

International Social Games Association

BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

VERSION 5.0

February 2022

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The International Social Games Association (ISGA) is a global non-profit trade association established to develop and communicate best global practices in social gaming in consultation with public policy makers and regulators around the world.

Since 2013, we have developed Best Practice Principles based upon core values of consumer protection, accountability and transparency, aiming to shape a consistent and complementary global framework for the social games industry.

This fifth version extends the Principles, in areas such as in-app-purchases, advertising practices, privacy compliance and player safeguards.

We are proud to be taking the lead in promoting responsible standards for the sector - and we are committed to continued review as research and understanding develop.

Companies represented on the board of the ISGA include Zynga, SciPlay, Playtika, Playstudios, Pixel United, Greentube, IGT and Huuuge Games.

RESPECT

The ISGA and its members look to implement a culture of respect.

- We engage in honest, transparent practices.
- We are committed to promoting respect and inclusion.
- We do not tolerate harassment or bullying of any kind.
- We aim for in-game communities that are friendly, supportive and well-spirited.
- We are responsive to our players through customer support.

ADHERENCE TO APPLICABLE LAWS AND REGULATIONS

- ISGA members commit to abide by all applicable laws and regulations. Examples include laws and regulations for consumer protection, competition, advertising and privacy.
- We also embrace platform guidance encompassing advertising, age ratings and labels for in-app purchases, including randomised in-app purchases.

SOCIAL GAMES DESIGN, FAIRNESS AND FUNCTIONALITY

- Our games are designed to be fun and easy to understand for the intended audience. They are never designed to mislead or trick players, for example by intentionally providing false information or being deceptive.
- In general, games operators should consider the average consumer who is reasonably well informed and reasonably observant and circumspect.
 - For example, where a game is designed for a particular group of consumers, it is desirable that the operator assesses the game from the perspective of the average member of that group.
- Terms of service and relevant notices should be accessible to the player before they play the game and easily accessible at all times.
 - For example, casino-style social games should specify that the games are intended for use by those aged 18 or older and/or provide advice to parents and teens on making smart choices online.
- Social games should not lead players into believing they will be more successful at real-world activities. For example:

Car driving simulators should not deliberately lead people to believe they are acquiring real-world driving skills.

Action games should not deliberately lead people to believe they have developed real-world physical abilities.

Casino-style games should not deliberately lead players to believe they will be successful at real money gambling games.

- Players should have a seamless download and play experience.

| PURCHASES AND PAYMENT TRANSPARENCY

- When players are offered the opportunity to make a payment within a game, it should be transparent what the payment is and what it will provide.
- The terms and conditions of purchase for games or items within games (in-game purchases) should be clear – whether for virtual credits, additional lives, boosters, character upgrades or any other bonus features.
- The cost of virtual items offered for sale and currency bundles should be clear, intelligible and unambiguous.
- Where payment mechanisms are under the control of games operators, default settings should allow purchases to be made only with the player’s explicit consent. Players can choose to modify these settings.
- Where platforms dictate payment mechanisms, games operators should comply with the platform’s payment policies and any applicable consumer laws.
- Games that are designed for children should not contain direct exhortations to children to buy items in a game or to persuade an adult to buy items for them.
- We support and educate on the use of parental controls to prevent accidental purchases.
- Like many other industries, social games may have reward programs, but these are not linked to the outcome of the game.

| VIRTUAL ITEMS AND SECONDARY MARKETS

- We take a robust stance on secondary markets in virtual items.
- A “virtual item” is any in-game item, virtual credit or virtual good that can be accumulated as a direct result of the outcome of the game or pre-purchased for use exclusively on the game.
 - Virtual items must not at any time, be exchanged for real money or items of tangible real-world value.
 - Social games operators must not facilitate, permit or endorse the trading of virtual items via platforms or third party websites.



