

Weighing up

At this age, a child's brain is very much dictated by their emotions and feelings. The rational part of their brain has not fully formed. Opening a loot box, purchasing a skin, winning on the tombola or having enough tickets to 'win' an amazing prize generates rewards in the brain which a child enjoys and wants to repeat again and again.



Putting what they may class as a downer on their high is unlikely to make them want to open up. Remember when you spent your pocket money on a comic just for the free 'tat' as your parents called it, or came back with a plastic toy from a fair which fell apart the next day? If you chose to do it again would you still make the same choices? People usually did because the thrill of spending money on something which then made them feel good was the main factor, what happened after was irrelevant. Along with not wanting to admit that your parents might have been right!

Discuss the odds

This is the same with your child, albeit different 'tat'! What we can do is help your child make informed decisions, weighing up whether it is worth spending money on a purchase that is virtual, used once and can't be used again or to save up for something that they can have in their hands and play with over and over again.

Some companies have released information in relation to the odds of winning and we can use this information to discuss probabilities of success with our child.



Microtransactions purchases

Educate your child on the chances of getting what they want. In the activities section we have a document on the odds of winning top prizes, along with how much you are likely to spend to get that top item. Discuss these with your child.

For example, the chance you will get a Lionel Messi POTY card in FIFA 20 is less than 1%. This means on average you will need to spend £149 on FUT Packs.



- Does this change your need to get Messi?
- Do you want to spend £149 on FUT packs?
- What else could you spend your money on?



When we asked some children what they would spend the money on, the answers included Lego, a phone, tickets to a football match or art supplies.

- How long do you think it will take to get Messi?
- Where will you get the money to buy these FUT packs?

It is good for children to understand how likely it is to get what they want. They may not realise how unlikely it is to get the rare or special purchase, or how much they are likely to spend to get it.

Whilst some children will still opt to spend the money on microtransactions purchases, it is important to still make them consider their actions and weigh up whether it is worth the time and money. We need to prepare children for independent living when they will have to weigh up whether to buy a new item or pay a bill. It is good to get them thinking about these things at an early stage.



Arcade games

What are the odds on winning at the coin pushers/toy grabbers etc? These machines are good at making you think you are close to a win to keep you playing.

Claw machines are set at a fixed strength and the chances of winning a toy is 1 in 15, so you would need to play, on average, at least 15 times.

An example to think about; if it costs £1 each go, you would need to spend around £15 to receive a toy. These soft toys often cost far less when purchased direct from a shop. Would your child prefer to spend at least £15 playing a toy grabber or buy the toy direct and spend the remaining money on something else?

Your child may be ecstatic at winning lots of coins but how much did they spend compared to how much they won? Sometimes we get so caught up in the winning we do not think of the bigger picture and whether we actually won anything or in fact made a loss.

Of course, your child may not think like this and you don't want to dampen their excitement but helping them to see the bigger picture can help them not get caught up in the anticipation and spend more money than they had planned.



Safe Limits

- Discuss with your child how much money they have to spend on microtransactions purchases or when visiting an arcade or fete.
- Ensure this limit is stuck to so they know when the money has gone that is it. If they spend all their money in one go they will know for next time.
- If they are not sure to buy/spend their money help them look at the pros and cons of each decision.

