

Gaming - Where the Fun Ends

Gaming is a big trend, half of Europe plays video games. Playing games is fun and can transport interesting content. There is a lot of interaction on gaming platforms and in chats. However, they are also abused for spreading hate and agitation. This contributes to the division of our society. We have to do something about this!

#TAKEPART-Stories – an initiative of Deutsche Telekom AG
Facilitator's guide for a workshop (approx. 25 minutes)



LIFE IS FOR SHARING.

Imprint

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FURTHER INFORMATION

<https://dabei-geschichten.telekom.com/en/topics/gaming/>
<https://www.telekom.com/en/company/topic-specials/no-hate-speech>

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Notes on this guide

In the course of this workshop, the topic “Gaming - Where the fun ends” will be explored in more detail: What is it about and why is it important to take action?

The workshop emphasizes the following key points:

1. The gaming industry becomes more and more relevant for our economy.
2. Games teach values – they can be anti-democratic or democratic.
3. Not every game or all gamers contribute to spreading hate - it is not about attacking the industry and the community, but about raising awareness of abuse and hidden manipulation.
4. Games and the corresponding platforms are underestimated as a communication medium and it goes far beyond gaming.
5. Special about games is that problematic values hide in game design and game elements. Extreme views appear more acceptable.
6. Gaming is especially interesting for abuse because platforms are little regulated.
7. There are approaches to stop hate in games and to convey positive values.
8. Everyone can do something against the division of society.

This guide is intended as a support for you in your role as a facilitator. It can enable you to conduct a workshop, even if you have little experience in facilitating such events and/or you don't consider yourself an expert on gaming.

This guide is also available in other versions, for workshops of 45 and 90 minutes.

In the sections entitled “Structure” we offer recommendations on how to present and discuss each passage.

In the sections entitled “What to say”, we offer suggestions on things to say and questions to ask. In the sections entitled “Additional information”, we offer background information that can help you in your preparation and in case of questions.

To conduct this workshop, you will need:

- a laptop or other device with internet access,
- a projector or monitor connected to your laptop or other device.

Additional information:

- The image pages provided in the module work best in full-screen mode. Full-screen mode is available in virtually all internet browsers (check settings).
- Suggestions for email invitations and communication after the workshop are provided as well.

Enjoy!



Gaming - Where the Fun Ends (1/2)

STRUCTURE

Show picture and read out speaker notes



WHAT TO SAY



“Welcome to the workshop “Gaming - Where the fun ends”.
I am (personal introduction).

“For the next 25 minutes, these are our topics:

- Gaming has long since arrived everywhere in our society.
- People play games on gaming platforms and interaction takes place.
- Games convey values - and they are not always positive.
- Gaming platforms and communities are abused for spreading hate and manipulating others.
- What can we do against it?

In this workshop, some terms will come up repeatedly, so here is their explanation in advance:

- Gaming: Generic term for playing video games and everything associated with them. This term is also used for the interaction of gamers via different media while playing the game, as well as the story that the game follows.
- Gaming platforms: Websites and apps for buying video games but also for networking and interaction. Example: Steam.
- Gaming community: Community of people who come together on the internet because they share the same interests, e.g. playing games, talking about them, or watching others play.
- Streaming: Gamers broadcast their games live on the internet and comment on the gameplay for their audience. Largest game streaming platform: Twitch.
- Social media: Websites and apps on which people interact, like, share and comment on content. Examples: Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, or Discord - a platform that is particularly popular among gamers.

In the digital world, many things are possible. You can meet people, exchange opinions, get information, play video games by yourself or together with others. The gaming industry is booming. It stands for fun, interaction and teamwork.



Gaming - Where the Fun Ends (2/2)

WHAT TO SAY



But the digital world has its downsides as well. For many, this is unexpected when it comes to gaming, especially if you think it's all about the game. When people are insulted and excluded in gaming communities or streams because of their gender, origin or sexuality; when games are programmed serving enemy images and stereotypes, this conveys values that have a negative impact on our society. That's where the fun ends!

