

A P A R E N T ' S
T O
G U I D E

League of Legends

A Global...Sport?

With only the recent popularity of *Fortnite* or *Overwatch* to rival it, *League of Legends*, aka League or LoL, is a [vastly popular game](#) and has remained so since its introduction in 2009. In fact, *League of Legends* is the biggest video game in the world: It sports over [100 million monthly players](#) (compared to [78.3 million monthly players](#) for *Fortnite* and [37 million](#) for *Overwatch*), with at least 27 million of those playing daily.

Beyond that, competitive LoL play is also becoming as massively popular as many traditional sports. League team infrastructure is [starting to look a lot](#) like franchises from the NFL or NBA. It even has its own [ESPN page](#) and has been in conversations with the Olympic Committee about the possibility of [esports in the Olympics](#). In addition, LoL [offers salaries](#) to pro players, with some [making as much as](#) Major League Soccer players.

So if your kids want to play it, it's understandable. But like with anything, he or she needs guidance, wisdom, training, and boundaries in order to learn how to use it well and keep it from consuming his/her life. Whether your child has been playing LoL for years or has just downloaded the game for the first time, this Guide will help you better understand the world of League so you can disciple him or her well.

What is *League of Legends*?

It's a [Multiplayer Online Battle Arena](#) (MOBA) game in which two teams of five battle each other in an interactive map to invade and destroy the opposing team's base. It's similar to capture the flag, but you get to play as a legendary champion (hence the name) with unique skills, specialized movesets, and a novel-worthy backstory. There are [over 130 such champions](#) to choose from, all of which sport different play styles to perfectly suit one's taste. These champions also give League a bit of a role-playing game element. Some other aspects of it are:



Strategy. A player's decisions have a significant impact on the outcome of the game, rather than strength being the main factor, like Risk or chess. Situational awareness is particularly important in these games, and for League that means being aware of both your immediate situation and the larger arena map.

Action Real-Time Strategy (ARTS) (aka MOBA). In contrast to the turn-by-turn play of Risk, LoL allows you to take actions at any time. Imagine chess without turns, where you can move any of your pieces as fast as you're able—but then again, so can your opponent. The RTS element requires fast thinking and high levels of focus and engagement.

Team Based. Coordination, cooperation, and playmaking are necessary to fully combat the opposing team. On each team there are 5 different roles, each having their own part to play, kind of like the positions in baseball. Each position is played differently, and so adds much variety to the gameplay. Communication skills also come into play when interacting with other players.

Role Playing Game (RPG). This is any game in which you assume the role of a character, either by acting and speaking as them, or by developing them with your decisions (Dungeons & Dragons is also an RPG). League is an RPG thanks to its champions, which have extensive backstories, origin stories, character development, and key virtues or vices. This doesn't have much to do with the game-play, but it's there if players choose to delve into it.

On what platforms can it be played?

League is compatible with both Windows and MacOS systems, and it can now be played on a smartphone, both [Android](#) and [iPhone](#).



What's its rating?

[T for Teen](#), with descriptors of: Blood, Fantasy Violence, Mild Suggestive Themes, and Use of Alcohol and Tobacco. Many of these descriptors have to do with character attributes. For example, deaths in this game do not have blood animation, but there is a vampire character that steals blood from enemy characters to regenerate his own health. (More on this below.)

Why is it so popular?

Pinning down just what makes League so popular is tricky. There are many possibilities: Its creators work hard to make it appeal to many [different types of players](#); there's a low barrier to entry since it's free to play; it matches you with opponents of similar skill levels; it's constantly being improved and updated with new champions and play styles; and it offers the ability to play casually with friends or battle for prestige in ranked tournaments. There's also the appeal of watching professionals battle it out in the [world championships](#) every year, complete with a [specialized stadium](#), close to [60 million](#) online viewers, [opening ceremonies](#), and a [big shiny trophy](#). (Fun fact: The 2017 League of Legends World Championship, held in the sold-out Bird's Nest Arena in Beijing, China, was the [most-watched gaming event](#) in history to date.)

