ADVENTURES ARE
BETTER SHARED!



PLAYING TO CONNECT

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO VIDEOGAME-BASED FACILITATION IN ADULT EDUCATION

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the European Union

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INTRODUCTION

This practical booklet has been developed within "**Adventures are better shared! A guide for educators and facilitators in videogame education**", an Erasmus+ Small-scale Partnership in the field of **Adult Education**.

The cooperation initiative involved **Close in the Distance**, a cultural association based in Italy, **Rafíþróttasamband Íslands**, an esports federation based in Iceland, and **Sverok**, an umbrella organisation gathering several gaming clubs and initiatives in Sweden.

The project, together with its products, initiatives and deliverables, aimed to support the development of digital readiness, resilience and capacity by helping educators and other adult learning staff become more familiar with **gaming cultures**, **videogame-based facilitation** and **non-formal educational practices** connected to commercial video games and to the **broader participatory cultures surrounding gaming**.

This booklet therefore focuses on the use of commercial video games as **informal facilitation tools**. It explores how gaming may support **interaction**, **life skills**, **active imagination**, gradual participation and the work with people experiencing **anxiety**, **social isolation** or other forms of vulnerability. At the same time, it also addresses limits and risks: gaming **should not be romanticised**, and videogame-based activities require preparation, boundaries, **moderation** and careful reflection.

A starting point for educators who want to approach video games not as distractions, but as spaces for dialogue, observation, participation and inclusive learning.

WHAT THIS BOOKLET IS FOR

This resource turns gaming experiences into practical educational tools.

FROM STORYTELLING TO ADULT EDUCATION

This booklet was developed after listening to players. During the first phase of our project, **adult gamers were invited to share memories, habits and personal reflections connected to video games**: why they play, what they find there, which relationships they build, what kind of comfort, challenge or meaning gaming can offer in everyday life.

A TOOL FOR EDUCATORS

This resource started from that evidence and now asks what educators and facilitators can actually do with it. Not in order to turn games into lessons, and **not to present video games as a solution** to complex forms of vulnerability, anxiety or isolation. Rather, the aim is to understand how commercial games can become occasions for observation, conversation, shared activity and inclusiveness.

OBSERVING PLAY AND BUILDING EDUCATIONAL DIALOGUE

The **exercises** and **methodological frameworks** proposed in the following pages are meant as small, adaptable tools for non-formal education and videogame-based facilitation, in dialogue with broader approaches such as **Geek Therapy** and **EduGaming**.

They can help educators look more closely at what happens during play: how people cooperate, withdraw, take decisions, ask for help, react to failure, negotiate roles or build trust. In this sense, the value of gaming is not only in the game itself, but in the educational situation that can be built around it: a space where gaming becomes more readable, usable and discussable for those who work with people, not with abstract target groups.

THE PARTNERSHIP

CLOSE IN THE DISTANCE

Italy

Close in the Distance is a non-profit cultural association based in Italy. Its work focuses on digital social work, online inclusion, educational gaming and accessible non-formal learning opportunities for educators, facilitators, young adults and vulnerable groups. Within the project, **it coordinates the partnership and contributes to the development of educational resources and activities**.

RAFÍÞRÓTTASAMBAND ÍSLANDS

Iceland

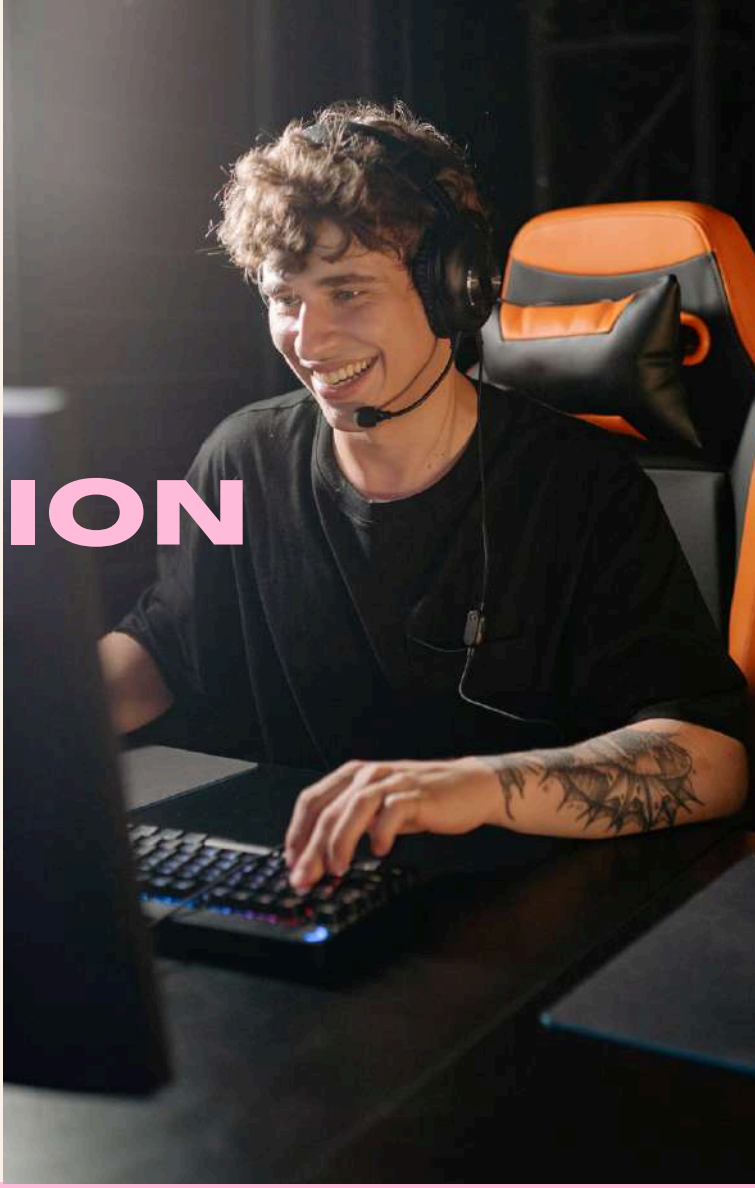
Rafíþróttasamband Íslands is an Icelandic esports federation promoting gaming culture, responsible gaming, digital well-being and educational initiatives connected to esports and online communities. In Adventures are better shared!, **it brings experience in community engagement, gaming communication and the involvement of adult players and educators**.

SVEROK

Sweden

Sverok is one of Sweden's largest non-profit organisations dedicated to gaming culture, bringing together thousands of gaming associations, clubs and communities. Its work includes digital gaming, role-playing, inclusive online spaces and civic participation through play. In this project, **Sverok leads the educational orientation activity on videogame education and facilitation**.

VIDEO GAMES AS INTERACTION



01.

when people play, they do not only interact with a game system, but also with rules, spaces, roles, other players and shared expectations.
For educators, this means that gameplay can become a useful situation in which participation, communication and group dynamics are easier to observe than in more formal settings.

METHODOLOGICAL BASIS 02.

This first chapter will explore the methodological basis for approaching video games as interaction-based educational environments. **A relevant part will be dedicated to the participatory dimension of gaming**: how players enter a shared space, follow rules, negotiate roles, respond to others and gradually take part in a common activity. The objective is to help educators move from a generic interest in games to the **co-construction of simple, replicable activity models** that can be adapted to different groups and contexts.

FROM OBSERVATION TO REPLICABLE ACTIVITIES 03.

The chapter will then focus on how interaction can be observed and translated into educational work. Rather than treating gameplay as an isolated moment, educators will be supported in **reading what happens during play and in using it to design short activities, discussion prompts and debriefing moments**. The final aim is to make each gaming session usable beyond the single experience, turning it into a **practical format** that can be repeated, adjusted and shared with other educators.

METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

from Geek Therapy to videogame-based facilitation

The starting point of this chapter is not the idea that video games should be "added" to education because they are new, attractive or useful for younger generations. That would be too narrow, and also inaccurate. **Gaming is now part of everyday digital culture across age groups: it belongs to teenagers, young adults and adults**, to casual players and experienced gamers, to people who play alone and to people who use games as shared spaces for friendship, routine, imagination and participation.
More specifically, **as also shown by the narrative surveys carried out within this project**, many people already use games, stories, characters, fictional worlds and online communities to make sense of their experiences, **to learn new things** (from languages to communicative and relational soft skills) to connect with others and to express parts of themselves that may be difficult to bring into more formal educational settings.

From a methodological point of view, this booklet and, more broadly, the project itself and the working approach shared by the partners, especially **Close in the Distance** and **Sverok**, draws inspiration from the broader field of **Geek Therapy®**, a term coined in 2011 by **Josué Cardona**, a mental health counsellor, educator and founder of the **Geek Therapy organisation**. Cardona developed Geek Therapy as a model for integrating geek culture into professional practice, starting from a simple but relevant assumption: the media people care about can help them understand themselves and communicate with others.

In this perspective, video games, comics, anime, films, tabletop role-playing games, fandoms and fictional characters are not treated as distractions from "real life", but as **meaningful cultural materials through which people may explore identity, emotions, relationships, choices and personal experiences**.

In concrete and contemporary terms, this can take many forms. To give a few already practical examples, a **teacher** may use a video game to introduce historical events or ethical dilemmas; a **youth worker** may use role-playing games to support cooperation, communication and social skills; **an adult education practitioner** or facilitator may use a fictional character to help a participant describe a personal difficulty indirectly, with less pressure; a community worker may use fandoms, gaming groups or online communities as entry points for participation and belonging. These examples show why **Geek Therapy** has gradually expanded beyond strictly clinical contexts, becoming part of a **wider field of applied geek and gaming practices**, where popular media are used not only in helping contexts, but also in educational, community-based and continuing learning settings.

For this booklet, the relevance of this methodological reference lies primarily in its educational implications.

To put it more simply, educators, often very focused on so-called "**basic digital skills**" or "**digital literacy**", should also take seriously the virtual worlds that people already inhabit. In continuing education, this is especially important: within the broader framework of digital readiness, adult and young adult learners do not arrive as empty recipients of content, but with habits, memories, preferences, communities and forms of informal knowledge. **If gaming is part of those experiences, then it can become a legitimate point of contact for educational work**.

Our aim is not to turn educators into specialists of geek culture, but to help bridge the gap between theory and practice: to **understand how commercial video games can be used as interaction-based environments** where educators may observe participation, support dialogue and co-construct simple activities that can be adapted, repeated and shared in non-formal learning contexts.

Looking more closely at the core of **Adventures are better shared!**, this perspective leads us to focus less on video games as objects to explain, and more on games as situations in which something happens between people. In other words, **media are not approached only as digital cultural products to be consumed, but also as relational spaces**. Even when the activity takes place on a screen, the interaction is still real enough to matter: someone waits for the others before starting a mission, someone gets impatient, someone explains the rules, someone stays silent but follows carefully, someone takes the lead without being asked, someone else gives up after a mistake or asks to try again.

This can happen in many commercial games, including titles that are already familiar to a large part of the gaming public. In ***Minecraft***, for example, a small group may have to decide what to build, who collects resources, who explores and who keeps the shared space organised, implicitly bringing into play the soft skills that each participant already has and, at the same time, giving the group a chance to strengthen them through a shared task. In ***Fortnite***, a team session can quickly show how people communicate under pressure, how they react when a plan fails, and whether more experienced players are able to include beginners instead of leaving them behind.

In ***Genshin Impact***, exploration and co-op activities may offer a calmer way to share a task, especially with participants who need time before speaking directly about themselves, while also creating opportunities for communication in a foreign language and for the development of relational, linguistic and intercultural competences. In ***World of Warcraft***, the structure of roles, routines and group activities can open a discussion on responsibility, belonging and participation in a larger community, in a way that is not entirely distant from what happens, at group and organisational level, in a workplace.

None of this means that these games are educational by default. A game session can remain just a game session. It can also become chaotic, frustrating or exclusionary if it is badly prepared. What makes the difference is the educational frame built around it: why this game is being used, who is taking part, what kind of interaction the educator may observe and work with, how long the activity should last, and how the group will discuss the experience afterwards.

This is particularly relevant because gaming is already part of the everyday life of millions of people, across different ages, backgrounds and levels of digital competence. **At the same time, the integration of digital practices into educational and facilitation methodologies is becoming a priority for many professionals working in support, adult learning and social inclusion**.

The objective of this chapter is therefore to help educators recognise the interactive potential of commercial games and translate it into simple, realistic and replicable activities.

More in detail, the task is not to design complex gaming workshops or highly technical sessions. It is to build **small, manageable educational situations around games, with activities directly connected to people's everyday digital lives**. What is needed is a clear purpose, a group that understands what is going to happen, a game that fits the objective, a few basic rules, an observation focus and a moment at the end where people can talk about what happened. In continuing education, this can be especially relevant with adults and young adults who experience **isolation**, **anxiety**, **low confidence** or **limited access to meaningful learning opportunities**. A game gives the group something to do together before asking people to explain themselves directly.

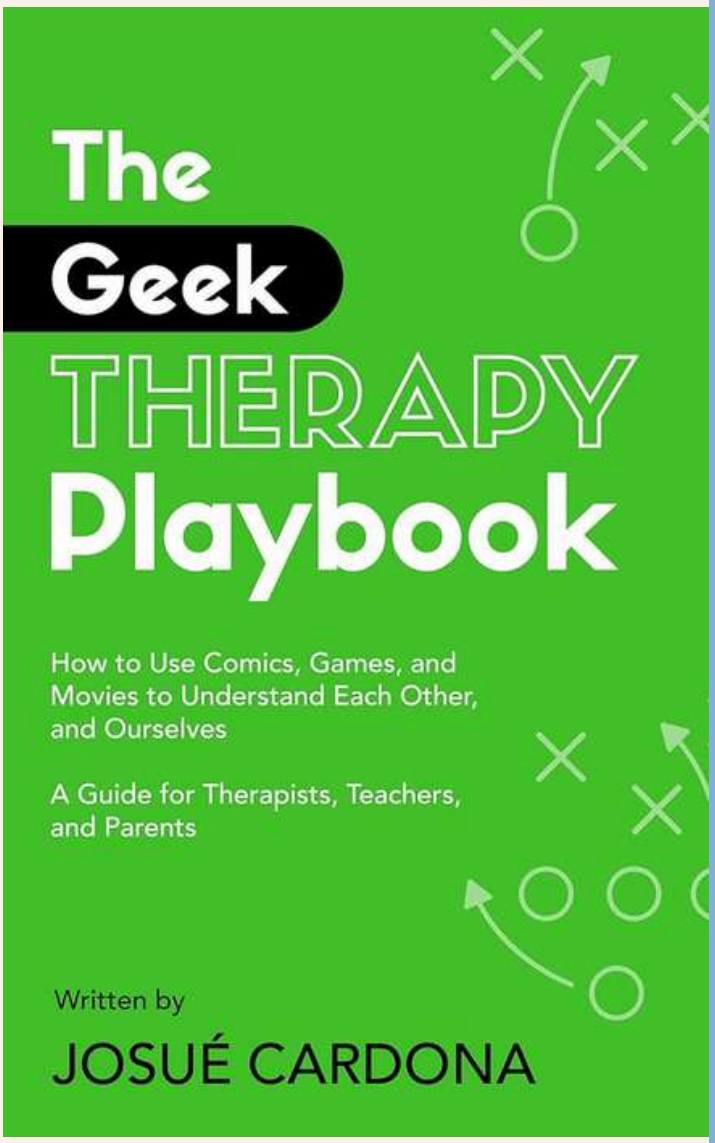
This chapter follows that logic, starting from the idea of interaction and then moving towards practical models that educators can adapt and repeat. More specifically, it will focus on:

1# Why interaction matters
How video games can create situations shaped by participation, communication and shared rules.

2# The participatory dimension of gameplay
How players enter a game, observe, cooperate, compete, wait, lead, follow, ask for help or step back.

3# What educators can observe
How gameplay may bring out initiative, frustration, trust, support, conflict, leadership and group dynamics.

4# Building, Debriefing and Replicating an Activity
How to design a simple videogame-based activity with a clear objective, a suitable game, a defined setting and an accessible structure; how to use debriefing questions to connect gameplay with broader learning and social dynamics; and how to adapt the same format across different non-formal learning contexts.



The Geek Therapy Playbook, written by Josué Cardona, is one of the methodological references behind this booklet. Its main value here is educational: it shows how comics, games, films and other popular media can become entry points for dialogue, reflection and shared learning.

Geek Therapy® is a registered trademark of Josué Cardona. It is mentioned here only as a methodological and cultural reference; this booklet is not affiliated with or endorsed by Geek Therapy.

WHY INTERACTION MATTERS

Participation, shared rules and affinity spaces

Interaction is one of the main reasons why video games can become useful in educational work, especially when they are approached not as ready-made educational products, but as **structured situations in which people act, respond, wait, decide, negotiate and adjust to others**.
This point is important because the main media object of this project, and of many ordinary gaming-based activities developed by the partnership, is the **commercial video game**: the same kind of game that fills the evenings of many households, supports friendships across distance, circulates through online communities and has become a transgenerational hobby rather than a niche practice limited to adolescents.

We are therefore not referring primarily to serious games, meaning games designed from the beginning with an explicit educational, training or awareness-raising purpose. Serious games can certainly be useful, but they are not the focus of this booklet. Here, the attention is on mainstream commercial titles (from ***Minecraft*** or ***FIFA*** to ***Roblox***, from ***League of Legends*** to ***Valorant***, from ***Wuthering Waves*** to ***Dota 2***) and on the many genres, platforms and communities that shape everyday gaming culture. This choice is not accidental.
James Paul Gee, a scholar of literacy, learning and digital media, and Elisabeth Hayes, a scholar of education, language and game-based learning, have argued that, in order to understand how gaming supports learning, we need to look beyond the software itself and consider the social practices that develop within and around games, what they describe through the concept of "**affinity spaces**".

This is particularly relevant because many contemporary **commercial games are not really played in isolation**, even when the player is physically alone in a room. They involve **teams**, "**guilds**", **chats**, shared objectives, **matchmaking systems**, roles, rankings, **informal mentoring**, online communities and forms of **peer learning**.

Kurt Squire, a learning scientist whose work has been central in the field of games and education, has described video games as **designed experiences and learning systems for an interactive age**: not simply containers of information, but environments made of problems, choices, feedback, identities, tools and forms of social participation.

This matters in non-formal learning because **many educational settings still rely heavily on verbal explanation and direct self-narration**: the learner is asked to speak, describe, justify, reflect, answer, and sometimes to do so before trust has been built. This can work well with some adults, but it can become a barrier for those who have experienced **social withdrawal**, **anxiety**, **educational discontinuity**, precariousness or simply a long distance from formal learning environments. A game changes the order of the interaction because it gives people a shared task before asking them for a personal statement, **allowing participation to begin through action, observation, support or small decisions, rather than through immediate verbal exposure**.
In this sense, what happens during gameplay is not a secondary effect of the activity, but part of the educational material itself.

A participant may ask for help inside a mission before being ready to ask for help in a more personal conversation; another may assume a coordinating role in a group activity, although they usually remain silent in a workshop; someone may react to failure by withdrawing, while another person may start explaining, encouraging or mediating without being asked. For education practitioners, these moments are relevant because they show how adults and young adults **mobilise previous experience, informal knowledge, relational habits and coping strategies inside a shared situation**, while also putting into practice competences that are central to **adult education**: communication, cooperation, initiative, learning to learn, digital participation, problem-solving and the ability to reflect on experience.

On the other hand, it would be a methodological mistake to assume that commercial games teach cooperation or resilience by themselves. As already stated above, **a gaming session may remain simple entertainment**. More specifically, its educational value depends on the way the activity is framed beforehand: the game selected, the group involved, the accessibility of the setting, the rules agreed upon, the position of the facilitator, the observation focus and the time dedicated to discussion afterwards.

The educator does not need to force a lesson out of the game; rather, they can help the group recognise what happened during the experience and connect it to broader forms of participation, communication and learning.
For this reason, the interactional dimension of gaming is not a secondary detail, but one of the most useful **entry points for educators who want to work with everyday digital practices in adult education**. This is also why this booklet begins here: before speaking about tools, activities or specific games, it is necessary to understand what happens when people enter a shared play situation.

Commercial games are already part of the lives of many learners and communities, so the educator's task is not to artificially introduce an external object into the learning process, but to make an existing experience more readable, discussable and usable within a clear educational setting.
Instead of approaching gaming as a distant or problematic universe, educators can start from what people already do, observe how they take part in it, and use that shared experience to open conversations that would often be much harder to begin in abstract terms.

THE PARTICIPATORY DIMENSION OF GAMEPLAY

Entering, observing and taking part in game worlds

To understand video games as educational environments, it is useful to look more closely at how participation works in contemporary gaming. With the spread of online play, cross-platform access and persistent communities, playing no longer means simply holding a controller, completing a level or consuming a digital product in isolation. In many commercial games, taking part means entering **a space that already has rules, rhythms, roles, expectations, languages and informal hierarchies**. A player may first watch, then imitate, ask a basic question, make a mistake, receive advice, adjust their behaviour and gradually understand how to belong to that specific situation. More often than not, this process happens through **contact with other players**: people with different ages, skills, backgrounds and habits, with whom a more or less intense form of social and civic relationship is established.

This is why the already mentioned notion of affinity spaces is a useful starting point. In *Language and Learning in the Digital Age* (2011), Gee and Hayes describe affinity spaces as environments where people gather around a shared interest and learn through participation, exchange and contribution, rather than through formal roles alone.

In gaming, this means that learning is not limited to the "gaming session" itself, but also takes place in the surrounding ecosystem: ***Discord* servers**, "**free companies**", **walkthroughs**, **modding communities**, **fan wikis**, **livestreams**, **tutorials**, **shared slang**, informal mentoring and the **small everyday practices** through which players help each other understand "how things work" in that world.

This perspective is useful because it prevents educators from asking only whether a game contains educational content. A more relevant question is how people learn to enter, inhabit and contribute to that game environment. In a title such as ***Warframe***, for instance, a beginner does not simply learn mechanics from a tutorial: they often learn by following experienced players, watching how they move through missions, how they choose equipment, how they explain objectives and how much patience they show towards someone who is still learning. In ***Final Fantasy XIV***, participation in a dungeon or raid depends on understanding roles, timing, communication and mutual responsibility; the activity only works if players gradually learn what the group needs from them. In ***Sea of Thieves***, the relational structure is different again: a crew must coordinate navigation, repairs, combat, exploration and decision-making, often with little time to formalise roles in advance. These are not adult education tools by design, but they are situations in which participation must be learned, negotiated and adjusted.

The same logic can be found in shorter and more accessible gaming experiences, including **games that are easier to approach through smartphones**, local multiplayer or brief sessions. ***Among Us*** is built almost entirely around discussion, suspicion, persuasion, listening and collective interpretation; a player participates not only by moving through the map, but by reading others, speaking at the right time, defending a position or choosing silence strategically.

Pokémon GO, differently, links digital play to movement, local space and community events, showing how a game can create light forms of social contact even outside the screen. ***Animal Crossing: New Horizons*** offers a slower example: visiting another island, exchanging objects, commenting on a shared space or helping someone complete a collection can become a low-pressure form of interaction, especially useful for people who do not immediately feel comfortable in competitive environments.

What matters for educators is that these examples do not produce the same kind of participation. A cooperative puzzle game, a competitive *shooter*, a *sandbox* game, a social deduction game, a mobile location-based game and an *MMORPG* ask different things from players. Some require quick decisions and verbal coordination; others require patience, planning, care for shared resources, interpretation of social cues or the ability to wait. **This is why the choice of the game cannot be treated as a secondary detail**. The game selected will strongly influence the type of interaction that becomes visible.

Observation itself is part of participation. In many gaming cultures, people do not start by playing confidently; they watch streams, read guides, follow more experienced friends, sit silently in voice chat, learn maps, study builds or take secondary roles before becoming more active. For adult learners who feel insecure, anxious, digitally less competent or distant from gaming culture, this gradual entry should not be confused with lack of engagement. Watching, asking, following and waiting may already be meaningful ways of taking part. A participant who does not want to lead a mission may still be learning how the group communicates. Someone who prefers to manage a simple task may still be experimenting with presence, trust and belonging.

This is where the educator's perspective becomes important. **Through gameplay, educators may see forms of participation that are often harder to notice in a lecture-style workshop or in a discussion-based activity**: who explains things to others, who is afraid of slowing the group down, who becomes impatient with beginners, who mediates, who gives instructions, who avoids responsibility, who encourages, who reacts to failure by withdrawing or by trying again.
The educator does not need to observe everything. That would make the activity heavy and artificial. The useful question is more limited: **which form of participation do we want to look at today?** In one session, the focus may be how beginners are included; in another, how roles are distributed; in another, how the group manages failure or asks for help. The value of the activity comes from choosing a focus, letting the experience happen, and then returning to it through discussion. At that point, the gaming session is no longer only "something we played", but **a shared situation** that can help the group understand how participation was built, where it became difficult, and what could be done differently next time.

WHAT EDUCATORS CAN OBSERVE

Seeing group dynamics through play

Observation during gameplay should not be understood as an attempt to decode participants from the outside, as if every gesture in a game had a fixed meaning. In an educational setting, observation has a simpler and more practical function: it helps educators understand how people take part in a shared activity, especially when that activity has a clear learning purpose. The focus may be communication, cooperation, digital confidence, problem-solving, inclusion, mutual support or the ability to remain involved when something becomes difficult.

In this sense, **a gaming session is not so different from many workshops, group tasks or non-formal learning activities that adult education practitioners already know well**.
Some participants enter immediately and with confidence, while others wait until they understand the rules. Some need to see how the group behaves before becoming active. Others appear quiet at first, but later become important because they remember details, notice resources, warn the group or complete a practical task with care. A participant who seems technically skilled may still struggle when asked to slow down, explain something to beginners or accept a decision made collectively.

