

# Why do people game?

Gaming has become part of everyday life. Many young people participate in it on a daily basis. Here we explore some of the reasons why young people are so engaged, using our research to present the voice of the child.

## Social aspect

Research has shown young people perceive gaming as a social tool. A chance to continue the social aspect after school. Most children of this age will have a phone and can access social channels.

**“As we don’t have the same consoles we all play our own game and use video chat to talk to each other whilst we play.”**

This provides them with opportunities to have large play dates. They enjoy the friendly competition, opportunities to share new skills and generally chat. Particularly in the winter months when they cannot go out as late as it gets dark they can still socialise.

## Entertainment and leisure

Like anything, people participate in gaming as something to do when they have some down time, to relieve boredom. Some may choose watching TV others like to game. They find their game of choice a form of entertainment which they like to participate as it feels good, and is relaxing and fun.

## Emotional coping

During adolescence emotions are sky high which can be very confusing for young people. One minute they may be feeling really happy and the next sad or angry. Doing something where they can switch off and immerse themselves in the game can help them feel calm and in control.

## Escape from reality

Not only are young people dealing with changing emotions, they may have life situations going on which can be hard to deal with. Bereavement, parent separation or divorce, changing schools and finding new friends, bullying, issues at home...the list can go on. These are tough times and often people look for something to do to take some time out from the actual world and escape into something that feels safe, thing they can be in control of or to take their mind off of what’s happening in the real world.

**“In this game I can be anyone. I don’t have to think about my life, I can just play.”**

## **Need for excitement and challenge**

Some like the competitiveness of gaming or play. Who can be the best, win the race or game, or they enjoy trying to figure out how the game works. As they play there is a release of dopamine which feels good and so they continue playing as they like the feeling. For some the excitement comes from 'beating the game' thinking about the logistics and how they can beat the system, think of an online interactive puzzle book.

## **Need for power**

Linked in with their feelings or lack of confidence, some people like to master the game to gain status amongst their peers. If they can excel and build a reputation as being one of the best in the online world this can generate positive feelings. Young people who struggle socially but are masters in the game and gain status in the online world will find online play particularly appealing.

## **What does this mean for my child?**

Understanding the reasons for your child's interest in online play can help you to understand why they choose to play so much. Some young people can dip in and out of play, seeing it as something to do but equally can find other activities which they enjoy. Others choose online play as it satisfies a need. Ask your child why they like gaming, and what they get from it to help you understand. Use this as a way of setting boundaries and providing healthy alternatives to match the needs of your child.

**For more information visit the following pages –**

**[Secondary – support – setting boundaries/healthy alternatives/responding to emotions/](#)**