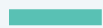




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Gaming Together



Digital Parental Mediation
and Responsible Gaming Toolkit



Gaming and Parents: education in Game Media Literacy and parental digital mediation

High Rollers! // Gaming & Parents

project code: 2023-2-IT02-KA210-ADU-000175959

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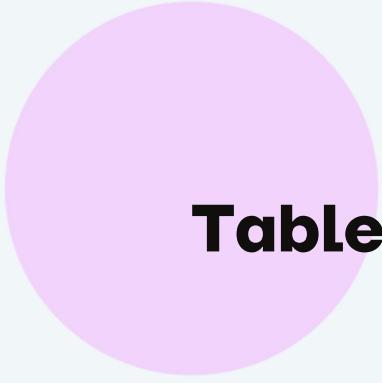


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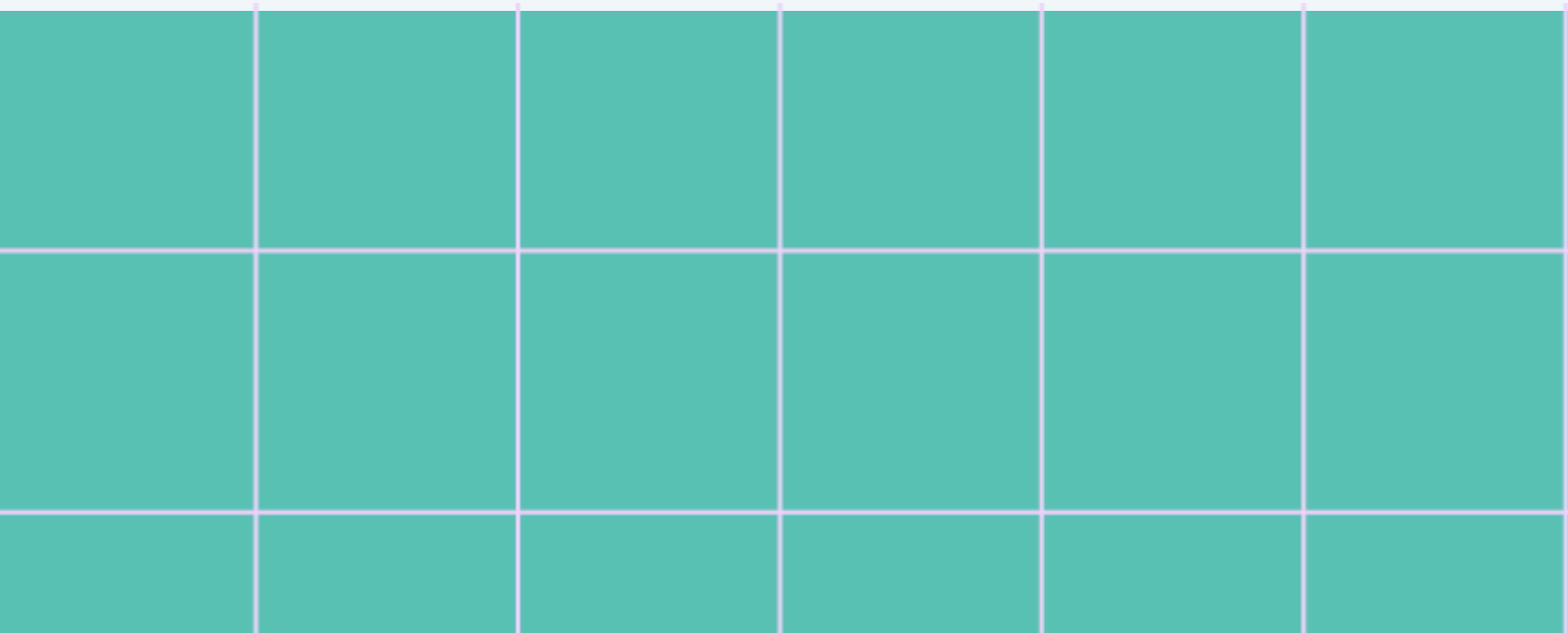
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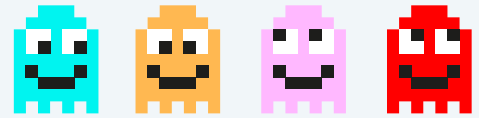
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Introduction



Video games are everywhere. From the most complex and expensive titles to an endless series of mobile games, simple apps that can be installed on your smartphone without any particular problems.

Over the years, a real language has developed, an endless series of words and acronyms that we can all hear, especially if we interact with younger people (but not even that much):

Gatcha, RPG, action-based games, MOBA, MMORPG, FPS...

F2P, P2P, and P2W, or even gg, gg ez, kill, pull, gank, farm (or grind), camping, buff, nerf, cheat, op, lag...

Acronyms and abbreviations that, at first glance, seem like random letters thrown together, but which actually encompass an entire universe: that of video game culture and video game consumption, or, in simple terms, gaming. A world that, for people who are not ‘insiders’ or, more simply, not passionate or interested, may seem distant and even a little cryptic, but which for at least 30 years has become an integral part of the daily lives of many, many people. Gaming culture is no longer limited to a few famous titles: if we were to somehow encapsulate it in one or more categories, **it would be more of a cross-cutting activity that involves hundreds of millions of people** (yes, hundreds of millions, if not more) almost every day, regardless of age, gender, or geographical origin. It is not just a phenomenon of simple entertainment, but something that unites and defines a true global community, capable of engaging its fans for hours on end, not limited to those spent, literally, in front of a screen or device.

However, the aim of this operating manual is not to write the history of languages, to talk about new formations in our lexicon, or anything else. Nor is it to write cultural, media, or audiovisual history.

The aim is rather to observe and communicate a fact, to provide information on a phenomenon that is as vast and widespread as it is commonly misunderstood and misinterpreted, defeating a few stereotypes and preconceptions here and there, addressing a category commonly understood as “opposed to video games”: parents.

Even in this case, not without some stereotypes or generalizations: who said that a parent is not, in turn, a video game player (or gamer)? Above all, are we sure that video games are a phenomenon dedicated to, and consumed by, only younger people?

In reality, contrary to expectations, as highlighted in the report All About Video Games – European Key Facts 2023, published by Video Games Europe^[1], 53% of the European population aged between 6 and 64 plays video games. The average age of gamers is 31.4, with 75% of people who regularly play video games being 18 or older. In short, it is much less adolescent than one might think. However, if we look not so much at the consumption or purchase of a title in a more or less episodic way, nor at the frequency, but rather at the type of game, i.e., if we understand gaming as being “glued” to the *PlayStation 5* or computer playing *League of Legends*, *World of Warcraft*, or *Valorant*, if we mean the purchase of something objectively expensive, such as *Final Fantasy VII Rebirth* or *Baldur's Gate III*, if we mean it as a more or less strong interest in gaming culture (to the point of using the kind of slang mentioned at the beginning of our introduction in our own language), then yes, gaming becomes more of an activity for young people, for teenagers (but also, at the same time, for young adults, up to at least 30-35 years old).

But isn't playing a ‘simple’ and free app on your cell phone, from the old and now somewhat outdated *Angry Birds* to the famous *Candy Crush*, the same thing? Is playing a few ‘little games’ on your tablet or cell phone while queuing at the bank or post office, or during your lunch break, so different?

To put it bluntly: no, it isn't.

Nevertheless, we are so accustomed to interpreting gaming as something youthful, as a waste of time, as an alienation typical of the younger generations, as something intimately connected to a specific product, a console, a way of playing (in your room, with headphones, perhaps on *Discord*, or even in front of the TV with a joystick in hand), that it is difficult to see it for what it really is: **a phenomenon, a consumption, a practice on a vast, vast scale with infinite possibilities, modes, and gradations that, above all, involves and affects all of us, regardless of age, and cannot be reduced to a single category.**

It is a phenomenon behind which there are countless possibilities and jobs, behind which there could be ambitions, emotions, interests – in the broadest and most complex sense possible.

Let's make a comparison. No one would ever think of discrediting cinema – from simple interest or passion to the actual film industry. Or digital art, the multimedia world, and so on. However, we forget to understand that, at the end of the day, it is essentially the same thing. In essence, it is always about audiovisual media, commerce, and entertainment.

Can we be moved by a movie but not by a video game? A movie can provide us with important messages and a new perspective on the world, but can't a video game do the same?

1. Video Games Europe. (2023). All About Video Games – European Key Facts. Available here: <https://www.videogameseurope.eu/news/annual-data-report-on-europes-video-games-sector-launched-at-gamescom/>

Simply put, compared to other cultural, digital, and media phenomena, the only difference that seems to characterize gaming is that it is more widespread, as well as its ability to engage more people for longer periods of time. In short, it seems to be more appealing to the general public, of all ages (and we will see why later).

And then, perhaps also because of this greater and more pervasive diffusion, it is more controversial, often becoming a sort of 'symbol' of generational conflict and, more specifically, of family conflict.

Like everything else, from art to cooking, sports, or social activities (going out, being in a group, dancing), gaming, which should be understood as the simple consumption of cultural and audiovisual products, is not in itself intrinsically good or bad. It all depends on how it is used, how this activity fits into our habits and our daily lives.

Like sports, **gaming can also become a compulsive activity**, it can become an addiction (aggression or isolation, or a decline in performance are different issues: studies on the subject now seem to refute the fact that video game consumption can generate these types of problems^[2]).

However, if video games are here to stay, if the market is constantly growing and now drives the entire global audiovisual industry (not just cinema or TV series!), is it not preferable for parents, before completely dismissing this activity (and, at the same time, before approving it without giving it some thought, handing their young children a tablet or computer), to learn more about it? Would it not be preferable in the long run to be able to mediate video game consumption, managing to integrate it in a healthy way into family habits?

If it is true that gaming can be dangerous, wouldn't it be preferable to really understand the dangers, without falling into stereotypes or preconceptions? Knowing when it is too much, when a title is suitable for a certain age group and when it is not (and above all why, not just by reading the label), knowing, based on inclinations, which activity or title might be suitable for your family and which might not.

At the same time, if it is true (as all the literature in the field now claims) that video game consumption can, in fact, be an educational tool with great potential, stimulating players in an interactive way and improving concentration, creativity, memory, logic, language learning, and teamwork, wouldn't it be preferable to be able to find your way around and enter this world with even a little more awareness?

2. Ferguson, C. J., & Kilburn, J. (2009). "The Public Health Risks of Media Violence: A Meta-Analytic Review." *The Journal of Pediatrics*, 154(5), 759-763.

Kühn, S., et al. (2019). "Does Playing Violent Video Games Cause Aggression? A Longitudinal Intervention Study." *Molecular Psychiatry*, 24, 1220-1234.

Drummond, A., & Sauer, J. D. (2014). "Video-Games Do Not Negatively Impact Adolescent Academic Performance in Science, Mathematics or Reading." *PLOS ONE*, 9(4), e87943.

And many others, spanning pedagogy, social sciences, psychology, and medicine. To put it briefly: no, gaming, in itself, does not lead to a decline in performance, antisocial behavior, or aggression. Neither in adults nor, above all, in younger people or adolescents.

The aim of this toolkit—as well as our course, which was delivered in blended mode, and, in general, the **Gaming and Parents** project—is to promote a different way of interpreting and understanding the cultural phenomenon of gaming, without focusing too much on whether it is intrinsically right or wrong (in which case we would never reach a conclusion), but focusing entirely on what really makes a difference in the family, namely parental competence in this area.

Many parents who already play video games have the advantage of fully understanding what their children are doing and why, as they can also share gaming activities with them, together appreciating the most positive, educational, and formative aspects inherent in gaming.

They may not play the same games or for the same amount of time (or maybe they do). They may not invest less time or resources, but less attention to one or more video games.

However, they will be able to recognize that those games, those digital pastimes, are not, in themselves, something else, something alien. And above all, that what they play and what their children play is not radically different, but is essentially the same thing: being immersed, involved, and interested in digital, audiovisual, and media products and activities. Possibly, they will also be able to understand that there are different ways of playing video games, of consuming, in one way or another, the same video game products. Indeed, these slightly more aware parents may even be able to broaden their knowledge through greater contact with their children, to experience something different, perhaps more complex, and ultimately become more competent in digital matters in a broader sense.

However, just as many parents are unfamiliar with these digital products, reject them entirely and, often even worse, let the younger members of the household do as they please, without questioning it too much. And even if they themselves consume a little gaming culture, they interpret it as something different, certainly not comparable to spending hours in front of a PC or *PlayStation*.

In this case, gaming could indeed become isolation and, above all, something you do alone, a real suspension of family time, continuing to perpetuate stereotypes and prejudices to a greater or lesser extent and, above all, continuing not to interact with a very important component—if not, on balance, the most important, if only in terms of size—of what is commonly understood as contemporary **digital competence and resilience**, in Europe and around the world.

This operating manual, which was developed from an informal course for parents and was produced in Italy and Iceland in 2025, will therefore seek, through **various units, good practices, and many concrete examples and exercises**, to bring those who are furthest from this slice of digital culture closer to the world of gaming, focusing above all on family environments and times, parenting, and parental digital mediation.

However, although the direct beneficiaries of this resource are parents, each chapter has been designed to be useful also for adults who do not necessarily have children but who, whether they like it or not, are still exposed to gaming culture. For example, teachers, or people involved in education and training who are in contact with younger generations, or even ‘ordinary’ adults who, again, whether they like it or not, are exposed almost every day to this increasingly impressive digital and cultural phenomenon and would like to understand it a little better and perhaps even try to be part of it.

In the first chapter, we will try to understand what gaming is today. Not just a pastime or a “digital toy,” but **a global cultural and social phenomenon**, rooted in the homes and imaginations of millions of people. We will provide a summary of data, trends, and types of games to better understand the breadth and relevance of this universe, which appears to be purely recreational but is now central to the broader imagination of our contemporary culture.

After this thematic analysis, still in the first chapter, we will delve into what really interests educators: the skills that gaming can promote and develop. These are primarily **cognitive, social, relational, affective, and creative skills and abilities**: all dimensions that, when viewed without prejudice, demonstrate how video games can be not only entertainment, but also tools for real individual, collective, and family growth.

To make everything more concrete, we will provide some **examples of video games that have significant educational potential**: titles that are often already present in our homes, perhaps given as gifts or downloaded without particular reflection, but capable of offering unexpected insights.

At the end of the first section, we will propose a series of **structured observation exercises**, useful for building real “skills maps” based on the most common gaming experiences, with particular attention, as mentioned, to the most popular commercial titles. These are activities designed to concretely experiment with an educational approach to gaming, not as a simple distraction to be managed, but as a practice to be understood and, when appropriate, valued.

In the second chapter, we will take a closer look at the relationship between gaming and parenting, focusing on a key theme of our project: **digital parental mediation**. We will analyze what this concept means, what the most common models and approaches are, and why it is an important tool for accompanying children in their relationship with digital technology, transforming playtime into an opportunity for dialogue and shared growth, always at the family level. Again, we will focus on practical aspects, starting with guidelines on managing screen time consciously: we will therefore propose ideas, tools, communication models, and family routines that, far from being simple prohibitions, will allow parents to implement shared practices that empower younger people (as well as themselves), while alleviating conflicts related to screen time.

Another key element will be the choice of suitable video games, evaluating titles based on the age and sensitivity of the player, transforming even the moments of selection and purchase into a potentially educational and, above all, conscious phenomenon.

Also in the second section, we will delve directly into the heart of family practice and what, in fact, represents the most relevant methodological example in terms of digital parental mediation: **co-gaming**, i.e., playing together, parents and children. We will analyze how this type of experience strengthens family relationships, what advantages it brings, and how it can become an opportunity to get to know each other better, share interests, and develop a more authentic intergenerational dialogue, precisely around digital technology. We will also provide **practical advice on how to start co-gaming, suggesting games suitable for different contexts** (consoles, PCs, mobile devices) and levels of familiarity with video games, so that this practice is accessible even to those who do not consider themselves ‘gamers’. As above, at the end of the second section, we will also propose a series of practical exercises, with the aim of consolidating and, above all, transmitting and disseminating as much as possible what has been learned. From the creation of a **family gaming plan**, which defines shared criteria and agreements, to the creation of a co-gaming session diary, a simple tool not only for actually carrying out a co-gaming session, but also for reflecting together on the emotions, dynamics, and skills that emerged during shared gaming.

In the third chapter, we will address an extremely sensitive issue that rightly raises fears and doubts: so-called **gaming addiction**, addiction to video games. Like many other forms of addiction, some better known than others, this topic triggers alarm and fear, but it deserves to be examined carefully and, above all, clearly.

First of all, we will ask ourselves: when does intensive use of video games really become a problem? Because not all people who play a lot are 'addicted'. There is a significant difference between intensive use, sometimes even daily, and a condition of true addiction: being able to understand this precise aspect, even in broad terms, is essential not only to be able to address the issue with balance and competence, but also to navigate more consciously in the broader field of everyday digital life (not just video games).

The **real warning signs** will be defined and discussed: behaviors that, if observed carefully, can actually lead one to think that there is a real risk. Above all, we will define who to turn to and how to do so when one believes they have spotted one or more warning signs. Similar to the previous chapters, this section will also be accompanied by some practical exercises designed to 'train' you to recognize and deal with possible situations of distress or addiction.

In the last section of the operating manual, we will open up a horizon that for many parents is potentially still very new and unfamiliar: the world of *eSports*, *streamers*, and interactive sharing platforms, including *Twitch.tv* in particular.

For some, the term "electronic sports" seems like a contradiction in terms; for others, however, it is a world in full swing, with professional athletes, international tournaments, sponsors, federations, world cups, and even university scholarships for those who excel in certain video game disciplines. A world that is already a reality for millions of people, with its own culture, role models, and success stories, especially in the Nordic countries (but also in the United States, Latin America, and, of course, the Far East).

Our goal is certainly not to turn everyone into *eSports* experts, but to familiarize ourselves with this additional piece of digital culture, to understand why it fascinates younger people so much and to grasp its educational and relational potential. If it is completely natural to watch a soccer game or a volleyball match together, why shouldn't it be natural to watch an *eSports* game together? Watching, understanding, discussing, and perhaps having fun in the same way: a new and conscious way to create quality family time, shifting the generational gap towards new forms of competence and relationality.

To put this into practice, we propose a simple exercise: watching a game together, a live stream, with a little guided analysis, to observe not only the game, but also the dynamics, emotions, and atmosphere surrounding it, with the aim of transforming a digital moment into another opportunity for dialogue, contact, and participation.

Finally, **at the end of the operating manual, a practical appendix** has been prepared for those who wish to continue further along this educational path. It is a set of additional summary exercises that can be reused, also suitable for small workshops with other parents and, above all, educators. The appendix will include instructions on how to replicate the entire course, with the support of teaching sheets, useful for facilitating discussion and training in different contexts, together with a collection of additional resources (links, support services, and a short essential bibliography) for those who wish to further explore the vast topic of everyday digital technology and video games.

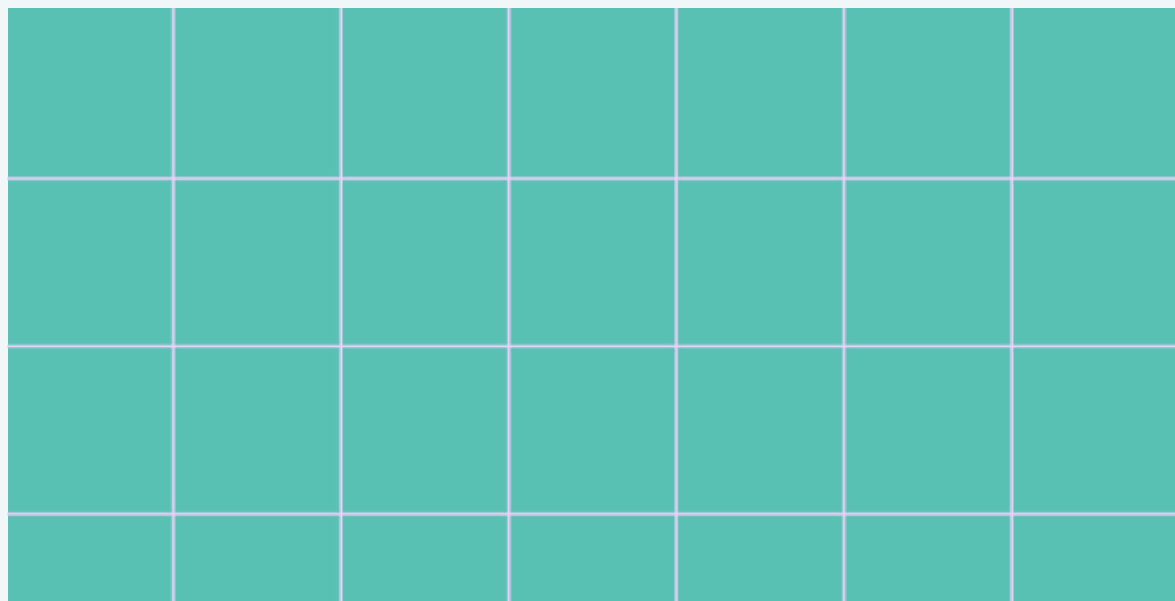
The Partnership



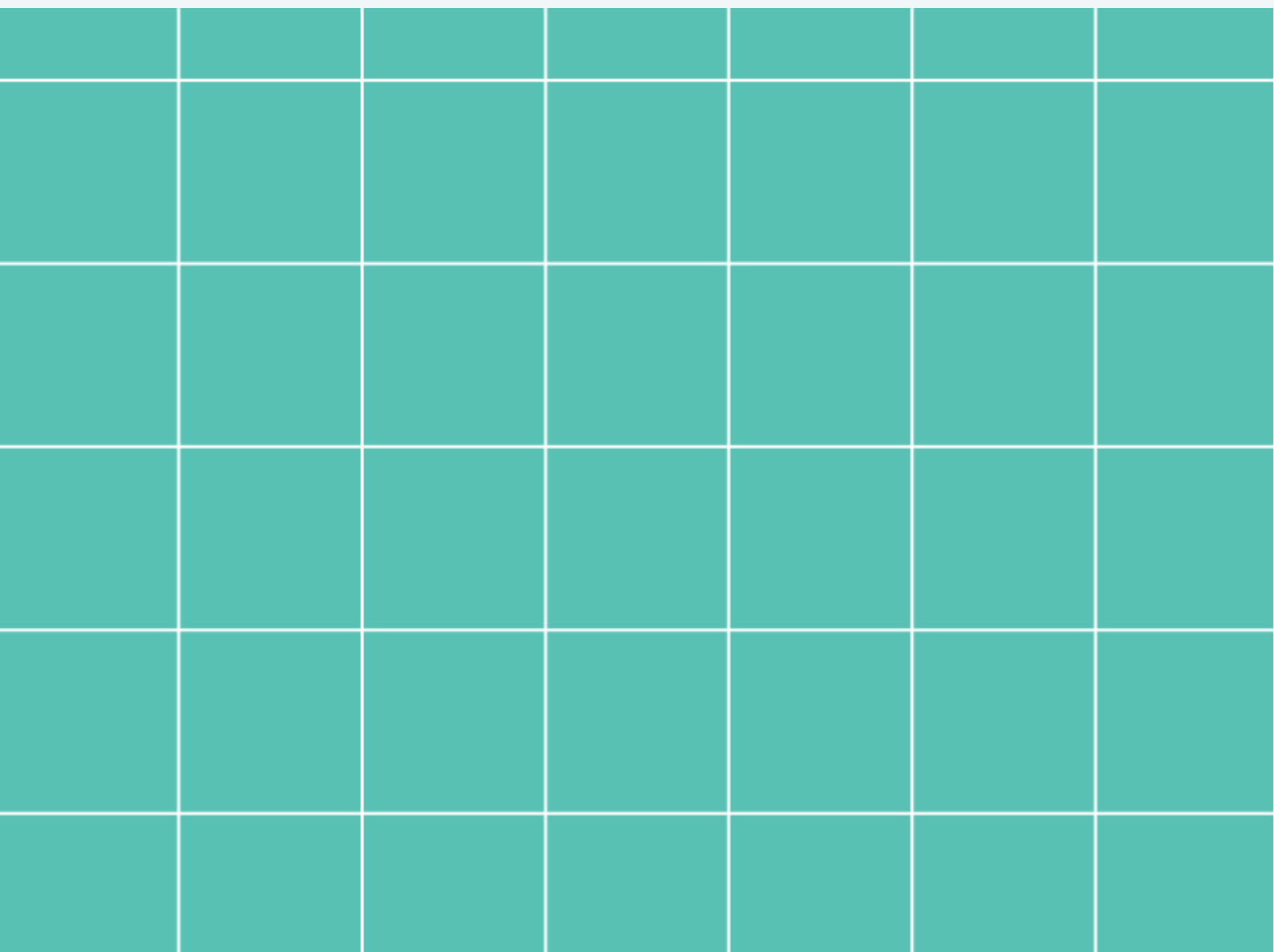
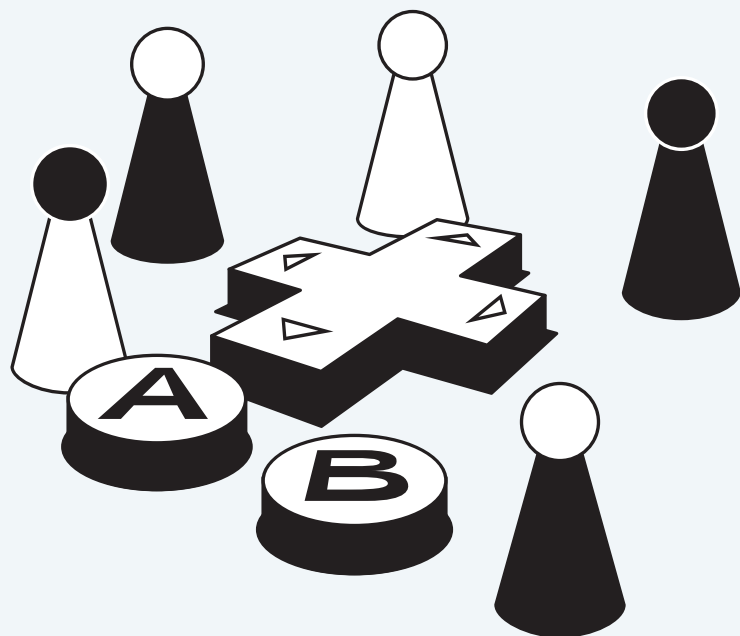
is a non-profit association founded in 2022, which began as an informal group of young professionals with complementary profiles from different geographical areas of Italy. The association is a space—both physical and virtual, online—where psychologists, educators, youth workers, and digital volunteers promote practices and resources that support inclusion and the non-professional empowerment of those who, like them, are involved in social activities, facilitation, youth socio-educational animation, tutoring, and, in essence, social promotion. **Close in the Distance** focuses primarily on **SOGIESC** issues, **online inclusion**, **Educational Gaming**, and **Digital Youth Work**, carrying out its activities mainly in virtual spaces and communities.



