



**YMCA**  
 Youth Gambling  
 Awareness  
 Program (YGAP)

**YMCA**  
 Programme de  
 sensibilisation aux  
 jeux de hasard chez  
 les jeunes (PSJJ)

**Winter 2014**

# Newsletter

## Social Gaming

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For our directory of site locations across Ontario: **1-877-5515** or [ymcagta.org/gambling](http://ymcagta.org/gambling)

Building healthy  
 communities





## What is Social Gaming?

By: Taylor Rosner

With the rise of the internet, smart phones, and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, a new wave of gaming has emerged. Instead of digging through storage bins in the basement to pull out the old Monopoly or Scrabble board, today's gamers can simply log onto their smart phone or Facebook account and play not only Scrabble and Monopoly, but an assortment of games – new and classic. Instead of attempting to gather friends and family into one room to sit around a game board, it is easy to connect and play virtually with friends by the click of a mouse, or the swipe of your password on your smart phone. This new trend of gaming is called *Social Gaming* – and as it continues to rise in popularity, it is becoming an extremely lucrative business.

Social games are games that rely on social and behavioral economic interaction – boasting, comparing, cooperating, gifting, and sharing. Popular examples include *Candy Crush*, *Farmville*, and *Words with Friends*. It is rare to avoid receiving at least one invite on your Facebook account from a friend requesting a “gift” to help them build a new virtual fence for their farm. It is exactly this premise which entices players to join Farmville, or any type of social game for that matter.

Social games place more emphasis and enjoyment on playing with friends rather than excelling in the game itself. The idea behind social games is that through social media platforms, accessible via the internet and mobile devices, you can connect and play with your friends while laying on your comfy couch at home or at the office. These games are predominately free to play, have a very gentle learning curve, and are easy to understand. As a player, you have the ability to play with or against your friends, and through social games, a more shared and fun experience is born.

On Facebook alone, social games reach 290 million active players a month. There are a few criterial markers in order for a game to be considered “social”. They are as follows:

Factors which differentiate social games from others:

**Turn-based.** Social means engaging with others. Therefore, in order for a game to be considered a social game, it must enable users to take turns.

**Awareness of Other's Actions.** In social games, you can “see” when your opponent makes a move in the game. This can occur by a post on Facebook, or a notification to your phone.

**Casual Gaming.** Social Games tend to be for the “casual” gamer and not for someone who plans on playing 24/7. However, time spend playing over time may increase

**Based on Social Platforms.** Social platforms provide users with an identity and can also provide the vessel for simple forms of communication (such as notifications).

Referenced from:

[http://socialtimes.com/social-games\\_b690](http://socialtimes.com/social-games_b690)

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# Blurred Boundaries: Convergence of Social Media and Actual Gambling

By: Catherine Bernatchez

Poker, blackjack, slots, bingo... Many social gambling games are not much different from traditional games found on online gambling sites. Additionally, many other social games incorporate elements of gambling into their games. Casino style games and other gambling social games have become one of the most popular, lucrative, and fast growing social gaming genre.

It is a relatively new issue regrettably lacking clarity and adequate classification. By its simplest definition, 'gambling' means playing a game of chance for a prize. Therefore, some might suggest that the most obvious distinction between social gambling and online gambling is around money and the prize. Players on social gambling games can play and "gamble" on the same games they would at a casino or internet gambling site. Most of the games are based on a freemium model where money is not required to play. Social gambling games are played for virtual currencies that cannot be cashed out. On real gambling sites, money is required to play the game and players can lose or win real money.

When it comes to differentiating between social casino style games and internet gambling, unfortunately, the answer is not as simple. The line is becoming increasingly blurred. Social gaming and internet gambling have already initiated a merge. In the United Kingdom, GameSys launched in 2012 Bingo Friendly & Slots Friendly and in 2013, Zynga, a global leader in social gaming, partnered with PartyPoker to offer real-money poker via Facebook. This move marks a big turning point for the industry.

