

Gaming disorder is characterized by a pattern of persistent or recurrent gaming behavior (also referred to as *digital gaming* or *video-gaming*), that may be primarily conducted over the Internet (online) or primarily conducted not on the Internet (offline). It creates not only significant distress in the person when they are not engaged in gaming, but the person feels like they have little or no control in how often or for how long they are gaming. Gaming is given a huge precedence in the person's life, over virtually everything else of importance (such as going to school, work, family relationships, interpersonal relationships, cleanliness, etc.).

While the disorder is still not recognized by the American Psychiatric Association, it has been recognized by the World Health Organization and appears in the diagnostic manual for medical diseases and mental disorders, the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) manual, 11th edition (which is not yet widely used by clinicians).

In order for gaming disorder to be diagnosed, the following symptoms must be present:

- Impaired control over gaming (e.g., onset, frequency, intensity, duration, termination, context);
- Increasing priority given to gaming to the extent that gaming takes precedence

- over other life interests and daily activities;
- Continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences.

According to the ICD-11, the behavior pattern in gaming disorder must be of sufficient severity to result in significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational or other important areas of functioning. The pattern of gaming behavior may be continuous, or episodic and recurrent.

In order for this diagnosis be made, the pattern of gaming behavior must be present for at least 12 months prior to seeking assistance for the problem. However, the ICD-11 suggests that the required duration may be shortened if all “diagnostic requirements are met and symptoms are severe.”

Gaming disorder is typically treated by individual psychotherapy that employs a cognitive behavioral therapeutic approach.

*ICD-11 code: 6C51.0 Gaming Disorder, predominantly online; 6C51.1 Gaming disorder, predominantly offline; bipolar disorder must not be present.*

## Controversy Surrounding Gaming Disorder

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Gaming disorder is recognized by the World Health Organization’s ICD-11 manual, a diagnostic manual not in widespread use yet around the world. It is not recognized by the American Psychiatric Association as a mental disorder diagnosis, and therefore is not covered by most people’s health insurance.

In an interview with CNN, Anthony Bean, a licensed psychologist has his doubts about whether gaming behavior should be a primary diagnosis. “It’s a little bit premature to label this as a diagnosis,” Bean said. “I’m a clinician and a researcher, so I see people who play video games and believe themselves to be on the lines of addicted.” In his experience, they’re actually using gaming “more as a coping mechanism for either anxiety or depression.” Forthcoming research shows that gaming is a secondary diagnosis in coping with a primary diagnosis of anxiety and depression, Bean said: “When anxiety and depression is dealt with, the gaming goes down significantly.”