



Bishop Alexander L.E.A.D. Academy

A L.E.A.D. Academy

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Autumn 1

Introduction

Autumn 1's newsletter will be focussing on online gaming and how loot boxes (also known as crates) and skins are bought, used and the effects they have on children and adults.

Online gaming and micro transactions -

In the media, there is a lot about online gaming, gambling and "skin" betting. These terms can be confusing as they mean different things in different contexts. Online gaming has historically meant gambling websites with cards, slot machines and roulette. More recently, online gaming has also come to mean gaming, such as on the Xbox or PC. In online video games, players can often start playing for free. As they progress further into the game, it offers in-app purchases that provide equipment, weapons, outfits and enhancements to characters. These are usually small purchases (micro transactions) of just a few pounds. However, in recent years, there has been a large rise in micro transactions, which come in the form of a 'Battle pass' or 'Fifa points' just as an example.

Some video games also offer what has been called "loot boxes" as a way to purchase these items. Similar to purchasing a pack of stickers or cards, players don't know exactly what they will get. They may get a common item that has a low value in the game. Equally, they may get a rare item that has a high value. These interactions are not considered to be gambling according to the UK Gambling Commission, although sometimes can be viewed as similar, due to them having no actual monetary value. Only games that contain simulations of real-world gambling have the PEGI Gambling descriptor. However, games that offer in-app transactions of any kind are tagged with the PEGI In-App Purchase descriptor on the box or at point of sale online.

What can I do?

As a parent you can build an understanding of how these purchases work and discuss which are really good value and which are over-priced. Like pocket money, it can be a good way to teach children about virtual currency and online purchases. It's important to understand that it can be easier to make repeat purchases online compared going to a shop and buying something, due to it being a click of a button. Also, many games offer high-cost top-ups of virtual currency (up to £79.99) in a single purchase. While these are often labelled as being the best option, it is a considerable amount of money to invest, considering the value of a Xbox/ Playstation game is around £50 or in some cases, free.

Microsoft, Sony and Nintendo have also agreed to disclose the odds of getting rare items in loot boxes, which allows you to visually see the percentage/ chance of receiving such items; some publishers do this already. Together with your child, you can set-up spending limits to stop accidental purchases. A good approach is to use the pocket money approach on consoles, to allow them to spend a small amount each month. Another way in which you can avoid children spending money accidentally, is to not put in your credit card details on to the console; if you do put in your credit card details, remember to password protect it!

Credit: <https://nationalonlinesafety.com/resources/wake-up-wednesday/>

Useful websites

<https://www.childnet.com/>

<http://www.safetynetkids.org.uk>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

<https://ee.co.uk/our-company/corporate-responsibility/keeping-children-safe-online>

Dates

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