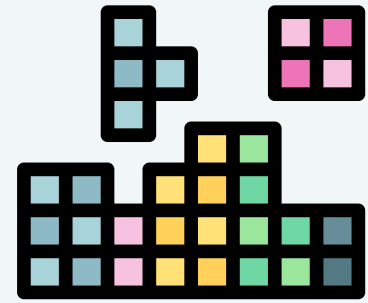
is an Icelandic non-profit sports federation founded in 2018 to promote and develop **eSports** as a cultural and educational activity, part of a Northern European network dedicated to gaming culture. The federation organizes competitive events and activities aimed at parents, teachers, and educators, offering awareness courses on the **conscious use of video games**, **digital inclusion**, and **well-being**. It also supports young gamers in finding training and professional opportunities in the European gaming industry, reaching hundreds of people every year through online broadcasts and communication programs dedicated to gaming culture.



GLOSSARY



The language of gaming



Gaming

The activity of playing video games on consoles, PCs, smartphones, or other devices. It includes both individual and online gaming, generally with other people, but also the culture surrounding it (events, streaming, communities).

Gamer

Someone who plays video games, either occasionally (casual gamer) or regularly (hardcore gamer).

Console

An electronic device specifically dedicated to gaming. The term 'console' implicitly refers to "objects" such as the *PlayStation*, *Xbox*, and *Nintendo Switch*.

Mobile gaming

Playing on smartphones or tablets, with generally shorter sessions and (often, but not always) free games. Examples of typical mobile games are *Candy Crush* and *Clash Royale*. At the same time, more complex, narrative and/or exploratory titles, such as *Genshin Impact* and *Honkai Star Rail*, or competitive multiplayer games, such as *Wild Rift*, are also mobile (i.e., available on smartphones as well as consoles/PCs).

Multiplayer, Online Multiplayer

A game mode that allows you to play with other people via the Internet, often in teams. The mode of interaction (competitive, adversarial, collaborative, social) depends on the genre of the game. The most typical examples of competitive games are, for example, *Fortnite*, *League of Legends*, *Valorant*, and *Call of Duty*. Other games, such as *World of Warcraft*, *Final Fantasy XIV*, and even *Minecraft* (multiplayer mode) can, on the contrary, be understood as examples of collaborative and cooperative play.

MOBA (Multiplayer Online Battle Arena)

A competitive genre with teams fighting on symmetrical maps. A specific and very significant multiplayer game mode. Among the examples already mentioned, we can also add *Dota 2*.

RPG (Role-Playing Game)

Games in which the player takes on the role of a character, often with customizable characteristics and abilities, who 'grows' (not so much physically as morally, experientially, and subjectively). The gaming experience is built around an extensive and detailed narrative: the world in which you move is an 'artificial world', i.e. a fictional environment with its own rules, geography, cultures, and stories created specifically for the game. Many RPGs, especially the more recent ones, allow the player to influence the plot through their choices, generating different narrative paths and stimulating ethical and creative reflection. Among the best-known examples are sagas such as *The Witcher*, *Dragon Age*, *Final Fantasy*, and *The Elder Scrolls*, which consist of numerous titles published over the years. Other well-known titles include *Baldur's Gate III*, the recent *Claire Obscure*, *Expedition 33* (a rare example of a European-produced game), *Cyberpunk 2077*, and *The Last of Us*.

FPS (First Person Shooter)

The highly controversial (and widely played) genre of first-person shooters, in which you see through the eyes of the character. Among the most typical examples are *Call of Duty* and *Valorant*.

Open World

Games set in virtual worlds that can be freely explored, with no mandatory paths. These are not necessarily role-playing games in the strict sense: they are generally more oriented towards exploration itself, or towards action-type experiences. Among the most famous examples are *The Legend of Zelda* and *GTA*.

Sandbox

Games that offer great creative freedom without pre-set objectives: literally, you build (often anything). Needless to say, the prime example is the educational video game par excellence: *Minecraft*, in all its versions.

Free-to-Play (F2P)

Games that are free to download, with optional purchases (microtransactions) for items or upgrades. For example, *Fortnite* or *League of Legends*, but also *Genshin Impact*, *Wuthering Waves* (although, technically, these titles, while free, fall into the *gacha* genre, which is particularly controversial but nonetheless widespread).

Pay-to-Win (P2W)

Mechanics in which those who spend money gain significant advantages.

DLC (Downloadable Content)

Extra downloadable content that expands a base game (new levels, characters).

Crossplay

A feature that allows players to play together from different devices (as we have already seen, in general, many games today are multi-platform, offering a gaming experience on both PC and console, and often also on smartphones or tablets. It is up to the individual player to choose where and how to play).

eSports

Professional video game competitions, often followed online like traditional sporting events. We will discuss this macroscopic phenomenon in more detail in the last sections of the operating manual.

Streamer

Someone who broadcasts their gaming sessions live, commenting on them, on platforms such as Twitch or YouTube. Among those who do it professionally, with earnings and sponsorships equal to those of 'traditional' professional athletes, and those who do it simply as a hobby, streaming one's gaming experience (but not only) is now a cultural phenomenon that is highly representative of what can be understood as digital life.

Precisely because the goal is to develop cross-cutting skills, with a focus on parenting, we decided to complete this short glossary with other terms, derived from the world and culture of gaming and the online world, but which have become slang "youth" par excellence:

Lag

Delay in the game's response due to a slow connection. The biggest enemy of a gamer who needs the internet to play. Hence, a slightly clumsy person will be said *to be lagging*.

Pulling (pull)

Intentionally attracting an enemy or group of enemies to start a fight. The origin of the term is the verb “to pull.” Pulling aggro can therefore mean deliberately attracting attention, exposing oneself.

Tanking (tank)

Intentionally taking damage to protect other players, typical of “tanks” (characters with high defense). Hence, a bad moment or bad experience (e.g., a teacher who is not particularly friendly) will be tanked.

Nerf, Nerfing

Reducing the power of an element of the game to balance the dynamics. The origin is a bit curious, coming from Nerf (a US brand of “soft” toys). Suffering a demotion, whether material or immaterial, or a failure or downsizing, could be linked to the thematic universe of nerf.

Buff, Buffing

To make a character more powerful temporarily. The exceptional, well-prepared test was therefore buffed.

Farm, Farming

To repeat game actions to accumulate resources or points.

Grind

Playing repetitively and for a long time to gain advantages (similar to farming, but more intensive). “I passed with 100, I really grinded this subject.”

Cheat

Using tricks to gain illicit advantages. Its context of use, for example in an academic environment (but also with peers), is perhaps the most intuitive of all.

OP (Overpowered)

An element that is too powerful compared to the rest of the game. Generally, the latter is now understood as a charismatic personality trait.

GG / GG EZ (Good Game / Good Game, Easy)

A greeting at the end of a game; GG EZ is sometimes sarcastic or provocative. Now a typical expression used to end any daily activity.

Camp, Camping

Staying in a strategic spot waiting for an opponent. Lying in wait, even metaphorically.

Respawn, Respawning

To be reborn in the game after being eliminated. A great comeback, for example in visibility or competence, in the face of a bad failure (just think of the school context), is technically a respawn.

Loot, Looting

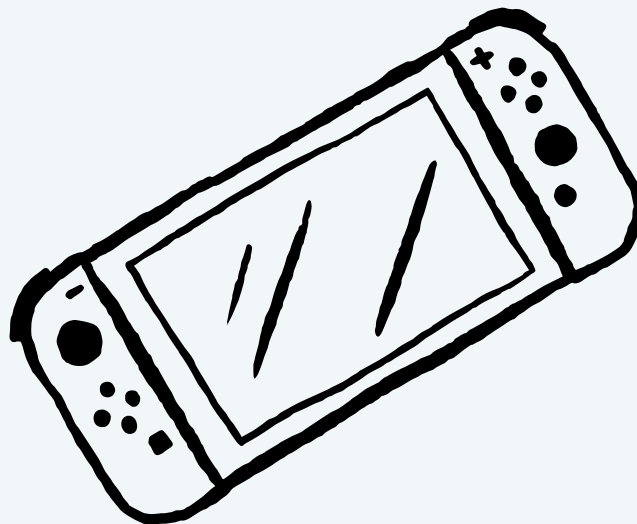
Collecting items from defeated enemies or explored locations. Metaphorically, reaping what you have sown or worked for.

To learn more:

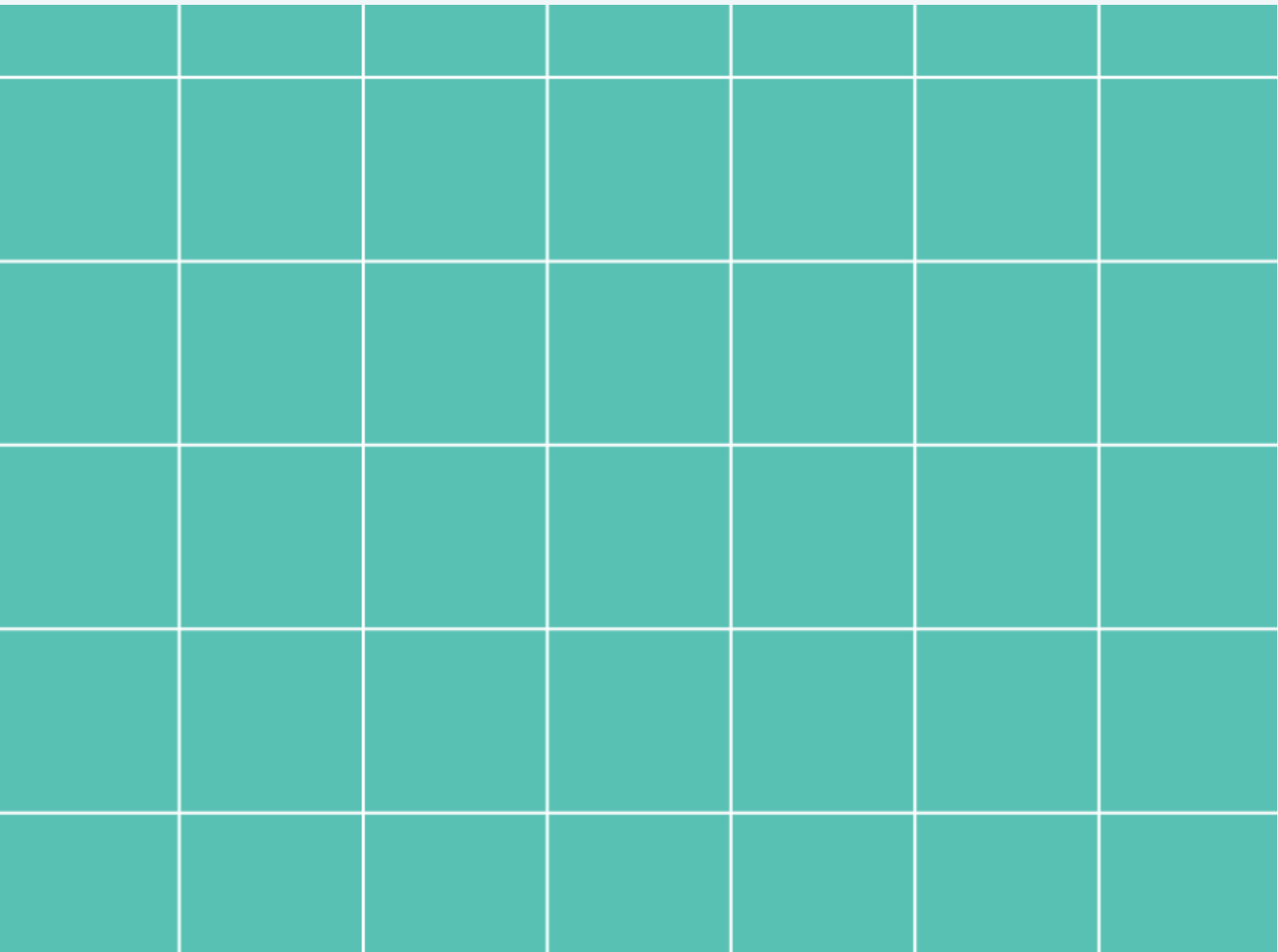
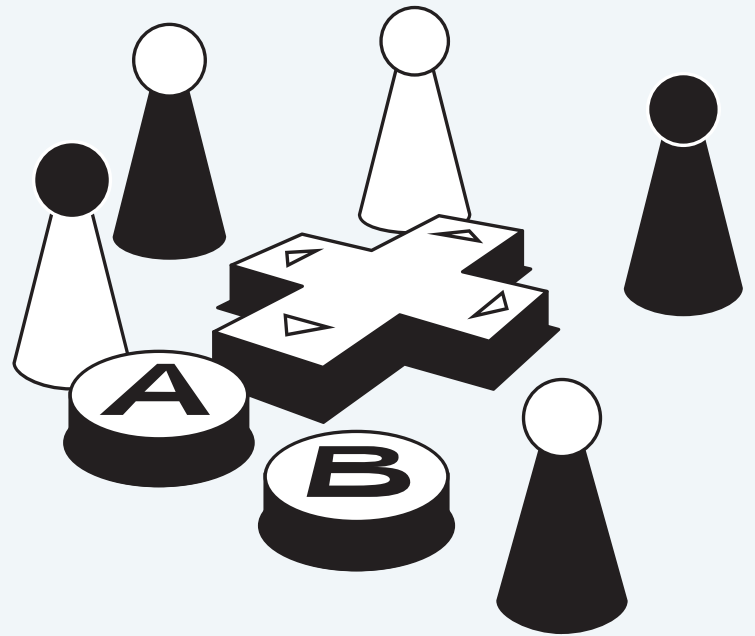
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GAMING'S EDUCATIONAL POTENTIAL



Gaming today: data, trends, types of games, and online and offline experiences

As mentioned in the introduction, today, talking about video games means talking about one of the largest cultural industries in the world, often even more profitable than the film and music industries combined. This is, in itself, a relatively recent trend: until the 1980s and much of the 1990s, video games were perceived as a pastime strictly for young people, almost always male, and strongly associated with a “niche” technological dimension.

The first personal computers and home consoles (*Nintendo Entertainment System*, *Sega Mega Drive*) represented a sort of ‘private arcade’, where you played alone or, at most, with one other person in front of the same screen, with titles as famous – now true historical artefacts – as they were simple, somewhat repetitive and, given the technological limitations of the time, with exclusively two-dimensional (2D) graphics.

Among the most nostalgic examples are the very first *Super Mario Bros.* – which is still one of the most played and profitable franchises today – the famous *Tetris*, created almost by accident but which became a worldwide phenomenon thanks to its emphasis on logic and reflexes, the more narrative *Sonic the Hedgehog*, Sega’s mascot, and of course *Pac-Man*, the arcade game par excellence that brought the arcade experience directly to consoles and private homes.

All these titles continue to live on in memory and in digital and gaming culture, even among the younger generations, considering that many of these sagas are still publishing new and highly successful episodes today. On the other hand, in their original form, they inevitably appear limited in comparison to the narrative depth and freedom of action that we tend to take for granted today when purchasing a commercial title for PC or *PlayStation*.

The evolution, starting in the mid-1990s, has been rapid and entirely exponential. The arrival of the so-called fourth and fifth generation consoles (namely, the *PlayStation* and *Nintendo 64*) began to transform gaming, albeit gradually, into a family phenomenon. Narrative titles such as *Final Fantasy VII* already demonstrated in the late 1990s how a video game could achieve the depth of a novel and the spectacular nature of a film, considering the technological standards of the time.

The real revolution, however, came with the advent of the Internet at the turn of the 2000s, when the web began to relentlessly reshape the very concept of interaction and socialization. Those years saw the birth of *MMORPGs* such as *World of Warcraft* (still widely played today) and *Final Fantasy XI*, true persistent virtual worlds where millions of people coexist, collaborate, and compete. At the same time, the first network-connected consoles (*PlayStation 2 Online*, *Xbox Live*) became widespread, marking the definitive transition from an individual activity to an increasingly collective, fully multiplayer experience.

Gaming today: size and audience

Today, the numbers tell the story of a phenomenon that is now completely normalized, but not really understood, especially considering the communication difficulties that characterize transgenerational relationships. According to the European Key Facts 2024 report by Video Games Europe, more than one in two people in Europe now play regularly: this means 53% of the population. Although gaming is, as mentioned, an area that makes the generation gap quite explicit, the idea that video games are exclusively ‘for young people’ is now outdated by the actual data: **the average age of gamers is actually around 31.4 years old**, reflecting an audience that is not only made up of teenagers, but also young adults and adults who are already fully integrated into working and family life.

In Italy, for example, the picture is similar, with a market that reached a value of €2.4 billion in 2024 (IIDEA data, April 2025) and approximately 14 million active players. This figure has been growing steadily since 2020, indicating a structural trend that is certainly not episodic or dictated by external and exceptional causes. In fact, another interesting piece of information concerns the age composition: 75% of people who play are, on balance, over 18 years old, which means that a quarter of the entire adult population in Italy is directly involved in gaming, whether it be occasional sessions on mobile phones or constant engagement on consoles and PCs. Of course, as has been said many times before, playing games does not necessarily mean defining oneself as a “gamer.”

This is where a sort of perceptual bias comes into play: the older we get, the more we tend to consider what we do as “something different” from video games in the strict sense. Those who play *Candy Crush* on the sofa in the evening, those who relax with digital solitaire, or those who follow their children in a session of *Minecraft* often do not perceive themselves as “gamers.” It is as if the term “gamer” is still associated, in the imagination of many adults, with a teenager wearing headphones, locked in their room, perhaps engaged in long gaming marathons.

Video gaming has therefore become a cross-cultural practice, uniting different generations, genders, and social classes. The spread of mobile devices has amplified this democratization: titles such as *Candy Crush* or *Clash Royale* have made gaming accessible without the need for expensive equipment, but even objectively more complex games, such as *Genshin Impact* or *Wild Rift*, have brought experiences that were once considered exclusive to PCs and consoles to smartphones. Today, anyone can find a game ‘tailored’ to their free time and preferences, whether it's quick games while waiting for the train or complex and engaging adventures on the sofa at home.

Contemporary video games: a true cultural ecosystem

To better understand what gaming really is today, we can define it as an extremely diverse ecosystem that cannot be reduced to a single “title” or “game session.” It is something broader, which includes the modes of use themselves, the communities of reference, the technological platforms, and even the languages that are created around video gaming. In other words, there is no longer just one way to play, but a constellation of experiences that respond to profoundly different interests, times, and needs. This transformation reflects, in a very concrete and material way, a wide range of social, technological, and cultural changes: video games are no longer “closed products,” but have for years been experiential spaces in which people can literally put their cognitive, emotional, social, and even introspective skills to the test. There are games that require **quick reflexes and teamwork**, others that stimulate **creative imagination or empathy towards complex characters and stories**, and still others that become moments of **daily respite or opportunities for light socialization**. One element seems to unite all these possible experiences today: the centrality of the video game player and their **interactive, reflective, and perceptive dynamics**, in a broad sense their protagonism, contrary to the stereotype that video game players are inert, passive spectators “indoctrinated” by what they see on a screen. Consider action and shooter titles, direct descendants of the pioneering *Doom* and *Quake*, which in the 1990s defined the imagery of ‘fast-paced, adrenaline-fueled, competitive gaming’. Today, this genre lives on in global phenomena such as *Call of Duty: Warzone* and *Valorant*, which are not just individual entertainment but actual sports, with international tournaments followed by millions of spectators and professional careers built around competitive gaming (eSports). Here, the experience—and, consequently, the area of expertise involved—is that of rapid decision-making, team coordination, and stress management: soft skills that are far from trivial and highly replicable in real life.

Another key genre is *MOBA* (Multiplayer Online Battle Arena), a relatively young category that exploded in the 2000s with the famous *Defense of the Ancients* mod for *Warcraft III*. Today, it is dominated by titles such as *League of Legends* and its mobile version *Wild Rift*, which takes the same formula and makes it a little more accessible, but not necessarily “simple.” These games are based on complex strategies and cooperation between different roles: each player is required to make quick decisions and communicate effectively with the team. It is an experience that, beyond entertainment, trains **collaborative dynamics and problem-solving skills**, which can once again be applied linearly to real life and everyday, educational, interactive, or social contexts.

Then there are *RPGs* (Role-Playing Games), already covered in our glossary: perhaps the most “literary” genre of all, a direct evolution of tabletop role-playing games such as *Dungeons & Dragons*. In role-playing games, the player almost always takes on the role of the protagonist, generally within complex narrative worlds. In the Western world, they have given rise to now classic sagas such as *The Witcher* (inspired by the novels of Andrzej Sapkowski), *Mass Effect*, *Dragon Age*, *Claire Obscure*, and *Baldur's Gate III*, awarded Game of the Year 2023. In Japan, the approach is often more aesthetic and emotional, as shown by long-running sagas such as *Final Fantasy* and *Persona*, which focus on feelings, relationships, and personal growth. In these games, the player's choices have a real impact on the development of the story, transforming the experience into a veritable laboratory of **ethics, identity, empathy, and civic sense**, embodying and realizing prosocial behaviors.

Another dimension is that of *Open World* and *Sandbox*, virtual worlds that prioritize freedom of exploration and creativity. From the poetic *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* to the provocative *Grand Theft Auto V*, to the now iconic *Minecraft*—now also used for educational purposes with the Education Edition—these games allow players to experiment without rigid constraints, build, collaborate, and use their imagination as a tool for play and learning: literally, you build something yourself, even something very, very complex, such as a city, an entire nation, an entire ecosystem.

Alongside these, the interactive narrative game sector has grown, such as *The Last of Us* or *Detroit: Become Human*, where mechanics are often secondary to the story, emotions, and ethical dilemmas. And let's not forget the world of casual and puzzle games—from *Candy Crush* to *Monument Valley* to the unexpected global phenomenon of *Among Us* during the COVID-19 pandemic—which show how gaming can also be a brief but meaningful part of everyday life, often linked to light socializing with friends or family.

The result of all this is that gaming today is a spectrum of worlds, styles, and languages: from casual pastimes on smartphones to epic adventures requiring dozens of hours of play, from professional competition to personal and creative discovery. It is a space where people can put not only their technical skills to the test, but also their cognitive, emotional, and relational abilities, transforming a hobby into a place of cultural exploration and, possibly, a real educational training ground of a non-formal and informal nature.

“Video games are not just entertainment tools, but learning environments that promote skill acquisition, identity experimentation, and creative problem solving (Gee, 2003).”

New trends (2024–2025)

The gaming landscape is constantly evolving, placing great emphasis on diversity of experience and enjoyment, depending on the context, the player and their subjective attitudes, as well as the actual game being played. But what are—if any—the actual common trends that, in a sense, make it legitimate to talk about gaming as a fairly unified digital and experiential phenomenon?

One of the most significant is certainly total connectivity: today, people play on multiple devices—PCs, consoles, smartphones—without losing progress, thus eliminating the old separation between “types of gamers.” This means that a friend with a *PlayStation* can share the same game with another who plays on a PC or even a mobile phone, creating a multi-platform ecosystem that breaks down not only technological and social barriers, but also spatial and geographical ones, going far beyond one's own room or gaming station.

Then there is the validation of the gaming experience in the sporting arena. *eSports* have taken on a central role, no longer relegated to a niche for “nerds,” becoming sporting events in their own right, followed by millions of viewers around the world. The *League of Legends* world finals, for example, have reached audience peaks higher than some NBA games, with professional teams, sponsors, coaches, and even athletic trainers. But even without reaching such peaks, many universities now offer scholarships to skilled and competitive gamers, just like talented “old-school” athletes.

At the same time, **the phenomenon of streaming has exploded**, another common trend that has now redefined the very concept of gaming. Every day, millions of people no longer just play games, but watch others play on platforms such as ***Twitch*** or ***YouTube Gaming***. This has given rise to the figure of the streamer, a cross between an entertainer, digital athlete, and influencer, capable of building real online communities around their personality and playing style. Gaming has thus become entertainment, often with commercial ambitions and capabilities: a phenomenon that, objectively speaking, has no real equivalent in the more “ancient” forms of multimedia consumption or enjoyment.

Another important trend is the growth of high-end **mobile gaming**: games such as *Honkai Star Rail* and *Wuthering Waves* demonstrate that the phone is no longer just a platform for quick puzzle games, but also for graphically complex and narrative experiences, once reserved for PCs or the latest generation of consoles.

Finally, we are witnessing a **growing hybridization of genres**: games mix different styles—action with RPG components, survival with deep narrative, adventure with elements of social simulation—precisely because the general public is now increasingly accustomed to investing time and personal resources, seeking ever more complex and customizable experiences, far removed from the rigid patterns that were still in place until about 15 years ago.

Why does this concern adults and, above all, parents?

Because gaming is no longer a marginal phenomenon or ‘elsewhere’ from real life: it is a primary cultural form, producing stories, imagery, languages, and even styles of social interaction. It is a job market—with roles such as developers, designers, streamers, and event organizers—and a place of **authentic social interaction**, where teenagers and adults share experiences comparable to those of a team sport or cultural club. Because gaming is perhaps the greatest example of everyday digital and cross-cutting digital skills, as well as onlife. To continue to deny this would mean giving up on understanding one of the spaces where generations meet (and sometimes clash), a space that can also become an educational and relational opportunity, if viewed with care and awareness.

Skills developed through gaming: cognition, social skills, interpersonal and emotional skills

Video games, long relegated to the idea of a frivolous pastime or even perceived as a threat to the development of children and adolescents, have instead been progressively recognized over the last twenty years as a fertile context, capable of stimulating cognitive, emotional, and social processes of great importance. It is not just a matter of 'playing', but of immersing oneself in a complex universe, made up of implicit and explicit rules, symbols, increasing challenges, and narratives that require constant attention, problem-solving skills, cooperation, and continuous management of emotions. In this sense, gaming, if experienced with awareness, can become a real informal laboratory for transversal skills.

Of course, what is developed does not depend indiscriminately on 'any video game': much is linked to the title we choose, the genre it belongs to, and the way we experience it alone or with others. Depending on the category of game, we can hypothesize the activation of specific areas of growth: there are titles that mainly train **logic** and **memory skills**, others that stimulate **emotional sensitivity** or **social cooperation**; some encourage **inclusion** and **acceptance of diversity**, while others serve as a training ground for **resilience** in the face of difficult and seemingly insurmountable tasks. It is therefore possible to imagine each video game genre as a small, distinct 'experiential domain', roughly associated with a different type of skill, whether **cognitive**, **relational**, or **emotional**.

In this sense, gaming often takes the form of a micro-laboratory, informal but effective, for enhancing our resources: from memory to attention, from emotional regulation to the ability to collaborate with other people. Let's take a closer look at these 'elusive' skills – which are in fact very concrete – that the gaming experience makes possible.