Perhaps most important is that you can engage with the game however you want. League is constantly churning out new [narratives](#), [videos](#), [music](#), and [comics](#) about champions and their adventures, but you don't have to know any of that to play the champion. Some players love the lore and backstories of champions, and some just love to win. League has made sure to tailor their game so all types of players find it satisfying.

How does it work?

When starting a game, teams of 5 are formed (either known friends/players or random players picked by the game). Then each players picks their character/champion for that game.

The object of the game is to defeat the other team by destroying their "Nexus" hidden inside and protected by their base. To do that, players start in their home base on one side of the map. Between the two bases are three paths or "lanes" ([this rendering](#) is helpful for understanding lanes). These lanes also correspond to the roles players are assigned for each game: Top (top lane), Mid (middle lane), Bot (bottom lane), Jungle (travels between lanes), and Support (heals, shields, and protects the Bot player).

Each player starts with a few items and healing potions, collecting more over the course of the

game to aid them as they go out into their lanes, face opposing champions, kill minions, and take down defensive towers. Little accomplishments (like defeating an opposing champion) also earn them experience and gold, both of which make them stronger and help them gain more abilities essential for winning the game. As more towers fall, the map becomes much more open and players can roam more freely, which eventually prompts a team battle. Whichever team gains the edge and destroys the Nexus wins.

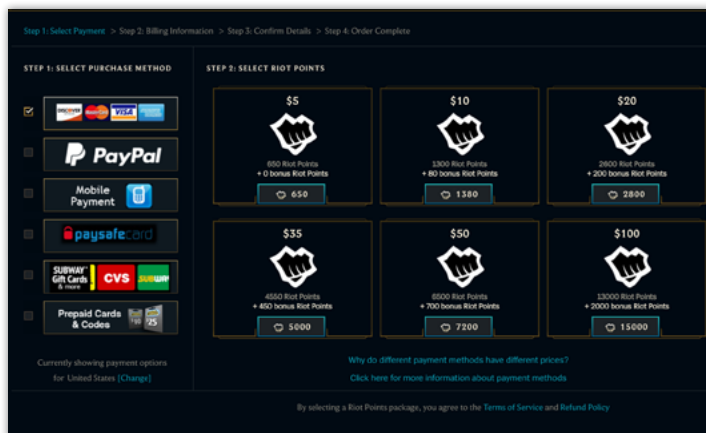
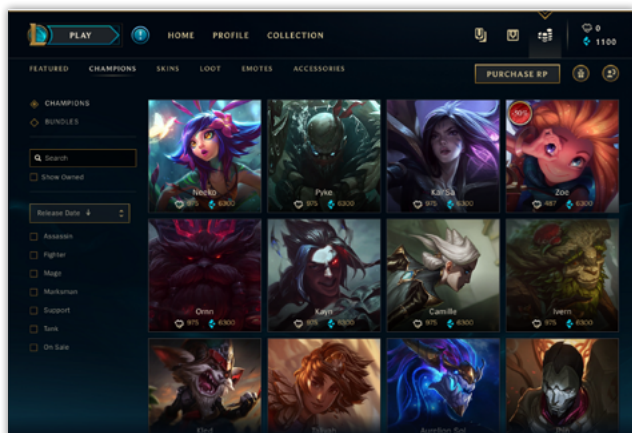
On average, an evenly matched game takes about 45 minutes, usually taking no less than 20 minutes and no more than 60.

We should also mention that are currently [three game modes](#), with the original (Summoner's Rift; described above) being the most popular. These provide subtle changes to the conditions and rules of play.

How much does it cost?

As mentioned, simply playing the game is free. But LoL has to [make money](#) somehow. So how did they top the free-to-play charts with [\\$2.1 billion](#) in revenue last year *and* support a vibrant esports community, complete with [six-figure salaries](#) for pro players?

