

Impact of Time Spent Gaming Online

Online gaming is an increasingly popular activity for people of all ages but especially those of Scouting age. Boys generally play more often than girls, while the popularity of violent games is consistent among both genders. For most adolescents, computer game playing is a fairly absorbing and harmless activity, but it can prove to be a problem for some. Males tend to admit playing more frequently, longer, and more often, and more often neglect school or work to play and feel better after doing so than females.



There's a great deal of concern about the impact that playing violent games may have on a child's aggression. While the research on this is mixed, in many cases there seems to be at least some impact, suggesting that exposure to video game violence increases aggressive behavior.

There is also disagreement in the literature about whether or not online gaming represents a true addictive behavior. The current criteria for addictive behaviors is that the person needs more of a behavior to keep them going and may become irritable and miserable if they don't get it. This certainly can be the case for some individuals.

Some may ask what the harm is in playing video games, but those who play four to five hours or more per day tend to have less time for socializing, doing homework, playing sports, being involved in Scouting, and participating in other normal adolescent activities.

Warning signs for parents that video game playing may be getting out of control include the following:

- Playing for increasing amounts of time.
- Thinking about gaming during other activities.
- Gaming to escape from real-life problems, anxiety, or depression.
- Lying to friends and family to conceal gaming.
- Feeling irritable when trying to cut down on gaming.

In addition, sometimes these individuals become isolated, drop out of social networks, and may give up on other hobbies or activities. Those most likely to do so may have poor self-esteem or social problems.

Strategies that parents and other adults can use to address this issue include the following:

- Know the content and procedures of the games and whether or not they are consistent with accepted family values.
- Pay attention to game ratings.
- Establish explicit game playing guidelines, including the amount of time spent.
- Educate youth about the difference between media and real-life violence.
- Help them to identify and pursue more appropriate activities.

Keep your Scouts healthy and safe by knowing and guiding their online game activities.

Sweet Sixteen of BSA Safety

As with other elements of Scouting, there is a wealth of information and resources on the topic of health and safety, so what's a new Scouter or parent to focus on? Start with the Sweet Sixteen of BSA Safety.

The Sweet Sixteen of BSA Safety outlines 16 distinctive areas that adults and youth can focus on to make the Scouting experience safe. Few youth organizations encompass the breadth, volume, and diversity of physical activity common to Scouting. Here's a quick summary:

1. **Qualified Supervision**—Every activity should be supervised by a conscientious adult who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of the children and youth in his or her care.
2. **Physical Fitness**—All Scouting participants should complete an Annual Health and Medical Record. Neither youth nor adults should participate in activities for which they are unfit.
3. **Buddy System**—It is always best to have at least one other person with you and aware at all times as to your circumstances and what you are doing.
4. **Safe Area or Course**—Know the area or course for an activity and determine that it is well-suited and free of hazards.
5. **Equipment Selection and Maintenance**—The equipment should be selected to suit the participant and the activity and to include appropriate safety and program features.
6. **Personal Safety Equipment**—Ensure that every participant has and uses the appropriate personal safety equipment (safety glasses, gloves, life jackets, etc.).
7. **Safety Procedures and Policies**—Common-sense procedures and standards can greatly reduce risks. These should be known and adhered to by all.
8. **Skill Level Limits**—There is a minimum skill level requirement for every activity. Identify and recognize this minimum skill level and do not attempt an activity beyond those limits.
9. **Weather Check**—Variable weather conditions and the appropriate response should be understood and anticipated.
10. **Planning**—Good planning minimizes risks and anticipates contingencies that may require emergency response or a change of plan.
11. **Communications**—Communicate effectively with participants as needed during the activity. This includes emergency communications and contingencies.
12. **Plans and Notices**—Appropriate plans and notifications should be directed to parents, enforcement authorities, landowners, and others as needed, before and after activities.
13. **First-Aid Resources**—First-aid supplies and the level of first-aid training and skill appropriate for the activity should be considered.
14. **Applicable Laws**—BSA safety policies generally run parallel to or go beyond legal mandates, but leaders should confirm and ensure compliance with all applicable regulations or statutes.
15. **CPR Resource**—The BSA strongly recommends that a CPR-trained person (preferably an adult) be part of the leadership for any BSA program.
16. **Discipline**—Control the activity and the individual participants.

For more information on providing a safe Scouting program, visit the [Scouting Safely](#) website. For help on how to specifically address some of the topics mentioned above, it is critical to reference the [Guide to Safe Scouting](#).
Happy and safe trails!