Cognitive, attentional, and motivational skills

The first skills we will discuss are those that we could define, in the simplest and most accessible way, as "mental." By the term "cognitive," we mean, albeit simplifying somewhat, **the set of processes that allow us to know and interpret the world: memory, attention, reasoning, and problem-solving skills**. These are the functions that every person uses when learning something new, reading a map, or trying to remember a to-do list.

Alongside these, or more accurately within these, we find **attentive skills**: the ability to stay focused on what is relevant, to filter out unnecessary stimuli, and to shift our mental gaze from one task to another without getting lost (and without getting distracted). In multi-stimulus contexts such as those we encounter every day, attention is considered a resource that is as fragile as it is adaptive (if we were unable to focus on just one thing, we would end up overwhelmed by external stimuli).

Finally, there is the **motivational dimension**: the drive to persevere despite frustration, the desire to overcome obstacles, the satisfaction that comes from achieving a difficult goal. More generally, the drive, the motivation to do, to complete, to try. Here we are no longer talking only about the 'head' but also, inevitably, about emotion. However, motivation is basically what drives us to try again after a failure (of any kind, not just in gaming!), what transforms a possible obstacle into an opportunity for growth.

The cognitive-attentional-motivational triad therefore represents one of the fundamental bases not only of the skills that can be stimulated by gaming, but, in a broader sense, of general psychology: a sort of underlying architecture that, in concrete terms, makes learning and adaptation possible in every area of daily life. This triad must naturally be accompanied by the **emotional dimension**, which acts in parallel, intertwining with and constantly modulating the others. Precisely because of its pervasive centrality in psychological processes, we will focus on it in more detail in the following paragraphs.

If we turn our attention to the world of video games, a real turning point in the way these dimensions are understood came at the beginning of the new millennium. When James Paul Gee published *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy* (2003)^[3], many read his words as a provocation: to argue that a video game could embody principles of learning meant overturning a cultural paradigm that still saw digital games as ephemeral or even dangerous pastimes. Yet his analysis clearly showed how digital games are designed to force players to learn: advancing to the next level means moving into a new environment, tackling challenging tasks, and setting long-term goals. “Knowledge,” writes Gee, “is not transmitted in abstract form, but is constructed within experience, in doing, in making mistakes, and in trying again.”^[4] This perspective anticipated the now widely accepted notion of situated learning, restoring the dignity of video games as an informal laboratory for strategies, logic, and perseverance. In subsequent years, neuroscience has confirmed this intuition. Studies conducted on patients with schizophrenia have shown that eight weeks of training with three-dimensional video games produce an increase in connectivity between the hippocampus and the prefrontal cortex, with positive effects on sustained attention and overall psychological well-being^[5]. The fact that such an effect emerges in such a delicate clinical context suggests how much stronger it may be in childhood, when cognitive plasticity is at its peak.

Other studies have highlighted specific improvements: action games, for example, enhance visuospatial attention and speed in selecting relevant stimuli^[6]; strategy or simulation games strengthen the ability to plan and manage multiple tasks, as demonstrated by studies that observed an increase in multitasking after ten weeks of practice^[7]; even seemingly simple games such as *Tetris* or *Pac-Man* prove to be useful contexts for exercising spatial reasoning or risk assessment, especially when incorporated into educational programs such as *XBadges*, which aim to develop soft skills that can be transferred to everyday life^[8]. This constellation of results paints a coherent picture: digital gaming not only entertains, but also deeply activates cognitive networks, bringing attention, memory, and motivation into dialogue. Every mistake becomes an opportunity to try again, every challenge an invitation to surpass oneself, and it is precisely from this dynamic that a form of resilience arises that translates into concrete skills, both on and off the screen.

3. James Paul Gee (1948-2022) was an American linguist and educationalist, professor of Literacy Studies and applied linguistics, first at the University of Wisconsin and then at Arizona State University. He is remembered for his contributions to studies on literacy and discursive practices, but above all for bringing video games into the international educational debate.

4. Gee, J. P. (2003). *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*. Palgrave Macmillan.

5. Becker, M. et al. (2024). Videogame training increases clinical well-being, attention and hippocampal-prefrontal connectivity in schizophrenia.

6. Green, C. S., & Bavelier, D. (2012). Learning, attentional control, and action video games.

7. Chiappe, D. et al. (2013). Improving multitasking through action videogames.

8. Terlecki, M. S., & Newcombe, N. S. (2005). How important is the digital divide? Tetris and spatial skills.

Social and cooperative skills

In the previous section, we saw how video games can affect the cognitive functioning of individuals, whether adolescents or adults. Here, we shift our focus to another equally important dimension: that of being together, whether virtually or not. Because, let's be clear, today, with global interconnection and the fact that almost all games and consoles are intrinsically online, **who really plays alone?** Of course, there are still single-player titles, but the vast majority of contemporary gaming experiences are mostly social. Whether it's a game of *League of Legends*, with its cooperative and competitive nature (five against five), a cooperative session in *Fortnite*, or even just exchanging flowers and fruit in *Animal Crossing*, the ultimate individual and light entertainment game, contemporary video games stage relationships, exchanges, and negotiations. In other words, they become a place where social skills are learned—or trained and strengthened.

What do we mean by “social and cooperative skills”? These are the skills that allow us **to relate to others, to communicate, to collaborate**, to coordinate our behavior with those who play with or against us. They are not limited to ‘knowing how to talk’ (as we shall see, this is a skill in itself): the social and cooperative sphere mainly concerns the ability **to interpret social signals, recognize roles**, negotiate implicit rules and, in cooperative contexts, **develop mutual trust**. To summarize further, it is that set of micro-skills that in everyday life allows us to work in groups, resolve conflicts, build networks of friendship and belonging, and develop a sense of purpose-oriented group.

Research confirms what everyday experience suggests. Granic, Lobel, and Engels (2014), in a now classic review, show that cooperative games stimulate prosocial behavior, increasing the willingness to help and collaborate even outside the gaming context^[9]. In other words, it is not confined to the screen: what is learned in the game is transferred, at least in part, to real life. On the other hand, it is also important to emphasize the opposite outcome: in overly competitive games, the opposite effect can be observed, namely the inhibition of cooperative stimuli and the emergence of exclusionary dynamics, in much the same way as can happen, for example, in traditional sports, if they incorporate elements of objective stress or performance anxiety, or in classroom and group work or projects (Lobel et al., 2017)^[10].

Another interesting frontier, as we will see later, concerns **family co-play**: that is, when parents and children play together, transforming the gaming space into a genuine opportunity for intergenerational exchange. Sheffield and Lin (2013) have shown how this practice strengthens family relationships, especially in fathers. However, since this topic is one of the main objectives of our project, we will explore it in more depth in a specific chapter^[11]. Here, it suffices to note that shared play can function as a common language, a neutral space where adults and adolescents meet on equal terms, always within the important framework of cooperative and prosocial skills and attitudes.

9. Granic, I., Lobel, A., & Engels, R. C. M. E. (2014). The benefits of playing video games. *American Psychologist*, 69(1), 66–78.

10. Lobel, A., Engels, R. C. M. E., Stone, L. L., Burk, W. J., & Granic, I. (2017). Video gaming and children's psychosocial wellbeing: A longitudinal study.

11. Sheffield, A., & Lin, L. (2013). Strengthening parent-child relationships through co-playing video games. CELDA Conference Proceedings.

There are also video games that explicitly and structurally incorporate the cooperative dimension. MMORPGs, for example, require a level of coordination that goes far beyond individual skill: tackling a mythical raid in *World of Warcraft* means distributing roles, organizing complex strategies, and synchronizing times and actions in a context where everyone's contribution is essential for collective success. Similar dynamics can be found in the “Ultimate” content of *Final Fantasy XIV*, where precision and cooperation are such that the support of external voice tools is almost inevitable.

And this is where an interesting phenomenon emerges: video game cooperation relies on parallel platforms — such as Discord^[12] or TeamSpeak — which become necessary extensions of the gaming experience. In these spaces, relationships are consolidated, communication routines are developed, and real digital communities are built, capable of maintaining cohesion and continuity even beyond a single gaming session. In this sense, video games are not only a setting for interaction, but also a catalyst for broader social environments, where bonds, belonging, and identity find new forms of expression.

Emotional, relational and empathic skills

All our experiences of the world are permeated by emotion. It is not a decorative addition to thought, but its deepest substance. Antonio Damasio^[13], in books that have now become fundamental, has shown how the mind does not function like a neutral computer: what we call “reason” is nothing more than the refined product of emotional processes that have always guided us. Emotions signal what is valuable, guide our choices, and allow us to distinguish what matters from what can be overlooked. We are not rational beings who occasionally experience emotions: we are emotional beings who have learned to describe and rationalize what we feel.

Thinking of emotion as a flash of anger or a moment of joy is therefore, to put it mildly, somewhat reductive. Emotion means physical and psychophysiological activation, a predisposition to action, modulation of our relationship with the environment and with others. It is fear that accelerates our heartbeat and puts us on alert, satisfaction that confirms the goodness of a choice, frustration that pushes us to recalibrate. Without emotions, there would be no learning, no memory, no further psychological or behavioral dimension. In fact, there would be no identity, no sense of self and others. If this is true in general, it becomes quite clear why video games are so powerful and, at the same time, why the emotional dimension is so important in any resource focused on **Video Game Education**, or even on **Digital and Video Game Mediation**, as in the case of **Gaming and Parents**. We play not out of duty and certainly not with the aim of learning something informally. We all play because something attracts us, excites us, promises us pleasure or, more precisely, an emotional trigger. **Emotional activation is always, in one way or another, the real starting point:** the curiosity to explore a new world, the anticipation of a challenge, the excitement of a victory, even the thrill and frustration of defeat. Without this emotional core, digital gaming would be a set of abstract rules, devoid of meaning. Instead, it is emotion that transforms the level to be overcome or the boss to be defeated into a living experience, which leaves us so engaged that we want to start again.

12. Discord is a digital platform launched in 2015, initially designed to facilitate voice and text communication between video gamers. Its success was immediate precisely because it filled a gap: it offered a flexible, free, and stable tool for coordinating mass cooperative games such as *Final Fantasy XI*, released in the early 2000s, which even then required constant communication between many participants. Since then, Discord has gradually expanded its functions to become one of the leading digital social environments: today it is used not only for gaming, but also in educational, work, and business contexts as a platform for collaboration and online community management.

13. Antonio Damasio is a Portuguese neurologist and neuroscientist, one of the most influential contemporary scholars in the study of the relationship between the brain, mind, and emotions. A professor at the University of Southern California, he has helped to dismantle the Cartesian idea of a purely rational mind, showing—through clinical studies on patients with brain injuries and with the support of modern neuroscience—how emotions are the very basis of the decision-making and cognitive processes of every human being. Among his best-known works are *Descartes' Error* (1994) and *Emotion and Consciousness* (1999), in which he effectively argued that all people are “emotional organisms that learn to think,” and not rational machines that sometimes experience emotions, definitively deconstructing the long-standing Western idea of human beings as intrinsically rational and thinking subjects.

This constant emotional immersion is not limited to immediate pleasure: it also becomes a laboratory for regulation. Losing is never indifferent, even if in a game it never has real consequences, except in highly specific and intrinsically competitive cases (as we will see below in the case of professional eSports). Defeat is a failure that can and must be faced, reworked, and ultimately overcome. Thus, frustration becomes resilience, fear turns into concentration, and enthusiasm translates into motivation to persevere. Every game, every gaming session, is, in fact, a small setting for emotional regulation and education, where one learns to tolerate, transform, and modulate what one feels.

And when the game is played with others, this dynamic is amplified. Coordinating as a team, enduring the tension of a challenge together, sharing joys and defeats means training in empathy, that is, tuning in to the emotional complexity of others, perceiving moods, supporting those who falter or may find themselves in difficulty at a certain point on the map. In this sense, video games do not merely “teach emotional skills,” but rather stage, in a playful and engaging way, the very fabric of our relationships, which hopefully cannot be reduced to simple mechanisms of exchange or a calculation of cause and effect. We do not experience relationships as in a theory of equivalence—I interact with you only because I get something in return—but, more often, as a complex intertwining of asymmetrical reciprocity, gratuitous gestures, and empathy that exceeds pure self-interest. It is precisely in this richer and more nuanced dimension that video games, in their own small way, train us, helping us to recognize the complexity of bonds and to navigate within them.

Examples of video games with educational potential (best practices)

So far, we have talked about skills, how digital games can stimulate and enhance cognitive abilities and aptitudes, promote social development and, above all, train emotionality, which remains, in a certain sense, the nerve center of all psychological dimensions. Everything seems extremely rosy, one might say: playing would be a wonderful discovery in itself, useful and compelling. Yet, as always happens in real life, things cannot be reduced to simple formulas. Like any other cultural practice—to stay in the field of audiovisual and creative arts, think of music or cinema—there is no such thing as “the video game” in the abstract, but there are specific titles, particular experiences, and different contexts that cannot be assimilated to one another. **What really matters, in the end, is what we play, what we bring into our homes, what we decide to invest our time and attention in.** And, above all, in the case of commercial video games, even within an increasingly pervasive ‘free to play’ policy, what we choose to buy. In this sense, the theoretical discussion becomes concrete, because one title may turn out to be pure entertainment devoid of anything else, while another may become an opportunity for learning, cultural exploration, and shared growth. A particular game may prove to be extremely appropriate and stimulating in terms of family co-playing, while another may be unsuitable, either because of its content or its very structure.

The aim of this paragraph is to explore this possibility in more detail: to identify specific cases in which video games not only entertain but also educate, in the broadest sense of the term. Some recent productions have shown how a title, if carefully designed, can become a vehicle for knowledge and skills, even finding its way into schools or more institutional educational contexts. It is therefore worth dwelling on these experiences, because they represent true **best practices**, virtuous examples that tangibly show how the medium of video games can combine pleasure and learning without sacrificing either. It is worth reiterating that when we talk about best practices, we are not referring to so-called serious games, i.e., products developed explicitly for business, training, or educational purposes in the strict sense, often with uninspiring results and a poor gaming experience. Instead, we remain in the realm of video games proper, created for entertainment, but which, thanks to the design, care, and intelligence of their developers, manage to transcend the mere dimension of leisure and transform themselves, almost naturally, into tools for learning and growth.

Discovery Tours of Assassin's Creed

A particularly interesting example of the convergence between entertainment and education comes from the *Assassin's Creed* series^[14]. Alongside the famous commercial adventures, Ubisoft has developed a parallel mode called *Discovery Tour*, created in collaboration with McGill University and with the contribution of historians, archaeologists, and educators. In this version, the game abandons missions, combat, and competitive challenges to become a sort of interactive museum: users can freely explore historical environments reconstructed with meticulous care—Ancient Egypt, Classical Greece, the Viking Age—accompanied by explanations, guided tours, and in-depth materials.

The strength of this tool lies precisely in its educational replicability. Several schools in various countries have already used *Discovery Tours* as a teaching aid: teachers can project a tour in class or let students move around the virtual world themselves, exploring monuments, cities, customs, and practices of the past. It is a way of “teaching history” that does not replace the textbook but complements it, stimulating attention through immersion and engagement.

From an **adult education perspective**, *Discovery Tours* represent a very interesting opportunity: they can be used in continuing education courses, in cultural activities organized by associations or libraries, and in contexts where access to traditional learning tools is less effective. Anyone, regardless of age or level of education, can “take a walk” through Alexandria or Athens, experiencing firsthand (virtually) what books describe in words.

This is the heart of best practice: taking a successful commercial title and exploiting its educational potential without distorting its appeal. Not a product designed from the outset as an ‘educational game’ — and therefore often uninspiring — but a real video game, created to entertain, which, thanks to intelligent design choices, has truly become a vehicle for knowledge.



Screenshot taken from Assassin's Creed Discovery Tour. © Ubisoft Entertainment. All rights reserved.

14. *Assassin's Creed* is one of the most famous and long-running video game series developed by Ubisoft, launched in 2007 and still ongoing with numerous chapters. The franchise's distinctive feature is its meticulous reconstruction of historical periods—from Renaissance Italy to Ancient Egypt, from Classical Greece to the Viking Age—in which the player takes on the role of characters linked to a secret sect of “Assassins” fighting against the “Templars.” Alongside the adventurous plot, which remains fiction, the saga has established itself as an emblematic case of contamination between entertainment and culture, thanks to its attention to historical research, architectural design, and the possibility of exploring environments of the past in an interactive form. It must be said that the games in the series are, in their original version, rather complex titles: vast open worlds, complex combat systems, dense interfaces. They are not immediately accessible to those unfamiliar with the medium of video games. This is why the Discovery Tour initiative represents a significant innovation: it maintains the visual and historical richness, but without ‘technical’ barriers, making the experience accessible even to those who are not regular gamers.

Project Oikos

The second example is *Project Oikos*, again from Ubisoft, already mentioned and in itself one of the largest and longest-running video game companies internationally. This in itself is an interesting fact: two high-quality educational experiences come from the same manufacturer, highlighting that these are not marginal initiatives or niche experiments, but a deliberate investment choice by a true commercial giant.

Oikos was explicitly created from this vision. It is a cooperative video game that presents players with a task that is as simple to describe as it is complex to carry out: taking care of an ecosystem. Each participant controls a different element—water, fauna, flora, energy—and every action, no matter how small, affects the overall balance. If someone over-exploits resources, the entire system risks collapse. The game thus becomes a delicate balancing act, in which the survival of the virtual world depends on the ability to communicate, coordinate, and accept compromises.

The educational aspect is not hidden: it is an integral part of the structure itself. You cannot win alone, you cannot excel over other people, there is no real individual ranking to climb. The only way forward is through cooperation, mutual recognition, and the development of a common strategy. It is an immediate and intuitive metaphor for major environmental issues, but at the same time a concrete laboratory for training cross-cutting skills: collaboration, shared responsibility, sensitivity to resource limits, and the ability to think ahead.

In our case, this type of experience is particularly stimulating because it can be replicated in very different contexts: a group of adults in training, an intergenerational workshop, a class, or an association. All it takes is a device and a few people to generate not only a moment of leisure, but also a collective reflection that arises spontaneously from the dynamics of the game: what did we do well, what did we overlook, how could we behave differently? It is precisely in this transition—from play to words, from shared action to common reasoning—that *Oikos* shows its strength as a best practice.



Screenshot taken from Project Oikos. © Ubisoft Entertainment. All rights reserved.

Minecraft

When discussing best practices in video game education, *Minecraft* is, in fact, a must, as it is probably the title that, more than any other, has embodied the idea that a video game can become an all-round cultural phenomenon. Released in 2011, starting as an independent project by Swedish developer Markus Persson, it is now one of the most popular and recognizable video games on the planet, with hundreds of millions of copies sold, imagery that has invaded T-shirts, gadgets, animated series, and even an upcoming movie. At first glance, with its blocky, spartan, somewhat arcade-like graphics, it may seem like a childish or limited game. In reality, behind that minimalist aesthetic lies a virtually infinite universe, built on the concept of *Sandbox*, which we have already explored in our glossary: that is, an open and malleable space, with no objectives imposed from above, where players can explore, build, invent rules and scenarios, independently and to the fullest extent of their abilities, will, inventiveness, and creativity. To understand what this is all about, just observe what happens when a child (because yes, *Minecraft* is suitable for ages 9-10 precisely because of the total absence of realistic violence, ‘hot’ topics or anything else unsuitable for that particular stage of development) opens the game for the first time: they find themselves in a world made of blocks, with no instructions or predefined plots. They can dig, gather wood, build a shelter, explore caves, and cultivate fields. Every action, however basic, becomes a small creative act that fuels curiosity and motivation. Some players limit themselves to surviving a few nights, others build houses and villages, and others go so far as to design entire cities or even functioning computers within the game itself. It is not uncommon to find emotionally powerful stories online: children who have rebuilt their school to stay ‘together’ during the pandemic, communities that have faithfully reproduced monuments, parents and children who have worked side by side to design their ideal home. This is where the *Minecraft* phenomenon shows its strength: it does not offer a script, but a language of digital bricks with which everyone can express their imagination, belonging, and memory. This explains why *Minecraft* has also become a global educational tool. Its dedicated version, *Minecraft: Education Edition*, is now used in thousands of schools: it allows users to reconstruct cells and ecosystems, address scientific or historical topics, and simulate the management of a city or a joint project. But even the “standard” version, designed for entertainment, retains the same potential: whether in a classroom, after-school program, or adult workshop, the experience of building a world together forces participants to negotiate roles, distribute tasks, manage resources, and coordinate actions. In this sense, there is no need to distinguish too much between the “educational” and commercial editions: both, due to their structure, stimulate creativity, collaboration, and problem solving. In our case, *Minecraft* is perhaps the most immediate and replicable best practice. It does not require any particular technical skills, appeals to all ages, and can be adapted to different objectives without losing the appeal of the game. It is a title that clearly confirms how the line between ‘fun’ and ‘learning’ is never clear-cut: a child building a shelter to survive the first night of play, a group of adults designing a virtual city together, a school reconstructing a historical monument: in all these cases, what remains is not only the work created, but the experience lived: training in imagination, collaboration, and resilience.



Screenshot taken from Minecraft. © Mojang AB / Microsoft. All rights reserved.

Triangle Strategy

Not all video games are immediate and intuitive: some require time, patience, and the ability to think long-term. *Triangle Strategy*, released in 2022 under the Square Enix banner, belongs to this category. It is a “tactical” game, i.e., a turn-based strategy role-playing game, in which battles are not resolved by quick reflexes but by clear-headed decisions. The game map is divided into grids, the characters have different abilities, and every choice—where to move a unit, which attack to use, but also how to position yourself in relation to the terrain and how to actively interact with it—can determine the outcome of a battle. It is not an immediate or forgiving genre: it requires attention, planning, and the ability to imagine different possible scenarios. In other words, tactics is training in strategy, not improvisation. On the other hand, it is a title particularly suited to teenagers, who at this stage of their development are developing ethical and civic skills that are less and less rigid and less and less dichotomous. It is the moment when they begin to realize that justice does not coincide with obedience to an external authority, nor with the simple rule of the majority, but takes shape in the encounter between different values, in the confrontation with others, in the ability to take responsibility for decisions that are never entirely painless. In this sense, *Triangle Strategy* becomes not only an exercise in war tactics, but a small moral training ground that accompanies the transition from childhood to adulthood.

This is because, beyond the tactical dimension, the plot—the real protagonist—of *Triangle Strategy* revolves around the moral and political dilemmas of the protagonist, Serenoa Wolffort, who constantly finds himself having to make difficult decisions in a world divided by conflicts and conflicting interests. This is where one of the most original features of the title comes into play: the *Scales of Conviction*. Whenever the story requires a crucial choice, Serenoa does not decide alone, but calls on his allies to vote. The player's task is not only to “choose a path,” but to try to convince the members of the group, discussing with them and using different arguments depending on the character and motivations of each character. It is not a matter of pressing a button to say “justice” or “utility”: the decision emerges from a collective process, in which the player directly experiences the dynamics of consensus, persuasion, and compromise. The consequences of these choices are profound: they not only change the ending, but also alter the course of the story itself, the allies who remain loyal or abandon the group, and the challenges that must be faced. And this is where the game becomes a civic laboratory: it shows how the principle of majority alone is not enough to guarantee justice or stability, and how political decisions are always the result of a fragile balance between values, interests, and power relations.



Screenshot taken from Triangle Strategy. © SQUARE ENIX CO., LTD. All rights reserved.

This intertwining of ethical reflection and emotional involvement is amplified by Square Enix's signature style: narrative care, complex characters, stories of marginality, otherness, and inclusion, but also (if not above all) a soundtrack that powerfully accompanies every choice and every battle. In *Triangle Strategy*, music is not just background noise, but an integral part of the experience, capable of amplifying tension and pathos, making a victory memorable or a defeat painful. Research has now shown^[15] that video game soundtracks are not mere embellishments, but tools capable of stimulating concentration, memory, and emotional regulation. In this sense, the musical dimension also contributes to the educational value of the game, training aesthetic sensitivity and the ability to modulate emotional activation in complex situations.

Triangle Strategy is therefore a unique example of best practice: it is not designed for schools, it is not suitable for everyone, but it clearly shows how a video game can become a growth experience. Through tactical planning, the exercise of ethical responsibility, reflection on decision-making, and the evocative power of music, the title offers cross-disciplinary training that intertwines the head, heart, and civic sensibility. It is no coincidence that, in the course of this manual, we will return to talking about Square Enix: a company that for decades has demonstrated how video games can be entertainment, storytelling, aesthetic experience, and an opportunity for growth and reflection on ethical, civic, moral, and value-based issues.



Screenshot taken from Triangle Strategy. © SQUARE ENIX CO., LTD. All rights reserved.

15. Siu-Lan Tan, Annabel J. Cohen, Scott D. Lipscomb, & Roger A. Kendall (eds.) (2013). *The Psychology of Music in Multimedia*. Oxford University Press.

Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes

We conclude this section on best practices, which straddles specific educational objectives and intrinsic, albeit less obvious, educational density, with a title that at first glance may seem almost provocative, so simple is its concept and so far removed from big blockbusters: *Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes*, developed and published in 2015 by Steel Crate Games, a small independent Canadian studio. The most interesting aspect, in the broader framework of **Gaming and Parents**, is that behind its minimalist appearance lies—and not even that deeply—perhaps one of the most significant experiences in terms of transferable skills, because it focuses on what is really needed in everyday life: the ability to communicate clearly, listen carefully, and collaborate under pressure, in a genuinely group-oriented environment.

The dynamic is as absurd as it is effective. A person in front of the screen finds themselves with a live bomb to defuse. In front of them is a series of modules with cables, buttons, symbols, and timers. However, they have no instructions: these are in the hands of the other participants, who cannot see the bomb but have a manual full of rules, diagrams, and procedures. The only way to succeed is to talk: those who see the bomb must describe it accurately, while those with the manual must interpret and provide operating instructions. Time is ticking, anxiety is rising, and the group must find a common language in order not to fail. Playing it means, in concrete terms, training skills that no manual can convey so well: learning not to interrupt, to make yourself understood without mincing words, to stay calm while the timer is running. Failure is never the fault of one person: either you succeed together, or you lose together. This **radical cooperative logic**, devoid of internal competition, makes the game a natural laboratory for teamwork and problem solving. A fundamental aspect that distinguishes it from other titles seen so far is its affordability. Unlike games such as *Minecraft* (which require individual licenses), here all you need is one copy of the software—sold at a low price, often under \$15—and the rest of the group can participate for free. The manual can be downloaded for free online in PDF format and printed without any restrictions. This means that even contexts with limited resources, such as libraries, associations, or adult education centers, can easily adopt the activity without major investment. In other words, it is not only good practice from a methodological point of view, but also a realistic, replicable, and authentically inclusive solution.

Many training programs have already adopted *Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes* to train communication in work teams, scout groups, and university classes. And it is clear why: once the game is over, reflection is immediate. Where did we get stuck? Who was able to explain themselves well? When did we lose our cool? It is precisely in this transition—from play to discussion, from action to discourse—that the title shows its true educational strength.

Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes is probably the clearest demonstration that a commercial video game, without any “serious” pretensions, can become a fully-fledged training tool, often more so and in a more marked way than titles and productions that place the educational objective—whatever it may be—at the center from the outset. What’s more, a title like this shows that effectiveness, potential, and appeal do not necessarily require spectacular graphics or large investments, but only an intelligent dynamic that focuses on human communication.



Screenshot taken from Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes. © Steel Crate Games. All rights reserved.

Practical exercises: “Skills map based on my child’s favorite game”

Let's close this chapter with a practical exercise that every parent can try at home without the need for any special tools. After thinking long and hard about the skills that video games can stimulate, it's time to gradually start translating these ideas into a concrete experience: work with your child to build a small “skills map,” starting with a game that they really love, one that they enjoy spending time on, either alone or with others.

The first practical exercise, inspired by education and training, focuses on *Fortnite*. The name alone should be enough to evoke, in today's parents, the gaming context in a broad sense, the entire imagery of video games: in fact, *Fortnite* is, in some ways, the modern, “adolescent” video game par excellence, even if in reality its user base is, as usual, much larger and more varied than one might imagine.

What is *Fortnite*? First of all, it is much more than just a shooter. Released in 2017, this entirely free-to-play title has revolutionized the battle royale genre: one hundred players are catapulted onto an island and must survive until only one (or one team) remains. To succeed, it is not enough to shoot: you have to decide where to land, gather resources, build structures in a matter of seconds, plan your movements, and coordinate with others. Added to this is a colorful, accessible, and constantly evolving aesthetic: each “season” brings new maps, special events, and collaborations with the worlds of cinema, music, and sports. It is no coincidence that in recent years *Fortnite* has become not just a game, but a global cultural phenomenon: players train their strategic and social skills, but they also participate in virtual concerts, meet friends, and share experiences. It is a symbol of how contemporary video games are at once games, entertainment, and social interaction.

And why did we choose *Fortnite*? The answer is extremely simple: for all the reasons mentioned above and because, according to the figures, in recent years it has become one of the most popular titles among teenagers. Almost every 15-year-old has played *Fortnite* or is familiar with its language, dances, skins, and mechanics. *Fortnite* is now a piece of pop culture, certainly not just ‘a video game’ (virtual concerts, collaborations with films and series, characters that enter the collective imagination). This is precisely why it is the most fitting example to start with: not an exotic or niche title, but the game that millions of young people actually have on their screens, for better or worse, every day.

Preliminary note: Is *Fortnite* a violent game?

Actually, no – **almost definitely not**. *Fortnite* is an explicitly (and “characteristically”) cartoonish game: its settings are colorful, the design is deliberately stylized, and none of the scenes can in any way be linked to imagery of blood, violence, or endless fighting. Even though players “shoot” at others, the action is depicted in a non-gory way. In any case, it is precisely the fact that you don’t just shoot (quite the contrary!) that characterizes *Fortnite* and its style of play: if we just shot, we would probably lose the game in less than 3 minutes.

Furthermore, although this will be explored in much greater depth in later chapters, it is worth noting that, on the scientific front, the literature has never established a causal link between violence in video games and violent behavior in real life. Many reviews, even by the *American Psychological Association*, conclude that “there is insufficient scientific evidence to support a causal link between violent video games and violent behavior.”^[16]

After all, without necessarily trivializing the issue, it should first be viewed through the lens of common sense. Watching *American Horror Story* does not automatically make you violent or antisocial, just as Sorrentino’s *The Great Beauty*—with its weary aestheticism and underlying nihilism—did not turn those who saw it into morally deviant people or those incapable of distinguishing beauty from ugliness. Why, then, should a stylized, cartoonish video game like *Fortnite* be held responsible for violent behavior in real life?

16. American Psychological Association. (2020, March 24). APA reaffirms position on violent video games and violent behavior. APA Press Release.

First exercise.

From battle royale to real life: what *Fortnite* can teach us



Screenshot taken from Fortnite. © Epic Games, Inc. All rights reserved.

Objective

Show your sons and daughters how *Fortnite* hides important skills: not just “knowing how to shoot,” but planning, communicating, collaborating, and managing emotions—both in the most ‘positive’ forms (creativity, cooperation) and in the most “negative” ones, such as frustration or performance anxiety.

Materials and duration

A large sheet of paper (or a whiteboard), colored markers, and about 45 minutes of time. More than the tools, what matters is mutual availability: a calm atmosphere without rushing.

Procedure

Briefing (10 minutes)

The activity begins with a conversation: the child explains what they do in *Fortnite*, how a game is played, and what the main challenges are. A useful step is definitely to watch a match together: the parent observes, while the child plays and comments, explaining on the fly what they are doing and why. This is a very useful first step in breaking down barriers: it is no longer a ‘mysterious world behind the screen’ or a ‘suspension’ of family time, but a shared experience that the adult watches live, participates in (and maybe even helps with!).

Activity (25 minutes)

Write the word “Fortnite” in the center of a sheet of paper and draw the branches of a skills map around it. As the young person talks or plays, the parent or guardian collects what emerges and translates it into keywords, for example:

- choosing the landing point and assessing risks/opportunities → **strategic planning**;
- quickly building ramps and walls to defend yourself, quickly choosing where and why → **creative problem solving**;
- using voice chat, coordinating with other people in the game, sharing materials → **collaboration and communication**;
- losing and trying again, dealing with frustration if someone eliminates us, if we lose the game → **managing emotions and resilience**;
- winning and recognizing merit → learning to enjoy the result without the need to humiliate, thus **training fair play and mutual respect**.

Debriefing (10 minutes)

At the end, look at the completed map and reflect together: “Do you see yourself in these skills? Are they useful to you outside of the game?” How do you behave? What is your favorite “strategy”? How do you relate to your allies? The important thing is not to force the conversation, but to let the idea emerge spontaneously that the time spent playing *Fortnite* is not “empty,” but rather full of implicit learning.

Why it works

Because it does not pass judgment from above, but starts from the lived experience of the son or daughter. It is not a question of saying “*Fortnite* teaches you to...”, but rather of discovering together what already happens while playing. In this way, a game beloved by teenagers becomes an opportunity for family dialogue and, above all, shared awareness.

While *Fortnite* has become the symbol of challenge, competition, and “battle royale” in the collective imagination, *Roblox* represents a different but equally central phenomenon. Widely popular and played, it is also an integral part of contemporary digital culture in the broadest sense, significantly transcending the boundaries of “video gaming” in the strict sense. Unlike a single, well-defined title, *Roblox* is best understood as a true platform, a sort of endless container that collects millions of digital experiences. In essence, there is not just one *Roblox*: there are as many as the worlds created by users. Some are simple obstacle courses, others are complex simulations of professions, others are fantasy adventures, and others are detailed, original, and interactive replicas of real cities.

The heart of *Roblox* is precisely this: not just playing, but being able to create. Every kid can enter, explore worlds imagined by others, or, if they want, build their own with custom rules, objectives, and aesthetics. It is as if thousands of different games coexist within the same box, continuously updated, remixed, and reinvented. It is no coincidence that, today, *Roblox* is one of the most popular digital environments among preteens and teenagers: it can be downloaded for free, works on PCs, consoles, and even smartphones, and has become a sort of global “virtual square.”

Many young people access it not only to ‘play’, but to meet up with friends, talk to each other and try new things together. It is precisely this dual nature, as both a video game and a form of contemporary digital socializing, that makes it an essential example for our journey and for **Gaming and Parents**. If *Fortnite* embodies the arena of competitive and cooperative confrontation, *Roblox* represents the other side: that of imagination, invention, and the implicit learning of digital skills that, until a few years ago, would have been unthinkable for a teenager. Building a world, establishing its rules, negotiating behavior with other people in the game, and sometimes even earning money from one's own creation: these are activities that concretely stimulate forms of micro-entrepreneurship and cultivate entrepreneurial skills, i.e., the ability to conceive, undertake, and carry out projects independently.

Second exercise.

Inside my child's world: *Roblox* and its worlds



Screenshot taken from Roblox. © Roblox Corporation. All rights reserved.

Objective

Highlighting the transferable skills developed through the *Roblox* experience: creativity, design, collaboration, the ability to negotiate rules and roles, as well as managing online social interactions. The activity aims to promote gaming as a creative and social laboratory, while strengthening dialogue between parents and children.

Materials and Duration

A device with *Roblox* installed (computer, tablet, console, or smartphone) and about 30–40 minutes of time. No other materials are needed, except a willingness to be guided.

Procedure

Briefing (5 minutes)

It starts with a direct question: “What's your favorite world on *Roblox*? Can you show me?” Unlike other titles, there isn't “the” game to explain here, but an ever-expanding universe of different experiences. The teenager chooses a world and the parent listens, ready to be guided.

Activity (20–30 minutes)

The son or daughter enters the chosen world and shows it in action: how it works, what rules it follows, what goals it proposes. The parent observes and asks questions, without judging or imposing:

- Who created this world?
- Why did you choose it?
- What is its main purpose?
- Do you play alone or with others?
- What part do you enjoy the most?

At the end of the exploration, together you can draw up a small fact sheet about the world, divided into three simple sections:

What you do (description of the rules and main objective);

Who you play with (alone, with friends, with a wider community);

What it trains (creativity, collaboration, logic, entrepreneurial skills, online relationship management).

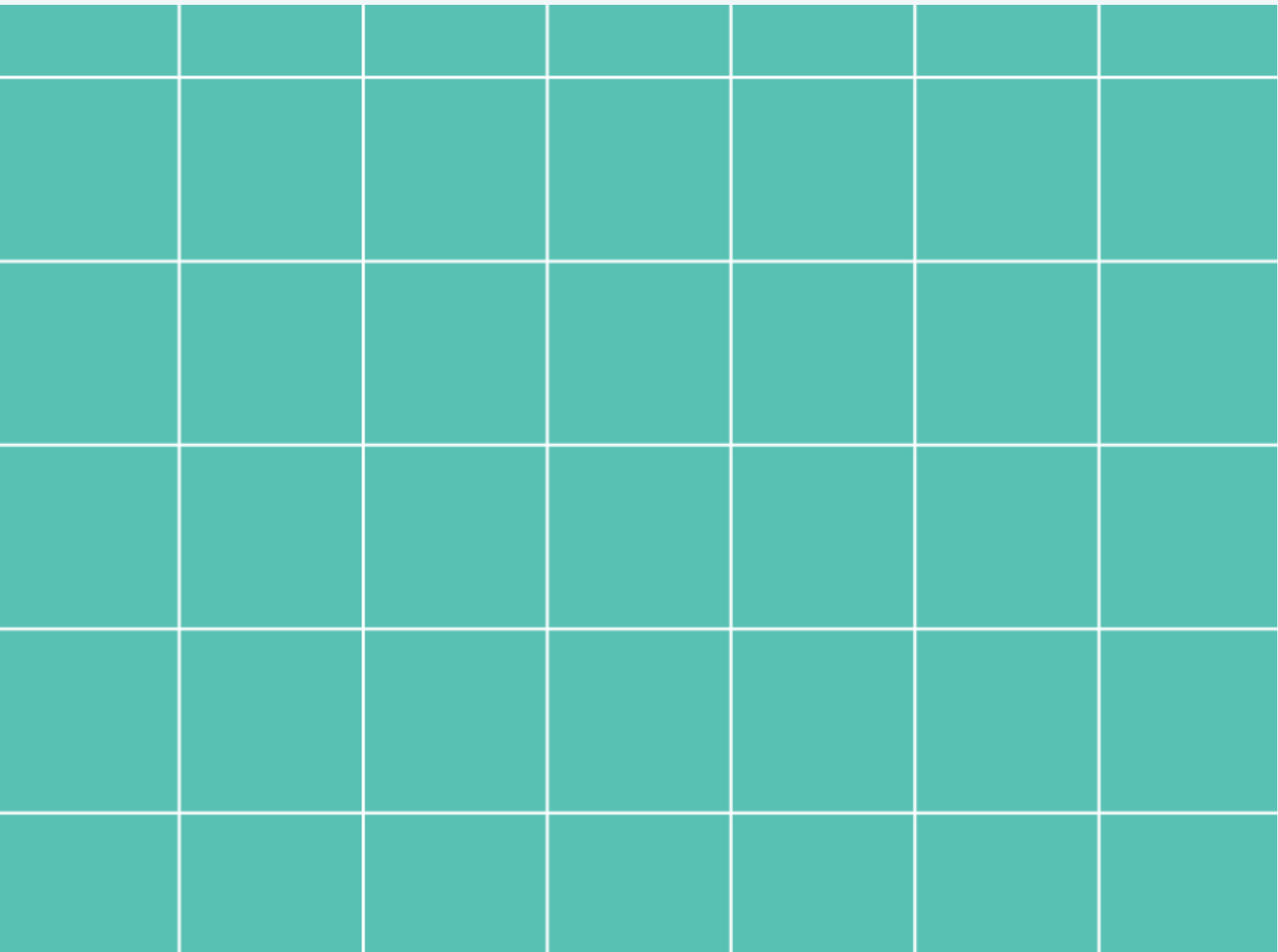
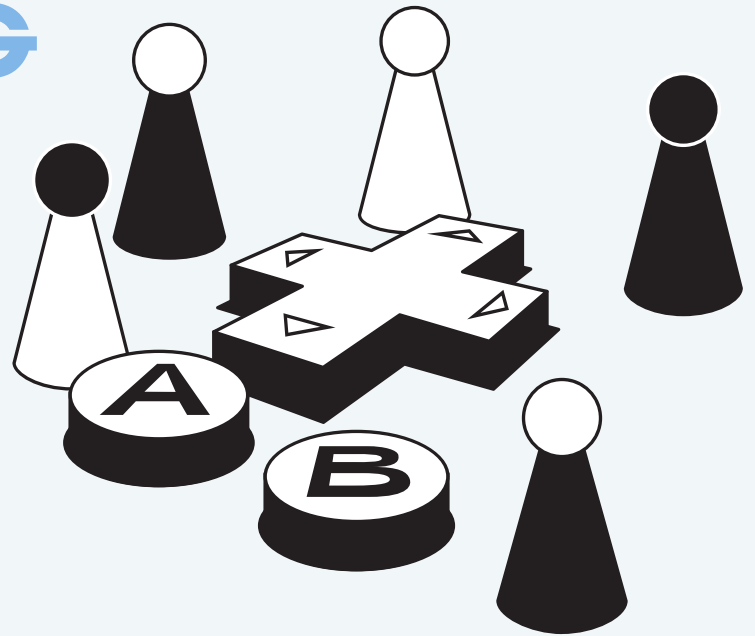
Debriefing (5 minutes)

The sheet is read together and becomes the starting point for reflection: “What have you learned here? Was there anything that challenged you? Were there any behaviors that taught you how to interact with others, even off screen?”

Why it works

Because it puts the adolescent's experience back at the center and transforms it into dialogue. Parents no longer observe from the outside, but enter the chosen world, allowing themselves to be guided. In this way, *Roblox* reveals itself for what it is: a space for experimentation that, if accompanied, can truly become fertile ground for human growth.

DIGITAL PARENTAL MEDIATION AND FAMILY CO-GAMING



What is digital parental mediation (models and approaches)?

What exactly is **Digital Parental Mediation**? When we talk about this topic, we are not referring to a single gesture or an isolated rule, but rather to a set of daily practices that families can implement, hopefully on a daily basis, to guide, accompany, or regulate the use of digital media for younger people (and, if they are sufficiently forward-thinking, for themselves as well). However, **Digital Parental Mediation**, with all its educational objectives—ultimately, healthy and monitored use of digital media—is a concept that predates video games: as early as the 1980s and 1990s, educational and communication research studied how parents tried to guide their children in front of the television, through time rules, discussions about content, or shared viewing moments. It was television that was the first, large, and pervasive audiovisual medium—albeit not yet digital—that truly, and not so gradually, reshaped the concept of family space and time, changed consumption habits, and ultimately entertained individuals and generations in ways that were unthinkable until today.

With the spread of the Internet and mobile devices since the 2000s, however, the issue has taken on new dimensions and perspectives. It is no longer a question of managing a linear medium, such as TV (which has itself become fully digital), but an interactive, participatory environment without spatial or temporal boundaries. It is precisely because of the all-encompassing and pervasive nature of everyday digital culture that there is an urgent need to rethink digital parental mediation in a broad sense: less protection and control (a goal that is presumably unrealistic today, as well as counterproductive), and more accompaniment, listening, dialogue, and sharing.

The first systematic studies, in particular those by Valkenburg, Piotrowski, Hermanns, and de Leeuw (1999) and Livingstone & Helsper (2008), identified three main types of mediation, in a sense three styles that have become a veritable “educational grammar” for parents and others, and which still retain their validity, even if only from a classificatory point of view:

- **Restrictive mediation**: Limiting time, content, and methods. This style of mediation is probably the easiest to implement, but not necessarily the most effective. In gaming, for example, it means establishing when to play, for how long, and which games to play. It is the most widespread style, especially with younger children, and although censorship tends not to guarantee effective results in the long run, it is certainly useful for reducing exposure to problematic content. The risk? It only works as long as there is direct control: without internalization, the rule is easily broken as soon as one is alone. Furthermore, given the pervasiveness of digital technology in all its forms, including video games, it is unrealistic to think, for example, that a teenager would not be able to circumvent the obstacle with relative ease, using a simple smartphone, at school, with friends, etc.
- **Active mediation**: Talking together, commenting, helping to interpret. In short, empowering, co-constructing moments of reflection. This style of mediation is the most “dialogical,” already aiming to transform the gaming experience into an educational opportunity. In video games, this may mean asking what they like about the title, what emotions it arouses, and what challenges they face. According to the literature, this is the style that most promotes critical skills, self-regulation, and risk awareness, requiring a certain amount of responsibility and competence on the part of parents, much more so than a simple ban (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008).

- **Co-use or co-playing:** sharing the experience directly, watching or playing together. Not necessarily with an explicitly educational intent: sometimes it is enough just to “be there,” with the aim of opening up and co-constructing a space of closeness. Studies such as those by Nikken & Jansz (2006) have shown that co-play strengthens communication and the sense of connection between parents and children, reducing conflicts and misunderstandings. The problem? The need for a participating parent who is reasonably competent, but above all interested in spending their time on this type of family activity.

In subsequent years, literature has expanded these models by introducing further nuances. Today, we talk about **discursive mediation** (a more fluid dialogue, less focused on rules and more on mutual listening), **investigative mediation** (parents who actively inform themselves about games and platforms by reading reviews, watching gameplay, and following forums), and even **diversionary mediation**, which aims to propose alternatives without direct conflict (“let’s take a break today and go to the park” instead of a flat-out ban). At the same time, referring back to the first restrictive style, it is the technology industry itself that has pushed hard for parental control tools, especially in recent years: apps that allow you to monitor playing time, limit in-app purchases, and control online contacts. These tools can be useful and, above all, protect parent companies in terms of liability, but they cannot be considered valid substitutes for actual educational and parental mediation: if anything, they are a technical support, which must necessarily be integrated with a relationship based on dialogue and open sharing. Perhaps the most relevant point that emerges clearly from the research is that no single strategy is valid for all families or all ages. Mediation only really works if it is flexible, capable of adapting to the maturity level of the children, their digital competence (as well as that of their parents), and the family’s educational style. What applies to an 8-year-old child does not apply to a 15-year-old teenager, and vice versa. In general, however, the literature agrees: restriction alone protects but does not educate; active mediation and co-use, on the other hand, promote the development of critical skills, a sense of responsibility, and a more peaceful relationship with digital technology, greatly reducing the possibility of encountering risks and dangers, which we will explore in more detail in the following chapters.

Far from being a rigid formula, **parental digital mediation should therefore be understood as a dynamic interweaving of styles, choices, and relationships**. Whether restrictive, active, or participatory, it only works if it is experienced as a process, capable of adapting to the age, needs, and digital skills of your family. It is in this perspective that it becomes essential to talk not only about how you play or with whom, but also about how much time you spend in front of the screen: the issue of conscious screen time, made up of concrete tools and shared family agreements, will therefore be the next point in our third chapter.

Mindful screen time: tools and family agreements

If there is one topic that has dominated public debate on the relationship between younger generations—and others—and digital media more than any other, it is undoubtedly that of **screen time**, or “time spent in front of screens,” so much so that regulating it is often understood as synonymous with Digital Parental Mediation in the broadest sense, even though this is not strictly the case. In any case, the expression ‘screen time’, which is widely used in the media and in everyday conversation, seems to encapsulate the anxiety of a generation of parents and guardians: how much time is ‘too much’? How many minutes or hours before the risk kicks in? The issue, however, is more complex than simplifications would suggest. Talking about screen time does not just mean measuring quantity, but questioning the **quality of experiences**, the context in which they take place, and the relationships that are woven around screens.

From what to how: comparing different models

For decades, the issue has been framed almost exclusively in quantitative terms: the stopwatch was seen as the sole measure of well-being. Screen time, along with its regulation, originated with television, as mentioned above, shortly before the pervasiveness of everyday digital technology, social media, and video games. On the other hand, the concerns of the past are still, in a sense, relevant today: “too many cartoons,” “hours wasted in front of the small screen.” With the advent of computers, smartphones, and consoles, anxiety has not been redefined, but rather multiplied, because screen time is no longer confined to specific moments, but pervades everyday life. It is no coincidence that the WHO and the American Academy of Pediatrics have attempted to set reference thresholds (no more than one hour per day for children under 5; for adolescents, a family plan that balances sleep, physical activity, and digital time)^[17].

However, the most recent research shows that the risks and benefits depend much more on how and what you do in front of the screen, and not on the sheer number of minutes. Przybylski and Weinstein (2017) talk about the Goldilocks Hypothesis: as in the famous classic fairy tale of Goldilocks, the ‘right balance’ is what works best. Neither too little (which can exclude people from social contexts and shared culture) nor too much (which can lead to isolation and dysfunction), but a balance that varies from person to person and family to family^[18].

Types of screen time

To truly understand screen time, it is useful to distinguish between the different forms it can take, if only to counteract misinformation and oversimplification:

- **Passive time:** watching videos in a serial and disengaged manner, without interaction (this type of screen time is even more relevant in the case of social media, and it would be more accurate to refer to it as binge watching, an endless and essentially uncritical, disinterested scrolling).
- **Interactive time:** playing games, chatting, participating in online communities. In this case, gaming can only be interactive, by virtue of its very nature, which in fact would not allow for completely disconnected or disinterested use by the user.
- **Creative time:** producing content, building worlds, programming (e.g., as described in the previous section: creating games in *Roblox* or maps in *Minecraft*).
- **Relational time:** use screens to connect with friends or family members, to coordinate, cooperate, and support each other. We will explore this type further with concrete examples in the section specifically dedicated to family co-gaming.
- **Competitive time:** participating in challenges and tournaments, which require concentration and emotional regulation. This type of screen time includes not only the most competitive video games, but also moments of playing together, when it is possible and intended to play with two or more players, perhaps in the same room, with a “competitive” goal.

Understanding these types helps shift the focus: not every hour spent in front of a screen is the same. A teenager who spends two hours building a city in *Minecraft* with a friend trains very different skills than someone who spends two hours passively watching *TikTok*.

17. World Health Organization. (2019). Guidelines on physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep for children under 5 years of age.

18. Przybylski, A. K., & Weinstein, N. (2017). A large-scale test of the Goldilocks Hypothesis: Quantifying the relations between digital-screen use and the mental well-being of adolescents. *Psychological Science*, 28(2), 204–215.

Moral fears and media narratives

Historically, “moral fears” have been one of the most evident and enduring trends in the history of media, from television to the most contemporary video games. But even before that, for example in the 1950s, it was comic books that were corrupting the younger generation. Then, in the 1980s, it was commercial television's turn. Finally, as early as the 1990s, moral fear began to affect video games more massively, particularly those considered inherently “violent.” Today, broadening our view to the digital world in the broadest sense, which is certainly not confined to video games but ranges from social media to sharing communities, artificial intelligence, and interactive streaming platforms, screen time performs the same function: it becomes the “scapegoat” for broader educational and social problems. But, as authors such as Sonia Livingstone point out, reducing everything to screen time risks obscuring the educational and relational potential of digital technology, which emerges when its use is accompanied, discussed, and shared^[19].

Tools and family agreements

How can all this be translated into the daily life of families? Some concrete and easily replicable examples are, for example:

- **Timers and parental controls:** the most popular consoles, as well as apps and other platforms, allow you to set time limits or block use beyond a certain threshold. These tools are certainly useful, especially with younger children, but they risk becoming punitive if not accompanied by explanations and, above all, by setting a good example, starting with the parents themselves. In addition, it is worth noting that most parental control tools are fairly easy to disable or bypass, especially if you are a digital native, inevitably exposed to the online world and digital devices from an early age.
- **Digital routines:** establish together times of the day dedicated to play (after homework, at the weekend) and screen-free times (at the table, before bedtime). These routines make use predictable and reduce conflict, based on the logic of the right balance or the right compromise.
- **Digital family contracts:** some families choose to put a real agreement in writing, signed by parents and children, which defines rights and duties. Not just limits, but also responsibilities: “I turn off the game when asked,” “I warn if I encounter content that upsets me,” “I respect others online.” The most interesting aspect of this type of contract is not only related to the regulation of screen time as such, but above all to what you do and how you behave online.
- **Screen-free days:** periodically introduce shared “digital detox” moments, not as a punishment, but as an opportunity to experience other activities together.

19. Livingstone, S., & Helsper, E. J. (2008). Parental mediation of children's internet use. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 52(4), 581–599.

From control to self-regulation

The common thread linking all these practices is clear: screen time should not be treated as an enemy to be fought, but as a dimension of life to be integrated in a balanced way. Excluding digital technology—and in particular gaming—from everyday life would, in fact, mean depriving adolescents and young adults of an environment that can be fertile, creative, and interactive. Limits remain important, but they are not enough on their own: they only work if they are accompanied by the ability to interpret one's own experiences and regulate one's own behavior. The ultimate goal is not to “count the hours,” but to help young people develop self-awareness and self-regulation: to recognize for themselves when it is time to take a break, to distinguish between gaming as pleasure and gaming that risks becoming a burden. In this sense, conscious screen time is not only about quantity, but above all about the quality of the relationships that are woven into it: the young person's relationship with their time, but also – and perhaps first and foremost – the relationship between parents and children, who learn together to build rules, agreements, and shared balances.