This workshop is not about a sweeping conviction of an industry. Not all games, not all gamers contribute to spreading hate and anti-democratic values. This workshop wants to draw attention to the fact that things happen on the internet, even if we don't consciously perceive or notice them. To the fact that we all must raise our awareness for the abuse of digital platforms for hidden manipulation and for its possible consequences in the analog world - also in connection to gaming.

Now, let's have a look at where the fun ends!"

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



Deutsche Telekom is fighting for an internet free from hate, also when it comes to gaming. This is only one example of how online hate shifts and spreads in unexpected ways. More information to be found in our topic special #TAKEPART – No hate speech at: <https://www.telekom.com/no-hate-speech>



Games - Only for Kids and Nerds? (1/2)

STRUCTURE

Show picture and read out speaker notes



WHAT TO SAY



“Is gaming actually relevant? Isn’t it more of a marginal phenomenon? No. Gaming has arrived everywhere in society! Hard to believe? Well, here are some numbers:

Around 3.1 billion people play video games worldwide – that is about 40% of the world’s population. In Germany it’s more than 34 million people.

What do you think: Are there more men than women who play?

The proportion of female and male video game players is fairly evenly distributed. But the situation is changing. According to different studies the proportion of female video game players is growing rapidly. In terms of age it is also maybe a little different from what one would expect, it’s not only very young people that play video games: 5 million players are older than 60 years in Germany. The age average is 36 years.

And even if gaming sounds like a free time activity, many people make their money with video games. In 2019, the turnover of the video game industry amounted to 6.2 billion Euros in Germany. That’s more than the revenue of the film or the music industry. For example, in Germany in 2020 around 30,000 people earned their living with gaming. But you can also earn money by playing video games - with streaming, for example.

Streaming means filming yourself while playing a video game and broadcasting it via online platforms such as Twitch. You comment on the game and moderate the corresponding chat. So, it’s not just the gaming that’s important, but also the entertainment. Popular streamers can earn up to 40,000 Euros a month through advertising, subscriptions and donations. Their reach makes them interesting. Meanwhile, they are often approached by game publishers to present new games on their channels.

But gaming has also become a competitive sport. Gamers sometimes earn their entire living through video game competitions - also known as eSports. In addition to countless smaller tournaments, there are major international championships. They are held in stadiums and usually broadcasted live online.



Games - Only for Kids and Nerds? (2/2)

WHAT TO SAY



One of these championships paid out a record of 30.7 million Euros prize money. Almost 450 million people worldwide watched eSports events online in 2019 - and the trend is rising. Almost ¼ of Germans can imagine eSports becoming an Olympic discipline.

As you can see, gaming has become a relevant medium. But where does the hate come into play?"

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



eSports are divided into three categories:

- Shooters e.g. "Counter-Strike" and "Fortnite"
- (Real-time) strategy games e.g. "Dota: Defense of the Ancient"
- Sports or racing simulations e.g. the soccer simulation "FIFA 20"

The largest market share - financially as well as in terms of the number of players and viewers - is taken by real-time strategy games. This is followed by shooters and the sports simulation genre.



All Just a Game? (1/2)

STRUCTURE

Show picture and read out speaker notes



WHAT TO SAY



“Online hate is on the rise. In today’s workshop, we are particularly interested in strategic hate, also known as hate speech. Hate speech aims at excluding people based on their group affiliation and to drive them out of the internet. For example, in Germany around 75% of female politicians and journalists have already been victims of hate speech. It is not about them as a person, but about their role in opinion shaping. When they withdraw, their opinion and perspective is missing. This is a problem for a balanced opinion forming process, where everyone decides for themselves what is important to them and what should be considered.

The insulting language towards people and groups leads to an ever-greater division of society. Boundaries of what can be said are shifting, misanthropic statements are becoming the norm.

There is a special workshop on the topic “Digital Civil Courage – How to get over the state of shock” and a topic special against online hate by Deutsche Telekom on the company website www.telekom.com/no-hate-speech.

But what does gaming have to do with hate?

On the one hand, there are increasingly strict regulations for social media such as Facebook and Twitter and for the responsibility they must take on regarding hate on their platforms. This leads to an increase in people’s awareness of online hate and to a better prosecution.