Like many games (including *Fortnite*), LoL uses what are called [microtransactions](#). Characters and their special costumes (called “skins”; left image) can be bought with Blue Essence (BE), an in-game currency you gather by playing games and completing missions. But if you don't have enough BE to buy what you want, you can use real money to buy Riot Points (RP; right image) to put toward such purchases. RP range anywhere from \$5 for 650 RP to \$100 for 15,000 RP, and good skins usually cost between 1350 and 3250 RP.



Despite such high revenue numbers, only a very small percentage of the player community actually engages in microtransactions. [About 0.15% of players](#) account for 50% of the microtransaction revenue. These players are called “whales,” because when they spend money, they spend a [significant amount](#). However, different from “pay to win” games (putting an extra quarter in the pinball machine to give you another life after you’ve lost), purchases in LoL have very little impact on gameplay, other than the intimidation of having a cool skin. In fact, Faker, a mid-laner lauded as [the best LoL player in the world](#), has [never bought a skin](#) and doesn't use the ones League gives him for promotion purposes (other than the ones themed after his legendary team, SK Telecom). So your kids can play without ever spending money.

However, League tries very hard to [make these skins worth purchasing](#). They're advertised with beautiful “[splash art](#),” enticingly depicting the character in their new outfit. Additionally, skins also make characters look cooler. Of course, one can always play enough games to buy the

skin with BE without paying any real money, but that can take a long time. So it's often easier to get the clout by buying it with RP. So don't be surprised if your kids start asking to make purchases.

Allowing them to do so is up to you. But remember that they can enjoy the game and even be good at it without spending a cent. If you are going to give them money for the game, **here's a pro tip:** Buy prepaid [League of Legends game cards](#) at places like Best Buy, GameStop, Target, and Walmart to keep your credit card out of the picture and put limits on how much can be spent before he/she needs to come talk to you again.

— Is it a mindless game?

Definitely not. It's true that LoL can be quite engrossing, so much so that those playing might seem mindless. So if someone does look zoned out playing League, it's because the game takes very high levels of strategy, thinking, focus, and problem-solving.

This high level of interaction is a huge pro to the game. The focus and forethought that many moves require are great skills to be able to develop. Many players have said that they think more strategically in general, thanks to League. As with anything, however, moderation is a good practice in LoL. The fact that it takes thought and effort is no excuse for hours upon hours of playing.

— Is it better or worse than other video games?

Comparing one game to the next can be hard, so let's look at some of the pros and cons.

Pros

Less violence. League is not a particularly violent game *for a battle game*. Yes, you fight and kill enemies. But there's usually no gore animation to signal a death. The health bar simply goes down to zero and then that character falls down and the screen turns black and white. That's partially why the rating calls it "Fantasy Violence," as opposed to just "Violence."

High levels of engagement. As already mentioned, it takes lots of strategic thinking, team work, cooperation, and focus, which can translate into other areas of life.

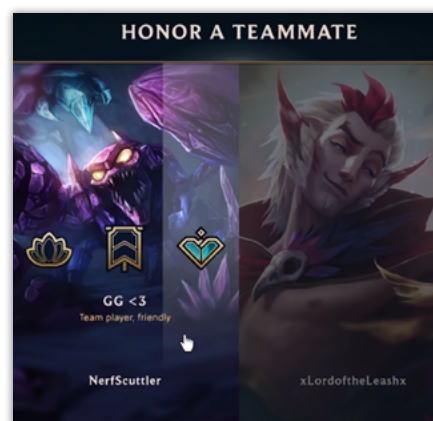
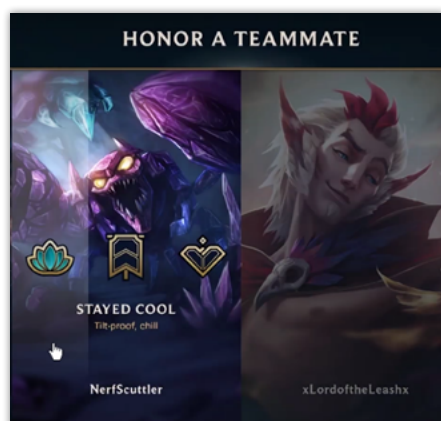
Problem solving. The strategic development League provides is one of its greatest strengths. Similar to the strategies of war, League takes both forethought and in-the-moment adaptation. This marriage of the big picture with the here-and-now is a valuable way to be able to see your circumstances.

