

# 1 in 12 Teens Addicted to Video Games

By [PSYCH CENTRAL NEWS EDITOR](#)

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A new nationwide survey suggests that approximately 1 in 12 teens show signs of behavioral addiction to video games.

Teens who answered the survey admitted to skimping on chores and homework, lying about how much they play, showing poor performance on tests of homework, and struggling to cut back on video game playing without success.

The survey was conducted nationwide on 1,178 children, aged 8 to 18.

It found that 8.5% of those who played video games exhibited at least six of 11 addiction symptoms that are commonly used to diagnose pathological behavior. The symptoms were based upon criteria adopted from the diagnosis of pathological gambling.

Douglas Gentile, the study's author, noted that the study "yields far more questions than it answers."

"It's not that the games are bad," said Gentile, who is also director of research at the nonprofit National Institute on Media and the Family.

"It's not that the games are addictive. It's that some kids use them in a way that is out of balance and harms various other areas of their lives."

On average, the number of symptoms per person was small: boys typically exhibited more than two, while girls less than two.

But more boys exhibited at least six symptoms — 12% of all boy gamers vs. 8% of girls — enough to be considered addicted.

Symptoms included spending increasing amounts of time and money on video games to feel the same level of excitement; irritability or restlessness when play is scaled back; escaping problems through play; skipping chores or homework to spend more time at the controller; lying about the length of playing time; and stealing games or money to play more.

Those who were considered to be "pathological gamers" by the researchers had been playing for more years than non-addicted gamers, spent twice as much time playing games and received poorer grades in school.

They were also more than twice as likely to have been diagnosed with [attention-deficit disorder](#) and have health problems exacerbated by playing for long hours (hand and wrist pain).

Gamers who showed signs similar to addiction were also more likely to have a video game system in their bedroom. However, having a TV in the bedroom and using the Internet for homework were not found to be a differentiating factor. Type of school (private, public, parochial, home schooling) was not a factor, either.

Overall, 88% of youngsters surveyed said they played video games at least occasionally. On average, they played three or four times each week, with boys playing more often. Boys also played longer, more than 14 hours per week, while girls played more than nine hours.

The study was published in the latest issue of *Psychological Science*. Source: Association for Psychological Science