Some practical examples

Let us now explore, in more detail and in a replicable way, these different styles of regulating family screen time, through well-documented case studies: the aim is to become familiar with how, in practical terms, we can imagine and implement a digital routine, a moment of digital detox, and an intergenerational contract on gaming in our own homes:

In the case of the aforementioned family contracts, drawn up jointly by parents and children, one of the most relevant examples is the Screenagers movement, which originated in the United States and has long been proposing models and guidelines for their drafting, emphasizing that the educational value lies not so much in the written rule as in the dialogical process that leads to its definition^[20]. Similarly, the Center for Online Safety suggests distinguishing between non-negotiable rules (such as not bringing devices into the bedroom at night) and flexible rules, which can be adapted to family circumstances.^[21]

With regard to the implementation of digital routines, another example is that of ‘digital-free’ zones or times, which aim to re-establish screen-free spaces and times. This approach has been taken up by the American Academy of Pediatrics, which, through its Healthy Children portal, suggests, for example, banning devices from the table during meals, or limiting their use when already in bed, waiting to fall asleep^[22]. Some families have turned these guidelines into concrete rituals: some have established “analog Fridays,” proposing a weekly evening dedicated only to board games or music, without screens. Other families have introduced a “phone basket” at the entrance, where everyone leaves their devices before going to sleep.

20. Screenagers Movie. (2023). Screen Time Contracts. Available here: <https://screenagersmovie.com/resources/screen-time-contracts>

21. Center for Online Safety. (2023). Technology Contracts for Families. Available here: <https://www.centerforonlinesafety.com/blog/technology-contracts>

22. American Academy of Pediatrics – Healthy Children. (2022). How to Make a Family Media Plan. Available here: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/How-to-Make-a-Family-Media-Use-Plan.aspx>

A third model is that of so-called screen time agreements, which are genuine family agreements that are not limited to setting rules and, unlike those described above, do not take the form of actual contracts, but are periodically reviewed based on the age and maturity of the children, and are also co-defined in a mostly oral and dialogical manner. The organization *Childproof Parenting* has codified a procedure in this regard: call a family meeting, discuss the advantages and risks of digital technology together, set limits and offline alternatives, and establish consequences for violations. It is an idea of a living contract that evolves as the younger members grow, but also requires self-control and self-regulation from older and adult figures^[23].

This is because screen time is, in itself, deeply influenced by the models that children observe at home. A Finnish study^[24] revealed that children of parents with higher levels of education who regulate their own screen time are exposed to clearer rules and more conscious use of devices (of any kind), and consequently spend less time in front of screens.

How to choose video games that are suitable for age and sensitivity

After reflecting on screen time, however, it is appropriate to return to video games and gaming culture, which is the focus of **Gaming and Parents**. Talking about screen time certainly means talking about gaming, but for obvious reasons it transcends it, because it concerns more generally being 'onlife', to use Luciano Floridi's expression: a condition in which the distinction between online and offline life has become increasingly blurred, with the two dimensions now coinciding completely in many cases. However, when the focus returns specifically to digital gaming, remaining in the field of family monitoring regulation, the decisive issue becomes another: which titles do we bring into our homes? What, in fact, do we grant access to and what do we deny?

Not all video games, as has now been illustrated, are the same: there are enormous differences in content, complexity, narrative and emotional styles. In this sense, the first tool available to families to help them find their way is undoubtedly the content classification system. The PEGI (Pan European Game Information) system has been in place in Europe since 2003, using mandatory and clearly visible symbols on the covers (3, 7, 12, 16, 18) to indicate the recommended age for a title. This is not just a question of age: PEGI assesses the presence of violence, foul language, references to drugs, fear, sex, or discrimination, and therefore warns if the content may be inappropriate for a certain level of maturity. A title with a "PEGI 7" rating may include scenes that are potentially controversial for younger children, while a "PEGI 16" rating may already introduce realistic violence or adult language^[25], which are in fact hyper-accessible and found almost everywhere today, from television to social media. In the United States, a similar system is managed by the ESRB (Entertainment Software Rating Board), established in 1994, which uses similar categories (E for Everyone, T for Teen, M for Mature, etc.)^[26]. These tools, much like the entire rigid regulatory framework that follows the basic principles of labeling, are certainly useful, but not sufficient when applied to our everyday contexts. In other words, they provide general guidance, but they do not know people, of any age, in their individual experiences.

23. Childproof Parenting. (2023). Crafting a Screen Time Agreement.

24. Määttä, S., Konttinen, H., Haukkala, A., Erkkola, M., & Roos, E. (2017). Associations of parental influence and role model with children's screen time. *BMC Public Health*, 17(1).

25. PEGI. (2023). Pan European Game Information: What do the labels mean? Available here: <https://pegi.info>

26. Entertainment Software Rating Board. (2023). ESRB Ratings Guide. Available here: <https://www.esrb.org>

The same scene can be experienced by one 12-year-old as pure adventure and by another as a source of anxiety: it depends on personal sensitivity, character, previous experiences and, of course, the role of parents as active and involved mediators. For this reason, several studies recommend combining ratings with a personalized educational approach. For example, some interesting research shows that more sensitive children or those with anxious traits tend to react more intensely to games rich in suspense or with exaggerated competitive mechanics (much more so than to 'simply' violent scenarios), regardless of the recommended age^[27].

Furthermore, the choice is not only about protecting children from inappropriate content, but also about promoting games that offer enriching experiences. Titles that stimulate cooperation, creativity, ethical reflection, or problem solving deserve to be favored over others that reduce the experience to pure compulsive consumption. As James Paul Gee has pointed out, video games are not neutral: some convey real "learning principles embedded in their design."^[28]

On a practical level, several parents say they have chosen to actively seek information: they watch trailers and reviews, look for gameplay on YouTube, and read forums or dedicated sites (such as Common Sense Media) before purchasing a title. In this case, it is not a matter of censorship, but rather of conscious choice, in which the parental figure becomes an active part of the experience. In some families, the children themselves suggest a game and the parent reserves the right to try it together, at least in the early stages, to assess whether it is suitable. In this sense, the selection also becomes an opportunity for dialogue and co-play: not just "you can or cannot play," but "let's see together if this game is good for us, if it entertains you/us and enriches you/us."

A final note concerns cultural and family sensitivity. Some families choose narrative games because they believe in the power of stories as a vehicle for values; others prefer sports or simulation titles, which are closer to their children's real interests. There are no universally right or wrong choices: there is the ability to mediate between market offerings, educational needs, and personal inclinations.

Choosing a video game is never, in essence, a neutral gesture, precisely because it involves acquiring a fragment of a larger, intrinsically complex audiovisual culture that is now almost entirely digital. If anything, it should be seen as a small educational decision that could help shape the imagination and skills of the player, or could contain more or less obvious threats. And while it is true that no label can replace the discernment of a truly present adult figure, it is equally true that the combination of tools (PEGI, ESRB, parental control), dialogue, and attention to individual sensibilities can transform the purchase of a video game into another opportunity for shared responsibility and sharing at the family level.

27. Gentile, D. A., & Anderson, C. A. (2017). *Violent video game effects on children and adolescents: Theory, research, and public policy*. Oxford University Press.

28. Gee, J. P. (2003). *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Why co-gaming strengthens the parent-child relationship

Shared gaming between parents and children, or co-gaming, is perhaps one of the most relevant ways to understand how video games can become a meeting ground for different generations and a tool for strengthening the family system. In the case of co-gaming in the strict sense, it is not simply a matter of ‘being together in front of a screen’, but of **entering a new, common and equal terrain**, in which the rules of everyday family life — hard work, chores, hierarchical roles — are temporarily suspended to make way for different dynamics: collaboration, exploration, fun, sharing. Beyond the validity of the activity itself, to be understood as a recreational moment, a family bonding experience, and digital and media literacy, numerous studies have shown how this change of setting promotes— even beyond gaming—more spontaneous communication, a climate of mutual trust, and the possibility of creating shared memories and experiences. In other words, video games transcend, in a sense, their limits of entertainment and can become a relational medium.

A qualitative survey conducted on twenty families who practiced co-gaming highlighted precisely this: playing together generated more fluid conversations, lowered communication barriers, and opened up spaces for daily intimacy that are often lacking in the rhythms of family life. In particular, parents reported discovering new facets of their children's personalities, while children proudly experienced being able to guide their parents in a context where they felt competent^[29].

It is interesting to note that the time spent playing with the mother, traditionally—and stereotypically—less involved in gaming activities, produces even more significant effects: precisely because it is rare, it takes on greater symbolic and emotional value^[30].

The phenomenon has also been observed in particular situations, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, when titles such as *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* represented a way for many families to share reassuring and creative activities, capable of alleviating the isolation and stress of lockdown. And there have been cases of fathers and mothers who have discovered, almost by chance, that a cooperative video game such as *It Takes Two* is a kind of laboratory for mutual trust: overcoming obstacles together, coordinating to solve puzzles, laughing at mistakes, and rejoicing in victories. These dynamics convey implicit messages of collaboration and respect in everyday life, which are difficult to reproduce in more ‘educational’ and formal contexts^[31].

In addition to research, the data also speaks for itself: according to a recent report, more than half of parents (55%) play with their children at least once a week, and the percentage rises to 57% when it comes to children under the age of thirteen^[32]. This is therefore not a marginal habit, but a widespread practice that is becoming – hopefully increasingly and in its own right – part of the repertoire of family activities.

29. Sheffield, Anneliese. (2014). Co-playing video games and parent-child relationships.

30. Coyne, S. M., et al. (2011). Game on... Girls: Associations between co-playing video games and adolescent behavioral and family outcomes. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 49(2), 160-165.

31. Wired (2021). The surprising benefits of gaming as a couple or with kids.

32. Guo, F., et al. (2021). Parental involvement and digital gaming. CHI PLAY '21 Proceedings. Clemson University.

But why does co-gaming seem to work so well, perhaps even better than other intergenerational activities? Salvador Minuchin's systemic-relational theory of the family is probably the most effective tool for answering this question, offering us relevant insights into understanding the potential validity of co-gaming and its “diversity” compared to other forms of shared family time. First of all, what is the family? It is never a static set of isolated individuals, but rather a living organism, made up of roles, subsystems, boundaries, and hierarchies in constant flux. Every daily interaction contributes to shaping its structure: a shared meal, an argument, a moment of play. Within this framework, video games seem to act as a positive disruptive event: they temporarily suspend traditional roles—the parent as the teacher, the child as the learner—and open up the possibility of a new configuration.

A father who finds himself in difficulty when faced with a level that is too complex, a mother who learns how to use a controller from her child, a parent who follows a strategy suggested by their teenager: these are seemingly trivial episodes, but when viewed from a systemic perspective, they reveal the **transformative value of co-gaming**. Results of this kind are difficult to achieve in other ‘more traditional’ activities, because video games introduce new territory, where hierarchies are suspended and **new configurations** are experimented with. This is not a loss of authority, but a reconfiguration of it: educational authority does not disappear, but becomes more flexible, capable of accepting vulnerability, irony, even failure, without renouncing its guiding role. This is precisely what Minuchin recognized as a distinctive feature of healthy family systems: the ability to reorganize, to create new and adaptive structures, while maintaining cohesion even in the midst of change^[33].

This explains why co-gaming is not simply “time spent together,” but **time that restructures the relationship**. New emotional grammars emerge in shared play: the complicity born of a level passed together, the shared frustration of defeat, the joy of a victory that is neither ‘mine’ nor ‘yours’ but ‘ours’. All these micro-events, seemingly ephemeral, settle as powerful emotional memories that strengthen mutual trust and a sense of belonging.

It could be said that co-gaming, precisely because it suspends the logic of everyday life, creates a transitional zone in which parents and children meet as equal partners. In this sense, and not by chance, the literature on attachment reminds us that the bond of trust is strengthened when the parent knows how to show themselves not only as an authority figure, but also as a secure base who plays, explores, laughs, and sometimes learns with the child^[34]. In this sense, video games become a potentially very important arena for rediscovering the playful dimension of the parental bond, which is often sacrificed due to educational or work pressures.

Consequently, co-gaming appears to be so effective precisely because it is not confined to the screen, but tends to produce effects that spread outwards, into everyday life, like an underground web of trust, dialogue, and mutual recognition. It is not the duration of time that is decisive, but its qualitative intensity: a few minutes of shared play can be worth more than hours of parallel coexistence. Ultimately, video games are not a barrier that separates, but a medium for renewing family ties, especially in a transgenerational key.

33. Minuchin, S. (1985). *Families and family therapy*. Harvard University Press.

34. Bowlby, J. (1988). *A Secure Base: Parent–Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development*. New York: Basic Books.

How to start a co-gaming experience with your children

We have seen how co-gaming should not be viewed merely as a somewhat eccentric pastime, but rather as a transformative opportunity that allows us to experiment with different roles, laugh together, discover others within a shared framework, and at the same time familiarize ourselves and become literate in the field of today's everyday media and digital culture. However, a very practical question remains: how do you get started? Where do you begin, without risking that the idea remains a good intention destined to fade away after two attempts?

The first answer is simpler than you might think: start with what you already have. There is no need to buy new titles or spend money 'just to try it out': almost always, the best starting point is the game your son or daughter already loves, the one they spend the most time on, the one you may only know by name. Asking, "Can you show me?" or, even better, "Can I try it too?" is not an act of control, but a gesture of openness and a genuine request to participate. This is precisely how co-gaming shows its relational, pedagogical, and innovative power: not in the novelty imposed by adults, but in the recognition of the world already inhabited by younger people.

Another unwritten rule is that there is no need for a marathon. Given its very nature of "transforming" and 'reorganizing' family time, co-gaming should not be turned into a new "duty." Thirty minutes, an hour at most, is often enough, preferably at a relaxed time on the weekend or on an evening with no other commitments. The point is not the amount of time, but the quality of presence and co-participation: really being there, letting yourself be guided, laughing together at mistakes, and accepting that, for once, it is your son or daughter who knows more, dictates the pace, and teaches.

And if you are afraid of 'not being able', this should not become an obstacle, but rather a resource. Being clumsy with a controller, not understanding the rules right away, is an integral part of co-gaming. Lightheartedness, irony, and the possibility of failing together are the spice of an experience that works precisely because it does not demand performance, but authenticity and mutual help.

Those who want to learn more can find support in a network of associations that in recent years has begun to work on these very issues. Organizations such as *EduGamers for Kids*, which was created by educators and game designers to offer awareness-raising activities and workshops for families, have shown how video games can become a tool for intergenerational dialogue^[35]. Furthermore, to a different extent, *Close in the Distance*—the leading non-profit association and promoter of **Gaming and Parents**—works explicitly to help parents, educators, and civic groups view digital technology not as a threat, but as an opportunity for encounter, promoting above all a healthy and conscious use of video games. These are just two examples, but they are enough to realize that there is a real international movement working along these lines: bringing together pedagogy and gaming culture, with the shared goal of building a common language between generations, precisely around a significant segment of everyday digital culture.

35. edugamers.cloud

The most important advice, ultimately, is this: don't try to find the “right” game to buy, don't imagine that you need the perfect experience. Start with what you have, with the resources already available, with the genuine pleasure of trying things out together. The rest—skills, bonds, learning—will come naturally, regardless of the specific game that will make it possible to actually implement a co-gaming session.

That said, there is one last important step: translating reflections into concrete experiences. Because co-gaming, however rich in potential, is not based on theories or explicit models, but rather on everyday moments: a game started on the sofa, a title chosen together, a controller passed from hand to hand. It is not a question of proposing educational software or ‘serious games’ developed for schools, but of starting with the commercial titles that millions of families already have at home, transforming what is normally perceived as simple entertainment into an opportunity for dialogue, cooperation, and shared growth.

For this reason, in the next paragraph we will present some examples and practical exercises, based on popular and accessible games that are easily available at no additional cost and can be immediately replicated in a family setting. These are not abstract models, therefore, but proposals that every parent can potentially adapt to their own home environment.

Ideas for family gaming activities (console, PC, mobile)

Before getting into the seven exercises designed by the **Gaming and Parents** partnership, it is worth clarifying one thing: what you are about to read is not a list of “games to play together” with your sons or daughters or, more generally, with teenagers or young adults, as if it were a light-hearted pastime, even if it is aimed at strengthening family bonds (a goal that is, in itself, more than relevant). However, it may seem that way because the titles chosen are popular and accessible to millions of teenagers and families: *Mario Kart*, *Fortnite*, *Minecraft*. But the logic is not fun for its own sake: each exercise is designed as an educational opportunity, that is, as a space in which the game becomes a lens for observation and a source of skill acquisition.

Therefore, we will not talk about the game as such—which remains spontaneous and free, as every playful experience should be—but about the game as an environment for continuous education. Within a co-gaming session, as already mentioned, cognitive, social, emotional, and communicative skills emerge and are trained: planning strategies, negotiating roles, managing frustration and victory, and building mutual trust. Consequently, this is precisely what is defined in adult education as the area of transversal skills: skills that arise in a specific context but remain available throughout life and are transferable to other areas (e.g., school, work, social relationships).

To further illustrate this, in the exercise dedicated to *League of Legends*, the game becomes a laboratory for **emotional management** and **strategic planning**, with the aim of learning—together—to tolerate the frustration of defeat and to recognize the merits of others. In *Mario Kart*, the focus shifts to fair play and the ability to cope with unexpected events – however ‘fun’ they may be – transforming a competitive context into an opportunity for **resilience and mutual respect**. With *Among Us*, the focus is on negotiation and critical thinking, exercised through group discussions and **dynamics of trust and suspicion**. Furthermore, experiences modeled on *Minecraft* or *Final Fantasy XIV* open up to long-term collaborative work: building together or facing an online challenge means training **cooperation, communication, and shared problem solving** in contexts that require commitment and, above all, **consistency and perseverance**. In this sense, the manual works on two levels. On the one hand, it is aimed directly at parents: reading and experimenting with these exercises means recognizing that video games are not ‘wasted’ time, but a possible area for growth and intergenerational contact. On the other hand, the exercises are also designed for professionals working in educational contexts: for them, the **Gaming and Parents** project has also produced specific factsheets, with instructions and adaptations for educational use and for the replicability of resources, which will be introduced in more detail in the appendix to this operating manual.

There is another aspect that is no less important: each exercise, in itself, represents a form of **digital literacy**. Learning to play together, understanding the logic of a game, reflecting on what happens on the screen, means becoming more aware of how digital media works, in a broad sense. It is a learning process that involves and affects not only young people, but in our case especially parents themselves, who often find themselves bridging this specific form of generational gap. In this sense, co-gaming is not just ‘shared time’: it is also mutual learning, parallel growth, and the acquisition of critical tools for inhabiting the digital dimension together and more consciously.

In light of all this, the seven exercises that follow should not be understood as a closed repertoire, but as examples: models that every family or educational context can adapt to its own possibilities. There is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ game: what matters is and always will be the method, the way in which gaming time is transformed into a space for dialogue, observation, and learning.

First exercise.

Getting back on track: *Mario Kart*

Objective

Practice managing emotions in a light competitive setting, encourage quick planning and respect for common rules, and experience frustration and the joy of victory in a healthy way.

Materials and duration

A console or device with any edition of *Mario Kart* (from the old Wii to *Mario Kart Tour* on smartphones), two or more controllers if playing on a console, and approximately 40–55 minutes of time.

What’s *Mario Kart* (and who is Mario?)

Mario Kart is one of *Nintendo*’s most famous series, created in the 1990s and now available in numerous versions. It is a spin-off from the world of *Super Mario*, the Japanese company’s flagship character—and global gaming icon—who has defined the very image of video games since 1985. In *Mario Kart*, the protagonists of this colorful world—from Mario to Luigi, from Peach to Bowser—abandon their traditional roles to compete in chaotic and unpredictable car races. It is not a realistic driving game, but an exhilarating experience made up of fantastic tracks, bizarre obstacles, and “special” items (from bananas that make you slip to the now legendary blue shells) that can turn the race around at the last second.

Precisely because of its immediacy and lack of realistic violence, *Mario Kart* has become a cross-generational title and, in fact, is also well suited to younger age groups.

Procedure

- **Briefing (5 minutes).** Parents and children choose the characters and the track: this moment alone becomes an opportunity for dialogue and exchange, between aesthetic preferences (“I want Yoshi!”, “I want Peach!”) and small strategies (“this track is more difficult, shall we try it?”).
- **Activity (about 30-40 minutes).** Play a few races together. The focus is not so much on winning at all costs, but on learning to deal with unexpected events (a banana peel, a blue shell that destroys a perfect race) and starting again without losing your good humor.
- **Debriefing (5-10 minutes).** At the end of the races, we stop to reflect: “How did it feel to lose on the last lap?”; “What made you laugh the most?”; “What did you do to catch up when you were behind?” Simple questions that help to recognize emotions and strategies and connect them to other contexts (school, sports, everyday life).

Reflections

Mario Kart is universally recognized as a family game: colorful, immediate, accessible to all ages. Its structure—fast, unpredictable, made up of sudden overtakes and rollovers—puts everyone on the same level, from beginners to veterans, creating fertile ground for training certain relevant skills. First and foremost, emotional management: learning to lose without getting discouraged, to laugh at the unexpected, to accept that a stroke of luck can, in fact, as in real life, turn the race around. Secondly, fair play, i.e., the ability to enjoy a victory without turning it into mockery, and to recognize the merits of others. Finally, there is the not-so-obvious element of attention and concentration, because staying on track requires quick reflexes and the ability to adapt to constantly changing situations. These are not abstract skills, but everyday skills that, when repeated over time, become part of the way people of all ages deal with challenges, cooperative relationships, and moments of frustration, even off screen.



Screenshot taken from Mario Kart World. © Nintendo. All rights reserved.

Second exercise.

Cooking under pressure: *Overcooked! 2*

Objective

Develop the ability to communicate clearly, coordinate in real time, and deal with stressful situations together, learning to collaborate and manage minor conflicts constructively.

Materials and duration

A console or PC with *Overcooked! 2* installed (available on multiple platforms, including online play options). Two or more controllers are required; recommended duration: approximately 50–65 minutes.

What's *Overcooked!*

Overcooked! is a cooperative video game published by Team17 and Ghost Town Games, which has enjoyed surprising success in recent years thanks to its simple yet entertaining formula: cooking together in kitchens that become increasingly absurd and chaotic over time. The goal of the players is to prepare dishes and serve customers within the time limit, coordinating their efforts to chop, cook, plate, and wash dishes. What makes it all unpredictable are the kitchens themselves, which move, collapse, catch fire, or turn into moving platforms. The result is a comical and frenetic game that requires constant cooperation and the ability to give clear instructions under pressure.

Procedure

- **Briefing (5 minutes).** In an informal setting, it is important to bear in mind that the goal is not so much to “win” as it is to learn to organize together. Each player takes on a role (“you cut,” “you cook,” “you serve the dishes”), assuming that dynamic kitchens will, in one way or another, force them to change plans on the fly. However, it is desirable that the assigned roles be discussed by the family group (or simply by the parent and son or daughter) and assigned based on the aptitudes and dispositions of the individual participants.
- **Activity (approximately 40-50 minutes).** The game is played on a couple of levels, observing how people communicate, who takes the initiative, who finds themselves in difficulty. Inevitably, there will be moments of chaos: burnt dishes, missed orders, various and possible gaffes.
- **Debriefing (5-10 minutes).** At the end of the session, there is a discussion: “When were we most organized?”; “When did we get lost?”; “What would you have liked me to say to you at that moment?” “Was the initial role actually suitable for you?”; “Would you have liked to start in a different way, with a different role?” Far from being a technical analysis, the conclusion should rather be a light-hearted conversation, aimed at noting the quality of communication, the management of chaos, and the consistency between personal expectations and the roles initially assigned to each participant.

Reflections

Unlike competitive games such as *Mario Kart*, *Overcooked!* is built entirely on cooperation. No one wins alone: either you work together, or the kitchen implodes. It is an ideal context for training interpersonal skills, both for younger and older people: direct communication, mutual listening, flexibility in roles, stress management. Here, the parent figure is not an outside observer but an integral part of the chaos: it is not uncommon for it to be the adult who ruins a dish through distraction, thus learning to laugh at themselves and apologize. These dynamics are potentially very significant because they can overturn the traditional relationship: adults do not ‘teach’ but cooperate, showing that even those with more life experience can find themselves in difficulty, and that the key is not perfection but mutual support.



Screenshot taken from Overcooked. © Ghost Town Games Ltd. / Team17. All rights reserved.

Third exercise.

Who is the impostor? Trust and negotiation with *Among Us*

Objective

To stimulate the ability to reason in a group, train negotiation and critical thinking skills, and explore the role of trust and suspicion in social dynamics.

Materials and duration

A smartphone, tablet, or PC with *Among Us* (free game, available on almost all platforms). A group of at least 4–6 players is recommended, for example, an entire family, for a duration of about 45 minutes.

What's *Among Us*

Among Us, developed by Innersloth, became a cultural phenomenon especially during the pandemic, when millions of people started playing it online with friends and strangers. It is a game of 'social deduction': in a spaceship, most players are 'crew members' who must complete small tasks, while 1 or 2 are 'impostors' who try to eliminate the others without being discovered. At intervals, players discuss who they suspect and vote to expel someone: a mixture of logic, intuition, bluffing, and theater.

Procedure

- **Briefing (10 minutes).** Before starting, explain the basic rule: the game is divided into two phases, the operational phase (everyone does their tasks) and the discussion phase (everyone talks to decide who to eliminate).
- **Activity (30 minutes).** Play one or more games, observing how each player constructs their reasoning and defends their position. Parents can play an active role (by participating as players) or an observational role (by listening to the discussions and encouraging debate).
- **Debriefing (5 minutes).** At the end, discuss together: "How did you figure out who the impostor was?"; "Did you trust anyone, and why?"; "How did it feel when they suspected you?" These questions help to connect the dynamics of the game with those of real life: trusting, deceiving, defending, and persuading.

Reflections

Among Us is a game with rules that are as simple as its social implications are profound. It is a playful laboratory in which players experiment with negotiation skills, the ability to construct and evaluate arguments, and the management of suspicion and trust. For younger players, it is a playful way to experience issues that are part of growing up: learning to defend one's own reasons, accepting being questioned, tolerating unjust suspicion. For adults, it is an opportunity to observe (and sometimes participate in) these mechanisms, recognizing how intense but also useful they can be for learning to dialogue in a group. Here, co-gaming becomes a relational laboratory: it is not so much who wins that matters, but how we confront, discuss, and negotiate.



Screenshot taken from Among Us. © Innersloth LLC. All rights reserved.

Fourth exercise.

Dancing together: expression and movement with *Just Dance*

Objective

To promote physical expression, the creative use of the body as a form of language, mutual acceptance, and the ability to share fully experiential moments in a familiar way.

Materials and duration

A console with *Just Dance* (available on *Nintendo Switch*, *PlayStation*, *Xbox*) or the *Just Dance Now* mobile app, which also works with smartphones connected to a screen. The duration is approximately 30–40 minutes.

What's *Just Dance*

Just Dance, developed by Ubisoft, is one of the world's most popular series of body games. The idea is simple: follow the steps of a musical choreography on the screen, imitating the movements of the digital character and trying to keep the rhythm. Each song is accompanied by colorful sets and choreography ranging from pop to rock, hip hop to Latin music, making the experience accessible to anyone, even those who “can't dance.” There is a competitive aspect—the final score—but it is secondary to the creation of a space of complicity and, above all, to the experiential and physical dimension.