## REGULATION OF SOCIAL GAMBLING?

The lack of clarity concerning the differences between gambling and social gaming does not simplify the regulations. Currently, social casino games are generally self-regulated. Various jurisdictions are beginning to examine this issue in order to set regulations and re-

sponsible policies addressing gambling on social networking sites.

The games and applications permitting real money gambling on social network sites in the U.K. have been licensed. However, they do not fall under gambling regulations because players cannot take out the virtual currency won out of the game.

Some of the main concerns are that freemium social gambling games are not required to operate the same payout ratios or odds as real money gambling games and the lack in better age verification systems to prevent under-age gambling via social media networks.

## YOUTH GAMBLING

Today's youth are growing up in a society where gambling is actively promoted, legalized, easily accessible (especially online), glamorized and generally presented as harmless entertainment.

The number of opportunities for young people to gamble via social media sites keeps increasing. Casino style games and other gambling social games are one of the most popular social gaming genres. Facebook contains the largest number and most popular free-play gambling opportunities, such as Texas HoldEm Poker, Slotomania, DoubleDown Casino, Bingo Blitz, and Best Casino. Some of these games appear highly attractive and engaging to underage youth.

There is rising concern regarding young people being exposed to gambling simulated games via social media sites. These games have the potential to teach young people to gamble, without the risk of losing actual money. However, some games provide distorted payout rates and odds, resulting in an erroneous understanding of the actual odds of winning.



## Blurred Boundaries: Convergence of Social Media and Actual Gambling (continued)

By: Catherine Bernatchez

With the fast growing expansion of the social gambling/casino type games segment of the social gaming industry, more research needs to be conducted to evaluate the potential implications for risk, harm, and responsible play. Hopefully, more regulations and responsible policies will be set either by the industry itself or governments to help answer some of the concerns and protect customers.

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### Popular Social Casino Games and Applications



#### Free-to-Play Trivia Quiz *Answers can be found on the last page.*

The most common free-to-play games are based on the freemium software model.

Q1. Freemium Model: players usually play for free, but are encouraged to pay microtransactions to access additional content and features.

True      False

Q2. Microtransactions are also referred to as in-app billing or in-app purchasing.

True      False

Q3. Which year did Facebook launched Facebook Credits (the virtual currency used to buy goods in games and apps)?

- 2007
- 2009
- 2011
- 2013

Q4. In Freemium model, players are encouraged to pay:

- for extended game play and further levels
- to increase their standing or power within a game
- to obtain virtual goods or to give virtual gifts
- to express themselves
- all of the above





# Live Video Gaming: Risks and References to Gambling

By Chelsea Romualdi

Video games have been a popular past time mainly among males for decades. While more and more households become connected to the internet, video games have adapted, advanced, and become more of a social activity. Playing “live” refers to the connection between the player’s gaming consoles to the internet, thereby communicating and playing against other players from all around the world in real time. This is yet another example of how the digital age has transformed the word ‘social’ into being more than face-to-face interactions. These players are socializing via their avatar characters in the games, but are also able to speak to each other and even set up webcams through their gaming console.

As innovative and fascinating as it may seem that technology has reached such heights, it is not without its risks. A number of studies over the years have shown the positive effects of video games (i.e. better hand eye coordination, better understanding of technology, cheaper entertainment, etc...) while many have demonstrated the negative effects (lack of physical engagement, isolation, etc...). Live gaming is a relatively newer concept but it still sheds light on risks that accompany this new technology, especially when players are paying a monthly fee to participate.

## Case study: Grand Theft Auto

Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas is a wildly popular video game. The game has gained widespread attention over its detailed violent and sexually explicit content. The player is able to commit a wide range of criminal felonies in order to acquire money including robbery and murder. There is also the option of a player taking their character to the casino and gambling.

