Gaming addiction is an addiction to video games, role-playing games, console games (Playstation or X-Box) or any interactive gaming environment available through the Internet. Online games such as ‘Grand Theft Auto’, ‘World of Warcraft’, ‘Dark Age of Camelot’ or ‘Diablo II’ – dubbed “heroinware” by some players – can pose much more complex problems. Extensive chat features give such games a social aspect missing from offline activities, and the collaborative/competitive nature of working with or against other players can make it hard to take a break.

**Signs of Addiction**
Gamers who become hooked show clear signs of addiction. Like a drug, gamers who play almost every day, play for extended periods of time (over 4 hours), get restless or irritable if they can’t play, and sacrifice other social activities just to game are showing signs of addiction. The highly addictive nature of online role-playing games impacts children and teenagers the most, but a growing number of adults are also getting hooked, and the latest craze is to online sports fantasy games.

**Are You Addicted?**

Answer “yes” or “no” to the following statements to see if you may be addicted to online gaming:

1. Do you need to play online games with increasing amounts of time in order to achieve the desired excitement?
2. Are you preoccupied with gaming (thinking about it when offline, anticipating your next online session)?
3. Have you lied to friends and family members to conceal the extent of your online gaming?
4. Do you feel restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop online gaming?
5. Have you made repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop online gaming?
6. Do you use gaming as a way of escaping from problems or relieve feelings of helplessness, guilt, anxiety, or depression?
7. Have you jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, or even risked your marriage because of your online gaming habit?
8. Have you jeopardized a job, educational, or career opportunity because of your online gaming habit?

If you answered “yes” to any of the above questions, you may be addicted to online gaming. These are common warning signs that you have lost control, lied, or possibly risked a relationship to support your gaming behaviour.

**Tips for Overcoming an Online Gaming Addiction:**

- **Ask for help** - A support system is vital when dealing with any kind of addiction. Having friends, family or a health professional to talk to can help you find the motivation and strategies to manage your use.
- **Write out your reasons for quitting or reducing your use**—Writing out the pros and cons of your gaming behaviour can help you get in touch with why it has become a problem and subsequently the motivation to change. Look at this list regularly to remind yourself of your goals.
- **Avoid temptation** - Reducing your time spent online can reduce the desire to engage in gaming so whenever you can turn off your computer and spend time outside or in another room. When you can’t avoid using the internet (e.g., for an assignment) block the gaming websites you use or delete the gaming software on your computer.
- **Exercising and meditating** —By releasing feel good hormones into the body, exercising can be extremely useful in dealing with an online gaming addiction. Regular exercise can make people feel energetic and meditation can help counter the urge to indulge in gaming. Exercise can also alleviate depression, keep an individual motivated and pave the way to a healthy and fit lifestyle.
- **Urge surfing** – Time away from gaming will no doubt create urges to play. Know that these urges will come and go despite their intensity. Think of riding the wave of an urge as you would whilst surfing at the beach. Delaying an urge for 15 minutes whilst you distract yourself with something else allows the urge time to pass. You may have forgotten about playing.
- **Keep busy** - Finding an alternative interesting pastime is pertinent. Engaging in sports of one’s choice or activities like dancing or painting that occupy a major share of a person’s leisure time allows little time for indulgences like gaming and provides the opportunity to make new friends. Sporting or an exciting activity can keep a person’s body healthy and also eliminate the need to feel good by indulging in gaming.

Extract from Net Addiction: [http://netaddiction.com](http://netaddiction.com)