Unfortunately, it also leads to a shift of groups that spread strategic hate to less regulated platforms.

Games and the corresponding platforms are still clearly underestimated as communication media, and it goes far beyond gaming. This means that hate is also spread on gaming platforms.”



All Just a Game? (2/2)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



To clarify the terms around online hate:

Cyberbullying is understood as insulting, threatening, exposing or harassing people. Cyberbullying is clearly directed against a specific person who is targeted intentionally, systematically and on a long-term basis on the internet. Cyberbullying often has a history of bullying in the analogue world, e.g. in the schoolyard.

All of us can be confronted with hate comments - usually when posting something that others don't like - swear words to extreme language are used, but often they stop and are not as much directed at the person as at the statement.

Hate speech is strategically used hate, especially against minorities - clear goal: silencing - driving people and groups out of the internet. This is the type of hate we are referring to in this workshop.



What Games Can Do as Well (1/2)

STRUCTURE



Show picture and read out speaker notes

WHAT TO SAY



“Media have an enormous influence on our idea of reality. They also teach us a lot of things that determine our own norms and values. Games as a medium are of course no exception. Especially because they are very intense and combine language, text, sound and moving images.

Now let’s talk about the positive effects that games can have.
But how does it work?

The interactive processes in games often require our decision. This is then immediately carried on in the game. While playing, we fall back on learned norms and values and apply them, for example when we meet other gamers. However, we also encounter predesigned characters and ways of acting that are laid out in the story. This also allows us to get to know new perspectives. Games can therefore make a great contribution to more diverse perspectives in our society.

Games also have the power to address social and political issues in a critical but playful way. With the help of playful processes, they can support media competence and the formation of democratic values. Serious games provide knowledge, train skills and our behavior in addition to being fun to play. Winning is not the main goal but gaining awareness of the conveyed content and going through a special experience is.

74% of the parents in Germany say they have already used serious games with their children.

What are the topics that those games deal with?

There are games that deal with historical facts. In the German game “Through the Darkest of Times” you can take on the role of a resistance fighter in Nazi Germany. Another game “The Game is not over” by Anne Frank educational institution simulates the life of a young person who slides into antisemitism and conspiracy ideologies. The aim of the game is that educators and young people can recognize such processes and prevent them in their peer group. There are also games simulating the life of refugees, like the game “Salaam”. It was designed by Lual Mayen, who himself fled from Sudan. Escape and displacement with all its consequences are brought to life, especially for young people.



What Games Can Do as Well (2/2)

WHAT TO SAY



Serious games can also teach people how to deal with fake news in the media. Examples are games such as “Bad News” and the German game “Fake it to make it”. They create awareness of how fake and misleading news can manipulate opinions. And we can learn to deal with the media in a competent and critical way.

Teaching knowledge or values and gaming therefore are a perfect match. Games make an important contribution to improving media literacy.”

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



The video game “The Game is not over” by the Anne Frank educational institution was still in production when this module was published.

Other examples of serious games:

“Darfur is dying”:

The video game deals with the situation of refugees in Darfur in Sudan. One of the central tasks in the game is to collect water from a militarily controlled source without being caught. In addition, you can help with various problems in the village and, in the final level of the game, you can rebuild a burnt village and cultivate fields together with other gamers.

“Jessika”:

This game draws attention to racism and radicalization in our society. You slip into the role of Jessika, who committed suicide. The game aims to demonstrate what makes people join radical groups.



4 MIN



Why Does Hate Play a Role in Games? (1/3)

STRUCTURE

Show picture and read out speaker notes



WHAT TO SAY



„Why does hate play a role and why is there room for hate in video games?”

Chat features and comment functions in video games and on gaming platforms play an important role. On the one hand, they offer opportunities for interaction, for example for better coordination and alignment in the game. But they also offer space for hate. While many social networks today are regulated by laws, such as the German Network Enforcement Act, and counter speech and resistance exist, hate speech in games often remains without consequence. Thus, victims of hate speech in gaming feel unprotected. There are ways to report content and punish those who spread hate and agitation, but they often remain unused. At the same time, misanthropic statements in the game are hardly noticed or deliberately ignored in order to remain in the game.