Procedure

- **Briefing (5 minutes).** A song is chosen together and it is decided who plays first. It is important to emphasize that it is not skill that counts, but seeing and seeing oneself grappling with something unusual and intimately physical: the goal is to dance together using a video game medium, not to perform perfectly.
- **Activity (20–25 minutes).** A couple of songs are danced in turn or simultaneously. It is common for moments of poor coordination to arise (a wrong step, an exaggerated movement), which are intended to become opportunities for sharing. The parent participates as a player, agreeing to expose themselves, showing that the body can also be used in a playful and liberating way.
- **Debriefing (5–10 minutes).** The activity ends with a reflection: “What did you enjoy most?”; “How was it dancing with me?”; “Was there a song that surprised you?”

Reflections

Just Dance is not just a rhythm game: it is a context that makes something natural that would be unlikely to happen in everyday life. Dancing with your children or parents is not a common experience: dancing is often confined to gyms, parties, or formal contexts. Here, however, it becomes an expressive medium within the home, an “exceptional” opportunity in which the body becomes a language and a relational bridge. Laughing at a wrong step, sharing an improbable choreography, exposing oneself without fear of judgment: all this has enormous value because it transforms movement into communication and play into improvised sport, but above all into an experience of family intimacy that is difficult to replicate with other equally immediate tools.



Screenshot taken from Just Dance. © Ubisoft Entertainment. All rights reserved.

Fifth exercise.

Building worlds together: collaborative creativity with *Minecraft*

Objective

To stimulate creativity and design skills, encourage long-term collaboration and shared problem solving, training patience, imagination, and initiative. Above all, to enjoy the unique experience of building something together, a joint project that will remain over time as a tangible sign of family collaboration.

Materials and duration

A PC, console, or mobile device with *Minecraft* (Java or Bedrock version, it doesn't matter). Two or more people can play together, even locally. Recommended time: at least 45–60 minutes, but the game lends itself to repeated sessions.

What's *Minecraft*

Minecraft, which we have already mentioned, was originally developed by Mojang Studios and is now owned by Microsoft. It is also one of the most popular video games in the world. It is a sandbox game: it has no predefined goal, but offers a world made of blocks to explore, dig and build. You can play in 'survival' mode, where you have to gather resources and defend yourself from hostile creatures, or in 'creative' mode, which allows you to build freely without constraints. Its strength lies in its relative simplicity and immediacy: with just a few tools, you can build houses, cities, digital works of art, and even replicas of real monuments. It is no coincidence that *Minecraft* is used in educational contexts around the world as a non-formal learning tool, suitable for all ages.

Procedure

- **Briefing (10 minutes).** Choose together what to build: a house, a bridge, a village, a small joint "enterprise." It is important that the decision is shared: discussing and agreeing on the goal is already part of the co-gaming activity.
- **Activity (30–40 minutes).** Play collaboratively: one participant collects materials, another builds the foundations, one decorates, one explores. There are no fixed roles: you can change tasks freely, exchanging advice and suggestions. Unexpected moments—such as a night of monsters in survival mode or a construction error—become opportunities to reflect and reorganize.
- **Debriefing (5–10 minutes).** Observe the final result together: "Do you like what we've built?"; "What would you change?"; "What did you enjoy doing the most?". The emphasis is not on the finished product, but on the collaborative process.

Reflections

Minecraft is a creative workshop without equal. There are no scores or rankings: the value lies in imagining together and transforming an idea into digital reality. This makes the experience educational in a broad sense: it exercises creativity, patience, planning and collaboration skills, but above all, it allows you to experience the pleasure of building something together, in our case at the family level. For younger children, it means giving shape to ideas and imagination; but for parents, too, it is an opportunity to be amazed, rediscovering the joy of 'doing' things together without rushing, while learning the basic rules and principles of online cooperation, geared towards a creative goal. The most important aspect is that the work you build remains there, in the world of *Minecraft*, as a shared memory: every time you return to visit it, memories of the experience will resurface. In this sense, the title is truly capable of becoming much more than a 'simple' video game, instead taking the form of a potential repository of family stories.

Sixth exercise.

A timeless adventure: *Final Fantasy XIV* and the shared journey

Objective

Experiencing the video game as a long-term narrative and community journey, building lasting family bonds through exploration, cooperation, and sharing a complex story.

Materials and duration

A PC or console with *Final Fantasy XIV Online*. A subscription is required, but Square Enix offers a very generous free trial that allows you to play for hundreds of hours at no initial cost. The game lends itself to both short (30–40 minutes) and long sessions, as it is based more on continuity over time.

What's *Final Fantasy XIV*

Final Fantasy XIV is one of the most popular MMORPGs (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games) in the world. Set in a fantasy universe, it allows millions of players to create a character and experience epic adventures together, including missions, dungeons, raids, and a Main Story Quest (MSQ) that has become famous for its depth and narrative quality.

An emblematic example of the relational power of the game is the Japanese series *Final Fantasy XIV: Dad of Light* (2017), based on a true story: a son introduces his father—who was going through a crisis in his work and personal life—to the game in order to communicate with him in a new way, building a relationship that had remained distant in real life. This is not an isolated case: many families around the world have used FFXIV as a bridge to share time, emotions, and adventures.

Procedure

- **Briefing (10 minutes).** Create the character together, choosing race, class, and appearance: this is already a meaningful moment, as it allows you to express your tastes, identity, and creativity.
- **Activity (40–60 minutes or more).** Tackle cooperative content from the Main Story Quest or a dungeon. Here, the family experience immediately opens up to a broader dimension: you never play just the two of you, but within a group of eight people (in 'Trials') or even more in other content. This means that the parent-child dyad will inevitably find themselves collaborating with six other unknown players, sharing different roles (tank, healer, DPS), strategies, and unexpected events. It is a natural training ground for mutual trust and effective communication, which is not confined to the family unit but extends to the global gaming community.
- **Debriefing (10 minutes).** Reflect together on the experience: "How was it playing not only with me, but also with other people?"; "Did we learn anything from people we didn't know?"; "Did you feel part of a larger group?"



Screenshot taken from *Final Fantasy XIV*. © SQUARE ENIX CO., LTD. All rights reserved.

Reflections

With *Final Fantasy XIV*, family co-gaming is enriched with two unique elements. The first is virtual socializing: parents and children experience together what it means to join a large group, trust people who are essentially strangers, and learn to communicate quickly. It's not just about having fun, but about developing adaptability and collaboration skills that are essential even outside the digital world. The second is the linguistic and cultural dimension: MMORPGs connect players from all over the world, and the lingua franca is almost always English. It is not uncommon for boys and girls to improve their language comprehension (and even writing) by playing, learning technical terms, polite phrases, and ways of expressing themselves. Many adults recount the same experience: even before formal courses, it was the 'practical' English of online video games that represented a real language school.

In this sense, *Final Fantasy XIV* is much more than a game: it is a cultural and social environment, a context in which storytelling, strategy, language, and relationships intertwine. Playing together here means not only experiencing an epic adventure, but also participating in a global community that trains—without declaring it—social, linguistic, and emotional skills of great importance.

Seventh exercise.

Two-player strategy: *Teamfight Tactics* (TFT) in *Double Up* mode

Objective

To train strategic thinking and medium- to long-term planning skills, develop focused collaboration and constant communication between two people, transforming the parent-child pair into a real team with competitive ambitions.

Materials and duration

A PC or mobile device with *League of Legends* installed (free). In *Teamfight Tactics* – *Double Up* mode, two players collaborate in pairs. Recommended duration: one or two games of approximately 50–60 minutes each.

What's *League of Legends* (and what's TFT)

League of Legends (LoL), developed by Riot Games in 2009, is one of the most played and longest-running video games ever, as well as the flagship title of eSports, with millions of viewers at world championships and a huge global community. Its narrative universe has expanded far beyond the game, culminating in *Arcane*, the animated series produced by Riot and Netflix that won over audiences and critics alike in 2021, even winning an Emmy Award.

Alongside the "classic" version (a competitive 5v5 MOBA), Riot has developed *Teamfight Tactics* (TFT), which belongs to the "autochess" genre. What does that mean? Each turn, players choose "champions" from the LoL roster, place them on a digital chessboard, and combine them based on traits and synergies. Once deployed, the fights take place automatically ('auto'), while the heart of the game is the "chess" part: deciding who to put where and how to empower them. You don't need quick reflexes, but rather the ability to plan, adapt, and manage resources.

The *Double Up* mode takes all this to a cooperative level: two players form a team, can send each other champions and items, and support each other directly, building common strategies and sharing responsibility for the outcome.

Procedure

- **Briefing (10 minutes).** Parent and child sit down together and discuss possible initial strategies. The choice is never definitive, because the game forces players to adapt to what “comes up” turn after turn: the briefing therefore becomes a small lesson in flexibility.
- **Activity (30–40 minutes).** During the game, communication becomes central: units are exchanged, positions are suggested, and synergies to look for are pointed out. Success only comes if the pair manages to think like a real team, synchronizing their decisions.
- **Debriefing (10 minutes).** At the end, you reflect: “Which move helped us most as a pair?”; “Was there a moment when we weren't synchronized?”; “How was it to divide responsibilities and trust each other?”

Reflections

With *TFT Double Up*, co-gaming takes on the characteristics of shared strategic training, in which victory depends not on individual speed, but on the ability to coordinate. This makes it particularly suitable for family co-gaming: unlike the classic version of *LoL*, which requires motor skills and quick reflexes, *TFT* is based on reasoning, planning, and communication, which are accessible even to those who do not have much gaming experience.

It is a free game, so it is easily replicable without economic barriers, and at the same time it is part of a vast cultural universe: *League of Legends* has been at the center of the global eSports scene for years, and *Arcane* has shown how its narrative world can speak to different audiences. In this sense, *TFT Double Up* is a perfect bridge: it allows younger players to involve their parents not in a “chaotic battle,” but in a strategic challenge, where every decision counts and where two heads really are better than one—provided they actually talk to each other.



Screenshot taken from Teamfight Tactics (League of Legends). © Riot Games, Inc. All rights reserved.

Final exercise: how to draw up a family co-gaming plan, together with keeping a diary of the sessions

Introduction

We have looked at various examples and practical activities, from the most immediate and light-hearted games to the most complex cooperative adventures, always focusing on the most important aspect that co-gaming can guarantee: the transmission and acquisition of transferable skills, the strengthening of the systemic and relational network of the family unit, together with the improvement of intergenerational dialogue. Consequently, it is now time to take a further step: to move from episodic experience to conscious planning. Just as in everyday life we organize ourselves for meals, sports, school, or work, co-gaming can also find its own planned and recognized space. It is not a question of rigidly scheduling gaming, but of making it an integral part of the family routine, valuing it as an opportunity for shared growth.

Family plan for gaming

The first step is to sit down together and draw up a small “family plan” for gaming. It can be a simple chart, hung in the kitchen or on the refrigerator, that answers basic questions:

- When do we play together? (e.g., one evening a week, or half an hour on the weekend)
- What do we want to play? (choose together, alternating between games suggested by adults and children)
- What are the rules? (mutual respect, no insults, possibility to stop if someone feels uncomfortable)

The plan is not a rigid contract, but a flexible and shared agreement. The important thing is that it is created together, because in this way it can truly become a tool for mutual accountability: it is not “the parent who grants,” but “the family who decides.”

Diary of a co-gaming session

The second step is even simpler, but no less useful: keep a small journal. After a co-gaming session, you can spend a few minutes writing (or drawing) what happened. No need for long sentences, just answer two questions:

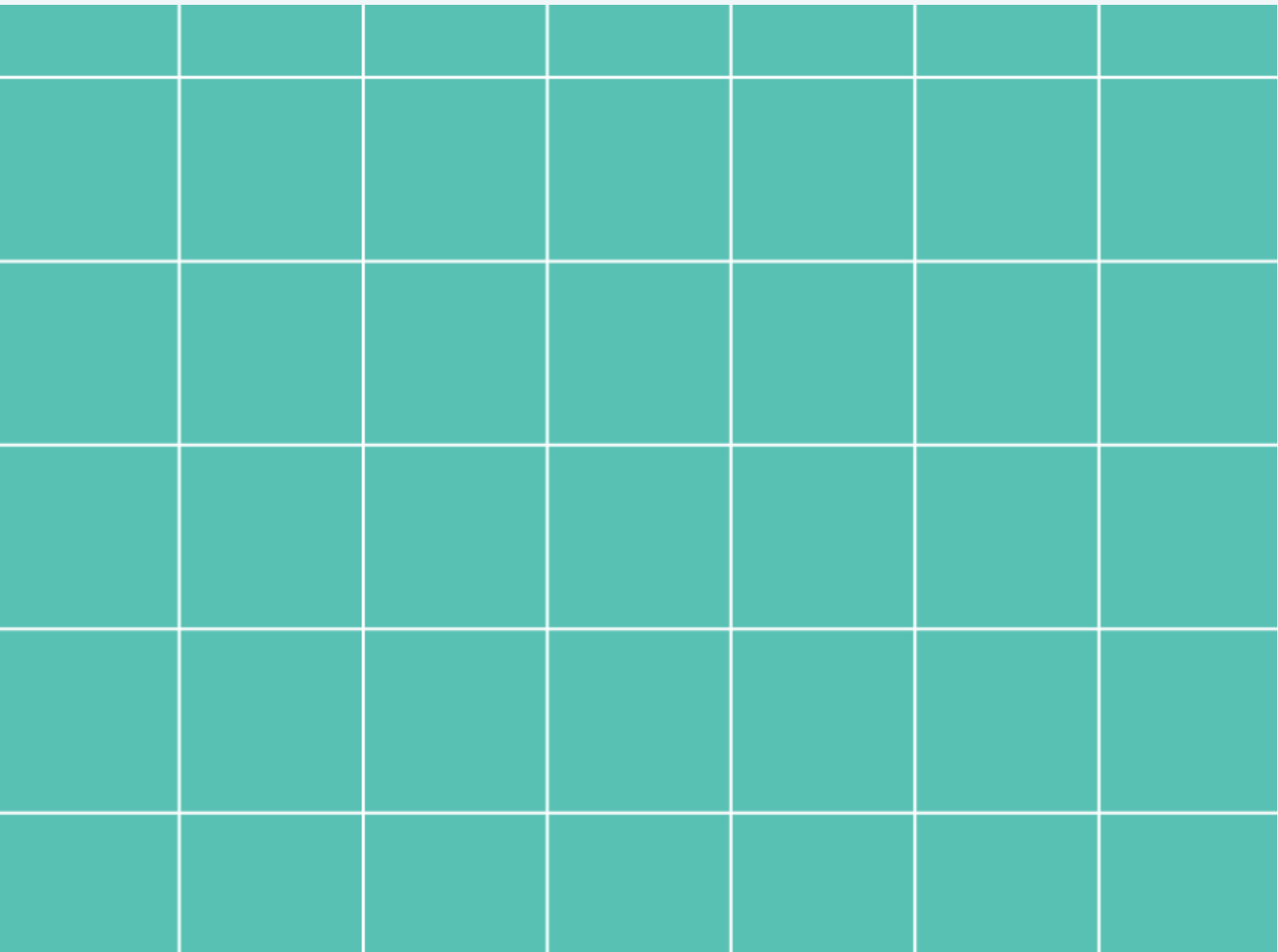
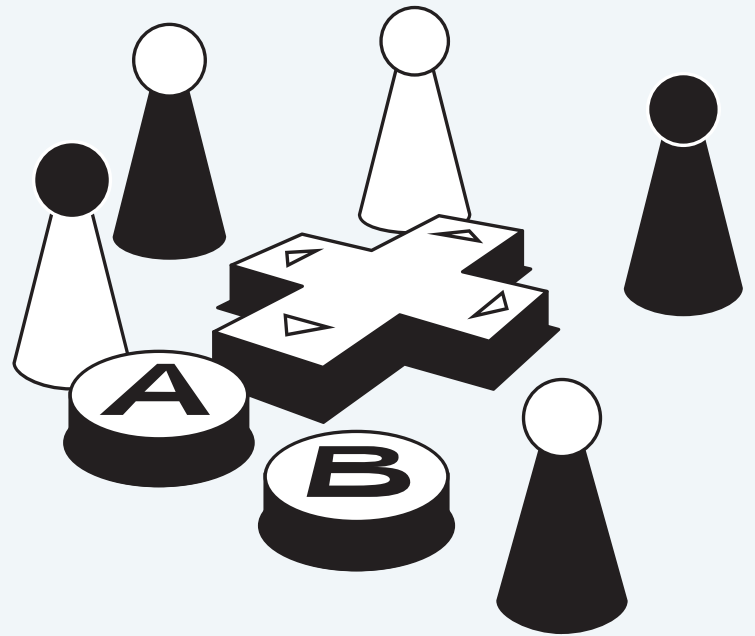
- What did I like most today?
- What did I learn (or discover) by playing together?

For younger children, the journal can be made up of drawings or collages; for teenagers, it can be a shared file, perhaps enriched with screenshots of the game. Adults can write in it too, turning the journal into a true intergenerational dialogue: not only a record of the game, but also a reflection of how the relationship is changing and growing.

Reflections

Planning and reflecting does not mean taking away the spontaneity of the game: on the contrary, it means recognizing it as a significant part of family life. A plan and a diary help to provide continuity, to prevent co-gaming from remaining an isolated episode, and above all to consolidate the awareness that what happens in front of a screen has real educational and relational value that transcends the boundaries of the medium. Ultimately, what matters is not the title chosen, but the ability to get together regularly and reflect together on the potential inherent in both digital technology and, more specifically, video games.

GAMING ADDICTION: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS



Difference between intensive use and addiction

In the previous sections, we described video games—and, more generally, gaming as a widespread, everyday practice—as a potential educational space: a “place” for informal learning, capable of stimulating cognitive, relational, and emotional skills which, in our case, can strengthen the family system on multiple levels. Specifically, we have placed gaming within a broader landscape of places and practices that make up what we now call **family digital literacy**: the ability, shared across generations, to **navigate digital environments critically, creatively, and consciously, leveraging intergenerational cooperation**. Yet, all this is not automatically positive. As with any other cultural or media practice—from television to competitive sports—**gaming can also take on problematic forms, which in some cases fully meet the clinical criteria for addiction**. Although we have so far emphasized the healthier aspects of video gaming, ignoring the possible risks would be naive, not only methodologically incorrect but also of little use to readers. This is precisely why this chapter focuses on the vast and complex phenomenon of gaming addiction, a specific form of new digital addictions (which are certainly not limited to gaming, but also include social networks, online shopping, and other compulsive behaviors related to the digital environment). To begin with, it is necessary to dwell on a fundamental distinction: that between intensive use and addiction to video games.

Intensive use ≠ Addiction

A boy or girl can play for many hours a day without being “addicted.” Intensive use describes a strong immersion in an activity that can also have positive outcomes: as we have seen, especially the development of transferable skills, social and creative abilities, or the strengthening of one's problem-solving skills, ethical sense, and so on. In general, gaming takes the form of deep “engagement” in the vast majority of cases, in seasonal mode (a highly anticipated new title, school holidays), which, however, does not significantly compromise daily life. In other words: it can be a lot, and all at once, but it is not necessarily too much. Addiction, basically, is a qualitatively different phenomenon. In 2018, the World Health Organization recognized gaming disorder as a behavioral disorder, defining it as “a pattern of behavior characterized by loss of control over gaming, increasing priority given to gaming over other activities, and continuation of gaming despite significant negative consequences.”^[36]

There are three elements that make the difference and allow us to talk about actual addiction, rather than intensive, more or less occasional use:

- **Loss of control:** the player is unable to limit the duration or frequency of gaming sessions on a daily basis
- **Impaired functioning:** gaming replaces other important activities (study, sleep, relationships, hygiene)
- **Persistence despite negative consequences:** even when the problems caused are recognized, gaming continues, precisely because of an intrinsic inability to control the gaming medium.

36. World Health Organization (2018), International Classification of Diseases 11th Revision (ICD-11).

The context matters more than the number of hours

However, international research converges on one key point: it is not the amount of time alone that defines addiction^[37].

A study conducted by Przybylski and Weinstein (2017) on over 2,000 adolescents showed that most young people who play more than three hours a day do not show clinical symptoms of addiction: problematic use affects a small minority (about 2–3%)^[38]. And, above all, it tends to accompany pre-existing conditions of psychological or social fragility (e.g., a tendency toward isolation or antisocial behavior), rather than “creating” them from scratch.

This is why it is essential to view the gaming experience in its context: who plays, with whom, what, when, and why.

An hour spent alone in the middle of the night, not only trying to ‘disconnect’ from reality, but also in a completely compulsive way, is not the same as three hours spent in the afternoon with friends, laughing and discussing strategies in an online game.

The role of parental mediation

In this scenario, parental mediation — both active and participatory — plays a fundamental role.

As studies by Sonia Livingstone and Ellen Helsper show, the risk is not so much exposure to the medium as the absence of shared rules, clear routines, and dialogue^[39].

When gaming is part of a family framework that includes:

- agreed times,
- spaces for discussion,
- moments of co-gaming,
- mutual curiosity,

then intensive use can even become an opportunity for growth.

On the contrary, when left entirely to the self-regulation of the youngest, in contexts of isolation or absence of alternatives, it can degenerate into compulsive use, unfortunately like many other activities.

Indicators of risky behavior and warning signs

When we talk about “addiction,” we are not referring to a vague impression, but to a reality that psychology and psychiatry have precisely defined and that includes specific warning signs, indicators, and observable behaviors. In DSM-5, which is the international reference manual in the field of psychopathology, addictions have long since ceased to concern ‘only’ substances (alcohol, drugs, tobacco), but also behaviors: for example, pathological gambling is recognized as a form of ‘addiction’ in all respects. This same framework applies to new digital addictions, i.e., online behaviors that, while not involving substances, can become equally pervasive.

37. Kuss, D. J., & Griffiths, M. D. (2012). Internet Gaming Addiction: A systematic review of empirical research. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 10(2), 278–296.

38. Przybylski, A. K., & Weinstein, N. (2017). A Large-Scale Test of the Goldilocks Hypothesis: Quantifying the Relations Between Digital-Screen Use and the Mental Well-Being of Adolescents. *Psychological Science*, 28(2), 204–215.

39. Livingstone, S., & Helsper, E. (2008). Parental mediation of children’s internet use. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 52(4), 581–599.

It is important to emphasize this again: **playing a lot does not automatically mean you are addicted**. Intensive use can be normal at certain stages of life, such as when a highly anticipated new title is released or during the holidays. Addiction begins when gaming ceases to be a choice and becomes an obligation, often a silent one, when it seems that the video game itself is “calling,” taking up space and time at the expense of everything else.

In order to truly speak of gaming addiction, there must be a continuous emergence of characteristic signs:

- Constant preoccupation with gaming (continuously thinking about when and how to play).
- Withdrawal symptoms when not gaming (irritability, anxiety, sadness).
- Increasing tolerance (need for more playing time to achieve the same satisfaction).
- Failed attempts to control or reduce gaming.
- Loss of interest in other activities (sports, friendships, school).
- Continuing to play despite problems that have already arisen (family, school, social).
- Deceiving family members or others about the actual time spent playing.
- Using gaming to escape negative emotions (anxiety, guilt, helplessness).
- Risking or losing relationships, school or work opportunities because of gaming.

Behavior is defined as problematic if these criteria are persistently present for at least 12 months, with significant impairment in daily life (school, relationships, work, health)^[40].

It is not enough for one of these signs to appear once in a while. To speak of addiction, there must be consistency over time (at least 12 months, according to WHO criteria) and, above all, significant impairment of daily life. Specifically, at least five of these signs must be present continuously in order to truly speak of addiction^[41]. A teenager who spends hours playing with friends on Discord, discussing strategies and laughing together, has a very different experience from someone who plays alone late into the night to escape school or relationship problems.

For a parent, the challenge lies precisely here: not to focus on the number of hours, but **to observe the quality of the experience**.

Is there social interaction? Is there shared fun? Or rather isolation, conflict, and daily fatigue? These are seemingly simple questions, but they require, first and foremost, the parent's active participation in the gaming experience of their younger child, as well as a certain degree of competence and awareness in the digital and media spheres, as well as specifically in video games. The educational role is not to turn off the screen at the first warning sign, but to learn to read the signs in their complexity, opening up spaces for dialogue and—if necessary—seeking specialist support.

How to intervene: dialogue, resources, external support

When gaming risks becoming potentially pathological, the first step should not be blind prohibition, nor blame, but rather open and equal dialogue.

40. American Psychiatric Association (2013). Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.).

41. At present, it should be noted that DSM-5 (2013) does not officially include “gaming addiction” among its recognized diagnoses. The American Psychiatric Association has chosen to include Internet Gaming Disorder only in the appendix, as a condition that warrants further study. In this sense, the nine criteria proposed by DSM-5 should be understood as clinically plausible warning signs, not as definitive diagnostic criteria. It is likely that the issue will be revisited and better defined in future editions of the DSM (DSM-6 is in preparation), but even today, a comparison of the two classifications provides some guidance: clinical criteria should not be frightening, but should offer parents and educators a clear framework for distinguishing between intense use and truly problematic use.

Parents should not and cannot become doctors or therapists—addiction, it bears repeating, is a very serious clinical issue that must be addressed by specialists—but they can play a decisive role as informed allies, creating opportunities for discussion and listening. Often, a simple “I’ve noticed you’ve been playing a lot lately, how are you feeling?” is worth more than a thousand prohibitions. This is where the importance of the educational alliance emerges: from mutual recognition, from breaking down the barriers of judgment that would make gaming a “forbidden world” rather than an area of life to explore together.

Many parents, when they perceive a risk (correctly or not), react with the temptation to cut it off abruptly: take away the console, turn off the Wi-Fi, ban the smartphone. It’s understandable, but it rarely works. Educational research suggests that the most effective approach is to co-construct family rules and agreements, those ‘digital contracts’ described in previous sections of the manual, in which times, spaces, and modes of use are written down together. Initiatives already mentioned, such as *Screenagers* in the United States or the tech contracts proposed by the *Center for Online Safety*, show how this collaborative approach is more productive, precisely because the very process of writing the rules becomes an opportunity for dialogue and internalization, much more so than a ban imposed from above^[42]. In Europe, similar projects are promoted by organizations such as *Internet Matters* (UK), which provides templates for digital agreements for families, transforming prevention into an act of shared participation.

However, when the signs become more worrying—isolation, loss of interest, recurring lies, difficulties at school—then it is necessary to consider qualified external support. In this field, Europe is moving decisively. The Council of Europe, together with the European Commission, has launched initiatives targeting the mental health of young people in relation to gaming and online gambling^[43]; several countries have activated national strategies, such as Greece, which in 2024 presented a plan to combat digital addictions with a mix of education, technological tools, and support services^[44]. At the same time, in countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, clinical centers specializing in the treatment of gaming disorder have been set up, demonstrating how the phenomenon is being taken increasingly seriously in the health sector.