For this reason, the educator is not mainly observing performance. Winning, losing, completing a mission or being "good at the game" may matter to the players, but they are rarely the most useful elements from an educational point of view. What is more interesting is how participation changes when the activity becomes less predictable: when time is limited, when a plan does not work, when a beginner needs support, when the group has to choose between different strategies, or when someone's mistake affects everyone else. These are the moments in which initiative, patience, responsibility and trust become easier to notice.

A useful way to look at gameplay is to pay attention to "**turning points**". A turning point is a moment in which the group has to reorganise itself, even in a small way. It may happen when the first player admits they do not understand what to do, when the group has to decide whether to continue or restart, when a more experienced participant chooses between taking control or explaining patiently, or when someone who stayed silent suddenly contributes something important. These moments are not necessarily dramatic. Often they are brief, ordinary and easy to miss, but they can show how the group actually works.

This also helps educators avoid a common mistake, both in digital and non-digital settings: confusing participation with speaking a lot. In any group activity, the most verbal person is not always the most involved, and the quietest person is not necessarily absent. **Gameplay makes this especially visible because contribution can take different forms**. One participant may coordinate through voice chat, another may quietly complete a necessary task, another may follow the map, protect the group, manage resources, remember instructions or simply keep the rhythm of the activity stable. As in ordinary communication, not every message is verbal, and not every form of presence is loud.

Another element worth observing is how the group manages asymmetry. Almost every gaming activity brings together different levels of confidence, digital competence, language ability, reaction speed and familiarity with game culture. This difference should not be treated as a problem in itself. On the contrary, it is often where the educational value of the activity begins. A mixed group has to decide, in practice, whether expertise becomes a shared resource or a way to dominate the session. It has to show whether beginners are included, whether explanations are clear, whether jokes become exclusionary, whether slower participants are given time, and whether the group can adapt without losing motivation. **Failure is also part of this picture**, but not because games offer some magical training in resilience. More simply, games make failure frequent, visible and usually reversible. A mission can be lost, a character can fall, a team can restart, a route can be changed.
This gives educators a concrete situation in which to observe how the group deals with mistakes. Does someone blame others? Does someone minimise the problem too quickly? Does the group become silent? Does anyone propose a new plan? Does the mistake become an occasion to learn, or does it push someone out of the activity? These reactions are not labels to attach to participants; they are material for later discussion.

For practical purposes, observation should remain limited. If the educator tries to observe everything, the session becomes artificial and the facilitator loses sight of the group. **It is better to choose one or two observation focuses before the activity starts**. For example, in one session the focus may be inclusion of beginners; in another, communication under pressure; in another, role distribution; in another, reactions to failure. This makes the activity easier to manage and gives the final discussion a clear direction. **A simple observation focus may look like this**:

Observation focus	What to notice
Initiative	Who takes the initiative, proposes ideas or takes responsibility?
Support	Who explains, helps, waits or adapts to others?
Frustration	How does the group react to mistakes?
Inclusion	Are beginners involved, ignored, supported or excessively controlled?
Leadership	Is leadership shared, or is it concentrated in the hands of one person?
Trust	Do participants rely on each other or act independently?

BUILDING, DEBRIEFING AND REPLICATING AN ACTIVITY

From briefing to replication

After discussing interaction, participation and observation, the next step is to clarify what this approach may become in concrete educational practice. Within **Adventures are better shared!**, "**EduGaming**" has been understood less as a specialised method reserved for expert gamers and more as **a practical way to work with materials that many people already know**. In most educational groups, there will be participants who play, have played, watch gaming-related content, recognise commercial titles or take part in digital communities. This existing familiarity can become a useful common ground.

For this reason, the activity does not need to begin with a complex design. It can begin with informal information: which games participants know, which platforms they use, whether they prefer playing alone or with others, whether they follow streamers or online communities, and which titles are already part of their everyday digital experience. **Starting from this, the educator can build a simple and replicable session around a game that is accessible, free or low-cost, sufficiently familiar and suitable for the group's level of digital confidence**.

A videogame-based activity does not need to be complex to be educationally useful. What matters is that the session has a clear structure. Participants should know why the activity is being proposed, what they are going to do, how long it will last, what kind of interaction is expected and how the experience will be discussed afterwards. The educator's role is not to turn the game into a lesson, but to prepare a situation in which play can happen, be observed and then become material for reflection.

A simple structure can be organised in five steps:

Briefing

The educator introduces the activity, the selected game, the objective and the basic rules, keeping this first moment short enough not to overload the group, but clear enough to reduce confusion and anxiety. This is also where the choice of the game should be briefly explained: why it is accessible, why it fits the group, and why it can support the kind of interaction the activity wants to explore.

Gameplay task

Participants play with a specific and limited focus, such as cooperation, communication, role distribution, inclusion of beginners, problem-solving or reaction to failure. The task should be manageable in time and difficulty, so that the group can concentrate on the shared experience rather than becoming blocked by technical complexity.

Observation

During gameplay, the educator observes one or two selected aspects only, without trying to capture everything that happens. A clear observation focus keeps the session lighter and more natural, while still giving the facilitator enough material to guide the final discussion.

Debriefing

After the session, the group discusses what happened through open and concrete questions. The aim is to help participants connect the gaming experience with broader social and learning dynamics, such as how they communicated, how they asked for help, how they managed disagreement or how they reacted when the activity became difficult.

Replication

The same format can later be adapted to another group, another game or another educational objective. Replication does not mean copying the activity mechanically, but keeping the structure clear enough to be reused, modified and shared in different non-formal learning contexts.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY #1

BUILDING A SHARED SPACE



Game
Minecraft, preferably in Creative Mode.

Educational focus
Cooperation, task distribution, communication, shared decision-making and inclusion of beginners.

Suggested group
4–8 participants.

Duration
60–90 minutes.

SETTING

In person, online or blended. The activity works best when participants can speak to each other during play, either in the same room or through a voice channel.

BRIEFING

The group will build **a small shared space together**, such as a house, garden, meeting room or safe base. The goal is not to create an impressive construction, but to observe **how participants organise themselves**, share tasks, include beginners and make decisions as a group. **No advanced gaming skill is required**: participants can build, plan, collect materials, decorate, suggest ideas or support others.

GAMEPLAY TASK

The group has to design and build a small shared space within a limited time. At the beginning, the educator may avoid assigning roles, allowing participants to organise themselves spontaneously. After a few minutes, if the group is blocked or confused, the educator can invite them to divide tasks more clearly. **Possible roles may include**:

Builder
Resource collector
Planner
Decorator
Explorer
Helper for beginners
Timekeeper
Observer of group decisions

OBSERVATION FOCUS

During the activity, the educator can focus on how the group organises cooperation.

Useful questions for observation:

Who proposes the first idea?
Who waits for instructions?
How are tasks distributed?
Are beginners included or left aside?
Does anyone dominate the decisions?
Does the group change plan when something does not work?
Who helps others understand what to do?

DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS

After the session, the educator brings the group back to the experience.

Suggested questions:

How did the group decide what to build?
Was everyone able to contribute?
Were the roles clear or did they emerge during the activity?
Was it easy to ask for help?
Did anyone feel left behind or overloaded?
What made cooperation easier?
What would you change if you repeated the activity?

POSSIBLE ADAPTATIONS

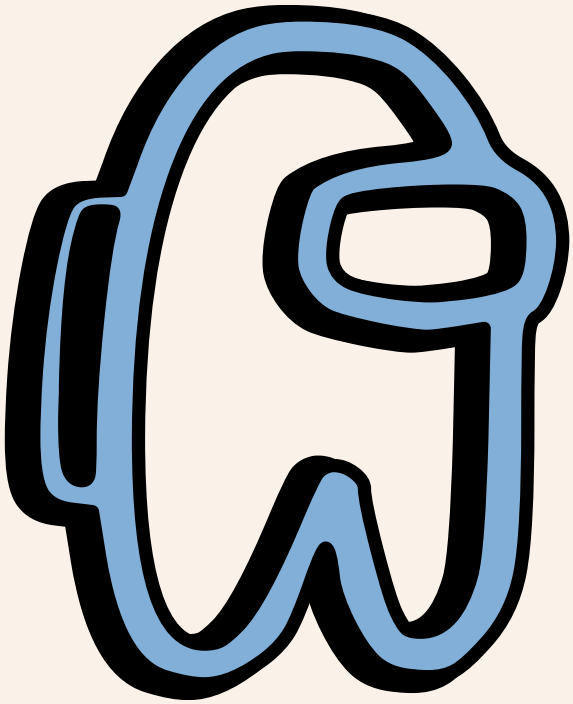
With beginners or participants who are not familiar with ***Minecraft***, the activity should be run in **Creative Mode**, reducing technical difficulty and allowing the group to focus on cooperation rather than survival mechanics. The task can also be simplified by choosing a very small objective, such as building a room, a garden or a meeting point. **For more experienced players, the educator can add light constraints**: a time limit, limited materials, assigned roles, or the rule that every participant must contribute one recognisable part of the final space. Participants who feel less confident can start as observers, planners, decorators or helpers for beginners before actively building. **The same structure can also be adapted to online-only groups, provided that voice communication and basic rules are clearly set before the session**.

REPLICATION NOTE

The same structure can be reused with other *sandbox* or building games, or even with non-building games that require **shared planning**. What should remain stable is the educational frame: **a shared objective, visible task distribution, observation of cooperation and a final debriefing**.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY #2

TRUST, SUSPICION AND GROUP DISCUSSION



Game
Among Us

Educational focus
Communication, listening, argumentation, trust, disagreement and group decision-making.

Suggested group
6–10 participants.

Duration
45–60 minutes.

SETTING

In person or online. The activity works best when the group can **discuss verbally after each round**, but it can also be adapted with text chat if needed.

BRIEFING

The group will play short rounds focused on communication under uncertainty. The aim is not only to win, but to observe how participants discuss, listen, justify their choices, **manage suspicion and make group decisions**. **Suspicion** and **disagreement** are part of the game, but personal attacks are not: accusations must remain inside the game situation.

GAMEPLAY TASK

The group plays two or three short rounds. During the game, participants complete tasks, observe others and take part in group discussions when a meeting is called. **The educator may participate as a player if the group needs support, but it is usually better to remain outside the match and observe the discussion**.
The focus is not on identifying the impostor as efficiently as possible. The focus is on how the group reasons together: who speaks first, who is believed, who is interrupted, who stays silent, how accusations are made, how evidence is used and how disagreement is managed.

OBSERVATION FOCUS

During the activity, the educator can focus on communication under uncertainty.

Useful questions for observation:

Who speaks first during discussion?
Who is listened to by the group?
Who is interrupted or ignored?
How do participants defend their point of view?
Does disagreement remain playful or become tense?
Do participants use evidence, intuition or pressure?
Are quieter players invited to speak?

DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS

After the session, the educator brings the discussion back to the group process, not only to the result of the game.

Suggested questions:

What made someone seem trustworthy or suspicious?
Was it easy to explain your point of view?
Did everyone have the same opportunity to speak?
How did the group react to disagreement?
Did the discussion stay inside the game, or did it become personal?
What helped the group make decisions?
What would make the discussion fairer next time?

POSSIBLE ADAPTATIONS

With groups that do not know each other well, reduce the number of rounds and leave more time for debriefing. If the group includes participants who may feel uncomfortable with accusation-based play, **the educator should choose a more cooperative game instead**.
For less confident participants, the educator can allow an observer role during the first round. The observer can focus on how the discussion works, without having to defend themselves or accuse others immediately.

REPLICATION NOTE

The same structure can be adapted to other social deduction or discussion-based games, but **also to non-digital activities involving incomplete information, group decisions or role-based interaction**. What should remain stable is the educational frame: a safe briefing, **a contained task**, observation of communication and a debriefing focused on **trust**, disagreement and **group decision-making**.

GAMING, LIFE SKILLS AND ACTIVE IMAGINATION



01.

Commercial games can place players in situations where they make decisions, solve problems, communicate, manage frustration, adapt to change and collaborate with others. The chapter starts from this practical idea: life skills are not only taught through explanation, but can also emerge through situated experience.

02. ACTIVE IMAGINATION AND REFLECTIVE LEARNING

A relevant part of the chapter focuses on how **avatars**, **characters**, **fictional worlds** and **role-taking** can support reflective learning. In videogame-based activities, participants do not only express themselves; they make choices, test roles, face consequences, imagine alternatives and compare different ways of acting inside a structured environment. For educators, this can become a way to **work on agency, decision-making, creativity and self-awareness** without relying only on direct explanation or frontal discussion.

03. FROM EXPERIENCE TO REFLECTION

The chapter then moves towards practical activities: **how educators can use gameplay to help participants recognise the skills they used**, discuss decisions, reflect on roles and connect in-game experiences with everyday life, learning and social participation. This reflective step is also where gaming can support broader adult education goals, such as **civic awareness**, **social inclusion**, **emotional competences** and **perspective-taking**: participants are invited to consider not only what they did in the game, but how they understood others, managed choices, responded to difficulty and contributed to a shared situation.

METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Games as environments for life skills

Before connecting video games to **life skills**, it is useful to clarify what this expression means and why it became so common in educational language. **The term does not come from gaming, nor from digital pedagogy**. It became widely used in the field of health education, psychosocial development and prevention programmes, especially through the work of the **World Health Organization**, which defined life skills as **abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life**. In this sense, life skills were never meant to indicate vague "good attitudes", but **practical psychosocial competences**: decision-making, problem-solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness, empathy, coping with emotions and coping with stress.

This vocabulary later entered the broader field of education, including school education, youth work and adult learning, because it offered a way to speak about competences that are not limited to disciplinary knowledge.

In the European context, this is close to the language of key competences for lifelong learning. The Council Recommendation adopted in 2018 identifies key competences considered necessary for personal fulfilment, employability, active citizenship, social inclusion and a sustainable lifestyle, and it treats competence development as something that happens **across formal**, **non-formal** and **informal learning**.
For this booklet, the most relevant connection is with **LifeComp**, the European framework for the personal, social and learning-to-learn key competence.

LifeComp describes these competences as applying to all spheres of life and as developable through formal, informal and non-formal education. **It is also explicitly non-prescriptive**: it does not tell educators exactly what activity to implement, but offers a shared language to think about areas such as self-regulation, flexibility, wellbeing, empathy, communication, collaboration, growth mindset, critical thinking and managing learning.

In adult education, this matters because learners do not only need information. They often need contexts in which they can practise confidence, communication, initiative, adaptability, cooperation, emotional regulation and the ability to reflect on experience.

This is especially true in non-formal settings, where the purpose is frequently connected to participation, social inclusion, employability, digital readiness, civic awareness or personal development. A workshop, a group task, a volunteering activity or a community project can all become spaces where life skills are not simply explained, but used.

Video games can enter this discussion because they are now among the most widespread digital cultural products in everyday life, even if they are still often looked down on as secondary, childish or unproductive. They are commercial media, certainly, but this does not make them educationally irrelevant. Like films, novels, music, sport or role-playing activities, they can create **situations in which people make choices, deal with limits, interpret others, manage frustration, coordinate actions and imagine alternatives**. Their specific feature is interactivity: the player is not only exposed to a story or a message, but is asked to act inside a system that reacts.

This is why a game may make life skills more visible than a purely verbal activity. In a game, a participant does not only say that they are cooperative, patient or creative; they may need to cooperate, wait, improvise, explain, negotiate or try again while the activity is taking place. A learner may plan a route in ***No Man's Sky***, manage resources and routine in ***Stardew Valley***, coordinate movement and timing in ***Portal 2 co-op***, communicate under pressure in ***Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes***, or make choices with moral and emotional consequences in ***Life is Strange***, ***Detroit: Become Human*** or ***Tell Me Why***. The educational interest is not that these games contain a hidden lesson, but that they can place participants in situations where competences become easier to recognise and discuss.

It is therefore more precise to say that commercial games can become environments for life skills when the activity is framed properly. In an educational context, the facilitator can help participants pause and reflect on what they did or, so to speak, on how they played: how they made a decision, how they reacted to a mistake, how they explained something to another person, how they handled uncertainty, how they interpreted a character's point of view or how they adjusted their strategy after feedback. **The competence is not "inside" the game in a mechanical way; it emerges from the relation between the game, the task, the group and the reflection that follows**.

The connection with **emotional competences** and **perspective-taking** is particularly relevant. Some games invite players to act through an avatar or a character whose background, fears, responsibilities or choices are different from their own.

Research on player-character relationships, avatars and parasocial interaction has explored how **emotional involvement with fictional figures can influence the way players interpret characters, understand motivations and engage with different points of view**. This does not mean that playing a narrative game automatically makes someone more empathetic, but it means that fictional interaction can offer educators useful material for discussing emotions, consequences, moral choices and perspective-taking in a less direct and often less defensive way.

For educators, the practical question is not "which skill does this game develop?" as if every title had a fixed educational effect. The better question is: **what can this group recognise through this activity?** With one group, a game may open a discussion on communication; with another, on frustration tolerance; with another, on creativity, self-regulation, collaboration or learning to learn. The same title can support different educational aims depending on the participants, the setting, the task and the debriefing.

For this reason, it is more useful to speak of **situated competences than of generic soft skills**. A competence becomes visible inside a situation: a task to complete, a role to assume, a rule to follow, a problem to solve, a group to negotiate with, a moment of difficulty to manage. The educator's work is to help participants **move from action to awareness**, giving names to what happened without flattening the experience into a checklist. In a videogame-based activity, "we played" can gradually become "we made choices, used strategies, dealt with uncertainty, listened to others, changed our approach and understood something about how we learn."

FROM SOFT SKILLS TO SITUATED COMPETENCES

Skills in Context, Not in Abstract

Imagine a non-formal adult education workshop focused on effective communication or assertiveness. At the beginning, the facilitator asks the usual questions: what participants expect from the session, where they feel confident, where they feel blocked, which situations they find difficult in everyday life. During this first exchange, it may emerge that several people in the group play video games, have played in the past, follow streamers, know a few online games, or recognise certain titles even without considering themselves "gamers". This information is not marginal. It tells the educator that part of the group already shares a digital cultural ground that could be used to approach the same educational objective from another angle.

This is where videogame-based activities become useful. Not because they reveal a fixed profile of the learner, and not because they magically "develop" one skill or another, but because they create **a concrete situation** in which competences are used, tested and sometimes negotiated. A game gives participants a task, a role, a set of limits, a feedback system and, very often, other people to coordinate with. The educator can then look at how a competence appears inside the situation: not "is this person good at problem-solving?", but "what happens when their first strategy does not work?"; not "is this person collaborative?", but "how do they behave when someone else needs more time?"; not "is this person autonomous?", but "when do they act independently, and when do they ask for support?"

This distinction is especially important **when learners bring very different biographies, levels of confidence and relationships with learning**.
Some adults may have had negative experiences with school or training; others may return to learning after years of distance from formal education; others may have strong practical competences that are rarely recognised in traditional settings. **The digital part of these biographies is often overlooked, even though it may be highly relevant: a person may have learned English through online games, developed organisational skills in a guild, practised communication in voice chat, managed resources in a simulation game, or learned how to search for information through tutorials, forums and player communities**.

A situated videogame-based activity can make these informal competences more visible. Participants are not immediately asked to define themselves, list their strengths or explain their weaknesses. They are invited to do something together: plan, try, fail, adjust, help, wait, decide, change strategy or explain something to another participant. Only afterwards does the educator help them give language to what happened. In this movement from action to reflection, the competence is not presented as an abstract label, but as something that has appeared in practice.

Just to give a couple of examples, a ***sandbox*** game may become an activity on creativity, but also on planning, negotiation or shared responsibility. A ***narrative game*** may prompt reflection on empathy, but also on decision-making, consequences and moral ambiguity.

A cooperative game may focus on communication, but also on frustration, trust or leadership. **There is no automatic one-to-one relation between a game and a skill.** The educator's task is to choose a focus, observe how the group moves through the activity and help participants recognise what they have actually used.

Instead of asking whether a game "developed collaboration", the educator may ask when collaboration became necessary. Instead of asking whether a learner "is communicative", the educator may look at the moments in which communication became clearer, more hesitant, more effective or more difficult. Instead of asking whether the group "solved the problem", it may be more useful to reconstruct which strategies were tried, abandoned, improved or shared.

This small shift matters because it brings the discussion closer to adult learning: people do not only receive content, but reinterpret their experience and connect it to their own ways of acting, learning and participating.

For this reason, the expression "situated competences" is useful. It reminds us that life skills do not appear in a vacuum, as they take shape in relation to a task, a role, a group, a difficulty, a rule, a choice and a moment of reflection. In videogame-based facilitation, the educator's work is not to prove that a game has taught something, but to help participants notice what was already happening while they were playing, and to make that experience available for further learning.

To make this approach easier to use, **the table in the next page** translates some broad competence areas into situated elements that an educator may look for during a videogame-based activity. The aim is not to classify participants, but to support a more precise debriefing after play.

Abstract skill	In a videogame-based activity, look at...	Debriefing angle
Communication	How participants explain, ask, clarify or stay silent when coordination is needed	What made communication easier or harder?
Collaboration	How tasks are shared, refused, negotiated or taken over	When did the group actually need to cooperate?
Problem-solving	How participants react when the first strategy does not work	What changed between the first attempt and the next one?
Autonomy	When participants act independently and when they ask for support	When was it useful to act alone, and when was support needed?
Adaptability	How participants respond to new rules, mistakes, time pressure or unexpected events	What helped the group adjust?
Emotional regulation	How frustration, waiting, failure or uncertainty are managed	What happened when the activity became difficult?
Perspective-taking	How participants interpret roles, characters, teammates or different points of view	Did the activity help you understand another position?

ACTIVE IMAGINATION, ROLES AND FICTIONAL WORLDS

Imagining, choosing and seeing from elsewhere

The expression **active imagination** may sound abstract, but in videogame-based education it points to something very concrete: **the possibility of entering a fictional situation, taking on a role, making choices and then looking back at what those choices made visible**. In many games, participants move through imagined worlds, create or select characters, decide how to act in uncertain situations and temporarily inhabit perspectives that may be close to, or very distant from, their ordinary experience. **This is one of the most interesting educational aspects of gaming**. A fictional world can create distance, and that distance can be useful. Speaking directly about oneself is not always easy, especially in adult education contexts where participants may have different levels of trust, confidence, language ability or previous experience with learning environments.

A character, an avatar, a fictional dilemma or a game situation can offer a less exposed way to approach questions that are still meaningful: how do I make decisions, how do I react to responsibility, what kind of role do I choose, what do I avoid, what do I find difficult, what kind of person do I become when the situation is not “real” but still asks me to act?

This does not mean that educators should interpret avatars or game choices as hidden psychological messages. A participant choosing a “warrior”, a “farmer”, a “healer”, a “thief”, a “driver”, a “builder” or, simply, a strange-looking avatar does not automatically “mean” something fixed.

The educational value lies elsewhere: in using those choices as openings for conversation, reflection and comparison. **Why did you choose that role? Was it familiar or unusual for you? Did the game allow you to try something different? Did you feel more comfortable deciding alone or following the group? Would you have acted differently if the consequences had affected another player?**

Many commercial games already work in this direction, even without being designed as educational tools. For example, in ***The Sims***, players build households, organise routines, shape relationships and imagine possible lives, often dealing with care, work, domestic space, aspiration and conflict. In ***Baldur’s Gate 3***, character creation, dialogue choices and moral dilemmas invite players to think about identity, loyalty, power, persuasion and consequence. In ***Disco Elysium***, the player is constantly confronted with memory, failure, self-perception and contradictory inner voices, making it a dense example of narrative decision-making. In ***Animal Crossing***, self-expression may appear through the slow construction of a personal and social space, where care, aesthetics, routine and hospitality become part of the activity. In ***Final Fantasy XIV***, role-taking is not only narrative but also functional: the way a player acts as healer, tank, damage dealer, crafter, mentor or guild member can become a starting point for discussing responsibility, belonging and cooperation.

For educators, the important point is to recognise that fictional worlds can support reflective learning because they allow participants to experiment safely with positions, behaviours and decisions.

A game can ask a player to make a difficult choice, to negotiate with a character, to protect someone weaker, to manage a community, to accept a consequence, to care for a space, to take responsibility for a group, or simply to choose how they want to be seen. These moments can later become material for discussion, especially when the educator helps participants move from the fictional situation to broader questions of agency, perspective-taking and self-awareness.

Role-taking is particularly useful here. In everyday life, people are often attached to the roles that others already recognise in them: the quiet one, the competent one, the fragile one, the helper, the outsider, the person who does not speak much, the person who always takes charge. **Games can temporarily loosen these expectations**: someone who usually avoids leadership may coordinate a small group because the game gives them a clear role; someone who is used to being helped may become the person who explains a mechanic to others; someone who rarely speaks about emotions may find it easier to discuss what a character felt, chose or lost. This does not solve anything by itself, but it creates a different angle from which reflection can begin.

Active imagination, in this sense, is not escapism but, more broadly, an educational use of the very notion of "distance". Fiction makes it possible to approach real themes indirectly: responsibility, fear, cooperation, exclusion, care, ambition, anger, trust, belonging, moral uncertainty. The imagined situation protects the participant from being immediately exposed, while still allowing them to engage with experiences that are recognisable. For adult learners, this can be especially valuable because it respects their biographies and avoids forcing a direct confession or a simplified self-assessment.

The educator's task is to keep this process grounded. After a gameplay moment, an avatar creation activity or a narrative choice, the discussion should not ask participants to reveal more than they want to. It can remain close to the experience: what did your character do, what options did the game give you, what did you choose, what did you avoid, what surprised you, what would another person have done, what changed when you looked at the situation from a different role? From there, the group can gradually connect the fictional experience to learning, social participation, emotional competences and civic awareness.

In this chapter, active imagination is therefore understood as a practical, interactive and truly educational resource. It can help educators use fictional worlds not as decorations around learning, nor as static spaces of competence, as sometimes happens in serious games explicitly built around a predefined educational outcome (for example, games designed to teach environmental sustainability or a specific civic topic). **Commercial games often work differently**: they are more open, less linear and more closely connected to the experiential dimension of growth, choice and adult awareness. Within these spaces, participants can try out different civic and social roles, recognise choices, discuss consequences and reflect on themselves with a certain degree of safety.

