

Loot boxes and skins betting

What are they?

Loot boxes: a feature of online games where players pay to get unknown rewards, like items or modifications for their character. It's similar to gambling, because most of the time you don't know what you're going to get before you pay.

One example is 'player packs' in EA Sports FC or FIFA, where you buy a 'pack' of player cards, but don't know who you're going to get when you make the purchase.

Skins betting: where people use 'skins' as betting currency ('skins' are extra items in online games, for example visual upgrades for their weapons or character). You can earn real money if you win. People usually do this through specific websites that let you use skins to bet.

What's the problem?

- Some children say they end up chasing a win with loot boxes, like gamblers do
 - Skins betting is a backdoor way for children to gamble underage
 - Gambling can be addictive, like drugs or alcohol, with a severe impact on emotional health and wellbeing
 - Teens have reported spending hundreds of pounds in a year on loot boxes, and losing skins worth thousands through gambling
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3 steps you can take

1. Make sure your child knows the risks

Your child might not realise they could lose hundreds or thousands of pounds. They might not understand the risk of addiction or that, in general, it's illegal to gamble when you're under 18.

Explain that websites that guarantee wins or have offers that seem too good to be true are using these to entice you. Behind these promotions is a business looking to make money.

Explain how loot boxes are also like gambling, as you take a risk for the chance of a reward.

Tell them they should report skins gambling websites to [The Gambling Commission](#).

2. Set limits on in-game spending to control how much your child can spend

This will also help you stop them from spending a lot of money without realising it.

Please note: when following the instructions below, the exact steps you need to take may be a little different depending on the device and software version you're using.

On **Xbox** (to do this, you'll need to set up a [Family Safety](#) account):

1. Go to [family.microsoft.com](#) and sign in with your Family Safety account
 2. Find your child's profile and then select 'more options', then 'spending'
 3. Select 'needs organiser approval to buy things'
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4. Select 'Email me when they get stuff', and you'll be notified when your child tries to buy something

On **Android** devices:

1. Open the Google Play Store app on your child's device
2. Select the profile picture on the top right corner, then 'payments and subscriptions'
3. Select 'budget and history'
4. Select 'set budget', followed by the budget you'd like to set, or 'remove budget'
5. Select 'save'

On **Apple** devices:

1. Select 'settings', then 'screen time'
2. Select 'content and privacy restrictions' (enter your passcode if asked)
3. Select 'iTunes & App Store purchases'
4. Select 'in-app purchases', then set to 'Don't allow'.

On **PlayStation**:

1. Select 'settings', then 'family and parental controls', then 'family management'
2. Select the user you want to set a spending limit for
3. Select 'parental controls', then 'monthly spending limit'

You'll need to [set up accounts for family members](#), with adult and child accounts, and make sure you and other adults have family manager or parent/guardian status.

3. Know the signs of problematic activity

Look out for signs, like if your child:

- Is short of money or has unexplained sources of money
- Becomes secretive or starts lying
- Loses interest in school and other hobbies, as well as in their health and appearance
- Has mood swings if they're not able to access games or devices
- Speak to our school if you're concerned about your child, and seek support from organisations like BigDeal (<https://www.bigdeal.org.uk>) and The Gambling Commission

Sources

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