Community. LoL's huge community is a pro. It feels good to a part of something! League also allows you to create "clubs" or teams that you can join with your friends to further deepen your bonds through playing. You can also make new friends to play alongside if you liked their playstyle or strategies, and you never have to know anything other than their username (called a "gamertag"). But there is a dark side, which we'll talk about below.

Lack of sexually suggestive content. Unlike games like *Grand Theft Auto*, LoL is fairly clean in-game. Any suggestive or revealing outfits are honestly hard to see and of little interest. (See "Splash Art" section below.)

Honor Code. LoL tries to encourage good sportsmanship through their [extensive honor code system](#), through which players get special [outside-game rewards](#) for getting picked by

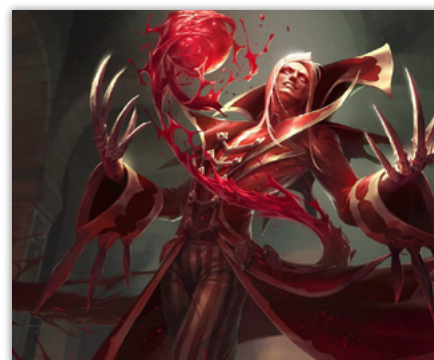
teammates (anonymously) for being enjoyable to play with. [The three honors are](#): 1. **Stayed cool** (“tilt”-proof, chill; left image); 2. **Great shotcalling** (leadership, strategy; middle image); and 3. [GG <3](#) (team player, friendly; right image).



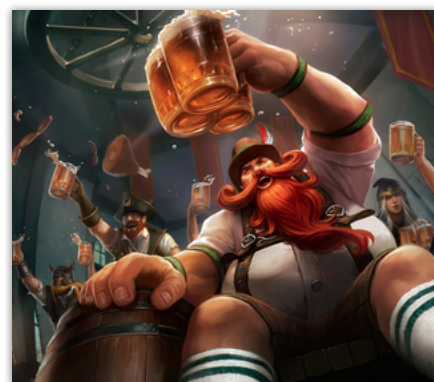
Similarly, [you get dropped in the honor ranks](#) when people block you in chat or report you. Basically your honor rank tells strangers how chill and fun you are to play with.

Cons

Character attributes. As mentioned earlier, some characters have attributes that might trouble you. For example, that vampire character turns into a pool of blood when he dies and has blood in his splash art (see image) and [abilities](#). A few other characters have similar issues, like the [executioner character](#), who does have minor blood animation when he damages other players.



As far as substances go, there's [a drunkard character](#) that throws wine barrels, drinks as one of his abilities, goes into “drunken rages,” and is shown with alcohol in his splash art (see image).



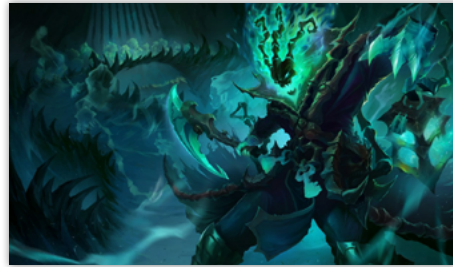
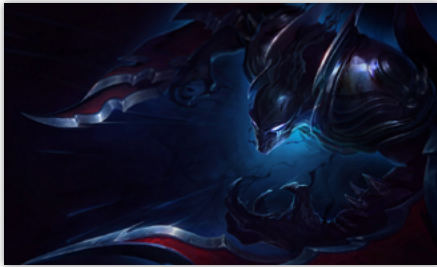
Splash Art. The splash art that accompanies the champions is not part of the gameplay, but it is part of the LoL world, and it can be problematic. In these skillfully rendered images, there's often more skin showing than you'd expect from the in-game champion. None of them are explicit, but many are suggestive. From [abs](#) and [flat stomachs](#) to [backs](#) and [thighs](#) and even deep-cut shirts on busty women (see image), there are plenty of images to concern us here. [Some skins](#) are innocent and harmless, but *many* are going for the “sexy and dangerous” look, and that can be something to watch out for, especially with younger or more impressionable kids.