RATINGS AND PARENTAL CONTROLS

- We support and encourage the use of parental controls and other safety features to ensure age-appropriate content.
- We promote and provide information on how to use parental controls via our [Smart Mobile Gamers](#) safe play portal.
- Across the platforms through which our games are played, we answer content rating questionnaires honestly and accurately to ensure that apps align properly with age rating expectations.
- We support the development of ratings guidance for players at platform level.
 - For example, via the introduction by PEGI¹ of an 18+ rating for casino-style games on Google Play in Europe.

ADVERTISING

- Advertisements should comply with all applicable laws and regulations.
- We are committed to clear, transparent and accurate advertising of games and in-game purchases:
 - Games should not be advertised as 'free' where purchases are mandatory.
 - We take care to ensure that visualisations of gameplay shown in advertisements are generally representative of the game itself.
 - Advertisements should give a realistic impression of how easy or difficult it is to obtain virtual items through standard play.
- When assessing marketing for different audiences, games operators should take due account of the way messages are presented and the context of those messages.
- Games operators should ensure that advertisements are appropriate for the intended audience and filter their content accordingly:
 - Advertisements for casino-style games should not be deliberately or explicitly directed at those aged below 18 years.
 - In keeping this longstanding ISGA Principle, we support the development of guidance at the platform level, including that advertisements for casino-style games should only be targeted at players aged 18 or older.
 - Our material (copy, images, tone, etc.) is suggestive of playing for fun and enjoyment.
- Players should receive clear and comprehensible information about how their personal information is being processed within the advertising ecosystem.

¹Pan European Game Information

| PRIVACY

- We take appropriate steps to comply with privacy and data protection laws that are applicable to our games.
- We seek to ensure that players have knowledge about the processing of their personal data and are able to exercise their data protection rights.
- We empower players so that they can make informed decisions about how they use their data. For example:
 - Players can easily access a game's privacy policies.
 - Game operators provide players with choices about the sharing of personal data, for example by allowing a player to choose whether they share their game activity publicly when playing on a social network.
 - Players are able to request the deletion of their public profile.
 - We provide data-protection friendly interfaces on a range of applications, platforms and devices that feature simple, uniform and easily accessible buttons to exercise key choices.
 - We support data transparency efforts at the platform level.

| COMPLAINTS

- We make customer support available to players.
- We have an internal process and trained personnel to ensure that we respond to player complaints in a timely manner.




| SAFEGUARDING PLAYERS

- We believe in giving players the tools and advice they need to have a positive experience.
- Our goal is always to create a fun, safe, positive, and supportive community in and around our games.
- Our [Smart Mobile Gamers](#) safe play portal, works in concert with our Principles, offering guidance, tips and advice on topics such as parental controls and managing in-game spending, from leading experts in the online safety field.
- We support approaches that encourage balance and control in gameplay, such as the “[5 tips to curb your gaming](#)” outlined on our Smart Mobile Gamers portal:
 1. Set time limits for play and stick to them
 2. Install an app or apply a device level control that can limit play time
 3. Recognize triggers
 4. Find an accountability (or “success”) partner
 5. Reach out to a culturally competent psychologist
- Recognising that education efforts must be iterative, we support making players aware of self-help tools and associated materials through multiple channels. For example, through emails to registered players or links, pop-ups, and tabs within the game itself.
- We have an internal process to suspend and/or close a player’s account in a timely manner when requested to do so by the player.
- If a games operator discovers that a player whose account was previously closed opened a new account, the operator should investigate the circumstances with that player and determine whether the new account should also be closed.
- We support the introduction of temporary and permanent self-exclusion policies when players communicate and/or we are able to deduce from their communications, that they are unable to control their gameplay and/or expenditure.
- Through our research program, safe play portal and these Principles, we are responsive to the development of evidence-based understanding of concerns surrounding excessive gameplay.

| AND FINALLY, CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- We regularly review these Principles and are always looking to improve our practices. If you have constructive suggestions, please get in touch: contact@i-sga.org



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& RESPONSIBLE
V O I C E

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