Keep Safe From Intruders at Scouting Events



Safety in Scouting is always a top priority. Leaders, adults, and Scouts are always on the lookout for things that are unsafe and may be dangerous. We even train so that we can mitigate things like the weather, water events, hiking, and, of course, youth protection dangers. But have you ever thought about what steps you would take if someone assaulted a Scout or leader or entered your meeting place with the intent to cause harm?

Do you meet in a public place like a school or church? Are there other meetings going on at the same time? Is there a way leaders can contact each other and talk prior to these meetings and pass along information about people with issues or conflicts? Perhaps the week before there

was an argument between two adults at another meeting and one of them was told not to come back, but they do and cause an issue. What would you do?

Perhaps you meet in your own Scout hut. Are you aware of what other events may be going on in your area? We tend to plan for phenomena that we are aware of and familiar with, but what about third-party individuals or outside organizations? Perhaps there was an article in the news that reflected badly on Scouting as a whole and someone decided that they needed to take action and came to your Scout hut. What would you do?

There are lots of materials out there for people to review and we encourage you to do just that. But for now, let's look at a few things you can do to help keep everyone safe if an incident turns violent.

Pre-Event

1. Plan ahead

Use the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) to plan out what actions you could take. For starters, look at the number of entryways. Do all of them have to be unlocked? It may be a good idea to have at least two adults at every entrance to monitor who and what comes into your meetings. Is there a method for groups that share a facility to pass along information to each other? If there is an event, where do you go to escape and regain control and accountability? What exits are viable and who makes that call on which ones to use? How do the leaders communicate during the event? Where is the first-aid kit located? Can you shelter in place? If not, how do you move?

Answering these questions is only the start of your planning. Perhaps the unit can schedule a special time to get together and really look at the unit meeting place to seek ways to mitigate risk, increase safety and readiness, and improve communications.

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2. Train

It is recommended that all EAPs be reviewed annually for any changes or updates. After reviewing the EAPs, why not try and train to them?

Prior to treks at Philmont, crews run drills for what they may find along the trail. Similarly, why not run leaders through guarding a door? How about walking through evacuation routes and assembly areas? Review and use the communications systems that would be available. Or ask your local police or sheriff's department if they have any training tips on things to be observant for. If you share a large facility, talk to the facility manager and ask if they do training for emergency response. If they say no, perhaps take the lead and get it started.

Event

The next three steps are actions to be taken if an event occurs. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security recommends the "Run, Hide, Fight" plan for violent incidents.

1. Run—First, if you have a safe path, evacuate—whether or not others agree to follow. Know your escape route ahead of time (refer to your EAP), leave belongings behind, and help others if possible (but do not move injured people).

2. Hide—If you can't evacuate, hide out of view, such as behind cabinets or desks, but not where you can't move or could get trapped. Lock and blockade doors with heavy furniture if you can, and silence cellphones and other sources of noise. If you can't hide or run, call 911 to give the shooter's location and other details (or leave the line open if you can't speak).

3. Fight—As a last resort—if your life is in imminent danger—attempt to incapacitate the shooter, act with physical aggression, and throw items at the person.

Emergency Response

At some point during or after an active shooter situation, emergency responders will be on the scene. To help law enforcement when it arrives, do your best to remain calm and follow all instructions. Don't scream or yell, and keep your hands raised above your head and free of any objects. Be prepared to assist with first aid if and when possible.

Post Event

The end of the event does not mean the event is over. There are a host of things that will happen: Parents want their children, children want their parents, the news media will be there asking questions, notifications need to be made, and the list goes on. Part of the EAP requires you to think through this. Who speaks to the media—a council representative? The facility manager representative? Who notifies parents and how? Do you need to coordinate counselors to meet with those involved? If someone was injured, where did they go and how is this information tracked?

Summary

Ensuring safety can be difficult at times. But it is our responsibility as leaders to accept the challenges of keeping everyone in our program safe. The BSA offers many tools for us to use, and for the most part we do that well. But what do we do with our plans once they are written?

At first glance, this can all seem overwhelming, but planning and working together can make even the hardest of tasks successful. But no plan is ever good enough unless training is conducted and evaluated. Review your plans. Do they still make sense or has something changed? Then try them in a training scenario and see how it goes. You may find that what you planned worked really well, or you may find that it needs some more adjustment. Be safe—plan for the intruder.