One other thing to mention is that some champions have sexual personas. Namely, there's a [seductress champion](#) (see image) that seduces men to kill them, a sort of "black widow" character. In-game this just looks like any other damage, but her splash art is quite suggestive. A few other champions have a [charm ability](#) or are [portrayed as flirts](#), but nothing close to the seductress champion.

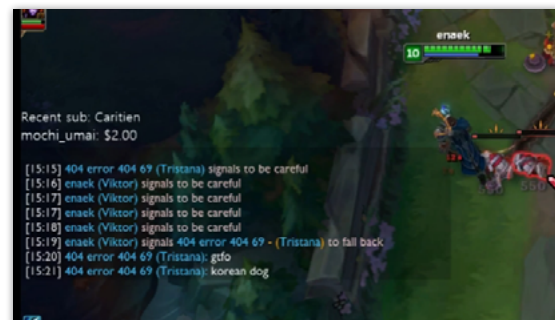
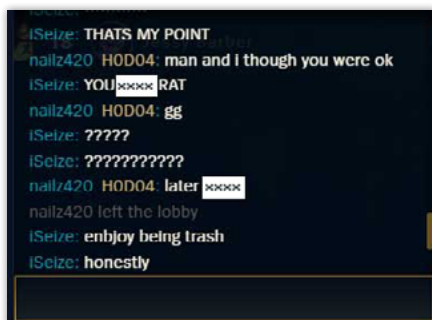


Finally, there are characters that look scary, demonic, or evil (see images below). This is really only their appearance, as they are not technically demons, nor do they have demonic/spiritual abilities. No need to be concerned here beyond the fantasy world setting.



Community. As mentioned, the League community isn't all good; it can be what LoL deems "toxic." Because the game is a challenge, players get frustrated by any number of things: when a play or game doesn't go right, when the team doesn't execute strategies well, when they get a champion or position they don't want to play. . . . Often this frustration is taken out on other players in rude and insulting ways through chat or through the offending player's actions in-game. Anonymity can make people nasty. Even when the game goes well, some players are so intoxicated by winning that they're still rude and insulting, by either pridefully taking credit for the win (and putting down their own team) or by gloating over the losers. This can be anything from sarcastic remarks to vulgar insults. Think of League as a sport—there will always be the majority of players with good sportsmanship and the few cases with *very bad* sportsmanship. In the case of LoL, one bad apple can ruin your day with his/her toxic remarks.

Chat. The game does have both voice and text chat, and many players use it to unleash their toxicity (see images below). Thankfully, League has some measures against toxic players. Swear words are automatically censored in chat by League (of course there are ways around this, like intentional misspellings). It's also possible to [report players](#) who are acting inappropriately, and with enough reports, that player will get banned. Additionally, both text and voice chat can be [selectively or fully hidden or muted](#). However, this is the player's prerogative as **there are no Parental Controls** (see below). If you want to allow them to play LoL but are concerned about the greater League community, consider asking them what their reaction is to toxic or vulgar players. Open up the conversation and help them form a plan for what to do when they encounter toxicity, such as muting, blocking, or reporting. Also, set some ground rules for what behavior is and isn't acceptable, making the consequences for violating those rules clear.



What's the danger of online player interaction?

By nature, players will interact with faceless players over the internet, often strangers or online friends they've never met in person. This, of course, raises some concerns, like stranger/predator interaction and computer vulnerabilities.

For some peace of mind, you should know that **League is not a very attractive platform to online predators**. First off, you can very easily and quickly [block players](#) who say weird or inappropriate things. Additionally, the chances you will play with that same player again without choosing to is very low. Also, to become friends with a stranger on LoL, they would have to be good enough at LoL to play in your skill level. Predators—particularly sexual predators—don't want to put in that amount of effort when there are far easier places online to hunt.