WHAT EDUCATORS CAN WORK WITH

Gaming habits as educational material

In many educational and facilitation settings, the first questions addressed to a group tend to be quite "traditional": how are you, what do you expect from this activity, what would you like to improve, what difficulties do you usually meet? These questions are useful, but they often leave aside a part of people's everyday life that is increasingly important: **their digital identity, their online habits and the virtual, yet cultural spaces they already inhabit**. If digital readiness is taken seriously, it should not concern only the ability to use basic tools, platforms or online services. It should also enter the way educators design and facilitate learning situations.

From this point of view, asking about gaming habits can become a simple but meaningful educational gesture. It does not need to become a formal interview or a long questionnaire, but **it can be part of the ordinary opening of a workshop**: what do you usually play, if anything? Do you play alone, with friends, online or locally? Are there games you return to when you want to relax, compete, build, explore or stay in contact with others? Do you follow streamers, esports events, *Discord* communities, tutorials or fan spaces? Has a game ever helped you learn something, practise a language, manage stress, meet people or feel part of a group?

These questions matter because the answer is rarely just a list of titles. When people talk about games, they often also talk about routines, relationships, skills, frustrations, forms of belonging and personal preferences.

For example, someone who plays ***Football Manager*** may end up speaking about planning, long-term strategy, statistics and control. Someone who spends time in ***Roblox*** may describe social spaces, creativity, user-generated worlds and online friendship. A player of ***Elden Ring*** may speak about difficulty, repetition, mastery and persistence, while a person who plays ***Candy Crush*** or other mobile games may describe short moments of regulation, pause and daily rhythm. These are not clues to be decoded, but educational openings: small entry points into how a person organises time, attention, challenge, sociality and pleasure.

This gives educators two kinds of material to work with. The first is what participants do during gameplay, when an activity is actually organised. The second is what participants say about their gaming experience, which may be even more accessible at the beginning. Not every educator will immediately organise a multiplayer session, and not every group will be ready for one, but almost every educator can start a conversation about games as part of everyday digital life. **In adult education, this is already meaningful because it recognises gaming as one of the informal spaces where people may have learned, related, failed, improved, helped others, managed frustration or built confidence outside recognised educational settings**. This connection with informal learning is quite central: **European frameworks on lifelong learning explicitly recognise that competences are developed not only in schools, training centres or formal courses, but also through non-formal and informal experiences across the whole life span**. **The 2018 Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning**, for example, frames competence development across formal, non-formal and informal learning, linking it to personal fulfilment, employability, social inclusion and active citizenship.

And yet, gaming is often missing from this discussion, even though it is one of the everyday digital environments where many people, especially young adults, already spend time, communicate, search for information, follow communities and learn by doing. This does not mean idealising gaming, nor treating every player as digitally competent by default. It means recognising that, for a significant part of today's adult and young adult learners, **digital readiness is not only about using institutional platforms, email or basic productivity tools**. **It also includes the informal and participatory digital cultures through which people already practise communication, problem-solving, language exposure, collaboration, orientation in online communities and self-directed learning**.

This is particularly relevant with young adults, whose biographies are often implicitly digitalised: not because they automatically master every digital tool, but because online environments, mobile platforms, social media, streaming and games have shaped ordinary ways of relating, searching, relaxing, learning and belonging. In this sense, asking about gaming habits is not a detour from adult education. It is one way to take seriously the learner's informal digital biography and to connect it with the broader **Erasmus+ priority of digital readiness, resilience and capacity**.

Returning to the methodological focus of this chapter, once gaming is recognised as part of the learner's informal digital biography, the next step is to understand what kind of relationship the participant has with it. Not all games are used in the same way, and not all players look for the same experience.

One useful aspect to explore is the kind of attachment participants have to a game. As already stated above, some games are connected to challenge and mastery, others to routine, collection, calm, competition, creativity, social connection, storytelling or care.

A participant may return to ***Stardew Valley*** not because it is "educational", but because its rhythm, seasons, tasks and relationships offer a sense of order and continuity. Another may prefer ***Valorant*** because it gives a sharp experience of precision, reaction, ranking and team coordination, where every error is visible and every improvement can be measured. ***The Sims*** may attract someone because it allows them to organise imagined lives, houses, aspirations and relationships.

The educator therefore can use them to understand what kind of bridge the game may offer.

Another relevant element is the social architecture of the game. A game is not only a story or a set of mechanics; it also organises how people can meet, speak, cooperate, compete, watch, wait or perform. Some games require teams and voice communication, while others allow a player to observe before joining. Some punish mistakes harshly through rankings, public scores or fast elimination; others allow slower experimentation, repetition and private attempts. Some include guilds, clans, trading systems, shared building, matchmaking, public profiles or user-generated content. **These details shape the kind of educational situation that can be built around the game**. A fast competitive title does not offer the same conditions as a farming simulation, a narrative adventure, a cooperative puzzle game or a sandbox world, and this difference matters before the educator even starts designing the activity.

The language participants use when they describe play is also important. Gaming has its own vocabulary, but that vocabulary is not only decorative slang. Words such as “grinding”, “carrying”, “ranking up”, “building”, “farming”, “healing”, “supporting”, “tilting”, “speedrunning” or “questing” often describe ways of understanding effort, role, success, failure, time, improvement and cooperation. Asking participants to explain these words can become a small adult learning exercise in itself. The learner becomes the person who knows something, the educator listens, and the group builds a shared vocabulary around digital culture. **This can be particularly useful with educators who feel distant from gaming**, because it reverses the usual direction of expertise without losing the educational frame.

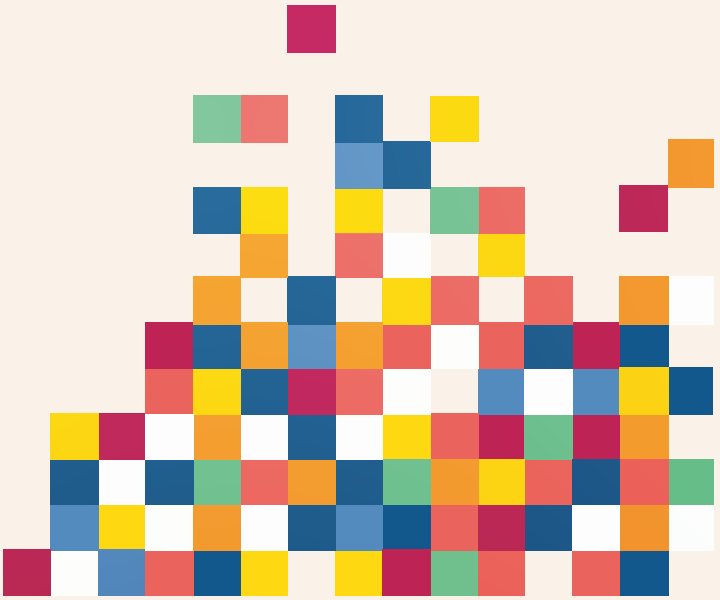
Educators can also pay attention to the distance between the player and the role they choose or describe, because this distance may open useful questions about preference, agency and self-awareness. Some participants tend to choose roles that feel close to how they already see themselves, while others use games to try out positions that are less available to them in everyday life. For example, someone who avoids direct conflict may still enjoy competitive play when the rules are clear, shared and contained by the game. These elements can help educators ask better questions about how participants experience responsibility, confidence, control, cooperation and visibility.

A simple way to organise this attention is the following:

Educator’s focus	Useful question	Educational opening
Gaming habits	What do you play, and when?	Routines, digital life, informal learning
Mode of play	Alone, with friends, online, locally?	Social connection, autonomy, belonging
Game motivation	Why this game?	Challenge, calm, creativity, control, care
Preferred role	What do you usually do in the game?	Agency, responsibility, identity, confidence
Game community	Do you follow or interact with others?	Participation, peer learning, digital citizenship
Language	Which words do players use?	Media literacy, shared vocabulary, cultural awareness
Transfer	Does anything from the game help outside it?	Reflection, learning to learn, civic and social skills

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY #1

MAPPING SKILLS THROUGH GAMEPLAY



Game
Overcooked, Portal 2, Stardew Valley, Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes.

Educational focus
Recognising life skills: communication, collaboration, problem-solving, emotional regulation, planning and learning to learn.

Suggested group
4–8 participants.

Duration
60–90 minutes.

SETTING

In person or online, depending on the selected game. The activity works best **when participants can communicate** during play and discuss the experience immediately afterwards.

BRIEFING

The educator explains that the aim is not to "perform well" in the game, but to notice **which competences are used during the activity**. Participants are invited to pay attention to how they communicate, solve problems, react to mistakes, ask for help, support others and adapt when something does not work.

GAMEPLAY TASK

The group plays a short cooperative or **problem-solving activity**, limited in time and simple enough to let participants focus both on the game objective and on how they work together. In ***Overcooked***, this may mean preparing a few dishes under time pressure, observing how tasks are divided and how the group reacts to mistakes or confusion. In ***Stardew Valley***, it may mean organising one in-game day together, deciding who waters crops, collects resources, explores or plans improvements, with a calmer focus on planning, routine and shared responsibility.

OBSERVATION FOCUS

During the activity, the educator can focus on how participants recognise and use competences while playing.

Useful questions for observation:

Which skills become visible during the activity?
Who explains, coordinates or supports others?
How does the group react when the first strategy does not work?
Do participants adapt their approach after feedback or failure?
Are tasks distributed clearly or improvised during play?
Does anyone use a competence without immediately naming it?

DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS

After the session, the educator helps the group connect the gameplay experience with the competences used during the activity.

Suggested questions:

Which skill did you use most during the game?
Was there a moment when communication became necessary?
How did the group react to mistakes or pressure?
Did anyone help you understand what to do?
What changed between the first attempt and the final one?
Which competence could be useful outside the game?
Where could you use it in daily life, work or learning?

POSSIBLE ADAPTATIONS

With less experienced groups, choose a slower and more forgiving game, such as ***Stardew Valley*** or ***Minecraft***, and focus on planning, routine and shared responsibility. With more confident groups, use a more demanding cooperative game, such as ***Overcooked*** or ***Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes***, where communication, pressure and role distribution become more visible.
If direct gameplay is not possible, the educator can use a short video of a cooperative game session and ask participants to identify which competences appear during play.

REPLICATION NOTE

The same structure can be reused with **any game that requires participants to act, decide, adapt or cooperate**. What should remain stable is the competence-**mapping process**: play first, identify what happened, name the competences used and connect them to everyday learning, work or social situations.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY #2

AVATAR, ROLE AND PERSPECTIVE-TAKING



Game

The Sims 4, Final Fantasy XIV, Animal Crossing, Life is Strange, Detroit: Become Human, Tell Me Why.

Educational focus

Active imagination, role-taking, perspective-taking, self-expression.

Suggested group

4–8 participants.

Duration

60–90 minutes.

SETTING

In person or online. The activity can be based on **direct gameplay**, **character creation**, a **short narrative sequence**, or a **shared discussion** around avatars and roles chosen by participants.

BRIEFING

The educator explains that the activity focuses on characters, roles and choices. Participants are not asked to "reveal" themselves through an avatar, but **to use a fictional situation as a safer way to discuss decision-making, responsibility, preference and point of view**. The aim is to explore what a role allows a player to do, avoid, test or understand from another perspective.

GAMEPLAY TASK

Participants choose or create a character, avatar or role, depending on the selected game. In ***The Sims 4***, this may mean creating a character with specific aspirations, routines and relationships. In ***Baldur's Gate 3***, it may mean discussing character creation, background, class and early dialogue choices. In a narrative game such as ***Life is Strange*** or ***Detroit: Become Human***, participants may analyse a short scene and discuss what different choices reveal about responsibility, empathy and consequence. **The task should remain simple**: choose a role, observe what the game allows that role to do, and reflect on how that position changes the way the situation is seen.

OBSERVATION FOCUS

The educator should focus on how participants approach roles, characters and fictional choices.

As already stated in this chapter, the educational aim is **not to interpret the avatar**, but to notice how each participant uses the **fictional situation**: whether they choose a familiar role, test something different, avoid conflict, take responsibility, care for others, seek control or explore another point of view.

Possible elements to notice:

- The kind of role or character selected.
- The reasons participants give for their choices.
- How they react to moral or relational dilemmas.
- Whether they prefer control, care, exploration, power, humour or safety.
- How they describe the character's feelings, goals or limits.
- Whether they connect the fictional situation to real-life experiences.

DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS

After the session, the educator helps the group move from character and role to reflection, keeping the discussion close to the fictional experience.

Suggested questions:

Why did you choose this character, role or option?
Was this role close to how you usually act, or different from it?
What did the game allow you to try, decide or avoid?
Did the character's point of view change how you saw the situation?
Was there a choice that felt difficult or ambiguous?
What consequences did your choice have in the game?
Did the activity help you understand another perspective?

POSSIBLE ADAPTATIONS

With groups that are not ready for direct gameplay, the educator can use **screenshots**, **character creation screens, trailers or short gameplay clips and ask participants to discuss roles and choices from the outside**. This can be useful when devices, accounts or time are limited.
With less confident participants, the activity can remain entirely fictional: the group discusses what a character might feel, choose or avoid, without connecting it directly to personal experience. **With more confident groups, the educator can gradually introduce questions about agency, decision-making, empathy and perspective-taking**.

REPLICATION NOTE

The same structure can be adapted to many **narrative**, **role-playing**, **simulation or avatar-based games**. What should remain stable is the educational frame: a fictional role or choice, a safe distance from direct self-narration, and a reflective discussion on agency, perspective, consequences and self-awareness.

DEBRIEFING AND TRANSFER

From gameplay to everyday learning

After implementing model activities such as the ones proposed above, the debriefing is the moment in which the **gameplay experience becomes educational work**. It should not be reduced to checking whether participants enjoyed the game, won the round or completed the task. Those elements can be useful to open the conversation, but the central point is different: **helping participants look back at what happened and recognise the competences, choices, reactions and forms of participation that emerged during the activity**.

In the context of an adult education workshop, this step is especially important because **videogame-based activities are not proposed as isolated moments of entertainment, but as tools for fostering skills**. The debriefing helps connect the game session with the aforementioned educational objective of the workshop: communication, collaboration, decision-making, emotional regulation, creativity, perspective-taking, digital confidence or social participation.

The educator does not need to cover all these dimensions every time. **A good debriefing is usually selective**: it follows the activity, the group and the specific competence focus chosen beforehand.

Questions for recognising competences

What did the activity require from the group, beyond simply playing the game?
Was there a moment when someone used a competence before naming it as such?
How did the group understand what had to be done?
What changed between the first attempt and the later ones?
Which strategies appeared spontaneously?
Was help requested, offered, refused or accepted?
Which competence would you name now, after looking back at the experience?

Questions for roles and perspective-taking

Which role did you find yourself taking during the activity?
Was that role chosen, assigned by the game, or shaped by the group?
Did you act in a way that felt familiar, or did the game place you in a different position?
Was there a moment when you had to consider what another player or character needed?
Did a choice look different once you considered another point of view?
What did the role allow you to try, avoid or understand?

Questions for emotional competences

When did the activity become easier or more difficult to stay with?
How did the group react when something went wrong?
Was there a moment of frustration, pressure, uncertainty or satisfaction that changed the way people played?
What helped participants keep going?
Did anyone slow down, restart, wait, explain or encourage others?
What could make the group more able to manage difficulty in a future session?

Questions for transfer

Where else could this competence appear: in learning, work, volunteering, community life or everyday relationships?
Does the activity remind you of situations where people have to cooperate, decide, wait, negotiate or take responsibility?
What did the game make easier to discuss than a purely verbal exercise would have done?
Which part of the experience could be useful outside the game?
What would you keep, change or adapt if this activity were repeated with another group?

SHORT EDUCATOR CHECKLIST

This final checklist is meant to support **educators who want to approach videogame-based activities without turning them into overly technical workshops**. The aim is to keep the educational frame clear: a suitable game, a realistic task, a group that understands what is happening, and a debriefing that helps participants connect play with learning.

Before the activity

- Does the selected game or sequence fit the group's level of digital confidence?
- Is the task simple enough to be played, observed and discussed within the available time?
- Is the educational focus clear: competence mapping, role-taking, perspective-taking, emotional regulation, creativity or another specific aim?
- Have participants understood that the activity is not about gaming performance?
- Are there meaningful roles for those who prefer not to play immediately, such as observer, planner, supporter, note-taker or discussion lead?

During the activity

- Is the observation focus limited enough to remain manageable?
- Are participants able to take part in more than one way: by playing, observing, planning, explaining, supporting or reflecting?
- Is someone struggling because of lower gaming experience, language barriers, anxiety or lack of confidence?
- Are roles, choices and competences becoming visible without being overinterpreted?
- Is the game still supporting the educational objective, or is the session becoming too technical, competitive or confusing?

After the activity

- Have participants had enough space to describe what happened in their own words?
- Has the group named at least one competence, role or strategy that appeared during play?
- Has the debriefing connected the activity to everyday life, learning, work or social participation?
- Has the discussion remained safe, without pressuring participants to disclose personal information?
- Can the activity be simplified, adapted or reused with another group?

GAMING, ANXIETY AND SOCIAL ISOLATION



01.

Gaming can offer a softer entry point into participation for people who find direct social interaction difficult. A shared task, an avatar, a chat or a familiar game space may reduce the pressure of immediate self-exposure, allowing participants to enter gradually, observe first, act through the game and relate to others without being asked to explain themselves from the beginning.

02.

CONNECTION, ROUTINE AND BELONGING

This chapter explores how gaming may support **contact**, **continuity** and **a sense of belonging**, especially for adults and young adults experiencing isolation, anxiety, low confidence or weak access to community life. In this sense, **games can become small social infrastructures**: recurring spaces where people meet, cooperate, recognise each other, follow routines and remain connected through shared activities.

03.

RISKS, BOUNDARIES AND EDUCATIONAL CARE

Gaming can also **reinforce avoidance**, overuse or **exclusion** when it is not framed carefully. The chapter therefore focuses on realistic educational use: preparation, moderation, gradual participation, clear limits and referral when needed. The aim is not to romanticise gaming, but **to help educators distinguish** between supportive **digital participation** and situations where gaming becomes another form of **withdrawal**.

GAMING AS A LOW-THRESHOLD ACCESS POINT

Participation before self-exposure

Anxiety, **social isolation** and **withdrawal** are terms that need to be handled with care in an educational booklet, because they can refer to very different experiences. Sometimes they describe clinically significant conditions that require specialised support; in many other cases, however, educators, youth workers and adult learning practitioners encounter them as barriers that shape everyday participation: learners who avoid group situations, young adults who have lost confidence in educational or community settings, people who feel safer behind a screen than in a room full of others, or adults whose social routines have become narrow, fragile or interrupted.

The **WHO Commission on Social Connection** has recently stressed that loneliness and social disconnection are widespread across age groups and regions, with **loneliness affecting one in six people globally and being particularly common among adolescents and young adults**.

For this reason, this chapter does not use anxiety and isolation as diagnostic labels, but it approaches them as **educational and social challenges that influence whether a person can enter, remain in and benefit from a learning situation**. More in detail, **social isolation** may refer to a reduced number of relationships or weak participation in community life; **loneliness** is more connected to the subjective feeling that one's relationships are insufficient or unsatisfying; **withdrawal** may describe a progressive retreat from social, educational or work-related contexts; anxiety, especially when linked to social exposure, may make ordinary group activities feel demanding before they have even started.

These phenomena are not the same, but **in adult education they can produce similar effects**: hesitation, avoidance, low confidence, difficulty asking for help, fear of judgement, or a preference for remaining at the margins of the group.

The role of the educator is not to diagnose these conditions or to solve psychological distress. It is **to design settings where participation can begin without forcing immediate self-exposure**: for example, an educator can notice that a participant struggles to enter a group, but does not need to decide "what the person has".

What they can do is work on the conditions of access: pace, task, group size, rules, predictability, options for observation, and ways of taking part that do not immediately require personal disclosure. In this sense, supporting participation is already part of **educational care**.

This is also where **gaming**, and more broadly **digital participation**, may become relevant. A video game can offer a shared task before it asks for a personal statement. For example, a participant who would not feel ready to introduce themselves in a circle may still be able to help build a small space in ***Minecraft***, follow a calmer cooperative route in ***Sky: Children of the Light***, manage a simple shared routine in ***Stardew Valley***, or take part first as an observer in a group activity before actively playing. In each case, the game creates a mediated situation: there is something to do, a role to inhabit, a small objective to follow, a screen or avatar that provides distance, and a possible way to relate without turning the participant immediately into the centre of attention.

On the other hand, the relationship between digital life, gaming, anxiety and isolation is extremely controversial and should not be simplified.

Online spaces can indeed support connection when they offer continuity, shared interests, recognition and community, but they **can also reinforce withdrawal**, overuse, toxic interaction, avoidance or dependence on a very narrow set of digital routines.

WHO Europe's 2024 data on adolescents, for instance, reported an increase in problematic social media use and found that 12% of adolescents were at risk of **problematic gaming**, which means that gaming should be discussed carefully, without assuming that it is always supportive or harmless. At European level, this is also the direction taken by current discussions on digital education. The issue is no longer framed only in terms of "screen time", as if the main question were simply how many hours learners spend online. The focus has gradually shifted towards the quality of digital participation: whether digital environments are accessible, inclusive, safe, meaningful and supportive of learners' wellbeing.

The European Commission's Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2027, adopted in 2020, is one of the main policy references in this field. It sets out a common European vision for high-quality, inclusive and accessible digital education, with the aim of helping education and training systems adapt to the digital age. For this booklet, this is relevant because digital education is not understood only as technical training, but also as **a matter of inclusion**, **participation** and **capacity-building**. A similar perspective appears in the work of the **Joint Research Centre on wellbeing in digital education**. Here, digital wellbeing is described as a broad concept that includes not only mental and physical health, but also inclusion and exclusion, the digital divide, stress, cyberbullying, fear of missing out, disinformation, and the empowerment of teachers and learners.

In other words, the educational question is not simply whether people use digital technologies, but what kind of conditions those technologies create for learning, safety, autonomy, relationships and participation.

For educators, this means that the question is not whether digital interaction is good or bad in itself. **The more useful question is what kind of participation a digital environment is supporting**. Does it help the learner move towards contact, confidence and broader social possibilities, or does it keep them inside a closed routine that becomes harder and harder to interrupt? Does the game give the person a manageable way to enter a group, or does it expose them to ranking pressure, exclusion, harassment or excessive competition? Does the activity create a bridge towards learning and community life, or does it become another isolated screen-based task?

A videogame-based activity can be useful when it is built around this idea of a bridge. It should not replace other forms of support, and it should not push vulnerable participants into overstimulating, competitive or socially risky environments. Its value lies in small and realistic steps: observing before acting, joining through a role, cooperating around a task, using an avatar or fictional space to reduce pressure, speaking through the activity before speaking directly, and gradually connecting the digital experience to learning, trust and social inclusion.

In this chapter, gaming is therefore treated as a possible low-threshold access point: not a solution to anxiety or isolation, but a structured way to make participation less abrupt, more mediated and easier to discuss.

SOCIAL ISOLATION, ROUTINE AND ONLINE BELONGING

Digital communities, everyday rituals and mediated connection

When speaking about gaming and social isolation, it is useful to widen the frame beyond the idea of "playing online with other people". **Digital life around games is made of many layers**: multiplayer matches, of course, but also livestreams, ***Discord*** servers, ***Reddit*** threads, **fandoms**, **guides**, **memes**, **fan art**, **daily logins**, **seasonal events**, ***avatars***, **characters**, **fictional places and routines** that people return to over time. For educators, this matters because participation does not always begin with direct conversation or visible social confidence; it may begin through recognition, repetition, shared references and the feeling of already knowing how to inhabit a small part of a digital world.

This is why the chapter needs to look at some of the online spaces where gaming-related relationships actually take place today.

For an educator working in 2026, **digital competence cannot only mean knowing how to use institutional platforms or practical tools.** It also means having **a basic understanding of the informal environments where learners may already communicate**, **learn**, follow communities and **build parts of their social identity**. In this sense, gaming belongs to the wider field of digital participation: not simply "using the internet", but taking part in digital environments by watching, commenting, creating, asking for help, following communities, sharing knowledge, building identity and maintaining relationships.

A useful reference and starting point is the work of **Henry Jenkins**, a media scholar whose work has strongly shaped the study of fandom and participatory culture. In *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (1992), Jenkins analysed fan communities not as passive audiences, but as **active groups producing interpretations**, **practices** and **cultural materials around the media they cared about**. Later, in *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century* (2006), he and his co-authors connected participatory culture more directly to media education, describing it as **a culture with low barriers to expression**, support for sharing, **informal mentorship** and **a sense of social connection** among participants.

A **fandom**, then, is not just a group of people who happen to like the same game. It is a community built around attachment to a game, story, character, streamer, genre or fictional world, and it often produces its own language, humour, rituals and forms of mutual recognition. Around games such as ***Dragon Age***, ***Genshin Impact***, ***The Legend of Zelda***, ***Pokémon*** or ***League of Legends*** people may create fan art, guides, memes, theories, mods, videos, cosplay, roleplay groups or support networks. **For a socially isolated person, this does not erase loneliness, but it may offer a first form of recognition**: other people understand the same references, wait for the same update, discuss the same character, or meet around the same recurring event. More in detail, when we speak about fandoms today, we often also speak about already mentioned platforms such as ***Reddit*** and ***Discord***, because many gaming communities organise themselves there. ***Reddit*** is a large platform made of smaller topic-based communities called subreddits, where users discuss specific interests, ask questions, share experiences, exchange advice and follow the rules and culture of each community. ***Reddit*** itself describes subreddits as "smaller communities created and moderated by users inside the wider platform".