Alongside clinical services, there is no shortage of third sector organizations. Organizations such as *YoungMinds* in the United Kingdom offer guides for parents and support programs on how to handle difficult conversations, recognize warning signs, and access targeted psychological resources^[45].

All this is part of a perspective that adult education is familiar with: **digital literacy as prevention**. Helping parents become more digitally aware means helping them not to be afraid of gaming, but to understand it, to make it an opportunity for shared growth and—in the most delicate cases—to recognize when it is time to ask for help. In short, the way forward is neither blind control nor abandonment, but a network of dialogue, educational tools, and, when necessary, clinical intervention. In this network, parents should act more as facilitators than judges: they accompany their children along the way, but do not walk alone on paths that require the presence of specialists.

42. See *Screenagers* (screenagersmovie.com) and *Center for Online Safety* (centerforonlinesafety.org).

43. Council of Europe – Promoting the mental health of children and youth by addressing the risks of online gambling and gaming.

44. Reuters, Greece presents strategy to combat youth internet addiction, 30/12/2024.

45. YoungMinds, Gaming and mental health: a parent’s guide.

So, if you believe—with a high degree of certainty—that there are potentially risky signs in your children's gaming behavior, what should you do?

The first step is to reevaluate what you observe. As we have said many times, it is not the hours themselves that determine whether there is a problem, but what those hours take away: neglected schoolwork, fading friendships, sacrificed sleep, skipped meals, a mood that swings between irritability and isolation. These are the real warning signs, the signals that transform a vague suspicion into a more solid and structured hypothesis that deserves attention and, if necessary, further action.

The second step is to choose how to react. The punitive approach (“That’s it, I’m taking away your console”) most often does not work: it generates conflict and hides the problem under the rug. It is much more useful to stop and open a conversation: ask “What do you like about this game?”, “How do you feel when you play?”. Dialogue does not eliminate the risk, but it makes it visible, shared, less threatening.

The third step is to recognize your own limitations. A parent is not a psychologist, nor should they become one. Their role is to accompany, not diagnose. But they can and should know that there are resources to turn to. In Italy, for example, several local health authorities have set up centers for new addictions, with specific help desks for gaming. In Germany and the Netherlands, there are dedicated clinics and local services. We have also already mentioned organizations such as *YoungMinds*, which offer free guides and online counseling (sadly only in English), while *Internet Matters* provides materials for all age groups.

Finally, the fourth step is not to remain alone. Talking to your pediatrician, a teacher, or a trusted educator is already a way to break the isolation and find the right services. Addiction is not tackled by closing the door, but by opening it: to the family, the community, and clinical and educational support networks.

In this sense, the parental figure becomes a bridge between the adolescent's daily life and the external resources available.

Practical exercise: how to recognize and deal with difficult situations

To conclude this chapter, we have chosen to propose a practical exercise with a “dual” function. On the one hand, the exercise is intended as a tool for parental self-education: a small workshop for reflection that allows parents to practice recognizing the signs of difficulties related to gaming and to imagine responses that are more effective than simply forbidding or reprimanding their children. On the other hand, the activity is designed so that it can be easily adapted and replicated in broader educational contexts: parent groups, adult training courses, and discussions between educators and families.

With this in mind, we are not proposing a rigid formula, but rather a ‘let’s pretend’ scenario: an imaginary but very realistic scenario that invites participants to put themselves in the shoes of the characters and experiment with choices, questions, and possible answers.

Objective

Help parents and educators recognize signs of possible problematic gaming and try out practical responses based on observation, dialogue, and the activation of external resources.

Materials and duration

No special tools are needed, except for a sheet of paper and a pen to write down your thoughts. The activity takes about 40 minutes and can also be done in small groups of parents or in an adult education setting.

Scenario (Briefing)

Let's pretend that: Marco is 14 years old. For several months now, he has been spending many hours locked in his room playing an online video game. He has stopped going out with his friends, his grades at school have worsened, and every time his parents try to ask him to turn off the game, he reacts angrily, saying that he is “playing with the team” and cannot stop. He arrives late or reluctantly at mealtimes and often skips breakfast because he stays up late into the night.

Activity

The group of parents starts by observing the scenario, working through three steps:

- **Distinguish.** The first question to ask is not “how much does he play?” but “what does he leave behind to play?”. School, friendships, sports, sleep, regular meals: if these areas remain intact, it is more likely to be intense use rather than addiction. Conversely, when gaming becomes the only source of gratification, to the detriment of everything else, then the alarm bells really start ringing.
- **Look at the bigger picture.** Excessive gaming is often a sign of other problems: anxiety, isolation, even eating disorders or depression. Before blaming everything on video games, it is worth asking yourself whether gaming is actually masking other difficulties. This awareness avoids blaming the tool and allows you to shift your focus to what really matters: the overall well-being of the gamer.
- **Try concrete educational strategies.** There is no need to resort to outright bans: there are intermediate steps that can make a difference. Invite your son or daughter to explain the game and try it together (co-gaming), agree on a shared family schedule, include breaks or simple rules (“no devices at the table,” “turn off after midnight”), think of rewards linked not to time but to goals achieved (e.g., “if we finish the mission together, then we'll watch a movie”). These are simple tools, but much more effective than a head-on conflict.

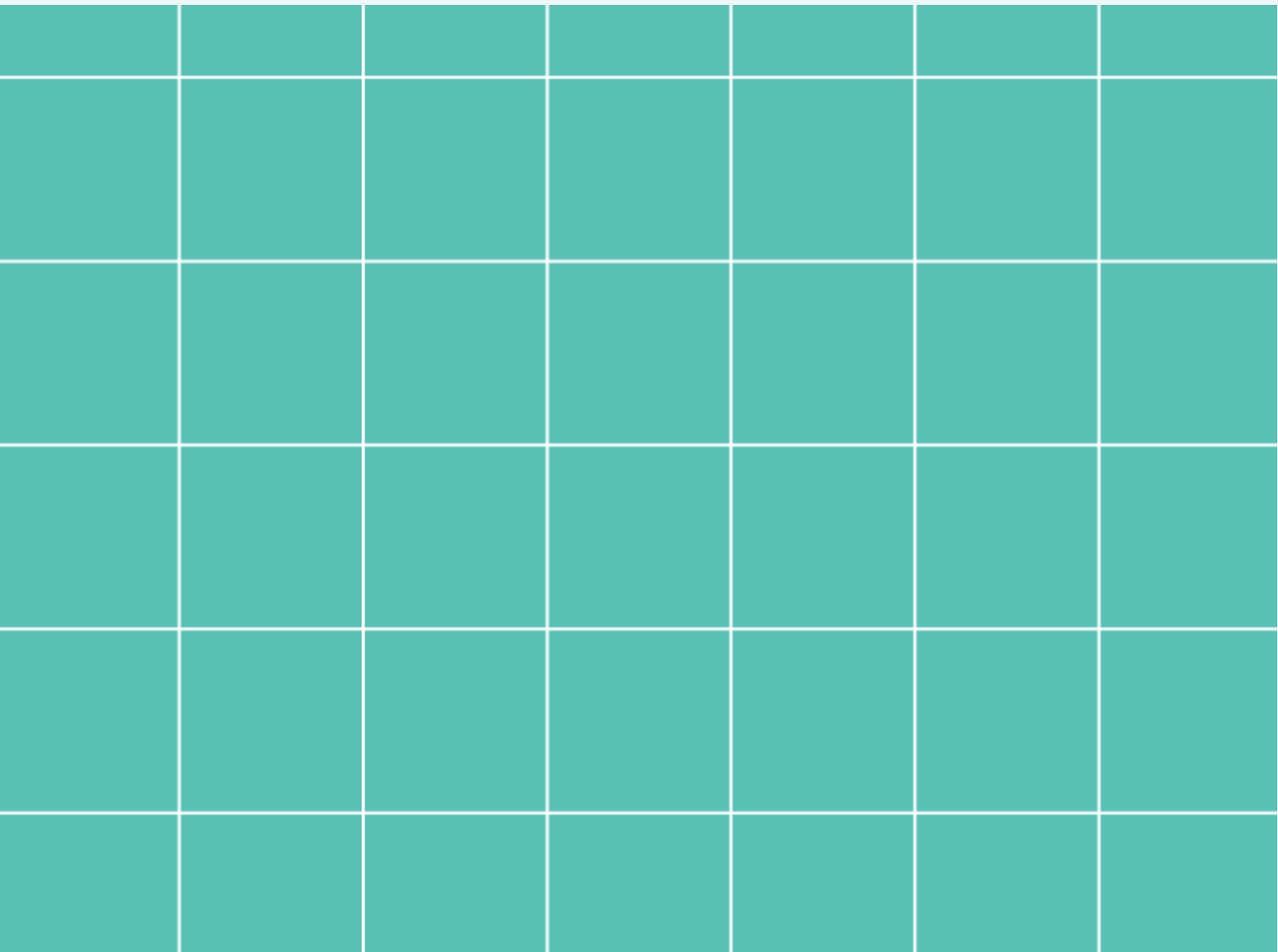
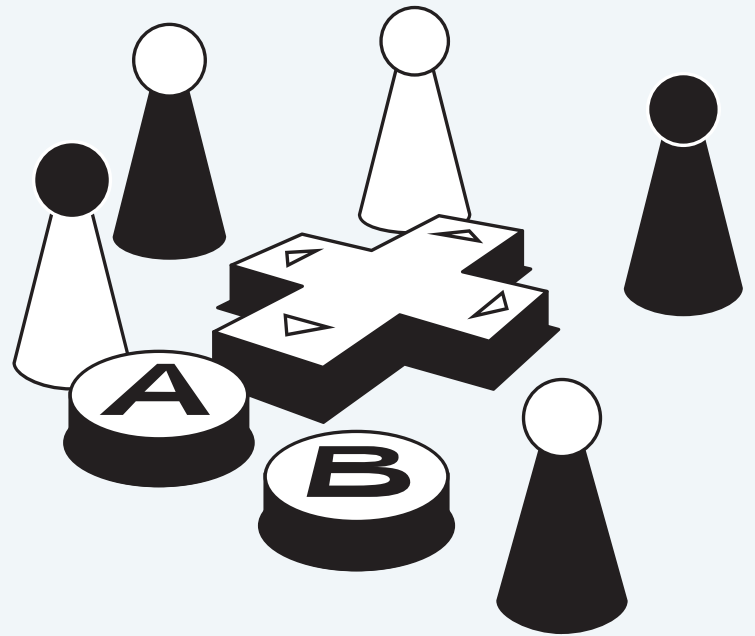
Debriefing

After the discussion, the group reflects on a fundamental principle: it is not the video game that is the enemy, but the lack of balance. Playing a lot can be a passion; playing too much, to the point of sacrificing relationships, health, and emotional well-being, is a sign of risk. If family strategies are not enough and behaviors continue to compromise daily life, then it is time to turn to those who can help: pediatricians, schools, local centers (AUSL/ASP/ATS), specialized associations.

Reflections

This exercise works because it presents parents and educators with a realistic story, not an abstract theory. The ‘let's pretend’ approach allows them to practice recognizing the signs in a safe environment, to think of strategies other than punishment, and to learn about local resources. It is a simple but powerful way to remember that digital addiction, like any other difficulty, is not solved by an impulsive reaction, but by the ability to observe, dialogue, and ask for help.

E-SPORTS, STREAMERS, TWITCH: A NEW AND POSSIBLE FAMILY ACTIVITY



What is eSports, who are streamers, and why are younger generations interested in it?

Today, talking about eSports means referring to a global and multifaceted phenomenon that crosses and involves different cultures, generations, and languages. **What exactly is an eSport?** The word comes from the abbreviation of electronic sports: organized and structured competitions in which video games become the playing field, in a completely competitive manner, just like a traditional sport. It is no longer a question of “playing video games” in a generic sense, but of competing in official tournaments, with shared rules, referees, rankings, and prizes. This has been possible because video games—which for decades were considered purely individual entertainment—have gradually transformed into a sporting discipline, capable of attracting audiences, sponsors, and professionals just like soccer, volleyball, basketball, or athletics. In fact, the difference between “playing video games” and “practicing an eSport” today is similar to that between an amateur soccer game and a Serie A game broadcast on television. On the one hand, there is the spontaneous and informal pleasure of the game; on the other, an organized context, with athletes who train daily, technical and medical staff, sponsors, audiences, and large arenas. In a sense, both share the same playful roots, but what changes—even radically—is the setting: the stakes, the rules, the competitiveness, and, above all, the collective attention.

The origins of this phenomenon can be traced back to past decades. Already in the 1980s and 1990s, with the first *Space Invaders* tournaments and later with LAN parties^[46], small groups of enthusiasts gathered to compete in “competitive” games. On the other hand, it was from the late 1990s and especially in the early 2000s that the term eSports really began to take shape, thanks to titles such as *StarCraft* in South Korea, which became a national phenomenon with a large television following, or *Counter-Strike*, which created real amateur ‘leagues’ in European and American circles. These experiences, which were ‘pioneering’ in a sense, marked the beginning of an evolution that saw video games leave private rooms and become public events, first at dedicated fairs and arenas, then on global channels. Today, eSports is a professional sector that mirrors traditional sports in every way: teams with managers and coaches, millionaire sponsors, dedicated training centers, tournament calendars that run throughout the year, and world finals watched by tens of millions of viewers simultaneously. Games such as *League of Legends*, *Dota 2*, *Counter Strike*, and *FIFA* have long since crossed the threshold of private entertainment to become disciplines followed in the same way as the *Champions League*, the *World Basketball Championship*, or the *Olympics*. In this sense, it is no coincidence that, as early as 2018, the International Olympic Committee set up a working group to integrate eSports into activities similar to the Olympic program, recognizing their potential for bringing people together and promoting inclusion^[47]. But beyond this veritable ‘explosion’ of ‘serious and professional’ eSports, amateur gaming – albeit competitive – has also evolved over time, changing and growing stronger. Reviving and enhancing the atmosphere of those home tournaments or improvised LAN parties, a competitive but more widespread and cross-cutting ecosystem has taken shape which, while not aspiring to true professionalism, has over time attracted the interest of industry, the media, and institutions: evening training sessions, small amateur leagues, and family-organized matches have taken on a new, hybrid tone, halfway between leisure and competitive sport.

46. LAN parties (Local Area Network parties) were gatherings, very popular in the 1990s and early 2000s, where groups of enthusiasts physically brought their computers to the same place—garages, gyms, classrooms, parish halls—to connect them to each other via a local area network (LAN). A LAN is a direct wired connection between multiple computers, allowing them to play together without the need for the Internet: all that was needed were cables and network switches to create a small “shared world” of challenges, exchanges, and friendships. These gatherings, halfway between competitive tournaments and community parties, were the embryo of the collective gaming culture that today finds expression in the large arenas of eSports and global streaming platforms.

47. IOC. Esports and Gaming: The IOC’s Esports Strategy (2021).

The parallel with other sports helps to better understand this evolutionary trajectory: alongside *Series A* or the *NBA*, there has always been neighborhood soccer, games at the parish youth club, sports club competitions, and semi-competitive volleyball leagues. Similarly, alongside the *League of Legends World Championships* or the million-dollar *Dota 2 tournaments*, there is now a fabric of friendships, youth communities, and even families who decide to compete together against other groups and pursue a “competitive” goal. Many parents, trying out titles such as *Rocket League* or *Dota 2*, discover that discussing strategy, coordinating during a game, or simply sharing a victory can strengthen bonds as much as a trip or a board game. In this sense, the digital “field” is intertwined with the real field: the place changes, but the spirit remains the same, made up of collaboration, rivalry, belonging, and mutual learning.

However, the eSports phenomenon today tends not to be limited to the moment of competition itself, whether professional or not. While it is true that world tournaments attract tens of millions of viewers, focusing on teams made up of professional athletes, much of the daily life of this ecosystem takes place elsewhere, namely in streaming. The sporting experience develops mainly on digital platforms where training is followed, strategies are viewed, and the plays of both professionals and extremely talented players are commented on^[48].

This is where **Twitch.tv** comes in, the platform that has turned this trend into a real mass phenomenon. Founded in 2011 as an evolution of Justin.tv and acquired by Amazon in 2014, Twitch has established itself as a virtual “symbol” not only for following major competitive challenges, but also for getting in touch with the daily lives of gamers. The logic is simple: a player broadcasts their game, viewers interact in chat, and a real-time dialogue is created that is both entertainment and conversation.

In this space, the central figure is not only the professional athlete, but the **streamer**: the person who, by broadcasting, narrating, and dialoguing, builds a loyal community over time. In this way, the phenomenon extends far beyond gaming as such: while competitions focus on technical skill, on Twitch, people also seek companionship, humor, and the opportunity to share. It is therefore not surprising that the most popular category is not always linked to a specific title, but to *Just Chatting*, a sort of “digital living room” where people chat freely, often without even playing games anymore.

In this sense, gaming remains the original matrix, but it expands into new forms of virtual sociality: it is no longer just about who wins a game of *League of Legends*, but also about feeling part of a common place, a space to return to every day to talk, share, and recognize oneself.

For a parent, therefore, the question is no longer whether it is worth paying attention to eSports or streaming, but how. The educational challenge is not to judge from above, downgrading this vast set of virtual and digital activities, but to find ways to enter this world, understand it, and perhaps become part of it. Because, as has happened in the past with sports, music, or cinema, what is at stake here is the construction of identities, languages, and communities that younger generations experience as an integral part of their growth. Ignoring them would mean letting that growth happen on its own, without tools for intergenerational dialogue.

48. Sjöblom, M., & Hamari, J. (2017). Why do people watch others play video games? An empirical study on the motivations of Twitch users. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 75, 985–996.

Relationship opportunities: observe, understand, participate

Thinking of eSports solely as a competitive arena populated by professionals means losing sight of a fundamental aspect: the possibility of experiencing them as an opportunity for interaction, especially within the family. Watching a *League of Legends World Championship* match or the final of a *FIFA tournament* together is not so different from gathering on the sofa to watch a Champions League soccer match: there is anticipation, there are shared emotions, there are technical terms that the younger generations may know better and can explain to their elders, once again overturning the traditional patterns of the educational process in a sort of intergenerational peer support.

The materials collected by **RÍSÍ**, an Icelandic eSports federation, illustrate this dynamic very clearly. A mother interviewed in a workshop described her surprise at seeing her daughter get excited during the final of the aforementioned *League of Legends World Championship*:

«She looked like she was watching the national soccer team, but with more passion, because she knew the moves, the players, the background».

The evening became an opportunity for dialogue: no longer “turn off that computer,” but “explain to me why you support this team.” A small reversal that opened a lasting channel of communication, in fact through and thanks to the electronic and gaming medium.

The same thing happened with other titles: again in Iceland, some families watched the *Rocket League* and *FIFA eWorld Cup* finals together, cheering and following the strategies on the field as if it were a basketball game. In some cases, parents discovered that their children were able to explain the rules, tactics, and “background” of teams and players with the same precision with which an adult would explain a soccer derby. For younger people, this meant feeling recognized not as “passive consumers of screens,” but as experts, worthy of being listened to and, above all, dedicated to a meaningful, complex, and exciting activity.

Other families experienced similar dynamics, not so much by watching official tournaments, but through streaming on Twitch.tv, thus moving beyond the specifically professional framework of eSports. Field surveys conducted by **RÍSÍ** staff collected several testimonials in which parents reported that they began sitting next to their children while they watched their favorite streamer. At first, it was just a matter of watching silently, almost with distracted curiosity; then came the first questions (“who is that?”, “why are they using this strategy?”); finally, in some cases, direct participation kicked in, with the parent finding themselves commenting on the channel's chat, sharing reactions and emotions with other viewers and fans.

This progression, so simple in its concreteness, is actually a very significant mechanism of rapprochement, especially in the field of broader digital and media literacy. As reported by the operators involved, it is not uncommon for a parent to arrive, after a few weeks, at recognizing the playing style of a pro-player or becoming familiar with slang terms that seemed incomprehensible the day before. It is a process of indirect, spontaneous cultural familiarization that does not come from manuals or courses, but from sharing a concrete experience. Above all, it is a way to get in touch with a segment of contemporary culture that coincides with live entertainment and a virtual sociality that is as fluid as it is real: one that arises from the dialogue between streamers and communities, and which younger people now inhabit as a daily extension of their relationships.

From a pedagogical point of view, the most important issue is to recognize the cultural dignity of a youth phenomenon and transform it into a shared experience. You don't need to be an expert on video games: what matters is a willingness to listen and a curiosity to understand a world that, for those who grew up without screens, may seem foreign or distant. In this sense, watching eSports or streaming together becomes a real laboratory for listening and mutual learning: adults learn to suspend judgment and decipher a new language, while teenagers feel recognized in their passion and in turn become guides and cultural mediators. It is in moments like these that the so-called digital gap between generations can truly be reduced. Not because a parent learns all the rules of a video game or knows how to distinguish between each streamer, but because they agree to sit alongside, observe, ask questions, and let themselves be guided. At the same time, the teenager will have the opportunity to validate their passion and a part of their daily life, not relegating it to a private corner but making it a shared, talked about, and recognized activity. In this way, screen-mediated socializing ceases to be perceived as a barrier and can become a terrain for learning, experience, and participation: a concrete opportunity to build, day after day, a common language capable of enriching family relationships and familiarity with the most contemporary trends in so-called everyday digital life.

Practical exercise: “Let's watch a game together (guided analysis)”

Introduction

To conclude this section, we propose three practical exercises, designed to be used directly in the family or adapted by professionals working in adult education and parenting support contexts. The logic is simple: start with a ‘real’ gaming event – a tournament, a game, a stream – and turn it into an opportunity for dialogue and shared reflection and, above all, into a workshop for acquiring digital skills and familiarity. Whether it is a parent watching with their children or a group of adults experimenting together and then transferring the practice to their own context, the goal is always the same: to lower generational barriers and reduce the digital and cultural divide that still characterizes the entire gaming sector.

Practical exercise.

Let's watch a game together (guided analysis on Twitch or YouTube Gaming)

Objective

To familiarize ourselves with video game streaming platforms (in particular Twitch and YouTube Gaming), observing not only the game content but also the social dynamics that develop around it: live chat, the role of the streamer, interactions with the community. The activity trains critical observation, understanding of digital languages, and recognition of the social skills implicit in these virtual environments.



Materials

A PC, smartphone, or smart TV with access to Twitch or YouTube Gaming. It is helpful to select in advance:

- a live event (e.g., a *Fortnite* tournament);
- a concert or special event hosted within a video game (e.g., Travis Scott or Ariana Grande on *Fortnite*);
- a channel of a popular streamer, preferably one that the child already follows.

Total duration

45–60 minutes.

Procedure

Briefing (10 minutes)

The younger person introduces Twitch or YouTube Gaming: they show how the platform works, what it means to “follow a channel,” what live chats are for, and how viewers and streamers interact. The parent or guardian lets themselves be guided, taking on the role of observer and learner.

Activity (25–30 minutes)

Watch a chosen piece of content together (e.g., a tournament or live stream of *Fortnite*). Here, the focus is not only on the game itself, but also on the context:

Who is the streamer? How do they communicate with their community?

What is being written in the chat? Is it just noise, or are there jokes, support, shared language?

How does the young person react to these exchanges? Do they recognize themselves in that language? Do they find it part of their everyday life?

You can also try writing a message in the chat (if the channel is open) or commenting together as a family, experimenting with active participation.

Debriefing (10–15 minutes)

At the end, discuss together:

“What struck you most: the game, the streamer, or the chat?”

“Does it seem similar or different from watching a football game or a talent show on TV?”

“What kind of skills do you need to be a streamer?” (public speaking, time management, keeping attention alive, etc.)

You can then reflect on how these skills are actually transferable to other contexts, and how online socializing is not “fake” but builds real, albeit digital, communities.

Reflections

This exercise shifts the focus from ‘playing’ to “watching others play,” one of the most popular activities among young people today. Understanding Twitch or YouTube Gaming means understanding a fundamental part of contemporary youth culture. Parents do not need to become experts in *Fortnite* or skilled streamers: they just need to recognize that these platforms are training grounds for communication skills, the ability to interact in virtual communities, and digital identity management. In other words, watching together is not just “passing the time”: it is opening a window onto a social world that integrates gaming, entertainment, and virtual relational culture.

Practical exercise

An eSports tournament: digital technology as an example of contemporary sports culture

Objective

To bring parents and children closer to the world of genuinely competitive eSports, looking not only at the “spectacular” aspect, but above all at the underlying values: cooperation, respect for rules, management of emotions, belonging to a global community. The activity aims to make it clear that sports culture—fair play, commitment, team spirit—is not the exclusive preserve of traditional sports, but can also live and regenerate in digital spaces.

Materials

A PC, tablet, or smart TV with access to Twitch or YouTube, selecting a competitive event (for example: the *League of Legends World Championship*, *The International Dota 2 Championship*, a *Valorant tournament*, or the *Overwatch League*).

Total duration

Approximately 60 minutes.

Procedure

Briefing (10 minutes)

The younger participant introduces the event: who the teams are, which countries they come from, and the basic rules of the game. It is not necessary to understand every technical detail: what matters is to grasp the spirit of the competition. The adult can ask simple questions (“Why is this team so strong?”, “Who are the most famous players?”), taking on the role of someone who is approaching the game with curiosity.

Activity (30–35 minutes)

Watch a phase of the match or tournament together, trying to observe not only the moves on the screen but also the dynamics behind them:

- cooperation between team members (complementary roles, rapid communication, collective decisions);
- discipline in respecting the rules (breaks, refereeing, professional codes of conduct);
- the behavior of the online audience (cheering, support, emoticons, and chat as tools for collective participation).
- Adults can try to read the game as they would read a *Champions League* match or an *Olympic final*: recognizing the common values that link physical sports and digital sports.

Debriefing (15 minutes)

At the end of the viewing, the dialogue opens:

- “Does it seem more like a soccer game or a video game to you?”
- “What is more important to win: individual skill or teamwork?”
- “What emotions did watching the match make you feel?”

You can then reflect on the global dimension: how these tournaments bring together spectators from all over the world, fostering a sense of belonging and transnational digital citizenship.

Reflections

Just as the Olympic Games or basketball tournaments are training grounds for civic and sporting values, major eSports events today represent a form of non-formal education: they teach that victory comes from teamwork, that shared rules are what make competition possible, and that respect for one's opponent is an integral part of the challenge. Watching an electronic match together means familiarizing oneself not only with a slice of youth culture, but with a true digital sports culture, in which the screen becomes a stadium, the community becomes an audience, and families can practice reading together a language that is as new as it is—by now—pervasive.

Practical exercise

From soccer ball to joypad: the world of eFootball

Objective

To show how eSports can convey the same values as traditional sports, encouraging cooperation, respect for the rules, and fair play. To accompany parents in a familiar context—soccer—to better understand the phenomenon of electronic sports.