One type of preying LoL can attract, however, is [account phishing](#). Many League accounts represent a lot of invested time, money, and skill, so hacking them can be valuable. Additionally, high-level accounts can be sold to players who want a new account but don't want to grind up the levels again. Needless to say, [League is actively fighting](#) the buying and selling of accounts and is on the forefront of the anti-hacking and anti-cheating scene, keeping its detection methods secret for an extra edge. Practically, players are always reminded to [never give out any account information](#) and are warned before clicking on any links that leave the League platform. As an extra precaution, here's how you can [take your credit card information off of LoL](#), just in case.

Another concern you may have is if your computer can be compromised by the online connection League uses. The answer is, not really. Your account can get stolen (credit cards and such), but your computer should not be affected. If you're following all of [League's safety guidelines](#), your computer should be safe. If the worst does happen, however, LoL has a prompt [rescue squad](#) you can contact to retrieve your account. You should not be able to get viruses or bugs from the game itself. **Be wary** of all links that take you out of the League platform.

Is it addictive?

Because of how fun it can be to play, League can easily be addictive. Some players never struggle with this; but many players have played obsessively at some point in their LoL careers (as evidenced by [the polarized reviews from parents](#) on Common Sense Media). When you win, you feel great and want to keep that momentum going to win another game. When you lose, you want to play again to improve and prove yourself. Either way, the draw to click "Play Again" is strong. In fact, with League's "matchmaking" system, they try to match you up with opponents of appropriate strength so that your win-rate is as close to 50% as possible. Even the [best players in the world](#) have win rates near 50%. That means you will lose just about as much as you win, allowing you to feel both sweet victory and bitter defeat. Who knows, maybe your next game can pull out a win . . . Hit that "Play Again" button and find out!

Another thing that can make League addictive is time with friends. Quitting when your friends continue on feels like leaving a party just when the fun started. You could miss awesome plays, inside jokes, and maybe even a winning streak. Many people play LoL alone, but when you play with friends it makes it that much harder to stop.

There are other aspects that encourage daily play, too. League offers BE for the first win of each day. They also have varying missions you can complete for more BE, prompting daily check-ins. There are also rotating free-to-play characters each week, updated on Tuesdays. These just reinforce the habit of daily play.

The last thing we should mention here is the loyalty League has from its players. With some much time invested in learning and improving at LoL, players are less likely to switch to other games because starting at square one with another game can be daunting. This keeps them coming back. Check out our [Parent's Guide to Video Games](#) for specific tips on placing boundaries around games.

— Are there parental controls?

No. There are game settings, like turning off voice or text chat, but as long as a player can access the account, he/she can change the settings. For that reason, we recommend setting the password, especially if your gamers are younger. It's possible to have it so that only you know the password, so they have to have you sign in for them every time (but once you sign in, they can still change settings). In addition, we also recommend not allowing children to play in private places (bedrooms, basements, etc.) or using headsets so they know they can't hide things. All the mouse clicking and chat can get annoying, but it's a small price to pay for keeping kids safe and accountable.

— Should I let my kid play it?

If you've read any of our other Parent Guides, you already know the answer: It depends on your situation and your kid's habits, proclivities, and personality. But here are some key points to consider.

First, *League of Legends* is quite tame when compared with games like [Assassin's Creed](#). The game itself is rather clean and mentally demanding. If your kid is acting out or having issues, it's not likely the game causing it, but rather an issue that the game brings to the surface.

Second, keep in mind that some streamers [dress up like League characters](#) (called [cosplay](#)) to boost views. Cosplayers also abound [at big tournaments](#). Sometimes this is just like halloween—monster costumes and the like. But sometimes these cosplayers dress up skimpily or [cross-dress](#) (both cosplayers in that article are male professional players). Typically the more scandalous the cosplay, the greater the views or attention.

Third, there's the streaming itself. Many gamers don't just play the game; they also watch other, more professional players play the game on YouTube or Twitch (see our [Parent's Guide to Twitch.tv](#)). Almost all of these LoL streamers swear while playing. You can turn off chat with vulgar players when in-game, but if your kid is watching someone else play, there's no such option. Something to be aware of and possibly start talking to your gamer about.