Discord works differently. It is a communication platform based on servers, channels, voice rooms, video and text communication, originally very close to gaming cultures but now used for many kinds of small and active communities. ***Discord*** describes itself as a platform for **building connections through voice**, **video** and **text**, and its own safety material explicitly addresses parents and educators because of how common it has become among young people and gaming groups. In practical terms, a ***Discord*** server may function as a semi-private meeting place: people log in, read announcements, join a voice channel, organise a game night, ask for technical help, share memes, discuss a new update, or simply remain present in a space where they are recognised by nickname, avatar, humour and routine.

Then there is ***Twitch***, which can look strange from the outside if an educator has never engaged with livestreaming culture: people sit in front of a computer or smartphone to watch someone else talk, play, react, lose, win, improvise and interact with a chat moving in real time. Yet this is not a marginal practice. **Amazon Ads reports that Twitch reaches an average of 35 million users every day**, with nearly 70% between 18 and 34, while TwitchTracker reports **more than 20 billion hours watched on the platform in 2024 and more than 2 million average concurrent viewers in 2025**.

Livestreaming adds a specific kind of mediated connection. A viewer may not play directly, but may follow a streamer, participate in chat, recognise regular viewers and feel part of a recurring community. Media studies often describe this through the concept of **parasocial interaction**, meaning a one-sided or partly one-sided sense of relationship with a media figure.

In the case of livestreaming, this relation is more complex than traditional television, because the streamer can answer messages, read usernames, react to chat and create a feeling of shared presence. For educators, the point is not to mock this relationship as “fake”, nor to exaggerate it as equivalent to friendship, but to understand that it can become part of a person’s daily routine, language exposure, entertainment, emotional regulation or sense of belonging.

Moving on, **another keyword here is routine**. In many games, especially live-service games, ***MMOs***, **farming simulations**, mobile games and ***gacha* titles**, players return regularly because the game is structured around repeated appointments (such as the already listed categories of “daily quests”, “login rewards”, “seasonal events”, “raids”, “guild meetings”, “ranked matches”, “limited-time banners” and much more). **This can be criticised when it becomes compulsive, manipulative or difficult to interrupt, but it can also provide continuity**. A daily check-in in ***Animal Crossing***, a **scheduled raid** in ***World of Warcraft***, a quiet evening in ***Final Fantasy XIV***, a recurring session with friends in ***Rocket League***, or daily tasks in games such as ***Honkai: Star Rail*** or ***Wuthering Waves*** may structure time and create a predictable social or emotional appointment. Predictability can matter when offline routines are weak, interrupted or emotionally demanding.

This also includes single-player games, because not every meaningful relation in gaming is a relation with another player. **Some people relate strongly to an avatar, a character**, **a place**, **a soundtrack**, **a fictional community** or a **repeated ritual**, and returning to a familiar game world may help them regulate mood, restore a sense of control or remain connected to a personal narrative.

The educator should not overinterpret this attachment, but neither should they dismiss it as irrelevant. If a participant speaks about a game as a place where they feel calm, competent, recognised or "at home", that information says something about the kinds of environments, rhythms and roles that make participation easier for them.

In short, **these digital routines and communities can be approached as part of the learner's informal social world**. A facilitator does not need to enter every ***Discord*** server, understand every meme or follow every streamer, but **they should be able to ask useful questions**: which spaces do you return to, who is usually there, what do you do together, what makes you feel included, what makes you leave, when does the routine help, and when does it become too narrow?

These questions keep the focus on quality of participation rather than on moral judgement about gaming.

Online belonging should therefore be treated as a possible resource, but not as a guarantee of wellbeing. Gaming communities can offer recognition, peer learning, humour, cooperation, routine and low-pressure contact; they can also expose people to exclusion, harassment, comparison, ranking pressure, toxic behaviour and dependency on digital validation. **The educator's role is to remain close to this ambiguity**, without pushing isolated learners further into digital spaces and without dismissing the connections they already have there. The practical question is whether these spaces can become bridges towards broader participation, confidence and social inclusion, or whether they are functioning as closed routines that make other forms of contact harder to reach.

WHEN GAMING HELPS PARTICIPATION (AND WHEN IT DOES NOT)

Supportive use, avoidance and digital wellbeing

Gaming can support participation when it gives learners a manageable way to enter a shared situation, especially when direct interaction feels tiring, unsafe or too demanding at the beginning of a learning process. In an adult education setting, this may happen through a cooperative task, a familiar avatar, a small group objective or a recurring online routine that reduces the pressure of having to perform socially from the first minute. For some participants, joining a session through a game may be easier than speaking in a circle, introducing themselves to a group or explaining personal difficulties in direct terms, because the first contact is organised around something shared and concrete rather than around self-disclosure.

This is one of the reasons why videogame-based activities may be useful in contexts such as non-formal adult education, youth work and broader social inclusion settings: they can change the form of participation before asking the participant to change their level of confidence. Someone may begin by observing a group building activity in ***Minecraft***, managing a small shared task in ***Stardew Valley***, following another player in ***Sky: Children of the Light***, or taking part in a low-pressure creative activity before speaking directly.

In these cases, the game does not remove anxiety or isolation, but it may create a safer margin between the person and the group, allowing participation to begin through action, routine, observation or small responsibility.

The same mechanism, however, can also become problematic depending on how the game is used and on the place it takes in the person's broader life. A digital routine in any live-service game may provide structure and continuity, but it may also become difficult to interrupt when daily rewards, limited events or group expectations make the player feel that they cannot miss a session. A competitive environment such as ***Valorant*** or ***EA Sports FC*** may give some players a strong sense of improvement and belonging, while for others it may increase pressure, shame or fear of being judged. A ***Discord*** community or a guild may offer recognition and humour, but may also become a narrow social world if it is the only place where the person feels able to participate.

Here it is useful to name a few concepts in plain language.

Avoidance means using an activity to stay away from situations that feel difficult, threatening or emotionally demanding; it may offer short-term relief, and this is not always negative, but it becomes educationally relevant when it gradually makes the person's world smaller, reducing other forms of contact, learning or responsibility.

Overuse does not simply mean playing many hours, because frequent play can be part of an ordinary hobby or community life; the more relevant question is whether gaming starts replacing sleep, learning, work, self-care, relationships or other meaningful activities. The WHO definition of **gaming disorder** in ICD-11 is useful precisely because it does not focus on gaming time alone, but on impaired control, increasing priority given to gaming over other activities, and continuation despite negative consequences.

Another useful term is **FOMO**, or "fear of missing out". In gaming and online communities, FOMO may appear when a player feels pushed to log in because of limited-time events, daily rewards, seasonal content, ranking systems, group appointments or the fear that others will progress without them. In short, the difficulty begins **when the routine becomes hard to negotiate**, when the person feels unable to pause, or when the game creates pressure rather than support. In a broader sense, the very same game may have different meanings in different lives.

A routine can be supportive when it helps a learner maintain contact, practise communication, feel competent, return to a group or slowly move towards other activities; it becomes more restrictive when it damages sleep, replaces all other social contact, produces distress when interrupted, intensifies conflict or makes offline participation feel even more unreachable.

The question is therefore not whether the learner plays, or even how much they play, but whether gaming is widening or narrowing their possibilities for participation.

This distinction also helps when designing videogame-based facilitation. If a group includes vulnerable learners, the safest starting point is usually a low-pressure, cooperative or reflective activity rather than a highly competitive or ranking-based environment.

The session should have a clear duration, a clear objective, a clear communication channel, basic rules for interaction and a moment of debriefing in which participants can describe what the activity did for them. This is not only a matter of good organisation; it is part of educational care, because boundaries help prevent the activity from becoming too technical, too intense or too socially risky.

In practical terms, the educator can ask:

Is this activity helping the participant enter a wider world, or is it keeping them inside a narrower one?

Does it create a step towards learning, confidence and contact, or does it mainly reinforce avoidance?

Does the person leave the activity more able to speak, cooperate or return to the group, or more tense, ashamed, exhausted or dependent on the digital routine?

These are not diagnostic questions, but educational ones. They help the facilitator decide whether gaming is functioning as a bridge towards broader participation, wellbeing and social inclusion, or whether the activity needs to be slowed down, reframed, simplified or connected to other forms of support.

WHAT EDUCATORS SHOULD PAY ATTENTION TO

Reading gaming habits as participation patterns

After discussing both the supportive and the risky sides of gaming, the practical question becomes more precise: **what should an educator actually pay attention to?** The aim is not to decide whether a learner's gaming habits are "normal" or "wrong", but to understand how gaming is positioned in that person's everyday life: whether it opens participation, makes it narrower, supports routines, absorbs them, creates confidence, produces pressure, or becomes difficult to negotiate.

A useful starting point is the place that gaming occupies in the learner's routine. **As already stated above, playing often is not, by itself, a warning sign**. Many people play regularly in the same way that others read every evening, follow a sport, watch series, go to the gym, listen to podcasts or spend time in online communities. The issue becomes more educationally relevant when gaming begins to displace other parts of life in a rigid way: sleep, meals, study, work, appointments, relationships, self-care, physical movement or basic responsibilities. For an educator, the question is not simply "how many hours do you play?", but rather "what becomes harder to do because of gaming, and what does gaming make possible that would otherwise be missing?"

Time, in this sense, should be read together with control and flexibility. A participant who plays several hours during the weekend but can stop, negotiate time, attend activities and keep other routines may not present the same concern as someone who plays fewer hours but feels unable to interrupt a session, becomes distressed when disconnected, or repeatedly misses learning opportunities because of in-game obligations.

As already outlined in the previous paragraph, this is especially relevant with live-service games, ranked systems, daily rewards and group-based online activities, where the rhythm of the game can become stronger than the rhythm of the person. The educational concern is not intensity alone, but the loss of flexibility, which is also consistent with the clinical description of gaming disorder, focused on impaired control, increasing priority given to gaming and continuation despite negative consequences.

Another aspect is the emotional tone around gaming. Here the educator is not looking for a hidden diagnosis, but for the quality of the before and after: whether the person describes gaming as calming, energising, social and meaningful, or whether it is mostly associated with anger, shame, exhaustion, comparison, conflict or a sense of being trapped. **A learner who says that a game helps them recover after work or stay in touch with friends is describing a different pattern from someone who says that they keep playing because they feel unable to stop**, fear losing rank, or feel worse after every session. The same activity can therefore have very different meanings depending on whether it produces recovery, pressure, compensation or avoidance.

The quality of the social environment, already introduced in the previous section, here becomes a more practical point of attention. A learner may be part of a **guild**, a ***Discord*** server, a ***Twitch*** community, a ***subreddit*** or a stable group of friends, but the educator should listen to how that space is described. Are mistakes tolerated, or does every error become public blame? Is humour inclusive, or built on humiliation? Can people take breaks without being punished socially? Are there trusted peers, moderators or shared rules?

In a game such as ***League of Legends***, for example, text chat can become a place for coordination but also for insults and blame; in ***Fortnite***, voice chat may support quick teamwork, but it can also expose less confident participants to pressure, mockery or unwanted contact. The relevant point is not the platform itself, but the climate it creates around participation.

Exposure is closely connected to this. **Some games and platforms ask players to become visible very quickly**: through voice chat, rankings, public profiles, livestreaming, team performance, reaction speed or visible mistakes. For confident players, this may be motivating; for others, especially those dealing with anxiety, low self-esteem or social withdrawal, it can become too much too soon. An educator planning a videogame-based activity should therefore ask whether the game exposes learners before they are ready. A participant may be able to join a creative or cooperative task, but not yet feel comfortable speaking in voice chat, playing ranked modes, joining public matchmaking or taking responsibility for a mistake that affects the whole team.

The relationship between gaming and offline participation also deserves attention, but without assuming that online life is automatically inferior. For some socially isolated learners, a digital community may be the first space where they feel recognised, competent or expected by others; dismissing that space as “not real” can close a door rather than open one. At the same time, if gaming becomes the only place where a person can exist, communicate, learn or feel valued, the educational objective cannot be limited to strengthening that digital routine. **The question becomes how to use what is already there as a bridge towards other forms of participation: a course, a volunteering activity, a local group, a safer routine, or simply a wider set of relationships**.

Privacy is another delicate point, especially with young adults. Many people between 20 and 30 still experience gaming as a hobby that can be judged as childish, strange or socially suspicious, particularly in contexts where “serious” adult identity is associated with work, productivity and offline social life. For this reason, learners may not immediately want to show their profiles, chats, servers, game history or online friends to an educator, and they should not be asked to do so.

The distinction is between privacy and secrecy: **privacy is legitimate**, **while secrecy becomes educationally relevant** when gaming is surrounded by shame, conflict, hiding, fear of judgement or an inability to speak at all about what happens online. The educator’s task is not to invade digital privacy, but to create enough trust for participants to discuss patterns, routines and feelings without exposing personal accounts or private conversations.

For practical purposes, the five areas below can help educators organise their attention without turning the activity into an assessment grid:

Area of attention	What the educator is trying to understand
Routine and flexibility	Whether gaming is one activity among others, or whether it has become difficult to negotiate with sleep, learning, work, relationships or self-care.
Emotional effects	Whether gaming usually leaves the participant calmer, connected or more confident, or more tense, ashamed, angry, exhausted or withdrawn.
Quality of relationships	Whether gaming spaces are supportive and respectful, or marked by insults, exclusion, pressure, dependency, harassment or fear of being left behind.
Level of exposure	Whether the activity allows gradual participation, or pushes the learner too quickly into voice chat, ranking, public performance, competition or social judgement.
Connection with broader life	Whether gaming opens paths towards learning, language practice, friendship, community or civic participation, or progressively replaces other possible spaces.

These areas are meant to keep the educator close to the quality of participation. In videogame-based facilitation, **the point is not to remove gaming from the learner's life**, **nor to treat it as automatically positive**, **but to understand what role it is playing there**. Sometimes it will be a resource to build on, sometimes a fragile routine that needs clearer boundaries, and sometimes a sign that the learner may need support beyond the educational setting.

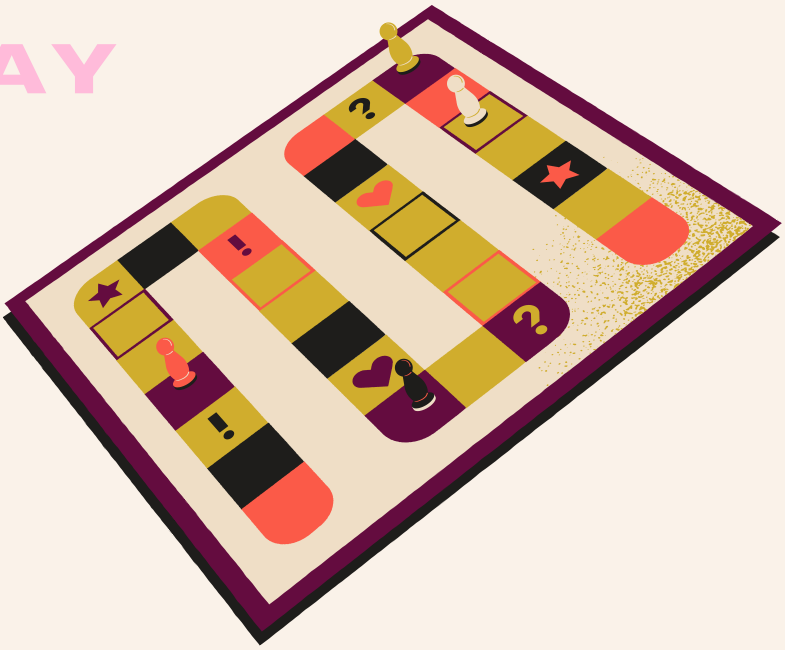
The most useful response is often small and practical. If voice chat creates too much pressure, the educator can allow text chat, observation or a non-speaking role. If competitive modes increase anxiety, the activity can move towards cooperative, creative or slower gameplay. If a routine appears too rigid, the debriefing can explore what happens before and after play, without moralising. If online conflict emerges, the group can work on communication rules, moderation and respectful disagreement. If the learner describes serious distress, loss of control or deep withdrawal, the educator should not try to manage everything alone, but should follow the organisation's safeguarding procedures and involve appropriate support.

What educators should pay attention to, then, is **not gaming as an isolated behaviour**, but **gaming as part of a wider pattern of participation**.

The same digital practice may be supportive, **neutral** or **harmful** depending on how it connects with time, relationships, emotional state, autonomy and everyday life. This is where adult education can work responsibly: not by treating games as symptoms or solutions, but by asking what forms of participation they are making possible, and which ones they may be preventing.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY #1

SMALL STEPS INTO SHARED PLAY



Game
Palia, PowerWash Simulator, Unravel Two, Fall Guys, Lego Fortnite Odyssey.

Educational focus
Low-pressure interaction, confidence-building, observation before action, cooperation, support and social inclusion.

Suggested group
3–6 participants.

Duration
45–75 minutes.

SETTING

In person or online. The activity should **allow different levels of participation**: playing, observing, giving suggestions, managing a small task, supporting another participant or joining after a first watching phase.

BRIEFING

The educator explains that the activity is designed as a gradual entry into shared play. Participants are not expected to perform well, speak immediately or already know the game. **They can start by observing**, following another player, taking a simple role or joining only when they feel ready. **The aim is to make participation accessible before asking for more direct interaction**.

GAMEPLAY TASK

The group enters a short, low-pressure activity where cooperation is useful but not intimidating. In ***PowerWash Simulator***, participants can clean a shared object or area together, dividing zones and moving at a calm rhythm. In ***Unravel Two***, two players coordinate movement and support each other through simple environmental puzzles, while others can observe and suggest solutions. If the educator chooses ***Fall Guys***, the focus should not be ranking, but entering a playful challenge where failure is quick, light and easy to restart. **The task should remain small, predictable and forgiving**. The point is not to win or complete a difficult mission, but to create a situation where participants can enter at different speeds and where the group can notice what helps someone join.

OBSERVATION FOCUS

During the activity, the educator can focus on how participants enter the shared task and how the group makes space for different levels of confidence.

Useful elements to observe:

Who prefers to watch before joining?
Who chooses a small or low-risk task?
Who follows another participant before acting independently?
Who uses gestures, text, movement or suggestions instead of voice?
Who helps others understand what to do?
Does the group allow slower rhythms of participation?
Does anyone seem pushed too quickly into action or exposure?

DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS

After the session, the educator helps the group reflect on what made participation easier, safer or more difficult.

Suggested questions:

Was it useful to start with a simple shared task?
Did everyone have a way to participate?
What helped you understand when and how to join?
Was there a moment when the group made participation easier?
Did anyone feel pressured, rushed or left behind?
What kind of support was useful without becoming intrusive?
How could this activity be adapted for someone joining for the first time?

POSSIBLE ADAPTATIONS

With less confident participants, the first round can include observer roles, shared-screen viewing, text chat or non-speaking forms of participation. The educator can also assign small and calm tasks, such as cleaning one area in ***PowerWash Simulator***, giving suggestions during ***Unravel Two***, or supporting navigation in ***Fall Guys***.
With more confident groups, the educator can slowly add light constraints, such as a time limit, a shared objective or the need to help a new participant enter the activity. **Competitive or ranking-based modes should be avoided here, because the focus is access to participation, not performance**.

REPLICATION NOTE

This activity can be adapted whenever the **educational goal is to make participation more gradual and less exposed**. The specific game can change, but the structure should keep the same progression: first allowing participants to observe, then offering a small and manageable role, and only later inviting more direct interaction. **The activity is especially useful with groups where confidence, social anxiety or uneven digital skills may make immediate participation difficult**.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY #2

MAPPING DIGITAL ROUTINES AND INTERACTIONS





Game
Gaming habits, Discord, Twitch, Reddit, live-service games, online communities.

Educational focus
Digital wellbeing, self-awareness, routine mapping, social contact, emotional regulation and gradual participation.

Suggested group
4–10 participants.

Duration
60–75 minutes.

SETTING

The activity can be done in person or online and **does not require direct gameplay**. Participants can use paper, sticky notes, a printed worksheet or a shared digital board to place their routines into the four areas. The educator should choose the format that feels **less exposing for the group**, allowing individual reflection before any shared discussion.

BRIEFING

The educator explains that the activity is not about judging how much participants play or use digital spaces. The aim is to **look at digital routines more clearly**: which ones support contact, calm, learning or belonging, and which ones may create pressure, fatigue or isolation.

GAMEPLAY TASK

Participants map their usual gaming or digital routines across four areas:

Contact — spaces where they meet, talk, cooperate or feel recognised.
Calm — activities that help them relax, regulate emotions or keep a routine.
Pressure — activities that create stress, comparison, FOMO, ranking anxiety or conflict.
Isolation — routines that may reduce other forms of participation or become difficult to interrupt.

They can write specific games, platforms, habits or situations: “daily quests”, “watching Twitch before sleeping”, “Discord voice chat”, “ranked matches”, “mobile games during breaks”, “Reddit guides”, “single-player game after work”.

OBSERVATION FOCUS

During the activity, the educator can focus on how participants describe the role of digital routines in their everyday life, without asking them to disclose private profiles, chats or personal content.

Useful elements to observe:

Which routines are described as calming or supportive?
Which routines are connected to contact, recognition or belonging?
Which activities create pressure, comparison or fear of missing out?
Are there digital spaces that feel difficult to leave or interrupt?
Do participants distinguish between being online and feeling connected?
Do some routines support learning, language practice or confidence?
Are there small changes that participants identify as realistic?

DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS

After the mapping exercise, the educator helps the group reflect on the quality of their digital participation, not only on the amount of time spent online.

Suggested questions:

Which digital routine supports you the most?
Is there a space where you feel recognised or expected by others?
Which activity gives you energy, and which one takes energy away?
Is there a routine that becomes difficult to stop or negotiate?
What is the difference between being connected and feeling less isolated?
Could one online contact, habit or interest become a bridge towards another activity?

POSSIBLE ADAPTATIONS

With participants who may feel exposed, the mapping can be done anonymously or **using fictional examples instead of personal routines**. The educator can prepare cards with common digital habits, such as “watching streams”, “daily quests”, “Discord chat”, “ranked matches”, “mobile games before sleep” or “Reddit guides”, and ask the group to place them in the four areas without referring directly to themselves.
With more confident groups, participants can **create a personal map and then choose one element to discuss in pairs or small groups**. The focus should remain on patterns, boundaries and possible adjustments, not on judging specific games, platforms or amounts of screen time.

REPLICATION NOTE

This activity can be reused whenever the educational goal is **to connect digital wellbeing with everyday participation**. It does not require direct gameplay, which makes it suitable for groups with different levels of gaming experience. **What should remain stable is the reflective structure**: mapping routines, identifying what supports or drains participation, and choosing one small adjustment that can make digital life more balanced and connected.

DEBRIEFING, BOUNDARIES AND EDUCATOR CHECKLIST

Keeping the activity safe, useful and proportionate

At the end of an activity on gaming, anxiety and social isolation, the debriefing should help participants make sense of the experience without turning the discussion into an unwanted personal disclosure.
The educator can keep the conversation close to what was done, seen and felt during the activity, then gradually move towards broader reflections on participation, routine and support.

General debriefing questions

What made it easier to enter the activity?

Was there a moment when participating felt more manageable?

Which forms of participation were possible besides speaking or playing directly?

Did the activity create contact, calm, pressure, fatigue or something else?

Was there a digital routine or space that appeared supportive?

Was there a routine that seemed too demanding, repetitive or hard to interrupt?

What kind of support helped without feeling intrusive?

What small adjustment could make participation easier next time?

The educator should avoid questions that push participants to explain their isolation, anxiety or private online life in front of the group. **The focus should remain on the activity**, **the conditions of participation and the quality of the digital routine**, not on personal diagnosis or confession.

A safer discussion asks:

What helped you take part?

What made the task easier or harder?

What kind of participation felt possible?

A less appropriate discussion asks:

Why are you isolated?

Why do you avoid people?

Why do you play so much?

Boundaries are also practical: activities should have a clear duration, a clear communication channel and an exit option for participants who feel overloaded. If a learner describes serious distress, loss of control, self-neglect, harassment, or a level of withdrawal that goes beyond the educational setting, the educator should not manage it alone and should follow the organisation's safeguarding or referral procedures.

SHORT EDUCATOR CHECKLIST

Before the activity

Is the chosen game or mapping task emotionally accessible for this group?

Does the activity allow gradual entry, observation or non-speaking roles?

Have time limits, communication rules and opt-out options been explained?

Is the activity low-pressure enough for participants with anxiety, low confidence or limited gaming experience?

Have I avoided competitive or ranking-based formats if the group is not ready for them?

During the activity

Is anyone becoming overloaded, rushed or exposed too quickly?

Are participants able to take part in different ways: watching, mapping, suggesting, playing, writing, supporting?

Is the group respecting different rhythms of participation?

Are online or in-game interactions remaining respectful and contained? Do I need to slow down, simplify the task or offer an alternative role?

After the activity

Have participants been able to speak about the experience without being pushed into personal disclosure?

Did the debriefing focus on conditions of participation rather than on judging habits?

Have we identified one small change, support or boundary that could help future participation?

Is there any sign that the situation requires support beyond the activity?

Can this format be adapted to a calmer, safer or more accessible version for another group?

TOOLS AND SPACES OF VIDEOGAME EDUCATION



01.

This chapter focuses on the practical conditions that make videogame-based education possible. A game does not become educational only because it is interesting or popular: it needs to be placed inside a clear setting, with a defined purpose, an accessible format, realistic timing and a group that understands how the activity will work.

02. PLATFORMS, ACCESS AND SAFETY

The chapter will explore the **practical elements** that make a session possible: **devices**, **accounts**, **internet connection**, **cross-play**, **free** or **low-cost games**, installation time, accessibility, voice chat, text chat and online platforms.
Particular attention is given to **privacy**, **moderation** and **digital safety**, because a videogame-based activity should not expose participants to unnecessary technical, social or emotional risks.

03. PREPARING A PLAYABLE EDUCATIONAL SPACE

The final aim is to help educators prepare spaces where participants can actually **play**, **observe**, **communicate** and **reflect** without being blocked by technical confusion or **unnecessary exposure**. The final aim is to help educators prepare **activities that are realistic**, **accessible** and **replicable**. This means checking the technical setup before the session, choosing the right game for the right group, defining clear communication rules, offering alternative roles for non-players and preparing a simple plan B when devices, accounts or connectivity do not work as expected.