Materials

- PC, console, or smart TV with access to YouTube or Twitch.
- Recording of an *eFootball* (formerly PES) or *FIFA eWorld Cup final*.

Total duration

Approximately 40–50 minutes

Procedure

Briefing (10 minutes)

As in a Series A or World Cup match, each participant chooses a team to support. This step alone puts adults and children on the same footing, because you don't need to 'know about video games': you just need to know the language of soccer.

Activity (25 minutes)

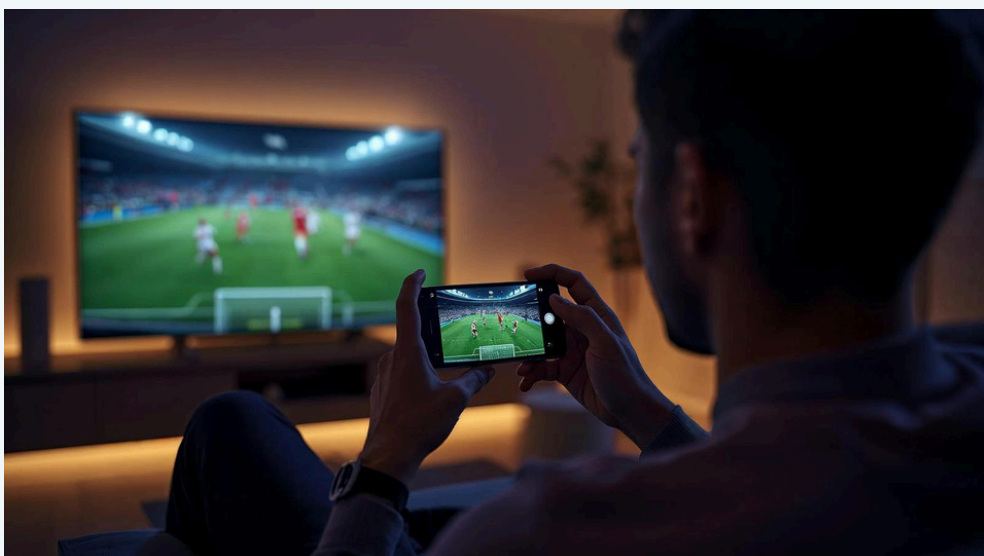
We watch the match together. Each person notes down two things: the actions they consider 'worthy of applause' (team play, intelligently constructed goals, defensive recoveries) and 'unsportsmanlike' behavior (provocations, toxic attitudes in chat).

Debriefing (10–15 minutes)

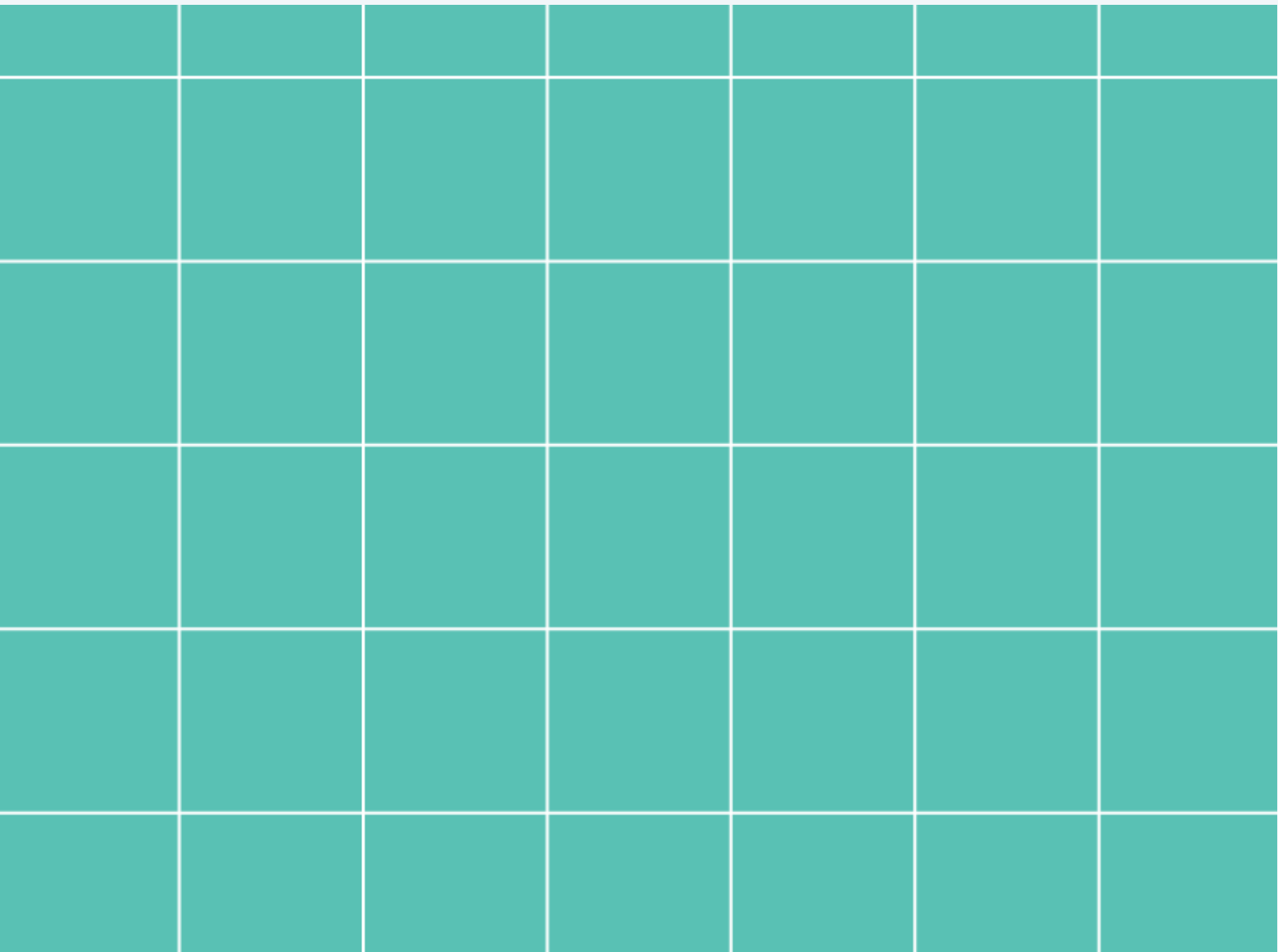
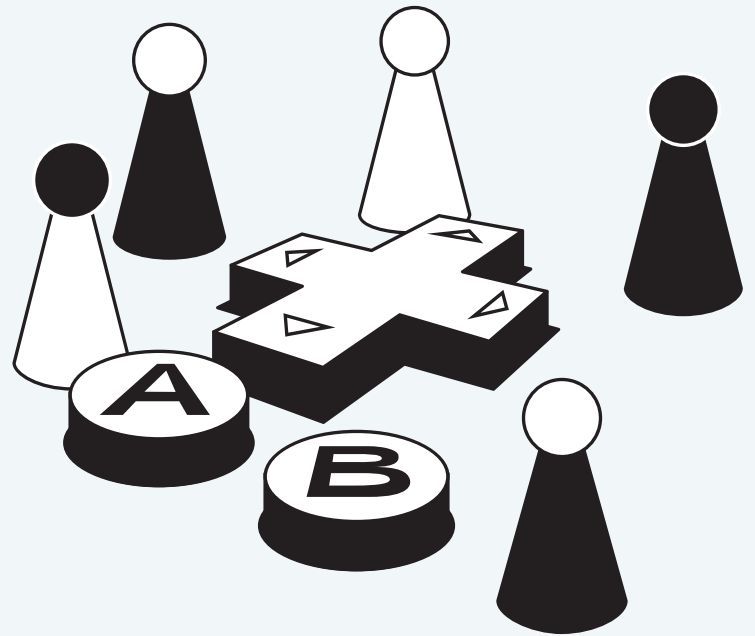
Discuss. What makes an action "beautiful," even in the digital world? How do the rules protect the game and the players? What similarities emerge between real soccer and virtual soccer?

Reflections

This exercise is based on common ground: the most popular sport in the world. For a parent, it is probably much easier to relate to an *eFootball final* than a *League of Legends* match. However, the dynamics remain surprisingly similar: respect for the opponent, the value of teamwork, resilience after a mistake. Watching together therefore means not only familiarizing oneself with the world of eSports, but also discovering how traditional and digital sports share universal educational values. In other words, it is a bridge between generations: the child explains the logic of an online tournament, while the parent recognizes echoes of matches seen at the stadium or on TV.



EDUCATIONAL APPENDIX



In this chapter, we have collected materials and tools with a dual purpose: to offer families additional practical activities to enjoy with their children and, at the same time, to provide resources and models that can be used in education and parenting support programs, including in other countries and by new operators and educators. **Gaming and Parents** was created with this very purpose in mind: to share contemporary gaming culture and transform what often appears to be a distance—the so-called digital gap—into an opportunity for dialogue and mutual learning, addressing both parents and families, who will thus have clear and concrete tools at their disposal, and educators and operators, who will be able to easily remodel and integrate the same materials into workshops, workshops, or adult training courses, thus strengthening the impact and sustainability of the project in the future.

The following exercises respond precisely to this perspective: simple activities that can be carried out at home but are capable of opening windows onto broader themes such as inclusion, diversity, active citizenship, sustainability, and digital skills. These are not just fun activities, but real micro-workshops that can be replicated in different contexts and are useful for both young people and adults.

Alongside the manual, the partnership has also developed **methodological guidelines**: concise and practical insights designed especially for educators and facilitators who wish to repeat the course with other groups of adults and families. The manual and guidelines are therefore two distinct but complementary tools: the former provides the narrative and methodological framework, while the latter translates it into a quick and immediately usable format.

Finally, this appendix includes a selection of additional resources (useful links, support services, essential bibliography) with the aim of promoting maximum replicability. The intention is that these pages should not just be read, but should become a real operational kit, capable of entering the daily lives of families and, at the same time, finding space in schools, educational centers, and civic and social communities, beyond the boundaries of our partnership.

First Exercise

Inclusion in the family: playing together with Drag X Drive on Switch 2

Introduction

This exercise is specifically designed for families with a member with a physical disability, or who ‘simply’ want to address this issue, which is relevant in the broader field of social inclusion. The goal is to transform gaming into an opportunity for real inclusion, where parents and children can experience playing ‘on equal terms’, without barriers. The title chosen is *Drag X Drive (Nintendo Switch 2, 2025)*, a sports video game that reproduces wheelchair basketball matches, designed with adaptive controllers and accessible modes to allow everyone to participate.

Objective

To promote an inclusive gaming experience within the family, where disability is not an obstacle but the very heart of the game, stimulating empathy, collaboration, and social awareness.

Materials and duration

- *Nintendo Switch 2* with *Drag X Drive*.
- Adaptive controllers or Joy-Con in accessible mode.
- Approximately 40–50 minutes.

Procedure

Briefing (5–10 minutes):

The parent introduces the activity as an inclusive game. Those who are more familiar with the controls can explain to others how it works: this reversal of roles is already part of the learning process.

Activity (25–30 minutes):

A family game is played, sharing the cooperation needed to move, pass the ball, and score. The experience becomes an opportunity for everyone to try out what it means to move around in a wheelchair, albeit in a simulated context.

Debriefing (10 minutes):

Talk together: “How was it playing like this?”; “How was it different from traditional basketball or a more ‘old school’ sports video game?”; “What did we learn about collaboration?”

Reflections

This exercise is an invitation to discover that video games can become a tool for concrete inclusion. It is not intended as an “exception,” but as an opportunity to create a familiar space where those with disabilities are not left on the sidelines, but can become protagonists of the game and the shared experience.

Second Exercise

Our digital city council: learning citizenship through play.

Introduction

This exercise is designed for families who want to stimulate civic awareness and the ability to participate in collective decisions in their children, with a particular focus on a possible co-gaming session. Too often, citizenship is perceived as something distant, reserved for adults. Yet even a virtual, video game context can become an interactive laboratory for understanding how common rules work, how to discuss, how to make decisions, and what responsibilities come with ‘living together’.

Objective

To introduce younger people to the basic concepts of active citizenship—dialogue, shared rules, compromise—using a familiar gaming environment such as *Roblox* or *Minecraft*.

Materials and duration

A PC, tablet, or console with *Roblox* (free) or *Minecraft* (paid, but already widely available). A session of about 45–60 minutes.

Procedure

Briefing (10 minutes):

The younger person creates or opens a small digital world (a city, a village, a game map). The parent suggests: “Let’s pretend this is our country. How do we organize it? What rules do we need?”

Activity (25–30 minutes):

Play a game of building a community together: a square, houses, a park. Then open up the discussion:

- Who decides where to build?
- Are there rules (for example: no houses too tall, everyone must have a garden)?
- How are conflicts managed (“I want a huge castle!”, “I want a soccer field!”)?
- You can simulate a real “family town council” with different roles: mayor, citizens, opposition, etc.

Debriefing (10–15 minutes):

At the end, reflect: which rules were easily accepted? What were the points of contention? How was the negotiation process? What tools, even informal ones, were used to resolve conflicts? This becomes a way to connect the game to real life: “Does something similar happen at school or in the city?”

Reflections

Through a playful context, teenagers and adults learn that citizenship is not made up of rules imposed from above, but of shared agreements and mutual responsibilities. In this sense, *Roblox* and *Minecraft* are not just creative “sandboxes,” but real examples of citizenship: digital environments where it is possible to simulate democratic processes and experience the complexity of living together. Through shared construction, discussion, and small negotiations, participants will be able to engage with key issues such as consultation, civic co-construction, and the ability to reach social compromises.

Third exercise

Eco: build, decide, preserve—digital sustainability education

Introduction

This exercise is designed for families who, for example in a shared gaming session, want to use video games as a tool for both environmental and civic education. *Eco* (Strange Loop Games, 2018) is a multiplayer simulation in which players must cooperate to build a sustainable civilization, balancing resource extraction, ecological impact, and social development. Decisions are not made individually but are the result of negotiations, rules, laws, and shared policies.

Objective

To promote sustainability-related skills among participants (parents and children): shared planning, resource management, ecological awareness, and the ability to collectively govern a digital community around the management of resources.



Screenshot taken from Eco. © Strange Loop Games. All rights reserved.

Materials and duration

- A PC (Windows/Mac/Linux) with access to the *Eco* game (in early access or demo, free of charge).
- Internet connection for shared session.
- Recommended time: 60 minutes or more, depending on involvement.

Procedure

Briefing (10 minutes):

Introduction to the game: “*Eco* is a simulated planet: we must survive together the threat of an asteroid, but without destroying the environment. We need to make laws, cultivate, plan, and cooperate.” Briefly examine the interface: environmental maps, resources, legislative proposals.

Activity (30–40 minutes):

Play together, trying to put ecological decisions into practice: who collects materials, who proposes a law against deforestation, who studies the metabolism of the entire civilization. Dialogue and mediation emerge naturally: “Should we create regulations that impose sustainable wood quotas? Do we need virtual taxes on emissions?” “How should we manage the water supply?”

Debriefing (10–15 minutes):

Reflect together on questions such as:

“Which choices best protected the ecosystem?”

“How was it possible to negotiate between different needs?”

“What similarities do we find with real-world environmental challenges?”

Reflections

Eco demonstrates that video games can be a virtual laboratory for sustainable governance: as they grow together, family members confront the real implications of their choices and understand that ecological responsibility belongs to the entire community. The dynamics that emerge, even within a “simple video game,” can become highly relevant educational material, capable of connecting virtual spaces and everyday life in a way that is both accessible and compelling.

Fourth Exercise

“Stories that unite”: Never Alone, reflecting on culture and identity

Introduction

Can a commercial video game, highly narrative and compelling, offer a family the opportunity to talk about identity, culture, and diversity? With *Never Alone*, the answer is yes. This is not a classic “educational” title designed for schools, but a work that stems from a partnership between developers and the Inuit community of Alaska, available in many languages (although the spoken language is deliberately only Inuit). You play with a child and a fox, but in the background you hear the real voices of the community's elders, recounting myths, stories, and legends handed down through generations. The result is an engaging experience for players—puzzles, jumps, spectacular snowy landscapes—and at the same time deeply stimulating for those who watch and listen: the video game becomes an oral story, a real window onto another world.

Objective

To stimulate empathy and cultural curiosity; to use the game as a starting point for family discussions about traditions, roots, and diversity.

Materials and duration

- PC, console, or tablet with *Never Alone*
- 45–60 minutes, divided between gameplay and discussion.

Procedure

Briefing (10 minutes):

Start the game and leave room for discovery: the Arctic landscapes, the first voices in Iñupiaq, the subtitles that translate. The adult asks: “What strikes you the most? The graphics, the characters, or the narrating voice?”

Activity (25–30 minutes):

Play together, taking turns or observing, and note down (even on a piece of paper) the images, phrases, or symbols that strike you the most, trying to mark especially those elements that appear culturally “different” from your own habits (landscape, family ties, relationship with the environment, with older generations, etc.).

Debriefing (10–15 minutes):

Connect the stories you have seen to those from home: “Do we also have legends of animals that protect us?”; “Is there a memory that connects you to a story told by your grandmother or grandfather?”

If you wish, you can create a small poster combining Inuit elements and family memories.

Reflections

Never Alone should not be read as a “lesson disguised as a video game,” but as a story that aims to become a shared experience. It transports you to a distant world, the Arctic, and it does so not with data or explanations, but with images, sounds, and legends. When experienced together as a family, something special happens: you are not just spectators of a “different” culture, but you also find yourself questioning your own. What stories have our parents and grandparents passed on to us? And how? What memories do we cherish and often forget to share? How do cultural differences lead us to recount and preserve family memories ‘differently’ from ‘others’? In this sense, the game does not simply ‘teach’, but opens a window to talk about identity, roots, and respect for differences, with the naturalness of someone crossing a snow-covered landscape.



Screenshot from *Never Alone*. © E-Line Media. All rights reserved.

Fifth Exercise

Moral dialogues and world choices: a family campaign in Baldur's Gate III

Introduction

There are games that are consumed in a few minutes, and others that are inhabited like worlds. *Baldur's Gate III* belongs to the latter category: it is not just a title, but a complex experience that intertwines narration, moral choice, and the politics of “living together.” Every decision matters, every action has consequences: to save or condemn, to collaborate or betray, to sacrifice the individual for the collective good or to defend autonomy at the cost of chaos. Bringing this universe into the family means opening an ethical laboratory without walls, where adults and adolescents sit at the same table to question issues that, behind the veil of fantasy, are as old as humanity itself.

Objective

It is not simply a matter of ‘playing’, but of staging an intergenerational moral dialogue: training the ability to argue, negotiate, respect divergent opinions, and work together to develop a compass of values that guides choices, both inside and outside the video game. In other words, *Baldur's Gate III* becomes an ongoing workshop on citizenship, where the language of video games opens up civic reflection and a concrete exercise in values: inclusion and diversity, respect for minorities, the pursuit of the common good in the face of the lure of individual interest, solidarity against oppression, moral courage against opportunism.

Each narrative crossroads thus becomes a mirror of real-life dilemmas: helping those who are vulnerable or exploiting their weakness; defending individual autonomy or yielding to authority to ensure collective security; trusting an ambiguous ally or risking loneliness for the sake of consistency. These themes, placed in a shared and familiar context, lose the harshness of a lecture and acquire the vitality of a lived, discussed, and fully argued experience.

Materials and duration

- A copy of *Baldur's Gate III* on PC or console, with cooperative mode for up to four participants.
- 60–90 minutes to explore a dense narrative session (main campaign or a significant quest).

Procedure

Briefing (10 minutes):

Before starting, roles and sensibilities are established: who plays the role of leader, who plays a healer, who plays an outsider. This is where the conversation begins: “What kind of person do you want to be in this world?”

Activity(40–60 minutes):

The family tackles a mission together. At moments of crucial choice—free or execute a prisoner, deal with an oppressed community, accept or reject a dark pact—the game is suspended and discussed, as in a town hall meeting. Every voice counts, every argument shapes the collective decision. It is an exercise in democratic deliberation, where the controller becomes a metaphor for the hand that decides the common destiny.

Debriefing (10–20 minutes):

At the end of the session, we pause to reflect: “Which value guided us most: justice, utility, loyalty, freedom?”; “How did we feel when our choices did not coincide?” Here, the game reveals itself for what it is: a drama that brings universal moral tensions to the surface, offering an opportunity to recognize and discuss them together.

Reflections

The educational value of *Baldur's Gate III* lies in its ability to transform the family into a micro-polis, a city assembly, a community that must make shared decisions. Fantasy is just a disguise: the themes are those of civil coexistence, justice, and political responsibility. At a time when public discourse appears fragmented and polarized, sitting on the sofa to negotiate the fate of a virtual character becomes a surprising opportunity for civic and ethical learning, for active citizenship experienced in a narrative key.

It is not so much the ending that matters, but the intensity of the journey: the way in which parents and children learn to discuss, disagree, and converge, reflecting on highly significant ethical issues. In this sense, the *Baldur's Gate III* campaign is an entirely digital and videogame metaphor for what it means to build a common future.



Screenshot taken from Baldur's Gate 3. © Larian Studios. All rights reserved.

Guidelines for replicating the program with other parents (using the Methodological Guidelines)

To support and make the pathway proposed in this Toolkit replicable, we produced a dedicated document: the **Methodological guidelines and engagement strategies for parents and parental figures**. These are not simple operational sheets or closed, “ready-to-use” activities, but a comprehensive methodological framework, consistent with the educational approach tested in Italy and Iceland.

The guidelines serve a dual purpose:

Support to the Toolkit:

they help translate the theoretical and practical content of the Toolkit into educational sessions aligned with the principles of non-formal education, facilitation, and parental digital mediation.

Transferability and replication:

they provide adult educators, counsellors, social workers and family support centres with a model for re-proposing — while adapting it to their own contexts and needs — the educational pathway of **Gaming and Parents**.

What do the guidelines include?

The document does not present a set of rigid activities or standardised worksheets, but a modular structure developed on the basis of the seven workshops implemented by the partnership.

For each component of the programme, the guidelines provide:

- methodological principles (non-formal education, relational counselling, learning by playing, digital mediation, intergenerational inclusion);
- an educational programme model organised into 7 modules, each with objectives, references to the Toolkit, and operational suggestions;
- indications for conducting and setting up the workshops, both in person and online;
- practical tools for facilitators, strategies for group management, and guidance on creating a positive relational climate;
- useful materials for preparation and self-training of new educators;
- short experiential pathways to familiarise with the main gaming languages addressed in **Gaming and Parents** (*League of Legends*, *Roblox*, narrative RPGs);
- suggestions for building continuity and a community of practice around gaming and digital mediation.

How to use them?

The guidelines should be read primarily as a reference framework.

In simple terms, they are meant to guide the organisation of a training pathway “similar to” or “inspired by” **Gaming and Parents**: they help define the educational climate, the structure of the sessions, the facilitation methods, and the criteria for selecting and adapting the activities presented in the Toolkit.

In this sense, as already mentioned above, more than prescribing “what to do”, the guidelines show how to build a learning experience coherent with the project’s participatory, dialogic approach, and with its focus on everyday relationships between adults, young people and video game culture.

The aim is to enable each educator or practitioner to shape a future programme around their own participants, local context, and the needs of the families they work with.

Availability

The **Methodological guidelines and engagement strategies for parents and parental figures** are openly accessible (in Italian, Icelandic and English) on the websites of **Close in the Distance** and **RÍSÍ**, as well as on the project page on Erasmus+ Project Results.

Additional resources (links, support services, essential bibliography)

This section brings together useful resources, both those already mentioned in the manual and new ones: links, services, and tools that offer a broad overview of gaming culture, digital mediation, and parental support. It is not an exhaustive list, but rather a small “atlas” to help you find your way around, learn more, and find reliable points of reference.

Useful links

- **PEGI – Pan European Game** Information (<https://pegi.info/>)

Official video game rating system in Europe: recommended age, sensitive content, guidelines for families and teachers.

- **Common Sense Media** (<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/>)

Independent reviews of films, apps, and video games, with practical information sheets to help parents evaluate titles and content.

- **EU Kids Online** (<https://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/research/research-projects/eu-kids-online>)

European research network on the digital behavior of children and adolescents, with comparative reports and policy briefs.

- **UNICEF – Digital Parenting** (<https://www.unicef.org/parenting/digital-parenting>)

International advice and resources for digital parenting, from social media use to online safety.

- **Videogames Europe** (<https://www.videogameseurope.eu/>)

European video game industry association: data, research, and projects dedicated to the social and educational impact of video games.

- **Game Education Network (GEN)** (<https://gameeducationnetwork.org/>)

International platform for educational projects and practices based on video games, useful for teachers and educators.

- **Games in Schools (European Schoolnet)** (<http://games.eun.org/>)

European Commission initiative promoting the use of video games in schools, with online courses and training materials.

- **EduGamers for Kids** (<https://www.edugamers.cloud>)

Italian association promoting the educational and inclusive use of video games, with school workshops and family co-gaming activities.

- **Screenagers** (<https://www.screenagersmovie.com/>)

A US project dedicated to screen time, digital well-being, and family contracts, with guides and materials for parents and educators.

- **Parent Zone UK** (<https://parentzone.org.uk/>)

A British center that develops resources for parent-child digital mediation, including templates for family contracts on the use of technology.

Support services

- **Close in the Distance** (<https://closeinthedistance.com>)

Association promoting the **Gaming and Parents** project, active in media education and digital parenting, with a psychological counseling service in collaboration with professional therapists with extensive experience in the field of new digital addictions.

- **RÍSI – Rafiþróttasamband Íslands** (<https://www.rafithrottir.is/>)

Icelandic eSports Federation, partner of the **Gaming and Parents** project. It promotes responsible gaming practices, the mental and physical well-being of players, and educational resources related to competitive gaming, with a strong focus on the world and culture of eSports, including within the family.

- **Telefono Azzurro – 1.96.96** (Italy)

Listening and psychological support service for minors and families, including issues related to digital technology and gaming.

- **Child Helpline International** (<https://childhelplineinternational.org>)

A global network of over 160 helplines for children and adolescents, also active in many European countries.

- **Game Quitters** (<https://gamequitters.com/>)

An international community offering support and guidance for families and young people struggling with gaming addiction.

- **Center for Internet and Technology Addiction** (<https://virtual-addiction.com/>)

International center for research and intervention on digital addictions, with guidelines and educational programs.

- **Restart – Gaming Addiction Recovery** (<https://www.netaddictionrecovery.com/>)

Specialized recovery service for video game and internet addiction, active in the United States and with contacts in Europe.

- **UKIE – AskAboutGames** (<https://www.askaboutgames.com/>)

British portal that clearly explains game ratings, parental controls, and co-gaming opportunities.

- **Family Gaming Database** (<https://www.taminggaming.com/>)

Online archive of video games with information designed for families: recommended age, educational values, shared play modes.

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