Safety for Scouting Activities Involving Horses

One of the best outdoor activities for Scouts is horseback riding, whether along trails in the wilderness, at national or state parks, or at a council camp. When planning such an event, here are a few resources and guidelines to consider.

Many councils may have a horseback riding program as part of their summer or resident camp program that includes a Horsemanship merit badge session and trail rides. Council and national camps (such as Cavalcade at Philmont Scout Ranch) are required to comply with Standard PS-209 (*National Camp Standards*, No. 430-056, 2018 printing).

Some council camps offer weekend horseback riding events or programs for Scouts and their families. Staff at these camps should know and understand the council rules regarding horseback riding during these times.

According to the Age-Appropriate Guidelines for Scouting Activities, No. 680-685 (2018 printing), Wolf and Bear Scouts are the minimum age for this activity. Generally, Wolf, Bear, and Webelos Scouts, and members of Scouts BSA may go horseback riding as a day event. Older Scouts, Venturers, and Sea Scouts may complete longer horseback rides, such as during a trek camp or high-adventure camp.

The camp should post or provide information about horseback riding that includes some of the following:

- Proper clothing should be worn, such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts (preferable), boots (preferably properly fitted riding boots), and gloves.
- Helmets must be ASTM-SEI rated for horseback riding. Ski or bike helmets are not effective for horseback riding. The helmet should be properly fitted.
- Gloves, preferably leather and properly fitted to help avoid blisters or burns (such as rope burns).
- Rain gear, such as rain jackets or rain suits, is helpful.
- Participants should bring water bottle or canteen (to stay hydrated) and sunscreen.

If an outside vendor is providing horseback trail riding, such as at a ranch or a national or state forest or park, do some pre-visit planning. Items to consider are:



- Does the vendor have experience with horses and trail riding?
- Does the vendor provide an orientation for riders prior to the ride?
- Are the horses ridden often and do they get proper care and feeding?
- Are the horses regularly checked by a licensed or registered veterinarian experienced in large animals?
- Is the vendor certified for horsemanship from an organization such as the Certified Horsemanship Association (www.CHA-ahse.org)?
- Does the vendor have licenses or permits for trail riding in the national or state park or forest?
- Does the vendor have suitable liability coverage for accidents and injuries involving their horsemanship activity? The levels of insurance coverage may vary, so check with your local council on what might be appropriate liability insurance coverage amounts.

Most of all, pre-planning can go a long way toward avoiding accidents or injuries and other hazards so all can have a safe horseback riding experience.

Resources

“Safety First for Your Horse Program”—Scouting Safely, Health and Safety Alerts; www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/alerts/safety-first-horse-program

Horsemanship merit badge pamphlet, No. 35909, 2015 printing—www.scouting.org/programs/boy-scouts/advancement-and-awards/merit-badges

Safety Resource: *Guide to Safe Scouting*

As participants in official Scouting activities, you should know that the [Guide to Safe Scouting](#) is one of the best resources available to help everyone understand how to conduct activities safely. *The Guide to Safe Scouting* is an overview of Scouting policies and procedures gleaned from a variety of sources.

In May 2018, a number of changes were made to section I, "Youth Protection and Adult Leadership." Here is a summary of the changes. You should review the *Guide to Safe Scouting* to understand how the changes impact Scouting activities.

- The Youth Protection and Adult Leadership section has been revised to add the following requirement: "Current Youth Protection training is required for leaders when renewing their registration or at unit charter renewal. Adult program participants must register as adults and follow Youth Protection policies."
- As a protection for youth, the adult supervision at all Scouting activities, including meetings, must have **two** registered adult leaders over the age of 21. Details have been added for units serving females.
- For those activities that total 72 hours or more, which do not need to be consecutive, all adults accompanying a Scouting unit **must be registered as leaders** in the BSA.
- Now included is information that one-on-one contact between adult leaders and youth members is prohibited both inside and **outside** of Scouting. This includes online communications (texting, phone calls, chat, IM, etc.). These communications must include another registered leader or parent.

It is the responsibility of all leaders to ensure that all participating in Scouting activities abide by the Scout Oath and Scout Law. The *Guide to Safe Scouting* states that "Adult leaders and youth members share the responsibility for the safety of all participants in the program, including adherence to Youth Protection and health and safety policies."

Be sure to review the *Guide to Safe Scouting* so that as a leader in Scouting you conduct activities in a safe manner and protect all Scouts.

Resource

[Guide to Safe Scouting](#)