FROM GAME CHOICE TO EDUCATIONAL SETTING

Selecting the game as part of the educational design

In videogame-based education, **the choice of the game is already part of the educational design**. A facilitator may know a title very well, enjoy it personally or consider it culturally relevant, but these elements are **not enough to make it suitable for a specific learning activity**. What matters is the kind of situation that the game can realistically create with a given group, in a given space, within a given time frame and with a certain level of digital confidence.

This is particularly important because commercial video games are not built around the needs of educators. They are designed to entertain, challenge, retain players, sustain communities, offer progression systems, sell additional content or support long-term engagement. On the other hand, none of this prevents them from being used in educational contexts, but **it does mean that the educator has to select and frame them with care**. A game can be well designed, popular and meaningful for many players, while still being unsuitable for a specific educational session because it is too long, too competitive, too expensive, too dependent on voice chat, too difficult to install, too fast for beginners or too complex to explain within the available time.

The starting point should therefore be the educational objective. If the aim is to **work on cooperation**, the game should create a situation in which coordination is actually needed and visible. If the aim is **gradual participation**, it should allow observation, low-risk roles and different speeds of entry. If the focus is **perspective-taking**, **emotional intelligence** or **civic awareness**, the game should offer characters, roles, choices, dilemmas or social situations that can be discussed afterwards.

If the purpose is **digital confidence**, the game should not overwhelm participants with complicated menus, account procedures, updates, controls or competitive pressure before the activity has even begun.

The same title can also produce very different educational effects depending on the group. A **competitive game** may support communication, planning and strategic thinking with confident participants, while creating pressure or exclusion with a group that has low digital confidence, uneven gaming experience or social anxiety. A **slow simulation game** may feel accessible and calming for some learners, but unclear or unmotivating for others. A **narrative game** may support reflection, but it may also require language skills, reading stamina, emotional readiness or familiarity with certain storytelling conventions. **For this reason, game choice should be connected not only to the educational theme, but also to the learners' biographies, habits and conditions of participation**.

In adult education, this means looking at the practical and cultural conditions that shape access:

Are participants already familiar with games, or is the activity their first structured encounter with gaming?
Do they usually play on mobile, console or PC?
Are they comfortable with English-language interfaces?
Can they create accounts safely, or would that create unnecessary barriers?
Do they have access to devices and a stable connection?
Will the activity take place in a classroom, a community centre, an online meeting, a blended setting or an informal space?
Will participants play directly, observe, discuss a gameplay clip, analyse a character, or take part through a shared screen?

These may look like technical questions, but they are educational questions because they determine who can actually participate and in what way.

Accessibility should also be understood broadly. It is not only a matter of disability access, although this remains essential. It also concerns **digital inclusion** in a wider sense: cost, device availability, connection quality, installation time, account creation, language, interface complexity, controller familiarity, sensory load, exposure to other players and the possibility of participating without playing immediately.

Social inclusion today is also shaped by digital environments, and an activity that ignores these barriers risks reproducing exclusion inside the very space that was meant to reduce it. A free-to-play game may seem accessible because there is no initial purchase, but it may still include monetisation systems, complex progression, online risks or long onboarding. A paid game may be less accessible economically, but easier to manage in a controlled workshop. The educator therefore has to look at the whole setting, not only at the price of the game.

Duration is another key criterion. Many games are built around long-term progression, daily routines, complex systems or repeated sessions, while educational activities often need to work within 45, 60 or 90 minutes. This does not exclude longer or more complex games, but it requires the educator to **select a limited and meaningful segment**: one mission, one round, one building task, one character creation phase, one short cooperative challenge, one narrative choice or one guided observation.

In a workshop, the educational unit is not necessarily the entire game; it is the specific situation extracted from the game and framed for learning.

The level of exposure also needs attention. Some games immediately ask players to speak in voice chat, react quickly, enter public matchmaking, accept rankings, show performance or make mistakes in front of others. Other games allow slower interaction, text communication, private sessions, shared observation, creative tasks or roles with less pressure. When working with beginners, vulnerable participants or groups with uneven confidence, **the educator should not assume that playing together is automatically inclusive**. A participant may need to watch first, manage a secondary task, use text instead of voice, or enter the activity only after the group has understood the basic rhythm.

A practical selection process can begin with a few questions: what is the educational purpose of the activity, what kind of interaction does this game produce, what barriers may appear, how much exposure does it require, how much preparation is needed, and what kind of debriefing can follow?

If these elements do not align, the educator does not necessarily need to abandon the topic. **The same educational focus may be approached through a gameplay video, a screenshot, a character discussion, a group analysis of a gaming community or a simplified non-playing activity**.

Moving from game choice to educational setting means treating the game as one component of a wider learning situation. Around it there must be a purpose, a group, a space, a time frame, access conditions, communication rules, safety boundaries and a moment of reflection. When these elements are missing, even a very interesting game may remain only entertainment or become difficult to manage; when they are prepared with care, even a short and simple game sequence can become a usable educational setting.

PHYSICAL, ONLINE AND BLENDED SPACES

Designing the environment around the activity

Once the game has been selected, the educator still has to decide where and how the activity will actually take place. In videogame-based education, **the "space" is never only the physical room or the online platform**. It is the whole environment in which participants access the game, communicate, observe, take roles, ask for help and later reflect on what happened. A session can fail not because the game was inappropriate, but because the space around it was unclear: devices were not ready, accounts did not work, voice chat created pressure, participants did not know whether they were expected to play or observe, or the educator had no clear way to manage the group.

A physical setting, such as a classroom, a youth centre, a library room, a community space or a training lab, may seem easier to control because the educator and participants share the same place. This is often true. The facilitator can read the room, notice confusion, support beginners, divide participants into small groups, manage devices and pause the activity when needed. **At the same time, in-person videogame activities require very practical preparation**: enough screens, stable internet, power sockets, controllers or keyboards, accounts already tested, sufficient space around devices, and a layout that allows both play and observation. If four participants are playing while others are watching, the observers need a clear role; otherwise, they may quickly become passive or excluded.

Online settings create different possibilities and different problems. They may be more accessible for participants who live far away, have mobility constraints, feel more comfortable at home or already use online communities as part of their everyday life.

They also allow activities based on ***Discord***, **voice chat**, **shared screens**, **online co-op**, **streaming**, **collaborative whiteboards** or **digital worksheets**. However, online sessions require stronger rules and clearer facilitation. Participants need to know which platform is being used, whether microphones are required, whether cameras are expected, how to ask for help, what happens if someone disconnects, and what kind of behaviour is acceptable in chat or voice communication. Without these rules, the online space can become confusing very quickly.

A blended setting sits between these two formats. Some participants may be in the same room while others join remotely; some may play directly while others observe through a shared screen; one small group may use the game, while another works on a worksheet, a debriefing grid or a reflection task. Blended formats can be useful, but they are also demanding because the educator has to avoid creating two different levels of participation: the "real" group in the room and the remote participants who only watch from the margins. If a blended format is used, remote participants should have a clear role from the beginning, such as observer, note-taker, map reader, discussion lead, chat moderator or debriefing reporter.

The choice between physical, online and blended space should therefore depend on the educational aim and on the group's conditions. If the objective is **to introduce beginners to gaming** in a protected way, an in-person setting may be better because the educator can provide immediate support. If the aim is **to explore online belonging**, **digital communities** or **voice-based cooperation**, an online setting may be more coherent. If the group has very uneven levels of confidence, a blended or shared-screen format may allow some participants to observe before playing directly. In all cases, the setting should reduce unnecessary barriers rather than adding new ones.

Communication is one of the most important design choices. Voice chat can make cooperation faster and more natural, but it also increases exposure: participants may feel judged for their voice, accent, language level, hesitation or lack of gaming vocabulary. Text chat is slower, but may feel safer for some groups and allows more time to think. **Shared screen activities reduce the need for each participant to manage a device, but they may concentrate control in the hands of one player**. ***Discord* servers** can support continuity before and after the session, but they also require moderation, rules and attention to privacy. There is no universally correct option; **the educator has to choose the communication channel that fits the group's confidence, language skills, social comfort and digital habits**.

Non-playing roles are also part of the space. In a videogame-based activity, participation does not have to mean that every person plays directly from the first minute. A participant can observe, take notes, manage time, read instructions, support a beginner, follow the chat, suggest strategies, document the process or lead the debriefing. **This is especially important when working with adults who are digitally insecure**, anxious, tired, **unfamiliar with games** or reluctant to be exposed in front of others. Non-playing roles should not be treated as secondary or remedial; if they are designed clearly, they can become legitimate forms of participation. **The physical arrangement of the room matters as well**. If participants are placed in rows, the activity may feel like a presentation rather than a shared experience. If all attention is on one screen, the educator should decide whether the group is watching, analysing, suggesting or waiting for their turn. If participants are divided into small groups, each group needs enough autonomy to play, but also enough structure to avoid confusion. **Even small details can affect inclusion**: whether people can see the screen, hear instructions, reach the device, sit comfortably, step back if they feel overloaded, or ask for help without feeling embarrassed.

For online and blended spaces, a similar logic applies. A ***Discord* server**, a **video call**, a **game lobby** or a shared whiteboard should be treated as educational spaces, not as neutral containers. They need entry rules, communication norms, roles, time limits and a clear exit point. Participants should know whether the space will remain active after the session, who moderates it, whether private messages are allowed, whether screenshots can be taken, and how to report discomfort or inappropriate behaviour. These details are not bureaucratic additions; they shape the safety and quality of participation.

In practice, **designing the space means asking what kind of participation the environment makes easier or harder**. Does the room allow small-group support? Does the online platform allow quiet participants to contribute? Does the communication channel expose people too quickly? Is observation possible without shame? Can the educator intervene without interrupting everything? Are participants able to leave, pause or change role if needed?

These questions help educators move from a generic idea of "playing together" to a more precise design of the learning environment.

A videogame-based space does not depend only on the game selected, but on the way the whole situation is prepared around it. The same title may work very differently depending on the room, the devices, the communication channel, the group size, the role of observers, the possibility of asking for help, the time available and the rules agreed before starting. For this reason, preparing the space means making the activity understandable and manageable before play begins: participants should know where they are, what they are expected to do, how they can take part, how they can step back if needed and how the experience will be discussed afterwards.

DEVICES, PLATFORMS AND ACCESSIBILITY

Access conditions before the activity starts

Before a videogame-based activity can become educational, it has to become practically accessible. This may sound obvious, but it is often the point where a session starts to lose clarity: the game has not been installed, the account requires verification, the controller is unfamiliar, the connection is unstable, the interface is in English, the device cannot run the selected title, or participants simply do not know where the activity actually begins. These issues may appear secondary when compared with the educational objective, yet they determine whether the group can enter the experience without embarrassment, delay or unnecessary frustration.

For this reason, **devices and platforms should be considered part of the educational setting itself**. Playing on PC, console or mobile does not create the same conditions of access. PC gaming may offer flexibility, screen sharing, free titles, keyboard-and-mouse controls and easier use of external tools, but it also requires attention to hardware requirements, installations, updates, accounts and uneven levels of digital competence. Consoles can be more stable and immediate once prepared, especially in a shared room, but they depend on controllers, subscriptions, local accounts, screen availability and the number of participants who can play at the same time. Mobile games may feel familiar to many adults and young adults, but they introduce other questions: personal devices, battery, notifications, privacy, monetisation, operating systems and possible differences between phones.

The educator does not need to become a technician, but the activity should not begin with a long chain of avoidable obstacles. In a workshop, a few minutes spent creating accounts, resetting passwords, downloading updates or pairing controllers can easily expand and take over the session; for participants with low digital confidence, this can also create the impression that the activity is already too difficult before the educational work has started. A useful preparation principle is to test the full access chain beforehand: device, connection, account, game version, controller, audio, screen, communication channel, login procedure and any safety or privacy setting likely to appear during the session.

The word "account" deserves particular attention. Many commercial games require email verification, age confirmation, platform login, two-factor authentication or connection to external services, and in an educational setting this is never a purely technical step. Asking participants to use personal accounts may expose usernames, friend lists, purchase history, playtime, messages, achievements or other elements of their private digital identity. When possible, it is safer to use dedicated accounts managed by the organisation, guest access, local modes, shared devices, or activities based on screenshots and gameplay clips. **If personal accounts are unavoidable, participants should know this in advance and should not be pressured to show profiles, contacts or online histories**.

Economic accessibility is another part of the same issue. A title may be educationally promising but unrealistic if every participant has to buy it, install it and create an account before the session. **Free-to-play games** can reduce the initial cost and are therefore attractive in **Erasmus+** and **non-formal education contexts**, but "free" does not automatically mean accessible, simple or appropriate.

Some free games are built around **microtransactions**, **loot boxes**, **gacha mechanics**, **battle passes**, **advertising**, **limited-time rewards**, **complex progression systems** or **retention strategies** that encourage repeated login. Conversely, a low-cost or already available paid game may sometimes be easier to manage in a controlled workshop. The relevant question is not only whether the game costs money, but **what type of access, monetisation and platform culture it brings into the educational space**.

Several additional keywords help educators read access more precisely. **Cross-play**, for example, can be useful when participants use different devices, since it allows PC, console and mobile players to join the same session; however, it may also create inequalities in controls, performance and communication. A mobile player may have less precision than a PC player, a console player may struggle with text chat, and someone using an older laptop may experience lag that affects their role in the group. These differences should be anticipated, because they can easily be mistaken for lack of skill, attention or motivation.
Interface and control are equally important. Some participants may be familiar with touchscreens but not with keyboard and mouse, while others may have used a console controller but never navigated a PC game launcher.

Even basic gaming conventions can be difficult for beginners: inventories, quest markers, health bars, maps, matchmaking screens, settings menus, lobby invitations, role selection. **A facilitator who already knows the game may underestimate how much silent knowledge is required before play begins**. For a new player, instructions such as “open the map”, “join the lobby” or “accept the invite” may already form a demanding sequence.

Language can either support or obstruct the activity. Many commercial games use English interfaces or English gaming terminology even when partly translated, and this can be useful when the educational aim includes language exposure, vocabulary, intercultural communication or informal English practice. If the objective is different, however, language can become an unnecessary barrier. **In adult education, where participants may have very different language biographies, the educator should decide whether English-language menus, voice chat, subtitles or written instructions help the session or make it harder to follow**. When needed, the activity can include visual instructions, translated keywords, peer support or a simplified task.

Accessibility also includes sensory and cognitive load. A game may be technically accessible because it runs on the available device, but still be pedagogically unsuitable if it is too fast, visually dense, loud, full of notifications, based on constant feedback or difficult to read. For experienced players this may be engaging; for beginners, anxious participants or people with low confidence, attention difficulties or sensory sensitivity, it may become tiring before it becomes educational. In a facilitation setting, accessibility means asking whether participants can understand, tolerate and inhabit the activity, not only whether the software works.

A practical distinction can help: some elements must be ready before the session, while others can be learned during the session. Installation, updates, account access, internet connection, controller pairing, audio settings and lobby creation should normally be prepared in advance unless they are part of the learning objective. Basic navigation, simple controls, role-taking or in-game communication can instead be introduced gradually, provided that the task is small enough and the group is not overloaded. The educator should decide where the educational activity actually begins; if the objective is cooperation, the group should not spend most of its time struggling with login screens.

Finally, access improves when participation is not reduced to direct gameplay. A participant can observe the screen, read instructions, manage time, support another player, take notes, monitor chat, suggest strategies, document the process or contribute during the debriefing. These non-playing roles are not secondary options for those who "cannot play", but part of a broader design that recognises different levels of confidence, readiness and digital competence.

Preparing devices and platforms therefore means reducing avoidable friction before it becomes exclusion. The educator cannot prevent every technical problem, but can limit the predictable ones: untested accounts, missing updates, unavailable controllers, unstable audio, unclear communication channels, games that require too much onboarding, or activities that depend on personal devices without checking whether participants actually have them. This preparation is not separate from pedagogy; it is what allows the group to start from participation rather than from confusion.

COMMUNICATION TOOLS AND COMMUNITY SPACES

Voice, chat and community platforms in practice

Once the activity has a game, a setting and the necessary devices, **the educator still has to decide how participants will communicate**. This is not a minor organisational detail. In many videogame-based activities, the communication channel strongly shapes the experience itself: a voice chat can make cooperation faster but more exposing; a text chat can slow the rhythm but give participants more time; a shared screen can reduce technical barriers but also concentrate control in one person; a Discord server can support continuity, but only if it is moderated and clearly framed as part of the educational setting.

The first choice is usually between voice communication, text communication and facilitated discussion outside the game. Voice chat is useful when the activity requires quick coordination, as in cooperative missions, team-based games or time-sensitive tasks. It can help participants feel that they are "in the same room", even when they are online. **At the same time, it is also one of the most exposing tools**: participants may feel judged for their voice, accent, hesitation, language level, background noise, lack of gaming vocabulary or slower reaction time. For this reason, voice chat should not be treated as the default option with every group. It works best when the group is ready for it, when the rules of communication are clear, and when participants have alternatives if speaking becomes too much.

Text chat has a different educational value. It is slower, less immediate and sometimes less efficient for gameplay, but it can be more accessible for participants who need time to formulate a response, who are less confident speaking in a group, or who prefer not to expose their voice. It also leaves traces that can be used for reflection, provided that privacy is respected. In a low-pressure activity, text chat may be enough to coordinate small tasks, ask for help, share instructions or react to what is happening. **The educator should therefore ask what kind of communication the activity actually needs, rather than assuming that "better communication" always means faster or more direct communication**.
A shared screen can be useful when the objective is observation, analysis or gradual entry into play. Instead of asking every participant to install the game and manage controls, one player or the educator can share the screen while the group observes, suggests actions, reads the interface, discusses choices or prepares the debriefing. This format is especially useful with beginners, with groups that have uneven access to devices, or when the selected game is too complex to be played directly by everyone. The limitation is that shared-screen activities can easily become passive if roles are not assigned: observers need a task, such as noting decisions, identifying communication patterns, tracking difficulties, suggesting strategies or preparing questions for the final discussion.

***Discord* deserves specific attention because it is often the platform that educators encounter when they enter gaming communities**. It can host text channels, voice rooms, announcements, resources, event planning, rules and ongoing group communication. In an educational project, however, a *Discord* server should not simply be opened and left to run by itself.

If used, it needs a clear purpose: is it only for one session, for preparation, for sharing materials, for group discussion, for technical support, or for continuity after the activity? It also needs moderation rules, defined roles, privacy boundaries, and a decision on whether participants are allowed to contact each other privately through the platform. Without this frame, the same tool that supports community can become confusing, exclusionary or too exposed for some participants.
Community platforms such as ***Reddit***, **forums**, **fan wikis** or **game-specific communities** can also be used educationally, but usually as objects of observation rather than as spaces where learners are immediately asked to participate. A group may analyse how a subreddit explains a game mechanic, how a fan wiki organises collective knowledge, how players ask for help, or how a community responds to beginners. This can support media literacy, digital citizenship and informal learning without pushing participants into public interaction. **Asking learners to post, comment or disclose personal accounts should be avoided unless there is a clear educational reason, informed consent and an appropriate safeguarding framework**.
Streaming platforms, especially ***Twitch*** and ***YouTube Live***, require similar caution. Watching a livestream can be useful when the educator wants to discuss spectatorship, parasocial interaction, online communities, chat behaviour, moderation, language exposure or the social meaning of watching games rather than playing them. It can also be a low-threshold way to introduce a title before asking participants to play. However, live chat is unpredictable, and the educator cannot fully control what appears on screen, how the streamer behaves, or what the community writes.

For educational purposes, it is often safer to use selected clips, recorded gameplay or a moderated viewing task instead of relying on an open live environment.

The general principle is that communication tools should be chosen according to the level of exposure the group can reasonably manage. A confident group may work well with voice chat and live cooperation; a mixed group may need text chat, observers and shared-screen moments; a vulnerable group may benefit from asynchronous tasks, pre-selected clips or activities where speaking is optional.
The educator should decide in advance what participants are expected to do: speak, write, listen, observe, react, take notes, moderate, support, or simply follow the activity. When expectations are unclear, communication tools easily become another source of anxiety.

Moderation is part of this design. Before the activity begins, participants should know which behaviours are acceptable and which are not: insults, discriminatory language, unwanted private messages, recording without consent, pressure to speak, jokes about skill level, exclusion of beginners or sharing of personal information should be clearly addressed. This does not need to become a long legal briefing, but the group should understand that online and in-game communication is still communication inside an educational space. The same standards of respect, inclusion and safeguarding apply, even if the interaction happens through avatars, usernames or chat messages.

In practical terms, the educator can prepare communication in layers. The first layer is the minimum channel needed to run the activity: for example, voice chat for a cooperative mission, text chat for a slower task, or shared screen for observation.

The second layer is the support channel: where participants ask for help if something does not work. The third layer is the reflective channel: where the group discusses the experience afterwards.

These layers do not always need different tools, but they should be conceptually distinct. A game lobby, a *Discord* voice room and a debriefing conversation do not serve the same function, even if they happen in the same session.

A careful use of communication tools helps prevent unnecessary exposure. Participants should not be required to use personal assets, show private profiles, enter public servers, speak in open voice channels, or remain in community spaces after the session unless this has been clearly discussed. Where possible, the educator should use closed groups, temporary channels, organisation-managed accounts, pre-selected materials and clear exit points. The question is not only how to make communication possible, but how to make it proportionate to the educational aim.

SAFETY, PRIVACY AND MODERATION

Basic rules for protected participation

When a videogame-based activity uses online platforms, personal accounts, voice chat, screenshots, public lobbies or community spaces, safety has to be prepared before the session begins. This does not mean turning a short educational workshop into a bureaucratic procedure, but recognising that **digital interaction involves personal data, visibility, group behaviour and possible exposure**. A setting may be educational in intention, but if participants are asked to enter an unmanaged online space, show their personal profile, speak in voice chat or interact with unknown players without clear boundaries, the activity can quickly move beyond what the educator is able to facilitate responsibly.

A first area of attention concerns identity and accounts. Many games and platforms are built around usernames, avatars, profiles, achievements, playtime, friend lists, purchase history, chat logs and visible online status. For experienced players these elements may feel ordinary, but in an educational setting they can reveal more than participants intend to share. **A username may be connected to other platforms, a profile may show previous activity, a friend list may expose personal relationships, and an account history may include purchases or long-term gaming habits**. For this reason, when the activity allows it, it is usually safer to use organisation-managed accounts, shared devices, local modes, guest access, selected clips, screenshots or guided observation instead of asking learners to use their personal profiles. **If personal accounts are necessary, this should be communicated before the session, together with a clear explanation of what will be visible to others**.

Nicknames are part of the same issue, because they sit between anonymity and identity. A nickname can be playful, habitual or protective, but it can also contain personal information, offensive references, inside jokes, links to other online spaces or elements that the participant does not want to expose in an educational group. In a short activity, temporary display names or names agreed specifically for the session can reduce this problem. **The aim is not to erase the participant's gaming identity, but to avoid making exposure a hidden requirement for taking part**.

The same care is needed with screenshots, recordings and streaming. In several non-formal education activities, documentation is often necessary, yet a game screenshot can contain usernames, chat messages, avatars, notifications, overlays, server names or other information that is not immediately obvious. Before capturing or sharing any image, the educator should clarify what is being documented, where the material will be stored, whether it will be used for dissemination and how participants can opt out. Recording voice chat or streaming a live session should remain exceptional, because it increases exposure and makes moderation more difficult; if it is used, the reason, consent procedure and storage rules should be explicit.

Voice chat requires particular caution because it exposes more than words. It can reveal accent, hesitation, language level, emotional reactions, background noise and sometimes parts of a participant's home or personal context. It can make cooperation faster and more natural, but it can also create pressure for people who are shy, anxious, less confident in the language of the activity or uncomfortable with speaking in a group.

When the same educational objective can be reached through text chat, emotes, gestures, shared screen, observation or a non-speaking role, **voice should not be imposed as the only legitimate way to participate**. If it is used, the group needs simple rules from the beginning: no insults, no mocking of voices or mistakes, no recording, no pressure to speak, and no private contact outside the agreed educational space.

Moderation should be understood as part of the setting, not as an emergency reaction after something has already gone wrong. Before the activity starts, the educator should know who can speak, write, share links, invite others, open private conversations, use voice rooms, change channels or remain in the digital space after the session. In a ***Discord*** server, this may mean using roles and permissions to keep the space readable: one channel for announcements, one for technical support, one for the activity, one for debriefing. In a game lobby, it may mean avoiding public matchmaking and keeping the group inside a private session. In a shared chat, it means knowing how to remove messages, mute participants or pause the activity if behaviour becomes inappropriate.

Behavioural rules should be ordinary, explicit and proportionate. **Gaming contexts sometimes normalise insults, competitive banter, irony, blaming or exclusionary jokes as part of "how people play", but an educational space cannot simply inherit those norms**. Participants should understand that discriminatory language, harassment, unwanted private messages, pressure to reveal accounts, mocking beginners, blaming slower players or excluding someone because of skill level are not part of the activity. This does not mean making play artificial or humourless; it means **setting a difference between playful interaction and behaviour that damages participation**.

Privacy also continues after the session. If the activity uses chat groups, shared platforms or game lobbies, the educator should decide whether that space remains open, who moderates it, whether participants can contact each other afterwards and whether follow-up communication should remain inside official educational channels. **This is especially important with vulnerable adults, young adults with low confidence or participants who may feel pressure to remain available online**. In many cases, temporary channels or closed groups are safer than spaces left open without a clear purpose.

Public and private spaces should also be distinguished carefully. Open lobbies, public servers, live ***Twitch*** chats, public ***Reddit*** threads or unmoderated multiplayer environments are difficult to control and may expose participants to strangers, harassment, scams, advertising, spoilers, unpredictable language or content unrelated to the educational aim. This does not mean that public digital spaces cannot be discussed. Often, the safer option is to use them as objects of analysis rather than spaces of direct participation: a group can examine a screenshot, a selected clip, a community guideline, a moderation policy or a recorded example without being sent into an uncontrolled environment.