Video games like Grand Theft Auto become a social experience when playing with or against other players in order to reach the same end goal: Acquire money at any cost. This demonstrates that video games can not only glamourize casinos and other forms of gambling, they can depict in detail extreme measures for which

the video game characters are willing to go in order to get to objectives like playing in the casino. Therefore, while gaming is a form of fantasy and virtual reality, it is important to recognize the images and behaviors it portrays.

Video games themselves in any form are also a popular platform for betting. This may include betting on how many points are gained, how many levels are completed in a given time period, or any other measure of gaming success.

These sorts of games are already widely distributed as demonstrated by their astonishing quarterly sales, the best avenue to game safely is to encourage healthy video gaming choices, especially while playing live.

Some safety suggestions include:

1. Limiting credit card use when live gaming.
2. Limiting time spent gaming.
3. Educating young gamers on the real social detriments and consequences these actions would carry in reality.
4. Lobbying to gaming companies to have a better “endgame” than in game access to casinos and drug-fueled parties.
5. Setting aside time for “offline” gaming.
6. Set other priorities.
7. Report any lewd or inappropriate behavior online, especially young gamers.

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## Help and Resources

### Helpful Resources:

Tech Addiction · [www.techaddiction.ca](http://www.techaddiction.ca)

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health · [www.camh.ca](http://www.camh.ca)

Media Smarts · [www.mediasmarts.ca](http://www.mediasmarts.ca)

### Find Help:

Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline: 1 888 230-3505

[www.problemgamblinghelpline.ca](http://www.problemgamblinghelpline.ca)

On-Line Gamers Anonymous

[www.olganon.org](http://www.olganon.org)



**Kids Help Phone**



### ? True or False ?

*Answers can be found on the last page.*

Q1. Social gaming can become an addiction just like gambling.

Q2. Facebook is the most popular social media platform for social gamers.

Q3. The biggest audience for Social Gambling games are not the same that spend the most time at classic casino slot machines.



## YGAP In Your Community

**Owen Sound**—On October 24, 2014, at the Aaron Roote Memorial Youth Centre on Saugeen First Nation #29, YGAP hosted a *Family Fun Bingo Awareness Day*. YGAP, paired with local health agencies New Directions, which is a counselling service for drug, alcohol and gambling addictions and Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre (SOAHAC), hosted a 3 hour event on a PD day so families could spend the afternoon together. These families learnt some important strategies to stay safe if they decide to gamble while also winning some great prizes and enjoying a free lunch provided by Saugeen First Nation. The afternoon began with an introduction to the Youth Gambling Awareness Program followed by the group playing 6 Bingo Games. In between each game, different snippets from the 15-18 YGAP presentation were facilitated, as well as guest speakers from New Directions and SOAHAC. We finished off the day by providing harm reduction strategies for players to engage in a discussion on how to stay safe if and when they decided to gamble. The event was a great success as it reached 55 participants ages 8-70!



### GAMBLING: THE **NEXT** GENERATION



As part of Problem Gambling Prevention Week, we warmly invite you to attend an evening event:

#### Gambling: The Next Generation

With new technology, gambling and gaming are everywhere and available 24/7. How will this affect us? What are the risks, especially for a tech-savvy generation?

Please join us in watching *Growing Up Gambling*, a short documentary that addresses these questions and more. A panel discussion will follow.

Presented by:



**Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford**— On October 15th 2014, YGAP helped organize an evening entitled "Gambling: The Next Generation" as part of Problem Gambling Prevention Week. Working together with ADGS in Hamilton and ADAPT in Halton, we created an evening open to the public centered around the short documentary "*Growing up Gambling*". Our panel consisted of an addictions counselor from Hamilton, myself as the Outreach Worker who works with youth and adults and two individuals who had past experience with either gaming or gambling overuse. Everyone on the panel brought a different point of view on the issue presented from the video. This panel discussion drew a lot of attention to the accessibility and growing popularity of online gaming and gambling. It was an eventful evening filled with informative conversation as everyone sees this developing trend differently.