Fourth is the idea of "[tilt](#)," which we alluded to earlier. This gamer term refers to the small mistakes a player makes when frustrated, emotional, or flustered, in turn causing more mistakes. Tilt can lead to something called "[salt](#)." When players are salty, they're bitter from losing, tasting that sharp sting of defeat. Both tilt and salt can be very harmful. If your gamer always gets upset playing League or is inconsolable for a time after losing, you may need to help them find healthier ways to cope. Talking about perspective and teaching them how to be gracious no matter the outcome can be really helpful. If your child seems unable to control their temper, it may be worth removing their LoL privileges, making it clear what they need to do to earn those privileges back. Remember that taking away the game will not teach them how to lose well; it will just take away the practice ground.

Last, League's addictiveness needs a similar treatment. Taking away the game may be a good

solution for extreme cases, but you also must teach them how to deal with things that want to suck them in. **It is far better for them to know how to resist temptation than to have the temptation taken away but still be weak to it.** We suggest creating a priorities list, listing League as a fun reward. For example, if playing League is taking the place of family time, academics, or time with friends, that's a problem. The strength to prioritize other things has to come from the player themselves. You need to teach them this, and it's a long process.

If you do end up needing to uninstall the game, be careful. [Some people](#) get pretty bold and sneaky about [not getting caught playing](#), [hiding it](#), or [disguising it](#) as something else. As an intermediate, there's always the option to use [administrative controls for Windows](#) or Screen Time on iOS devices to limit time (see our [Parent's Guide to iOS](#)). **But boundaries without conversation and growth mean nothing.** Only you know your kid well enough to understand their specific motivations for continued play. That deeper question is what you need to explore with them if League is becoming a problem. (Experts [aren't yet sure](#) if video games can be physically addictive, like opioids, but don't hesitate to seek professional help if your gamer exhibits [the signs and symptoms](#) of video game addiction.)

Discussion Questions

- Why do you want to play Lol?
- What do you love about it?
- What do you think it teaches you?
- What are some pitfalls of League?
- Do you keep chat on? Why/why not?
- Have you ever had a PvP encounter that worried you or angered you?
- Do you think some of the splash art is too suggestive? Why/why not?
- How do you deal with toxic players?
- Do you watch streamers? How do you filter what streamers you watch?
- What do you do to calm down when you get tilted or salty?
- What priorities do you think should take precedence over League?
- Have you ever felt the need to hide LoL from me?
- What do you think are good boundaries to set around the game?
- How can I help you stick to those boundaries?
- What do you think I should do if you misuse your LoL privileges?

Final Thoughts

We asked a few high-school-aged LoL players what they would say to parents trying to understand their kids' enjoyment of League, and in essence they said: Don't belittle or make fun of your kid's interests. They will withdraw and stop sharing stuff with you. Instead, be excited about the things they're excited about, ask questions, and help them grow by listening and growing with them. Pretty good advice for teenagers, huh?

Overall, *League of Legends* can teach strategy, quick thinking, and teamwork. It's rewarding to play and can create deep bonds between friends. As with anything, it has weaknesses and pitfalls that our gamers need us to show them how to navigate well. By keeping the door for conversation open and allowing your gamer to take ownership of their choices by proving their trustworthiness, you can disciple them into adult gamers who choose to honor God and others with their time, thoughts, energy, and compassion.

Related Axis Resources

- [A Parent's Guide to Video Games](#)
- [A Parent's Guide to Twitch.tv](#)
- [A Parent's Guide to Discord](#)
- [A Parent's Guide to Fortnite](#)

Additional Resources

- [“League of Legends beginner's guide: Everything to know,”](#) Dot Esports
- [“League of Legends Game Review,”](#) Common Sense Media
- [“10 Things Parents Need to Know about League of Legends,”](#) Game Skinny
- [“A Parent's Guide to eSports,”](#) Family Zone
- [“Parental Approval Information for Parents,”](#) Riot Games (makers of LoL)

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