Safety, in this framework, is not the attempt to eliminate every possible risk. It is the work of making risk visible, proportionate and manageable.

Participants should know where the activity begins and ends, who moderates it, what to do if they feel uncomfortable, how they can step back, and which parts of their digital identity are or are not involved.

These points can be explained in plain language: participants can observe before playing, they do not need to use a personal account unless this has been agreed, the session will not be recorded without consent, and discomfort can be reported to the facilitator.

For most small-scale videogame-based activities, a minimal safety protocol is enough if it is actually used. It should cover account use, consent for images, communication rules, moderation responsibilities, inappropriate behaviour, and what happens if a participant reports discomfort, harassment or exposure. The protocol does not need to be long, but it should exist before the session begins, because improvising safety rules after a problem has already appeared usually leaves both the educator and participants in a weaker position.
Privacy and moderation are therefore part of what makes the activity educationally possible. Clear boundaries do not reduce participation; they protect it. Participants can explore, play, observe, communicate and reflect with more confidence when they know how visible they are, what is expected from them, who is moderating the space and how they can step back if needed. In this sense, safety is not an external constraint on videogame-based education, but one of the conditions that allows the group to use digital spaces without losing trust, clarity or educational purpose.

Privacy and moderation should be treated as part of the activity design, not as additional rules added at the end.
When participants know which parts of their digital identity are visible, which behaviours are expected, who is moderating the space and how they can step back if needed, the session becomes easier to inhabit and to facilitate. Clear boundaries make it possible to use digital spaces without leaving participants exposed, confused or dependent on improvised decisions during the activity.

PREPARING THE SESSION: TECHNICAL AND EDUCATIONAL CHECKLIST

Before the activity begins

After choosing the game, defining the setting and clarifying the communication and safety rules, **the educator needs a final preparation step**. This is not only a technical check, and it is not only an educational plan. In videogame-based facilitation, the two dimensions are closely connected: if the account does not work, if the group does not understand the objective, if the voice channel is unclear or if no one knows what to do when the game crashes, the educational focus quickly disappears behind practical confusion.

For this reason, **the preparation of the session should be treated as a short but deliberate process**. The educator does not need to control every possible variable, but should reduce the predictable sources of friction and decide in advance where the learning activity actually starts. If the aim is **to observe cooperation**, participants should not spend half of the session creating accounts. If the aim is **perspective-taking**, the selected sequence should be ready to use. If the aim is gradual participation, non-playing roles and alternative ways to join should already be clear before the group begins.

A useful way to prepare is to distinguish between three levels: what must be ready before the session, what has to be explained at the beginning, and what can be adjusted during the activity. The table below can be used as a practical planning tool.

Preparation area	What to check	Why it matters
Educational focus	Define the main aim: cooperation, participation, digital confidence, perspective-taking, routine mapping, communication or another specific objective.	The game should serve the activity, not absorb it.
Game segment	Select a specific mission, round, scene, task, lobby, character creation phase or clip.	The educational unit is usually a small playable situation, not the whole game.
Devices and access	Test devices, controllers, screen, audio, connection, updates, accounts and login procedures.	Technical friction can exclude participants before the activity starts.
Communication channel	Decide whether the group will use voice chat, text chat, shared screen, in-room discussion or a combination of tools.	The channel determines the level of exposure and the rhythm of cooperation.
Participant roles	Clarify who plays, who observes, who supports, who takes notes, who manages time or who joins later.	Participation should not depend only on direct gameplay.
Time structure	Define briefing, gameplay, pause, debriefing and closing time.	A clear rhythm helps the educator avoid rushing the reflective part.
Safety and privacy	Check account visibility, screenshots, recording, nicknames, public/private spaces and opt-out options.	Participants should know how visible they are and how they can step back.
Backup plan	Prepare a fallback: gameplay clip, screenshot, discussion task, offline exercise or simplified activity.	A technical problem should not cancel the educational session.

This checklist should not be used as a rigid administrative form. Its purpose is to help the educator keep the session realistic. In many cases, the best activity is not the most ambitious one, but the one that can actually be played, observed and discussed within the available time and with the devices, confidence and attention that the group really has.

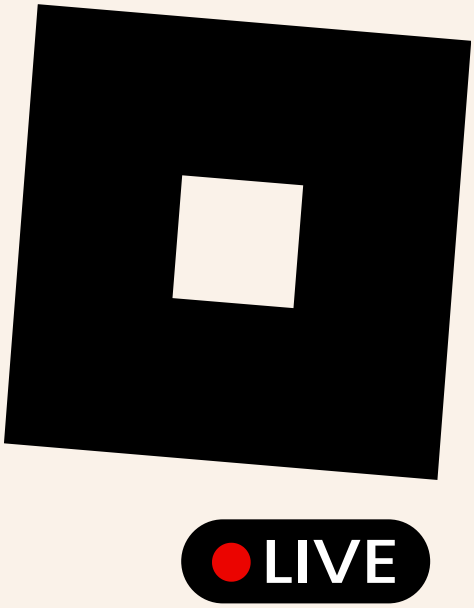
The briefing should also remain clear and proportionate. Participants need to know what the activity is about, how long it will last, what they are expected to do, which communication channel will be used, what counts as respectful behaviour and how the final discussion will work. They do not need a long technical introduction, nor a full explanation of the game's lore, mechanics or history. The educator should give only the information needed to enter the task safely and meaningfully.

The same applies to the backup plan. A videogame-based session should not collapse if the game does not load or if one participant cannot access the platform. A short gameplay video, a screenshot, a character screen, a printed map, a group discussion on a game situation or an observation worksheet can preserve the educational objective even when direct play is not possible.

This is especially important in adult education contexts, where time is limited and participants may not have the patience or confidence to wait through long technical troubleshooting. Preparing the session, then, means making the educational situation robust enough to survive ordinary problems. A controller may disconnect, a password may fail, a participant may prefer not to speak, or the group may need more time than expected. **If the structure is clear, these events can be managed without losing the purpose of the activity**. The educator's task is not to deliver a perfect gaming session, but to create conditions in which play, observation and reflection can still happen.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY #1

SETTING UP A SAFE CO-PLAY SPACE



Game

A controlled co-play setting using a private Roblox experience, Palia, Fall Guys, or a moderated Discord server.

Educational focus

Designing a safe co-play setting with clear access, roles, privacy and backup options.

Suggested group

4–12 educators or facilitators.

Duration

60–90 minutes.

SETTING

In person or online. The activity can be done with a printed planning sheet, a shared document, a digital whiteboard or a slide template.
Direct gameplay is not required, although educators may work on a real game they intend to use later.

BRIEFING

The educator-trainer explains that the aim is **to design the conditions around a videogame-based activity before focusing on the game itself**. Participants are invited to think like facilitators: what needs to be prepared so that the group can enter the activity without confusion, unnecessary exposure or technical barriers?

GAMEPLAY TASK

Participants work individually or in small groups and **choose a game or digital activity they would like to use with a target group**. They then complete a co-play space plan, defining the basic educational objective, the format, the devices needed, the communication channel, the roles, the privacy rules and the moderation arrangements. The plan should answer a few concrete design questions: **where** will the activity happen, **who** will play, **who** can observe, **how** participants will communicate, **whether** personal accounts are needed, **what** will be visible to others, and how the educator will intervene if something becomes confusing or inappropriate. The focus is the creation of a space where participation is possible, proportionate and safe.

OBSERVATION FOCUS

During the activity, the educator-trainer can focus on how participants translate safety and accessibility into concrete design choices, rather than treating them as general principles.

Useful elements to observe:

Do participants define clearly who will play, observe, support or moderate?
Do they identify possible access barriers before the session begins?
Do they consider whether personal accounts, nicknames or profiles will be visible?
Do they choose a communication channel that fits the group's confidence level?
Do they prepare a role for participants who do not want to play immediately?
Do they include a clear rule for screenshots, recordings or external sharing?

DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS

After the planning task, the educator-trainer helps the group reflect on whether the proposed co-play space is realistic, safe and manageable.

Suggested questions:

What part of the session would be easiest for participants to enter?
Where could confusion or exposure appear?
Which access barrier did you notice only after planning the activity in detail?
How did you decide who plays, who observes and who supports the group?
Is the communication channel proportionate?
What would you simplify before implementing this activity with a real group?

POSSIBLE ADAPTATIONS

With educators who are new to videogame-based activities, the trainer can provide **a partially completed planning sheet and ask them to identify only the missing safety elements**: account use, communication rules, opt-out options, moderation and backup plan. **With more experienced educators, the task can be made more demanding** by assigning different target groups, such as adults with low digital confidence, young adults with social anxiety, mixed-experience groups, online-only participants or learners using personal devices. Each group then adapts the same game to a different educational setting.

REPLICATION NOTE

This activity can be reused whenever educators need to prepare a videogame-based session before testing it with participants. **Its value lies in making the hidden parts of the setting visible: access, roles, communication, privacy, moderation and fallback options**. The same planning logic can be applied to a live co-op session, a shared-screen activity, a Discord-supported workshop or a non-playing analysis of gameplay materials.

DEBRIEFING, TRUST AND ACCESS

Turning safety rules into educational conditions

A safe co-play space is not only a technically prepared space. It is a setting in which participants understand what is happening, know how visible they are, have more than one way to take part and can trust that the educator is able to manage the activity. In this sense, safety, accessibility and moderation are not separate from the educational aim: they are the conditions that make participation possible.

For educators, this means translating inclusion into concrete decisions. Inclusion is not only a general value stated at the beginning of the session; it appears in the way the activity is organised. It appears when a participant can observe before playing, when a beginner is not mocked for asking a basic question, when voice chat is optional, when personal accounts are not exposed unnecessarily, when the group knows how to behave if someone feels uncomfortable, and when the activity has a backup plan instead of collapsing after the first technical problem.

A well-prepared co-play space also supports trust. Participants are more likely to engage when the setting feels readable: they know the objective, the duration, the roles, the communication channel, the rules and the limits of the activity. **This is especially important in videogame-based education, where the digital environment may feel familiar to some participants and completely unfamiliar to others**. The educator's task is to reduce this gap without turning the session into a technical lesson.

In practical terms, the quality of the space can be checked through three questions:

Can participants enter the activity without unnecessary barriers?

This concerns devices, accounts, connection, language, controls, cost and the possibility of observing before playing.

Can participants take part without excessive exposure?

This concerns voice chat, nicknames, personal profiles, screenshots, recordings, public lobbies and pressure to perform.

Can the educator keep the activity understandable and manageable?

This concerns timing, roles, moderation, communication rules, fallback options and the debriefing structure.

When these elements are prepared, the activity becomes easier to facilitate and more credible for the group. **Participants do not need to feel that everything is improvised; they can recognise that the game has been placed inside a clear educational frame**. This is what gives videogame-based facilitation its validity: not the use of a game in itself, but the way the educator turns play into a structured, accessible and reflective learning situation.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY #2

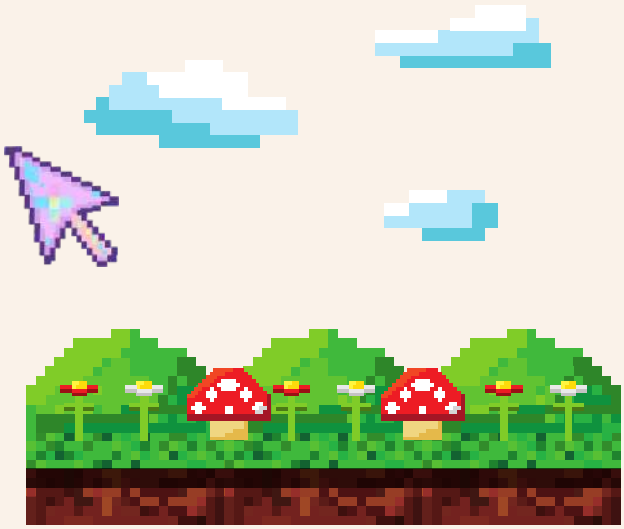
CHOOSING THE RIGHT GAME FOR THE RIGHT GROUP

Game
Commercial games such as Fortnite, Roblox, Rocket League, Genshin Impact, Final Fantasy XIV

Educational focus
Matching a game to a group, objective, setting and debriefing focus.

Suggested group
4–12 educators or facilitators.

Duration
60–90 minutes.



SETTING

In person or online. **The activity can be done with printed game cards, target group profiles, a shared document or a digital board**.
Direct gameplay is not required, because the focus is on educational selection and justification.

BRIEFING

The trainer explains that the aim is not to choose the most popular game, but **the most suitable one for a specific educational situation**. Participants will compare different games and decide which one best fits a target group, taking into account the level of digital confidence, possible risks and the type of debriefing that could follow.

GAMEPLAY TASK

Participants work in small groups. Each group receives one target profile and a short list of possible games, such as *PowerWash Simulator*, *Rocket League*, *Palia*, *Fortnite* , *Fall Guys*, *Roblox*, *Genshin Impact*, *Final Fantasy XIV* or selected gameplay clips. Each group chooses one suitable game, rejects one unsuitable option and explains the decision from an educational point of view, considering access, exposure, communication, risk and debriefing potential. For example, **with adults with low digital confidence**, *PowerWash Simulator* may fit better than Rocket League, because it is calmer, slower and less performance-based. **With young adults familiar with gaming but reluctant to interact directly**, *Palia* or a shared-screen *Genshin Impact* exploration task may work better than voice-based play.

OBSERVATION FOCUS

The educator-trainer should focus on how participants justify the match between a game, a group and an educational objective.

Useful elements to observe:

Do participants start from the group's needs, or from the game they personally prefer?
Do they consider access conditions such as devices, accounts, language and cost?
Do they notice possible exposure risks, such as voice chat, ranking or public matchmaking?
Do they identify which kind of interaction the game actually creates?
Do they reject at least one unsuitable option with a clear educational reason?
Do they connect the selected game to a realistic debriefing focus?

DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS

After the selection task, the educator-trainer helps the group reflect on the quality of the decision-making process.

Suggested questions:

Why did this game fit the target group better than the others?

Which barrier did you identify first: access, confidence, language, exposure or time?

Which game looked attractive but became less suitable after discussion?

What would make the selected game safer or easier to facilitate?

How would the activity change if the group had lower digital confidence?

What would you discuss with participants after the session?

POSSIBLE ADAPTATIONS

With educators who are new to videogame-based facilitation, **the trainer can provide ready-made game cards with basic information on access, cost, interaction type, risk level and possible debriefing themes**. This helps participants compare games without needing advanced gaming knowledge.
With more experienced groups, the activity can be made more demanding by assigning complex target profiles, such as mixed-age groups, learners with low digital confidence, young adults with social withdrawal, multilingual groups or online-only participants. In this case, participants should also prepare a fallback option if the selected game cannot be used.

REPLICATION NOTE

This activity can be reused whenever educators need to choose a game before designing a full session. **Its purpose is to make the selection process explicit**: a game is not chosen because it is popular, familiar or entertaining, but because it fits a specific group, setting, access condition and educational objective. The same logic can be applied to direct gameplay, shared-screen activities, gameplay clips or non-playing analysis.

DEBRIEFING, FIT AND EDUCATIONAL VALIDITY

Explaining why a game works for a specific group

After the selection task, the educator-trainer brings the group back to the reasoning behind each choice. The aim is not to decide which game is "better" in general, but to understand whether the selected game is coherent with the target group, the educational objective and the conditions of the setting.
A good choice should be explainable. Participants should be able to say why a certain game was selected, why another option was rejected, what barriers may appear, what kind of participation the game allows, and how the debriefing could connect the experience with learning. **This is what gives the activity educational validity**: not the popularity of the game, but the quality of the match between game, group and purpose.
In practical terms, the quality of the selection can be checked through three questions:

Does the game fit the group?

This concerns age, digital confidence, language level, previous gaming experience, access to devices and possible anxiety around exposure or performance.

Does the game fit the educational objective?

This concerns the type of interaction the activity is meant to support: cooperation, communication, confidence-building, perspective-taking, moderation, digital participation or another specific aim.

Does the game fit the setting?

This concerns time, accounts, connection, devices, communication channel, safety rules, possible observers and backup options.

The debriefing can then move from the selected game to the rejected options. This is often where the most useful learning appears. A game may be interesting, familiar or popular, but still unsuitable for a specific group because it requires too much speed, too much exposure, too many accounts, public matchmaking, voice chat or a level of gaming confidence that participants do not yet have.

Useful debriefing prompts:

Why did this game fit the profile better than the others?

Which option looked attractive but became less suitable after discussion?

What risk did you identify first: access, exposure, cost, language, time or group pressure?

How would you simplify the activity before testing it with real participants?

What would participants be able to discuss after playing or observing this game?

What backup option would preserve the same educational objective if the game could not be used?

This activity helps educators treat game selection as part of facilitation design. Choosing a title is not a matter of taste or trend, but **a professional decision connected to access, safety, participation and reflection**. A simple game, or even a selected gameplay clip, may be more appropriate than a complex live session if it allows the group to understand the task, take part without unnecessary barriers and produce a meaningful debriefing.

TECHNICAL SETUP AND SAFETY CHECKLIST

Before, during and after a videogame-based session

This final checklist helps educators review the basic conditions of a videogame-based activity before implementing it with a group. **It does not replace the planning process, but it can be used as a last check to make sure that the session is technically feasible, accessible, safe and coherent with the educational objective**.

Before the activity

Has the game or gameplay material been tested in advance?

Are devices, controllers, screens, audio, internet connection, updates and accounts ready?

Is the selected game segment short enough to be played, observed and discussed within the available time? Do participants know whether they will play directly, observe, support, take notes or join later?

Have communication channels been defined?

Are personal accounts, nicknames, screenshots, recordings and visibility rules clear?

Is there a backup option if the game, platform or connection does not work?

During the activity

Is the technical setup allowing participants to focus on the task rather than on troubleshooting?

Are beginners able to ask for help without feeling exposed?

Are non-playing roles being treated as legitimate forms of participation?

Is the communication channel still appropriate for the group's confidence level?

Is anyone being pushed too quickly into voice chat, public interaction, competition or performance?

Are moderation rules being respected in chat, voice communication and in-game behaviour?

Does the educator need to pause, simplify, slow down or change format?

After the activity

Has there been enough time for debriefing, not only for gameplay?

Did the selected game actually support the educational objective?

Were there technical or access barriers that should be removed next time?

Did any privacy, account, screenshot, chat or moderation issue emerge?

Were participants able to take part in different ways?

Does the activity need a simpler version, a safer communication channel or a clearer backup plan?

Can the same setting be adapted for another group without losing safety, accessibility or educational purpose?

A videogame-based session is easier to repeat when its technical, educational and safety conditions are made explicit. **The clearer the setup, the easier it becomes for participants to enter the activity, take part and reflect on what happened**.

CO-GAMING IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS



01.

This chapter approaches co-gaming as a form of experiential learning. Participants are not asked only to talk about cooperation, roles or decision-making; they are invited to enter a shared game situation where these dynamics can take shape through action. The game becomes a structured space where the group can try, coordinate, and then look back at what happened.

02.

ACCESSIBLE COMMERCIAL GAME WORLDS

The chapter works with free or widely accessible games such as ***Genshin Impact***, ***Final Fantasy XIV***, ***Roblox***, ***Fortnite***, ***League of Legends*** or ***Stardew Valley***. These titles are not selected because they are perfect educational tools, but because they are recognisable, **socially relevant** and **already familiar** to many learners. For this reason, they can offer a realistic starting point for co-gaming activities, provided that access, accounts, communication and safety are prepared in advance.

03.

FROM LIVE PLAY TO SHARED REFLECTION

A co-gaming session is the moment where the **methodological approach** of this booklet becomes practice. Through the videogame medium, participants enter a shared situation, take part in a task, negotiate roles, make decisions and experience cooperation or difficulty as they happen. **The educator's role is then to help the group transform this lived experience into reflection**, connecting live play with participation, learning, social interaction and the broader aims of the educational activity.

WHAT IS CO-GAMING IN ADULT EDUCATION

Shared play as structured non-formal learning

Co-gaming can be understood, at its simplest level, as **playing a video game with others: in the same room, online, through a shared screen, inside a multiplayer session, or around a game that some participants play while others observe and contribute**. In everyday language, this may simply mean "playing together". In an educational setting, however, the meaning is more specific, because **co-gaming is not defined only by the presence of more than one player, but by the way a shared game situation is intentionally used as a learning experience**. Participants enter a scene, act within rules and constraints, take roles, coordinate with others, make decisions and later return to what happened in order to give it educational meaning.

This distinction is important because social gaming is already a broad field. A systematic review by Gonçalves and colleagues describes social gaming as including gaming experiences involving more than one person, with attention to the social element that emerges among players and/or spectators (Gonçalves et al., 2023). This is useful for educators because it prevents a narrow understanding of participation: **in a co-gaming activity, not everyone needs to hold a controller at the same time in order to take part**. Watching, suggesting, guiding, commenting, supporting another player, reading the map, managing time or preparing the debriefing can also be part of the shared educational situation.

Co-gaming can fit this logic when it is not left as free play, but prepared as a flexible, learner-centred and reflective activity.

The game provides the situation, but the educator gives that situation a frame: why the activity is being proposed, how participants can enter it, what kind of participation is possible, and how the experience will be discussed afterwards.

The methodological link with experiential learning is also clear. In Kolb's model, learning develops through a cycle that includes **concrete experience**, **reflective observation**, **abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation** (Kolb, 1984). A co-gaming session can follow a similar movement without having to reproduce the model mechanically: participants first enter a concrete game situation, then look back at what happened, give language to the experience, and finally consider how similar dynamics may appear in other learning, social or community contexts.

This is why educational co-gaming should not be confused with simply allowing a group to play. If participants enter *Fortnite Creative*, *Roblox*, *Genshin Impact* or any MMORPG without an objective, without roles, without moderation and without a later discussion, the activity may still be enjoyable, but it remains close to ordinary play. **It becomes educational when the session is intentionally framed**: the group knows why the game is being used, what task will be attempted, how people can participate, what the educator will observe, and how the experience will be reworked afterwards.

The value of co-gaming lies in the fact that it turns educational themes into lived situations. **In short, cooperation is no longer only a word in a workshop**; it appears when participants have to coordinate movement, share information, wait for a beginner, decide who leads, or recover after a failed attempt. **Communication becomes visible** when players explain rules, use voice or text chat, misunderstand each other, simplify instructions or adapt to different levels of confidence. **Inclusion is tested when one participant knows the game well and another does not**. **Leadership appears when someone takes charge, but also when someone makes space for others to act**.

From this point of view, **co-gaming is close to other experiential methods used in non-formal education**, such as **simulations**, **role-play**, **group tasks or collaborative challenges**.

The difference is that the "scene" is created through a commercial video game. Participants do not act inside a paper-based scenario or a traditional role-play exercise; they enter **a digital environment with rules**, **feedback**, **constraints**, **avatars**, **interfaces**, **missions and social expectations**. The educator does not need to invent everything from scratch, because the game already offers a structured situation, but they do need to decide how that situation will be used pedagogically.

Research on multiplayer game modes also shows why this choice cannot be generic. Zahn and colleagues compared competitive, cooperative and creative multiplayer game modes and examined their **effects on social interaction, including verbal and non-verbal communication** (Zahn et al., 2022).

For educators, the implication is practical: a co-gaming session should not be planned as if all multiplayer games produced the same kind of relationship. A competitive match, a creative building task, a guided exploration and an MMO group activity expose participants to different rhythms, pressures and opportunities for interaction.

In adult education, **co-gaming can therefore be used as a structured way to work on participation**, **digital confidence**, **communication**, **role-taking**, cooperation, perspective-taking and social inclusion.

It can also help educators reach learners who may not respond well to more frontal or exclusively verbal formats, because the first step is not to explain oneself, but to enter an activity with others. This does not make the game therapeutic, nor does it make the educator responsible for clinical outcomes. It simply means that shared play can become a mediated educational space, where action comes before interpretation and reflection comes after experience.

The educator's role is to hold this structure together. **Before the session**, they prepare the setting, the task and the access conditions; **during the session**, they help participants remain oriented and included; **after the session**, they support the group in transforming live play into shared reflection. Co-gaming, in this sense, is not a recreational add-on to an educational activity, but a way of organising a concrete experience around a digital medium, so that participants can do something together and then understand something about how they participated.

COMMERCIAL GAMES AS CO-GAMING ENVIRONMENTS

Exploration, roles, and user-generated worlds

The games selected for this chapter (*Genshin Impact*, *MMORPGs*, *Roblox* and *Fortnite*) are approached from a non-formal educational angle, not as exemplary or universally suitable tools. **They are useful because they represent different ways in which commercial games can become co-gaming environments**: open-world exploration, online role-based play, user-generated spaces, creative building and team-based challenges.

Each of them offers a possible scene for educational work, but each of them also requires preparation, limits and a clear understanding of the group.

This matters because co-gaming does not always take the same form. **In one case**, **the group may explore a landscape together**; in another, **it may observe how roles are distributed inside a multiplayer world**; in another, **it may enter a user-generated experience and discuss how that space is designed**; in another, **it may use a creative mode to build rules, tasks or challenges collaboratively**.

For educators, the relevant question is not whether a title is "good" in general, but what kind of shared situation it can create, how demanding its access conditions are, which forms of interaction it encourages, and what kind of reflection can realistically follow. *Genshin Impact* can be understood mainly as an exploration-based environment. Its co-op mode allows players to visit other players' worlds and take part in certain activities together. This makes it potentially useful for guided exploration, shared discovery, informal language exposure and low-to-medium pressure cooperation, but less suitable when the group needs immediate access with no preparation.

In a co-gaming session, ***Genshin Impact* may work when the task is limited and exploratory**: following a route, moving through a landscape, helping a beginner understand the interface, solving a simple environmental challenge, or observing how participants communicate when one player knows the game better than the others. Its value is not speed or simplicity, but **the possibility of creating a shared journey in which orientation**, **support**, **curiosity and discussion can emerge gradually**. At the same time, it should be framed with caution: it is free-to-play, but also a gacha game, with monetisation systems, limited-time banners and progression mechanics that should be discussed rather than ignored. If used educationally, the session should avoid any focus on spending, pulling characters or chasing rewards, and should instead remain centred on exploration, communication and shared orientation.