Hate comments can arise spontaneously. If players lose the game, they might give voice to their anger. Hate speech, however, is planned and targeted, i.e. strategic manipulation that has nothing to do with the game.

Groups that have been banned from social networks like Facebook or have to fear regulation find a new space to manipulate and spread hate. Political ideologies, especially from the far-right spectrum, are spread on gaming platforms - sometimes hidden behind harmless-sounding statements, but sometimes also very explicitly and with a sharp tone. Uninvolved players cannot always withstand. Because what occurs in the social networks as a phenomenon of opinion-making also applies here: the more often certain messages are repeated, the greater the likelihood that they will be accepted as facts or “sayables”, because they automatically seem less absurd or off-putting. A habituation effect or dulling occurs.

But values and world views are also created by the game itself. Many game characters serve classic clichés and stereotypes - and thus reinforce the role models in the minds of gamers without them noticing. A rather unknown game is “Project Makeover”, addressed to girls in puberty. It’s about a girl’s boyfriend turning to someone else and you must decide whether to make him jealous or win him back. Both are achieved by revising the girl’s appearance, for which you also get feedback regarding the “fashion intelligence quotient”.



Why Does Hate Play a Role in Games? (2/3)

WHAT TO SAY



It's clear that you'll win your boyfriend back if you take off your glasses for 100 points and put on sexy clothes and make-up! Otherwise: Tough luck - the boy walks off with the other girl. Because normal, natural-looking girls don't stand a chance in the battle for the first place with boys!

Political ideologies are also placed in games. An extreme example of this is the German game "Heimat Defender: Rebellion" (engl. "Homeland Defender: Rebellion"). The story takes place in 2084, and the people in Europe are controlled by a large corporation. But in the game, a resistance is formed whose fighters are real characters from the far-right scene. The game conveys right-wing extremist and inhuman ideas. At one point, for example, you can see a graffiti that trivializes and ridicules the violent death of the African American George Floyd. In the game, this world view seems acceptable, since the player needs to liberate people and thus do something good. The ideology is transmitted casually. The drive to win the game is used to anchor the ideology as something positive.

Hate in gaming appears in different ways. However, the patterns are always the same. Supposedly weak minorities are attacked: because of their gender, their origin, their religion or their sexual orientation."



Why Does Hate Play a Role in Games? (3/3)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



What are the consequences of hate speech for our society and democracy?

Hate speech is dangerous for the social glue and respectful interaction. There is a habituation effect and a shift in the boundaries of what can be said.

It also damages the culture of democratic debate: social rules no longer apply; anyone who disagrees or does not fit into the role model is insulted, offended and silenced.

The consequences can be seen in real, violent outbreaks. The extent can vary greatly from individual racist attacks in public to larger massacres like those in Christchurch, New Zealand. Because hate does not stay on the internet and does not just arise online.



What Each of Us Can Do (1/3)

STRUCTURE

Show picture and read out speaker notes



WHAT TO SAY



“We can notice first steps in the right direction: The gaming industry starts to fight against hate speech and gaming will gain greater consideration in laws.

Nevertheless, this is still not enough. All of us can and must take action to prevent hate becoming acceptable - not in video games, not on the internet, and of course not in real life! And we can do this regardless of our role: as a gamer, as a parent, or as a member of society.

Therefore, we would like to take a quick look at concrete ideas on how to take a stand:

Be attentive: Recognize hate speech

As a gamer, the first and most important step is to be sensitive and to recognize hate. Often you are in the flow of the game and statements that cross boundaries are not noticed. That’s why it’s important to pay attention!

Active counter-speech

If you recognize hate speech and do not want to accept it, you can take a stand by actively countering it. By the way, the effect of a counter comment is often underestimated. It not only shows solidarity with the victims, but also has a great effect on other readers and players. In the best case, they join in, become active themselves or at least think about it. Counter speech is already widespread in social media. There are many organizations that help people to learn it and find arguments that do not serve hate with hate. The goal is to achieve a constructive dialog and to offer alternative points of view. In gaming, counter speech is still little used. How come?