A different model is offered by MMORPGs, or massively multiplayer online role-playing games. In these environments, the educational interest is not only the fantasy setting, but the way the game organises roles, communities, routines, quests, support systems and forms of belonging. Players may act as healers, tanks, damage dealers, crafters, mentors, newcomers or guild members, and these roles can become material for discussing responsibility, cooperation, leadership, dependency, support and participation in large online communities. **Research on MMORPGs and language learning has also highlighted the relevance of social interaction, motivation and authentic communication in these environments** (Martins, 2023).

Final Fantasy XIV is one possible example within this broader MMO field. Its free trial currently allows play up to level 80 with no restriction on playtime, which makes it more accessible than many subscription-based online games, although onboarding remains demanding because of account creation, download size, interface complexity, narrative progression and genre-specific language (Square Enix, n.d.). *World of Warcraft* also has a free trial, but only up to level 20, which makes it more limited as a long-form example of accessible MMO participation (Blizzard Entertainment, n.d.).

For this booklet, an MMO such as *Final Fantasy XIV* may be useful less as a game to "start from zero" in a short workshop and more as a prepared demonstration, shared-screen activity or guided observation of roles and community structures. **A co-gaming session can focus on character creation, role choice, movement through a shared environment**, **observation of social norms**, or discussion of what it means to be a healer, tank, mentor, crafter or newcomer. **A study by Fahlström and Sheikhi Pour explored players' experiences of learning English through *Final Fantasy XIV***, while Wong analyses the game as a case study for the social and narrative possibilities of MMORPGs (Fahlström & Sheikhi Pour, 2023; Wong, 2025).

***Roblox* introduces another model**: user-generated worlds. It is not a single game in the traditional sense, but a platform hosting many different "experiences" created by users, educational providers and developers.

Roblox's own education materials describe it as a platform where immersive experiences can support subjects such as chemistry, physics, robotics and other learning areas, and Roblox documentation also notes that **private servers can be used for classroom contexts when available** (Roblox, n.d.).
This makes *Roblox* relevant for co-gaming because it can support creativity, exploration of designed environments, simple group tasks, design thinking and discussion about how digital spaces are built. In a non-formal education context, **educators may use a selected experience to let participants enter a shared world**, **compare different environments**, **observe how rules are designed**, **or discuss what makes a space inclusive**, **confusing**, **safe or exclusionary**. It is also important to recognise *Roblox* as a strongly transgenerational and youth-facing environment: many adults know it only indirectly, while many children, teenagers and young adults have used it as a social, creative and gaming platform. This makes it educationally interesting, but also requires additional care around age, moderation, public interaction and the choice of experiences.

The same variety that makes *Roblox* useful is also its main risk. Because experiences are user-generated, quality, safety, accessibility and educational relevance vary widely. **A Roblox-based co-gaming session should not send participants into random public experiences without preparation**. It should normally use selected spaces, private servers where possible, clear roles, limited time and a defined observation or design task. Its educational strength lies in variety and creativity; its weakness appears when that variety is left uncurated.

Fortnite, especially through *Fortnite Creative* and *Unreal Editor for Fortnite*, offers a fourth model: creative, spatial and team-based play. Epic describes Fortnite Creative and UEFN as tools for building games and experiences to play with others, which means that Fortnite can be approached not only as a battle royale title, but also as a platform for **custom islands**, **designed challenges and shared creative spaces** (Epic Games, n.d.).
For educators, this distinction is important because *Fortnite* is often associated with fast reaction, competition and performance, while Creative mode can support different kinds of activities. **A session may focus on navigating a custom island**, **solving a spatial challenge**, **creating or analysing a designed environment**, **establishing team rules**, **or discussing how behaviour changes when competition is reduced or reframed**. Used in this way, Fortnite can support work on cooperation, spatial reasoning, negotiated rules, group coordination, creativity and respectful interaction inside a familiar commercial environment.

The limits are equally important. *Fortnite* may be too fast, too socially exposed or too strongly linked to competitive habits for some groups, especially if public matchmaking, voice chat or performance-based tasks are used without preparation. In an educational context, it should not be treated as a neutral “fun” choice. It needs a controlled setting, a selected island or activity, communication rules and a clear decision on whether the session is about creative exploration, team coordination or reflection on online behaviour.

Taken together, these titles show why commercial games should be selected as environments rather than as ready-made exercises. *Genshin Impact* lends itself to guided exploration and shared discovery; *MMORPGs* such as *Final Fantasy XIV* make roles, belonging and group coordination visible; *Roblox* opens work on user-generated worlds and creative participation; *Fortnite Creative* can support team challenges, designed spaces and negotiated rules. As already stated above, **none of these titles is automatically educational**, a**nd none of them is always appropriate**. Their usefulness depends on the match between game, group, objective, setting and debriefing.

For this reason, educators should avoid copying a co-gaming activity mechanically from one context to another. The same title may require a live session with one group, a shared-screen demonstration with another, a gameplay clip with a third, or no direct gameplay at all if access and safety conditions are not adequate. What matters is not the prestige or popularity of the game, but the kind of co-gaming environment it allows the educator to build.

DESIGNING A LIVE CO-GAMING SESSION

From training design to facilitated play

Designing a live co-gaming session means treating gameplay as a planned educational situation. This is particularly important in non-formal education, where the activity should remain flexible, learner-centred and open to participation, but still needs clear objectives, timing, roles and facilitation. **In short, a properly planned learning process with educational objectives, based on learners' actual needs, yet open to learners' input and connected to real life** (Council of Europe, 2026).

A co-gaming session can fit this definition when prepared as a short, structured experience in which the game becomes the medium through which participants act, interact and later reflect.

The starting point is the educational objective. In training design, the objective is not a decorative sentence placed at the beginning of the activity; it determines the choice of the game segment, the group format, the roles, the communication channel and the debriefing. **A session designed to work on cooperation will not require the same game situation as one designed to explore digital confidence**, **perspective-taking**, **moderation**, **communication under pressure or gradual participation**.

In practical terms, the educator should define the session backwards: first the educational aim, then the kind of experience needed, then the game segment that can generate that experience.

If the aim is to observe how a group distributes roles, the chosen segment should require different functions and not simply individual performance. If the aim is to support low-pressure participation, the segment should allow observation, small tasks and gradual entry. If the aim is to discuss communication, the activity should create situations in which participants need to explain, ask, wait, correct, simplify or negotiate. The live session should therefore be built around a specific playable moment rather than around the entire game.

This point is quite relevant. **In co-gaming, the educational unit is rarely the game itself** (for example, "Genshin Impact", "Roblox", "Fortnite" or "Final Fantasy XIV" as a whole). **It is a limited and facilitated sequence**: **a guided exploration route**, **a private creative map**, **a short co-op task**, **a character creation moment**, **a role-based observation**, **a custom challenge**, a shared-screen demonstration, **or a selected scene followed by discussion**. Commercial games are often too large, too complex and too full of systems to be used as they are. Training design means reducing that complexity until the activity becomes playable, readable and discussable within the available time.

The group profile should then shape the level of difficulty and exposure. A group of confident gamers may be able to enter a live co-op session quickly, use voice chat and handle more open-ended tasks, while adult learners with low digital confidence may need a shared screen, a slower rhythm, non-playing roles or a very small objective.

A mixed group may require differentiated participation: some participants play, others observe, one person manages time, another reads the task, another supports a beginner, another prepares notes for the debriefing. This is not a secondary adjustment; it is part of inclusive educational design, because it prevents "participation" from being reduced to direct gameplay only.

The educator should also decide which roles are needed before the session begins. In ordinary gaming, roles often emerge informally: the experienced player leads, the confident participant speaks, the beginner follows, the quiet person disappears. In an educational co-gaming session, this should not be left entirely to chance. **Roles can be light and flexible**, **but they should make participation more legible**: player, observer, guide, supporter, timekeeper, chat reader, map reader, note-taker, debriefing reporter, moderator. Assigning roles does not make the session rigid; it gives participants more than one legitimate way to take part.

The game segment should be short enough to leave time for reflection. This is a frequent mistake in videogame-based activities: the gameplay expands until the debriefing is rushed or removed. From an experiential learning perspective, this weakens the whole activity. A co-gaming session does not need to reproduce Kolb's experiential model mechanically, but it should respect its basic logic: the experience alone is not enough.

Participants need time to look back at what happened, identify patterns, name competences, and consider what could be transferred or tried differently next time.

For this reason, a 60-minute co-gaming session may include only 20 or 25 minutes of actual gameplay. The rest may be used for access, briefing, role assignment, observation and debriefing. This can feel counterintuitive to participants who expect "more game time", but in an educational setting the value of the activity depends on the whole sequence. **The live play is the central experience**, **but it needs a frame before and after**: without briefing, participants may not understand the purpose; without debriefing, they may not connect the experience to learning.

The briefing should be concise but substantial. Participants need to know why the game is being used, what they are going to do, how long the activity will last, which roles are available, which communication channel will be used, and what kind of behaviour is expected. They do not need a complete explanation of the game, its lore or all its mechanics. The educator should give enough information to enter the task, not so much that the session becomes a lecture. In co-gaming, the first learning threshold is often orientation: participants should understand where they are, what they can do, how to ask for help and how to step back if needed.

During the live session, **facilitation should remain present but not intrusive**. The educator is not a game master who controls every move, nor a passive observer who waits until the end. Their role is to keep the activity readable: slowing down when participants are lost, protecting beginners from being ignored, reminding the group of the task, adjusting communication if voice chat becomes too exposing, noticing when the game starts to dominate the educational purpose, and deciding whether to pause, simplify or move to discussion. This is where co-gaming becomes closer to non-formal facilitation than to ordinary play.

Observation should be limited and intentional. The educator does not need to record everything that happens during the session, because this would make the activity heavy and difficult to manage. **It is better to choose one or two observation focuses connected to the objective**: role distribution, inclusion of beginners, communication under pressure, use of support, management of mistakes, participation rhythms, leadership, conflict or decision-making. This keeps the debriefing grounded in what actually happened rather than in generic comments about the game.

Moderation remains part of live facilitation, but it should be proportionate to the activity. If the group uses voice chat, text chat or an online lobby, the educator should be ready to intervene when communication becomes exclusionary, aggressive, confusing or too fast for some participants. If participants are in the same room, moderation may involve managing turn-taking, preventing experienced players from taking over, helping observers remain involved or reducing pressure on those who are less confident. The aim is not to sterilise play, but to keep the interaction educationally usable.

Finally, as anticipated, the debriefing should return to the lived experience without forcing participants into personal disclosure. The educator can begin with descriptive questions: what happened, what was difficult, who took which role, when did cooperation become necessary, what changed after the first attempt.

Only then can the group move towards interpretation: what did this show about communication, trust, leadership, inclusion, digital confidence or decision-making. In adult education, this movement from experience to meaning is central because it allows learners to connect the activity with previous knowledge, everyday situations and future action.

A well-designed co-gaming session should also include a plan for failure. The game may not load, an account may fail, a participant may refuse voice chat, the task may be too difficult, the group may finish too quickly, or the activity may produce more pressure than expected. This does not mean the session has failed. If the educator has prepared alternatives, the same learning objective can continue through a gameplay clip, a shared-screen demonstration, a discussion of the failed access process, a role analysis, or a simplified task. In non-formal education, adaptation is not a sign of weak planning; it is part of facilitation.

A useful structure for live co-gaming can be summarised as follows:

Phase	Educational function	Practical focus
Objective	Defines why the session exists	Competence, participation, communication, role-taking, digital confidence
Group profile	Adapts the activity to learners	Experience level, access, language, confidence, exposure
Game segment	Reduces the game to a usable situation	Route, task, round, scene, map, lobby, clip
Roles	Makes participation readable	Player, observer, guide, supporter, moderator, note-taker
Briefing	Creates orientation	Purpose, rules, timing, communication, opt-out
Live play	Provides concrete experience	Acting, coordinating, deciding, adjusting
Observation	Keeps the focus educational	One or two selected dynamics
Debriefing	Transforms experience into learning	Description, interpretation, transfer

This structure should not be used as a rigid script. **Its purpose is to help educators keep control of the educational architecture while allowing the live session to remain flexible**. Co-gaming works when participants feel that they are genuinely doing something together, but also when the educator can explain why that experience matters. The session should be open enough to allow interaction and unexpected moments, but structured enough to avoid becoming only entertainment, technical demonstration or unmanaged online play.

Designing a live co-gaming session therefore means working at the intersection of training design, experiential learning and non-formal facilitation. The game creates the scene, but the educator designs the conditions that allow the scene to become educational: the objective, the segment, the roles, the rhythm, the boundaries and the reflective return.

When these elements are aligned, co-gaming can become a serious and replicable method for adult learning, **not because the game itself teaches**, **but because the educator turns shared play into a structured experience that participants can understand**, **discuss and reuse**.

FOUR CO-GAMING FORMATS

Facilitated learning situations through commercial games

The following formats are not full activities yet. **They are examples of how commercial games can be translated into co-gaming situations** with a clear educational focus. The aim is not to suggest that each title has one fixed use, but to show how different game environments can support different forms of participation, coordination and reflection when the educator prepares a limited task and a readable setting.

GENSHIN IMPACT: GUIDED EXPLORATION AND SHARED PROBLEM-SOLVING

Genshin Impact can be used as a guided exploration format, especially when the educator wants to work on orientation, support, informal communication and shared problem-solving. **The game offers an open world where participants can move through landscapes**, follow routes, solve environmental puzzles, activate mechanisms, complete simple challenges or help a less experienced player understand what is happening on screen. In a co-gaming session, the educator should avoid treating the whole game as the activity. **A more realistic format is to select a short sequence**: **reaching a location**, **solving one environmental puzzle**, **exploring a specific area**, collecting resources together or **helping a beginner navigate the interface**. These small tasks are useful because they create a shared objective without necessarily placing the group under strong competitive pressure. **The educational interest lies in how participants orient themselves together**. Who understands the map? Who explains the objective? Who waits when another player is lost? Who notices clues in the environment? Who takes over too quickly? Who helps without making the beginner feel incompetent?

A puzzle or exploration task can therefore become a concrete situation for observing communication, patience, initiative and shared attention.
This format also requires a clear educational boundary. As stated above, *Genshin Impact* is free to access, but its wider design is strongly commercial, with progression systems, limited-time banners and randomised rewards that may resemble gambling-like dynamics. A co-gaming session should therefore avoid focusing on pulls, rare characters, rewards or spending. If these elements are discussed, they should be treated as **media literacy or digital wellbeing topics**, not as the core of the activity.



Image: Genshin Impact screenshot, © HoYoverse.

MMO ENVIRONMENTS: ROLES AND GROUP COORDINATION

For the second format, it may be better to speak more broadly about *MMO environments*, using *Final Fantasy XIV* as one possible example rather than making the whole section depend on a single title. MMORPGs are useful because they make roles, routines, communities and forms of group coordination highly visible. Even before advanced content, these games are organised around characters, jobs, functions, quests, social spaces, guilds or free companies, and shared expectations about how players should behave in a group.

A co-gaming session based on an MMO does not need to involve a complex dungeon or raid. In many cases, this would be too demanding for an educational setting. **A more manageable format can focus on character creation**, **role selection**, **guided movement through a shared area**, **observation of community spaces**, or **discussion of what different roles imply**. What does it mean to be a healer, a tank, a damage dealer, a crafter, a mentor or a newcomer? What kind of responsibility does each role carry? How does the group depend on different forms of contribution?

This format is particularly useful when the educational focus concerns role-taking, responsibility, belonging and cooperation inside structured communities. Participants can observe that not all useful roles are equally visible: some players lead, some protect, some repair, some support, some explain, some prepare resources, and some learn by following.

For adult education, this can open a discussion on work groups, volunteering, community participation and the way people occupy positions inside collective tasks.
The main limitation is onboarding. MMOs often require accounts, downloads, interface familiarity, reading, patience and time. For this reason, an MMO-based co-gaming format may work better as a prepared demonstration, shared-screen session or guided observation unless participants already know the game. **The educator's task is to reduce the complexity of the environment without losing its main educational value**: the visibility of roles and the interdependence of the group.



Image: FFXIV screenshot, © Square Enix.

ROBLOX: USER-GENERATED WORLDS AND CREATIVE PARTICIPATION

Roblox offers a different co-gaming format because it is not only a game, but a platform of user-generated experiences. **This makes it useful for activities centred on creativity**, digital environments, informal learning and the design of shared spaces. Participants can enter a selected experience, compare different worlds, observe how rules are built, or discuss why one space feels accessible, confusing, welcoming or exclusionary.

In a co-gaming session, the educator may choose a private or carefully selected experience and give the group a limited task: explore the space, identify its rules, complete a simple challenge, observe how players are guided, or discuss how the environment communicates what is possible. The point is not only to "play Roblox", but to use Roblox as a way to look at how digital spaces are designed and inhabited.

This format works well when the educational focus is creative participation. **Participants can discuss what makes a digital space readable**, what makes it chaotic, how beginners understand where to go, how players interact, and what forms of agency are offered. In more advanced groups, *Roblox* can also support design-oriented reflection: if you had to create a space for inclusion, cooperation or learning, what rules would you add? What would you remove? How would you help a newcomer enter?

The main caution is moderation. Because *Roblox* experiences are user-generated, the educator should not rely on random public spaces. **The session should use selected experiences**, **private servers where possible**, **clear roles**, limited time and *defined rules for interaction*. *Roblox* is also strongly associated with children and younger users, so educators need to be careful with age appropriateness, public interaction and safeguarding. Its educational value depends heavily on curation.



Image: Roblox screenshot, © Roblox Corporation.

FORTNITE CREATIVE: TEAM CHALLENGES AND SHARED RULES

Fortnite Creative can be used as a co-gaming format when the educator wants to work on rules, team coordination, spatial challenges and the difference between competitive play and structured group activity. Although *Fortnite* is often associated with battle royale, speed and performance, Creative mode allows educators to work with selected islands, custom challenges and designed spaces where the objective can be reframed.

A useful educational format is to choose a short custom activity that requires the group to move through a space, solve a challenge, follow shared rules or complete a team-based task. The educator can reduce pressure by avoiding public matchmaking, rankings or elimination-based modes, and by choosing islands where the focus is exploration, coordination or problem-solving rather than pure performance.

This format is useful because it makes rules visible. Participants can discuss how the activity changes when competition is limited, when the group agrees on communication rules, when experienced players are asked to support beginners, or when the goal is not simply to win but to complete a shared task. It can also support reflection on online behaviour: how do people react to mistakes, jokes, pressure, speed, failure or frustration when the environment is associated with competition?

The main risk is exposure. *Fortnite* can easily become too fast, too loud or too performance-based if the task is not controlled. Voice chat, public lobbies, competitive habits and skill differences can quickly dominate the session. For this reason, *Fortnite Creative* should be used with a selected set of activities, a private or controlled setting, clear communication rules and a debriefing focus decided in advance.



Image: Fortnite screenshot, © Epic Games.

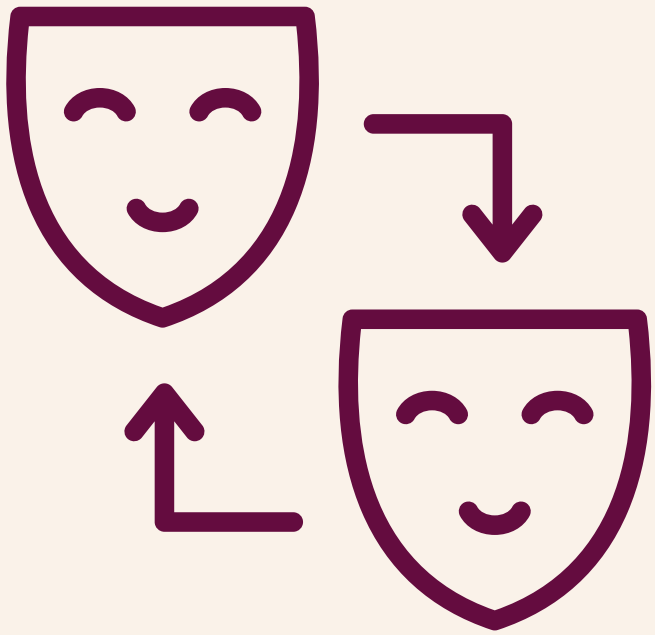
USING FORMATS WITHOUT TURNING THEM INTO FIXED RECIPES

These four formats show that co-gaming is not a single method applied in the same way to every title. *Genshin Impact* can support exploration and shared problem-solving; *MMO environments* can make roles and group coordination visible; *Roblox* can open work on user-generated worlds and creative participation; *Fortnite Creative* can be used to explore team challenges and negotiated rules. The educational value does not come from the title alone, but from the way the educator reduces the game to a manageable scene, defines the task, supports participation and prepares the reflective work that follows.

For this reason, **these formats should be treated as starting points**. The same game may be used live with one group, shown through shared screen with another, transformed into an observation task with a third, or avoided entirely when access, safety or confidence conditions are not adequate. What matters is not fidelity to the game, but coherence with the educational purpose.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY #1

GUIDED CO-GAMING SESSION



Game
Fortnite Creative, Roblox Private Servers, Genshin Impact (free to play)

Educational focus
Designing a short live co-gaming session with a clear task and accessible roles.

Suggested group
4–8 participants.

Duration
60–90 minutes.

SETTING

In person, online or blended. **The activity works best when the educator can keep the session controlled**: private lobby, selected world, shared screen, moderated voice/text channel, or a small group where not everyone needs to play directly at the same time.

BRIEFING

The educator explains that the activity is **a guided co-gaming experience**. Participants will enter a selected game segment, complete a short shared task and then discuss how the group participated. **The aim is to observe how people enter the activity**, coordinate, ask for help, take roles and respond to the limits of the game.

GAMEPLAY TASK

The group completes a short, pre-selected task inside the chosen game. In *Genshin Impact*, this may be **a guided exploration route or a simple environmental puzzle**. In *Roblox*, participants may enter **a selected private experience and identify how the space guides or confuses players**. In *Fortnite Creative*, the group may complete **a custom team challenge with agreed rules and no public matchmaking**. The task should remain limited and readable. The educator should avoid long progression, random public interaction, complex competitive modes or activities that depend on spending, rare rewards or advanced game knowledge. **The live session should give the group enough material to discuss, without letting the game absorb the whole educational frame**.

OBSERVATION FOCUS

During the live session, the educator observes how participants enter and use the selected game segment, with particular attention to the quality of participation rather than to gaming performance.

The observation can focus on three moments:

Entry into the task
How participants understand the objective, ask for clarification, follow the route, accept a role or wait before acting.

Cooperation during play
How the group shares information, supports beginners, manages mistakes, negotiates decisions or reacts when the game creates confusion.

Use of the game environment
How participants interact with the space itself: exploring, solving a puzzle, following clues, testing rules, using movement, chat, markers or shared visual information.

The educator should choose one main focus before the session. For example, in a *Genshin Impact* exploration task, the focus may be orientation and mutual support; in a *Fortnite Creative island*, it may be how participants follow shared rules, coordinate movement or manage frustration when the challenge has to be repeated.

DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS

After the session, the educator brings the group back to the live experience and helps participants describe what happened before moving to broader reflection.

Suggested prompts:

Describe the moment when the group understood what to do:

What helped participants enter the activity?

Was there a point where someone needed support?

How did the group react when something was unclear or did not work?

Did the game environment make cooperation easier or more difficult?

What role did communication play during the task?

What would you change if the same session were repeated?

POSSIBLE ADAPTATIONS

With groups that are not ready for direct play, the educator can run the activity through shared screen: one person plays while others observe, suggest actions, read the map, identify clues or prepare notes for the debriefing. For *Genshin Impact*, the task should remain centred on exploration, orientation or environmental puzzles, avoiding rewards, banners or character acquisition. For *Fortnite Creative*, the educator should use a selected island or private setting, avoiding the strongly competitive formats unless the group is ready for them.

REPLICATION NOTE

This activity can be reused with any commercial game that allows a short, controlled live segment. **What should remain stable is not the title**, **but the structure**: a selected game space, a limited task, clear roles, moderated communication and a debriefing focused on how the group participated. The format can work with direct gameplay, shared-screen play or guided observation, depending on the group's confidence, access conditions and educational aim.

DEBRIEFING, FIT AND EDUCATIONAL VALIDITY

Understanding what happened during the co-gaming session

After the guided co-gaming session, the educator brings the group back to the live experience. The aim is not only to ask whether the task was completed, but **to understand how the session worked as an educational situation**: how participants entered the game, how they used the space, how they communicated, where support was needed and what changed while the activity was taking place.

A guided co-gaming session has educational value when the gameplay produces material that the group can recognise and discuss. This may concern cooperation, orientation, role-taking, confidence, frustration, decision-making or the way participants helped each other understand the task. **The important point is that reflection remains connected to what actually happened during play, rather than becoming a generic discussion about games**.

In practical terms, the debriefing can be organised around three areas:

What happened during live play?

This concerns the concrete sequence of the session: how participants entered the activity, what they tried first, where they became confused, when the group adjusted and how the task developed.

How did the group participate?

This concerns roles, communication, support, waiting, leadership, hesitation, problem-solving and the inclusion of participants with different levels of confidence or gaming experience.

What can be learned from the session?

This concerns the connection between the co-gaming experience and broader educational aims: cooperation, digital participation, trust, shared rules, communication, emotional regulation or learning through action.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY #2

OBSERVING A CO-GAMING SESSION



Game / digital focus

A recorded gameplay or short live co-gaming clip from commercial games.

Educational focus

Learning to read a co-gaming session as an educational situation: roles, communication and access barriers.

Suggested group

4–12 educators or facilitators.

Duration

45–75 minutes.

SETTING

In person or online. The activity can be run with a projector, shared screen, selected gameplay clip or short live demonstration. **Participants do not need to play directly**; their task is to observe what the session makes visible from an educational point of view.

BRIEFING

Participants are invited to watch the session as educators: what kind of participation does the game allow, who seems oriented or disoriented, what kind of support is needed, where communication becomes important, and **which elements of the setting could become barriers for a real group**.

GAMEPLAY TASK

Participants watch a short co-gaming sequence, ideally 5–10 minutes. The sequence may show a guided exploration, a shared-screen demonstration, a selected *Roblox* experience or another controlled gameplay moment. The trainer assigns each small group one observation lens: roles, access, communication or educational potential. **Each group watches the same sequence from its assigned angle and prepares two or three points for discussion**. The aim is to avoid generic comments such as “the game is fun” or “the players cooperate”. Observers should identify what makes the session readable or difficult: who seems to understand the task, where support is needed, which barriers appear, and what could become useful material for debriefing.

OBSERVATION FOCUS

The educator-trainer should focus on how participants learn to observe a co-gaming session without reducing it to personal impressions.

The observation can be organised through four lenses:

Roles and positions
Who leads, who follows, who explains, who waits, who remains silent, who supports, who seems excluded or overloaded.

Access and readability
Whether the task is understandable, whether the interface creates barriers, whether beginners can follow what is happening, and whether the activity requires too much previous gaming knowledge.

Communication and support
How information is shared, how mistakes are handled, whether instructions are clear, and whether the group creates space for different levels of confidence.

Educational potential
Which elements of the session could become useful for debriefing: cooperation, confusion, role-taking, frustration, inclusion, digital confidence, shared rules or decision-making.

The point is not to observe everything. Each group should stay with its assigned lens and produce a focused reading of the same co-gaming sequence.

DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS

After the observation task, the educator-trainer helps the group compare the different readings of the same session.

Suggested prompts:

What did your observation lens make visible?

What did another group notice that you had missed?

Which moment showed the clearest educational potential?

Where did the session become difficult to read?

Was the main barrier technical, social, linguistic, emotional or related to the game itself?

What would you need to know before facilitating this session with a real group? What kind of debriefing would make sense after this co-gaming sequence?

POSSIBLE ADAPTATIONS

With more experienced educators, the same clip can be watched twice. During the first viewing, participants observe freely; during the second, each group applies a specific lens. This makes it easier to compare spontaneous impressions with more structured educational observation.
The activity can also be adapted by using contrasting clips: one well-facilitated co-gaming moment and one confusing or poorly framed one. The comparison helps participants understand how setting, roles, access and communication change the educational quality of the same medium.

REPLICATION NOTE

This activity can be reused whenever educators need to practise reading gameplay before facilitating it directly. **It is especially useful when direct play is not possible or when the group first needs to build confidence with the videogame medium**. The same structure can be applied to recorded clips, shared-screen demonstrations, live observation or short excerpts from a co-gaming session.

DEBRIEFING, FIT AND EDUCATIONAL VALIDITY

From watching gameplay to designing better facilitation

After the observation task, the educator-trainer helps the group compare **what each observation lens has revealed**. The same co-gaming sequence may look very different depending on the focus adopted: one group may notice communication problems, another may identify access barriers, another may see role distribution, while another may recognise possible debriefing themes.

This is the main value of the activity. Observation slows down the judgement. Instead of saying that a game is “chaotic”, “fun”, “inclusive” or “too difficult”, **educators learn to describe what actually makes it so**: the speed of the task, the interface, the communication channel, the presence or absence of guidance, the way beginners are treated, the amount of previous knowledge required, or the type of pressure created by the game.

The debriefing can therefore move around three different questions:

What did each lens reveal?

This concerns the difference between observing roles, access, communication or educational potential. Each lens makes some elements visible and leaves others in the background.

What would change if the group were different?

This concerns target adaptation. The same clip may work with confident gamers, but be confusing for beginners; it may be useful for educators in training, but too indirect for learners who need direct participation.

What would the facilitator need to prepare?

This concerns the practical consequences of observation: clearer instructions, a slower task, different roles, a safer communication channel, a shorter clip, a pause for explanation, or a more focused debriefing.

CO-GAMING SESSION PLAN

A short planning template for live educational play

This final template helps educators turn a commercial game into a structured co-gaming session. It should be used after the technical and safety conditions have already been checked. **The focus here is educational design**: what the group will do, how participants will take part, what the educator will observe and how the live experience will be discussed afterwards.

Before the session

Game and segment:
Which game, map, route, scene, island, puzzle or shared-screen sequence will be used?

Educational objective:
What is the main focus: cooperation, role-taking, communication, participation, confidence, digital citizenship or another aim?

Target group:
What level of gaming experience, digital confidence, language ability and social exposure can the group realistically manage?

Roles:
Who will play, observe, guide, support, take notes, read the map, moderate chat or lead part of the debriefing?

Live task:
What exactly will participants try to do during the session?

During the session

Participation:
Are participants entering the activity in different but legitimate ways?

Facilitation:
Does the educator need to slow down, clarify the task, redistribute roles or reduce pressure?

Observation focus:
What is being observed: communication, cooperation, support, confusion, leadership, frustration, access or group rhythm?

After the session

Debriefing focus:
What will the group discuss from the live experience?

Learning connection:
How will the session connect to adult learning, participation, social interaction or digital confidence?

Adaptation:
What should be changed before repeating the activity with another group?

A co-gaming session should remain limited, readable and connected to a clear educational purpose. This template helps educators organise live play as a facilitated experience, with attention to participation, reflection and non-formal learning.

PRACTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATORS AND FACILITATORS



01.

This final chapter brings together the methodological principles developed throughout the booklet and turns them into practical steps for educators and facilitators. The focus is on how to design a videogame-based activity from beginning to end: defining the objective, understanding the group, selecting the game, preparing the setting, assigning roles, observing participation and planning the debriefing.

02. DESIGNING WITH PROPORTION AND ON ACTUAL NEEDS

As discussed in the previous chapters, a videogame-based activity becomes useful **when it is proportionate** to the group, the setting and the educational objective. **The framework helps educators decide how much gameplay is needed**, which format is realistic, what level of exposure is appropriate, and how observation and debriefing should be actually prepared.

03. FINAL TOOLS FOR ADAPTATION AND TRANSFER

The chapter closes the booklet with **operational tools** that educators can reuse and adapt: an activity planning sheet, an observation grid, debriefing prompts and a final readiness checklist. Their purpose is to **support replication** without mechanical copying, allowing the same method to be transferred **across different groups**, games and **non-formal (and informal) learning contexts**.

THE VIDEOGAME-BASED ACTIVITY CYCLE

A planning sequence with concrete formats

The purpose of this final framework is to **help educators move from a general intention to a concrete videogame-based activity**. At this stage of the booklet, the central question is no longer whether commercial games can be used in adult education, but **how an educator can make a coherent design choice**: which need is being addressed, which format is most appropriate, which game or material can support the activity, what kind of participation is expected, and how the experience will be reflected on afterwards.

A videogame-based activity can therefore be planned as a sequence of decisions. The educator starts from the group and the educational context, then identifies the objective, chooses the format, selects the game or material, prepares the setting, defines the task, observes what happens and finally supports reflection and adaptation. This cycle is not meant to standardise every activity. Its function is to make the design process visible, so that an activity can be documented, adapted and repeated in other non-formal learning contexts.

The first design question concerns the educational need. A group may need to work on cooperation, digital confidence, gradual participation, emotional regulation, role-taking, online behaviour, social inclusion or reflective learning. Each need points towards a different kind of activity. If the focus is cooperation, a short shared task may be more useful than a long open-world session.

If the focus is digital wellbeing, a mapping activity may be more appropriate than direct gameplay. If the focus is co-gaming, the educator may select a controlled live segment from a commercial game rather than asking participants to enter a large multiplayer environment without preparation.

The table in the next page connects some common educational needs with possible videogame-based formats and examples already developed in the booklet.



Educational need	Possible format	Game or material example	Related activity model
Gradual participation	Low-pressure co-play or shared-screen play	PowerWash Simulator, Palia, Fall Guys custom lobby	*Small Steps Into Shared Play*
Cooperation and communication	Short cooperative task	Overcooked, Portal 2 co-op, Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes	*Mapping Skills Through Gameplay*
Role-taking and responsibility	Character, avatar or role-based activity	The Sims 4, Baldur's Gate 3, Final Fantasy XIV role discussion	*Avatar, Role and Perspective-Taking*
Creativity and shared planning	Building or sandbox task	Minecraft Creative, Roblox selected experience, Fortnite Creative	*Building a Shared Space / User-Generated Worlds*
Trust, suspicion and group dynamics	Social deduction or discussion-based play	Among Us, selected gameplay clip	*Trust, Suspicion and Group Discussion*
Digital routines and wellbeing	Mapping or non-playing activity	Daily quests, Twitch, Discord, mobile games, gacha routines	*Mapping Digital Routines and Interactions*
Educator training without direct play	Clip analysis or shared-screen observation	Roblox, Fortnite Creative, Genshin Impact, MMO clips	*Observing a Co-Gaming Session*
Live co-gaming	Guided session with controlled access	Genshin Impact exploration, Fortnite Creative island	*Guided Co-Gaming Session*

This table should not be read as a fixed catalogue. The same title can support different educational aims depending on the selected segment, the group and the debriefing focus.

After identifying the general direction, the educator can use a more technical planning sequence. This second table translates the cycle into concrete design decisions:

Design step	Concrete decision
1. Read the context	Who is the group? What level of gaming experience, digital confidence, language ability and social exposure can they manage?
2. Define the aim	Is the activity about participation, cooperation, life skills, anxiety and isolation, digital wellbeing, roles, imagination or co-gaming?
3. Choose the format	Direct gameplay, co-gaming, shared-screen session, gameplay clip analysis, mapping exercise, character work or discussion-based activity.
4. Select the material	One mission, one round, one map, one puzzle, one avatar screen, one clip, one community example or one digital routine.
5. Prepare access	Devices, accounts, connection, language, controls, cost, privacy, safety and possible non-playing roles.
6. Define the task	What exactly will participants do: build, explore, observe, decide, map, discuss, coordinate, support, compare or reflect?

7. Assign roles	Who will play, observe, guide, support, take notes, manage time, read chat, moderate or report during debriefing?
8. Choose the observation focus	Communication, participation, roles, support, frustration, access barriers, confidence, inclusion, leadership or digital routines.
9. Plan the debriefing	Which questions will help the group connect the experience with learning, participation and everyday contexts?
10. Adapt for replication	What can be simplified, replaced, shortened, documented or transferred to another group or setting?

The cycle becomes useful when it leads to real design choices. An educator who wants to work on social entry may decide to use a **shared-screen activity** first, because the group needs to observe before playing. A facilitator working on cooperation may select **a short *PowerWash Simulator* task**, because the activity allows participants to divide areas, help each other and see visible progress without strong performance pressure. A trainer working with educators may use a *Fortnite Creative* clip rather than live gameplay, because the aim is to practise observation before facilitation. In each case, the method remains recognisable, but the format changes according to the educational situation.

This is also where proportionality becomes important. **A videogame-based activity should be large enough to create a real experience, but small enough to be facilitated, observed and discussed**. In many cases, the best design choice is to reduce the game: one scene instead of a full narrative arc, one route instead of an open-world session, one private map instead of public matchmaking, one character screen instead of a full role-playing campaign, one routine map instead of a long discussion on digital wellbeing. **Reducing the game does not weaken the activity, but it makes the educational frame clearer**.

The same cycle can be used after the activity as a review tool. The educator can return to the design steps and ask what worked, what created barriers, what was too long, what was too exposing, which role was missing, whether the observation focus was too broad, or whether the debriefing produced meaningful reflection. In this sense, **the cycle supports both planning and improvement**. It allows educators to move from a single session to a reusable method, which can be adapted across games, groups and non-formal learning contexts without becoming mechanical.

DESIGNING WITH THE GROUP IN MIND

Initial needs analysis and participation profiling

Designing with the group in mind begins before the choice of the game. In adult education and non-formal learning, an activity should be based on **a preliminary understanding of the participants**: their expectations, previous experiences, confidence, access conditions and possible barriers to participation. This step can be described as **a light needs analysis or participation profiling**. It does not require a formal procedure, and it should not become an invasive assessment of personal difficulties; **it is a practical educational process that helps the facilitator decide what kind of videogame-based activity the group can realistically enter**.

A useful needs analysis can be simple. It may take the form of a short opening conversation, a few questions in a registration form, a group icebreaker, an anonymous digital poll, a short interview with the organisation hosting the activity, or an informal discussion at the beginning of a workshop. **What matters is not the complexity of the tool, but the quality of the information collected**.
The educator needs to understand whether the group is familiar with games, whether participants feel confident or hesitant with digital tools, whether they prefer to observe before acting, whether language may become a barrier, and whether the activity should avoid strong exposure, competition or voice-based interaction.

This first screening should remain educational in tone. The facilitator is not asking participants to explain personal fragilities, disclose anxiety, describe isolation or justify their gaming habits.

The focus is on participation conditions: what helps people enter an activity, what makes them feel blocked, what kinds of digital spaces they already know, and what level of support may be needed. In this sense, needs analysis is also a way to protect the group from activities that are too ambitious, too fast or too exposed for the actual context.

The information collected can be organised around a few practical areas, as shown in the next page:



Area to explore	Useful screening question	Design implication
Previous gaming experience	Have participants played games before? On mobile, console, PC or not at all?	Helps decide between direct gameplay, shared screen, clip analysis or non-playing activities.
Digital confidence	Do participants usually feel comfortable trying new digital tools?	Indicates how much technical preparation, guidance or simplification is needed.
Access conditions	Are devices, accounts, internet connection and language requirements realistic?	Prevents the activity from depending on resources participants do not have.
Participation preference	Do participants prefer to act immediately, observe first, work in pairs, or take a support role?	Helps define playing and non-playing roles.
Exposure level	Are voice chat, public performance, ranking or visible mistakes likely to create pressure?	Helps choose private settings, text chat, slower tasks or observer roles.
Learning focus	What should the activity support: cooperation, confidence, communication, wellbeing, role-taking or reflection?	Connects the game format to a clear educational purpose.
Time and setting	How much time is available, and where will the activity take place?	Helps reduce the game to one task, clip, map, scene or discussion format.

The same screening can lead to very different design choices. A group with little gaming experience but good curiosity may start with a shared-screen exploration rather than direct multiplayer play. A group of experienced players may need less technical guidance but more attention to communication rules, competitive habits and inclusion of less confident members. A group of educators may benefit from observing a clip before trying to facilitate a live session. A group working on digital wellbeing may not need to play at all; a mapping activity on routines, platforms and online contact may be more coherent with the objective. **The purpose of the initial needs analysis is therefore not to categorise participants, but to avoid designing in the abstract**. It helps the educator choose a format that matches the group's real conditions and not an imagined version of them. This is especially important in videogame-based education, because the distance between participants can be wide: one person may know the game deeply, another may have never used a controller, another may be comfortable online but uncomfortable speaking in voice chat, and another may participate more easily as an observer or supporter. **A short qualitative screening also makes adaptation easier: if the educator discovers that direct play would create too many access barriers, the same objective can be approached through a shared screen or a guided discussion**. If the group has strong gaming experience, the educator can use that familiarity while still framing the activity educationally. If the group is mixed, the session can include differentiated roles so that participation is not limited to the most confident players. The activity is then designed from the group outward, rather than from the game inward.

In practical terms, the facilitator can complete the needs analysis by writing a brief participation profile before finalising the activity:

This group can probably manage…
direct play / shared screen / clip analysis / mapping / discussion.

This group may need support with…
devices / accounts / language / controls / confidence / turn-taking / exposure.

This group should probably avoid, at least at the beginning…
public matchmaking / voice chat / ranking / fast competition / complex onboarding / long sessions.

The most suitable educational focus seems to be…
cooperation / communication / gradual participation / digital wellbeing / role-taking / confidence / social inclusion.

This profile does not need to be long. **Its value is methodological**: it helps the educator make design choices that are explicit, proportionate and easier to justify. In adult education, this is often what makes the difference between an activity that is merely interesting and an activity that participants can actually enter, use and reflect on.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT FORMAT AND PLANNING REFLECTION

Reflection as part of the design

In many adult education workshops, reflection can sometimes emerge during the activity itself: participants discuss what they are doing, compare experiences, adjust their behaviour and gradually make sense of the task. **With videogame-based activities, this process cannot always be taken for granted**. A game may be engaging, familiar or enjoyable, but its educational meaning is not necessarily obvious to participants while they are playing, watching or analysing it. **For this reason, the reflective frame should be prepared before the session begins, because it influences the choice of format, the size of the task, the role of the educator and the kind of experience the group will later discuss**.
This is particularly important when working with learners who are already familiar with games. Knowing how to play does not automatically mean knowing how to read a game situation educationally. A participant may complete a mission, win a match, use a character effectively or navigate a platform with confidence, without recognising what the activity has made visible in terms of communication, cooperation, role-taking, frustration, support, inclusion or decision-making. **The educator's task is therefore not only to organise an interesting activity, but to prepare a route through which participants can look back at what happened and understand why it matters in a learning context**.

The choice of format should follow this logic. Direct gameplay, shared screen, clip analysis, character work, mapping exercises and discussion-based activities do not produce the same kind of reflective material.

A live co-gaming session may create strong material on communication, role distribution and coordination, but it can also be technically and socially demanding. A gameplay clip may be less immersive, but it allows participants to slow down observation and analyse a situation without being exposed directly. A mapping activity may not involve playing at all, but may be more coherent when the focus is digital wellbeing, online routines or social contact. A character or avatar activity may be more useful when the aim is role-taking, self-expression or perspective-taking.

The key planning question is therefore simple: what will participants need to look back at?

If the educator wants the group to reflect on communication, the activity should include moments where information has to be shared, simplified, repeated or negotiated. If the focus is inclusion, the task should make different levels of confidence visible without humiliating beginners. If the focus is emotional regulation, the activity should include manageable difficulty, not overwhelming pressure. If the focus is digital participation, the material may be a Discord routine, a Twitch community, a gameplay clip or a shared online space rather than a live gameplay task.

Reflection planning can be organised through a short sequence of decisions:

1. What should remain visible after the activity?

The educator identifies the element that the group should be able to recognise afterwards: a role, a moment of cooperation, a difficulty, a communication problem, a decision, a routine, a form of support or a barrier to participation. This prevents the activity from becoming too open and difficult to discuss.

2. Where is this element likely to appear?

The educator considers the moment in which the chosen element may become visible: during the first attempt, when someone asks for help, when the group has to coordinate, when a rule is unclear, when a participant hesitates, when the game creates pressure, or when the task has to be repeated. This helps the educator observe with more precision during the session.

3. How will participants be helped to notice it?

Participants may notice the element through direct experience, observation, note-taking, a shared screen, a pause during the activity, or a short reconstruction after the task. The educator does not need to explain everything while the activity is happening, but should prepare a way to bring attention back to the relevant moment.

4. How will the experience be connected to learning?

The educator prepares one or two prompts that link the concrete moment to the educational objective. The question should not be generic, such as "what did you learn?", but connected to the experience: what did this moment show about participation, communication, confidence, support, decision-making, digital wellbeing or group work?

A compact planning sheet can help educators prepare this step:

Reflection planning step	Educator's note
What should remain visible after the activity?	
Where may it appear during the activity?	
How will participants be helped to notice it?	
How will the experience be connected to learning?	

This reflective frame also helps when the session does not go exactly as planned. **A failed login, a confusing interface, an unexpected hesitation, a task that proves too fast or a group that needs more support can still produce educational material, if the educator handles the situation carefully**. The point is not to pretend that every problem is useful, but to recognise when an unexpected event can help the group discuss access, instructions, confidence, digital barriers or the conditions that make participation possible.

The depth of reflection should remain proportionate to the activity. A five-minute clip does not need a long theoretical discussion. A live co-gaming session may need time to reconstruct the sequence of events before moving to interpretation. A mapping exercise on digital routines may require a calmer conversation around habits, pressure and small changes. In all cases, reflection should stay close to the activity itself, so that participants are not asked to produce abstract conclusions disconnected from what they actually experienced.

Choosing the format and planning reflection should therefore be treated as a single design step. The educator selects the format by asking what kind of experience or material it can generate, and then prepares a reflective route that helps the group use that material. **The activity becomes educational when participants can move from doing, watching or mapping something to understanding what that experience reveals about participation, learning, communication and digital life**.

FINAL READINESS CHECK

Before reusing or adapting an activity

This final check can be used before bringing a videogame-based activity into a real educational setting. It does not add another method to the booklet; **it simply helps the educator verify whether the activity is clear, limited, safe and ready to be facilitated, discussed and adapted**.

Before using the activity:

□ The educational aim can be written in one sentence.
□ The selected game or material is limited to one usable segment: one task, scene, clip, route, map, puzzle, character screen or discussion object.
□ The group can enter the activity without unnecessary technical barriers.
□ At least one non-playing role is available for participants who should not or cannot play directly.
□ The level of exposure is appropriate for the group.
□ Privacy and communication rules are clear before the activity starts.
□ A backup format exists if direct gameplay, accounts, connection or devices do not work.

During the activity:

□ The educator knows when to intervene and when to let the group work.
□ The activity remains readable for participants.
□ Beginners are not left behind, but they are not overprotected either.
□ The game serves the task, instead of absorbing the whole session.
□ The communication channel supports participation without creating unnecessary pressure.
□ One or two relevant moments are noted for later discussion.

After the activity:

□ Participants reconstruct what happened before interpreting it.
□ The debriefing refers to concrete moments, not generic impressions.
□ The group identifies one learning point, competence, difficulty or transferable insight.
□ The educator notes what should be changed before repeating the activity.
□ The activity can be simplified, shortened, slowed down or moved to another format if needed.
□ The session leaves enough information to be reused by another educator without depending only on the memory of who facilitated it.

A videogame-based activity is ready to be reused when its basic structure is understandable: what was proposed, why it was proposed, how participants entered it, what happened during the session, and what should be changed next time.

CONCLUSIONS

From videogame-based activities to educational practice

This booklet has been developed as a methodological and operational output of the project **Adventures are better shared!**, through the collaboration between partners bringing different experiences in education, youth work, gaming cultures, inclusion and non-formal learning. **Its purpose has been to explore how commercial video games can be placed inside a clear educational frame and used as part of structured, reflective and replicable activities, without presenting them as automatic solutions or as tools that become educational simply because they are played in a group**.
Throughout the booklet, video games have been approached as **interactive environments**, **social spaces and cultural objects that are already part of many people's everyday digital lives**. From this perspective, the relevant question is not how to add games superficially to educational work, but how gaming can offer meaningful situations for participation, observation and reflection when it is handled with educational intention. **A game can create a shared task**, **a fictional role**, a moment of cooperation, **a difficulty**, **a routine**, a **digital community or a space where learners can act before being asked to explain themselves directly**. These elements become educationally relevant when the educator prepares the setting, observes what happens and supports the group in making sense of the experience.

The chapters have followed a methodological progression. The first part focused on interaction and participation, showing how gameplay can make communication, cooperation, hesitation, support, leadership and group dynamics more visible.

The following sections connected gaming with life skills, active imagination, avatars, role-taking and perspective-taking, before moving towards more delicate themes such as anxiety, isolation, online belonging and digital wellbeing. **The booklet then addressed the practical conditions that make videogame-based education possible**: tools, spaces, devices, accounts, communication channels, privacy, moderation and accessibility. Finally, the co-gaming chapter translated the method into facilitated live sessions with commercial titles and guided observation formats.
The manual is therefore primarily concerned with educational design. **Some gaming literacy is necessary, because educators need to understand at least the basic language, platforms, genres and community practices they are working with; however, the core of the booklet lies in the construction of educational situations through the videogame medium**. The educator defines a purpose, reads the group, selects an appropriate format, reduces the game to a manageable activity, prepares access and safety conditions, assigns roles, observes participation and plans a meaningful debriefing. The game is one component of this process, while the educational value depends on the frame built around it.
The practical activities proposed in the booklet should be read as models rather than fixed recipes. They are not intended to be copied mechanically, because the same game may work differently with another group, in another setting or with another objective. **Replicability, in this perspective, means keeping the structure clear enough to be transferred and adapted without pretending that every session can be repeated unchanged**.

The booklet also underlines the need for boundaries. Gaming can support participation, belonging, confidence and informal learning, but it can also create pressure, exclusion, overexposure, toxicity, problematic routines or confusion if it is not framed carefully. **Safety, moderation and accessibility are therefore part of the educational setting, since they influence how participants enter the activity, how visible they become, how they communicate, how they can step back and how the experience will be discussed**. A well-prepared activity does not remove every possible difficulty, but it makes the session more readable and manageable for both educators and learners.

This manual is complemented by two additional project resources. **The narrative surveys** provide a qualitative basis for understanding experiences, perceptions and practices around gaming, education and participation, helping to situate the methodological work within the voices and perspectives collected during the project. **The operational glossary on gaming literacy** for educators offers a more introductory support for practitioners who need to become familiar with basic terms, platforms, genres, community spaces and gaming-related concepts before designing or facilitating activities. **Together, these resources support different levels of engagement: understanding the field, learning the vocabulary and applying the method**.

The contribution of this booklet is practical and methodological. It offers educators and facilitators a way to work with commercial video games without reducing them either to entertainment or to ready-made educational products. It proposes a framework for using games as structured situations in which participants can act, observe, cooperate, take roles, encounter difficulties and reflect on what happened. **In adult education and non-formal learning contexts, this can support the connection between digital culture, participation, inclusion, life skills, social interaction and reflective learning**.

On the other hand, the final responsibility remains with the educator. No game, platform or activity format can replace educational judgement, because the quality of the intervention depends on the capacity to choose proportionate tools, prepare safe and accessible settings, recognise what happens during the activity and help learners transform experience into reflection. When this frame is present, videogame-based education can become a concrete method for designing learning situations that are closer to the digital lives, informal practices and participatory cultures of the people educators work with.

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