Report

Reporting hate speech is also a way to oppose hate. In some gaming communities, there are “report buttons” that can be used to report hate. In addition, there are also regional NGOs for reporting hate speech. In Germany “HateAid” is one of many organizations that campaign against hate and cybercrime.



What Each of Us Can Do (2/3)

WHAT TO SAY



Don't ignore hate speech

Sometimes hate is ignored, e.g. because people don't want to make themselves ridiculous in front of their friends. Even if a friend posts a swastika as a joke: in some countries it is a criminal act that also has consequences, because the digital world is not a legal vacuum. Gaming in particular is about having fun together. Hate and inhuman statements destroy the fun - no matter who expresses it.

Supporting children with gaming

Particularly children and young people concentrate primarily on the video game itself. Hate and hate speech can occur casually and unnoticed. Parents therefore have an important role: It is not only essential to know which video games the children are playing and whether they are suitable for their age. It is at least equally important to keep an eye on what the game is about, what values are conveyed, and in which communities' children are active. Parents must support their children, talk to them about the video games and chats, and get informed. Even without playing the game, you can find clips, game descriptions and ratings on the internet to learn what it's all about.

It is important to always be aware of the effects that hate speech can have. Because behind every virtual victim there is also a human being. And unfortunately, words and mutual incitement also lead to attacks and crimes in the real life. We have already talked about the fact that hate speech is an attack on our democracy and on a society based on diversity.

Regardless of whether we are active in the gaming community, it is important to be attentive when it comes to online hate. The important thing is: No matter where hate occurs, it must never be left unchallenged! Because words must not become weapons!

So, do we have to put up with hate and exclusion in games? No!"



What Each of Us Can Do (3/3)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



There are a lot of initiatives against hate in gaming. Politicians have recognized the need for action. For example, Gilles de Kerchove, a Belgian senior European Union official, wrote a paper demanding for gaming platforms to be more strictly regulated. He therefore calls upon the EU to treat the online game industry in a similar way then the social networks by holding them accountable. So there could well be legislative changes on the European level that regulate the gaming industry more strongly.

In Germany, the first changes are already coming into force.

- The German Youth Protection Act is being revised. It will be adapted to the possibilities of the digital world. Consistent age ratings will be introduced, and the possibilities of interaction with others in video games will be considered as well.
- The German Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG) is also being reviewed. It is analyzed whether and which gaming platforms would have to be covered by the law, just like the classic social media platforms. For the future, this would imply: They must react more strongly, and they have to check hate comments regularly, give feedback and block accounts if necessary.

For those who would like to discuss the possibilities of “what everyone can do” in more detail, the 90-minute version of this workshop includes a suggestion for a moderated discussion session.

For those who want to learn more about counter speech and how to practice it, here is a short excerpt of the many offers:

- Media sure! but secure. with all Deutsche Telekom initiatives: <https://www.medienabersicher.de/en/> and the initiative Teachtoday for educators and parents: <https://www.teachtoday.de/en/>
- #Iamhere - largest counter speech organization on Facebook and Twitter with thousands of volunteers and boot camps to get started on the topic: <https://iamhereinternational.com/>
- Amadeu Antonio Foundation: <https://www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/en/>
- Digitale Helden (engl. Digital Heroes): <https://akademie.digitale-helden.de/online-kurse/> (in German only)
- Love Storm: <https://love-storm.de/trainieren/> (in German only)



 4 MIN

Gaming - Where the Fun Ends

STRUCTURE



Show picture and read out speaker notes: Draw a conclusion and, if necessary, final discussion.

WHAT TO SAY



„We are almost at the end of our workshop!
We have learned a lot about gaming and online hate and how to act against it.

On gaming platforms, people play video games. And a lot of interaction takes place. They are purposely abused for spreading hate and agitation. This contributes to the division of our society. We must do something about this!

A lot of good examples exist already: For resistance against hate and also for video games that teach democratic values.

Let's be attentive and let's have a look at where the fun ends!

(Possible questions for the final discussion:)

- What did you learn?
- What was new to you?
- What will you share with your friends and family?
