

Flex Academy: Resources for Families

- [HCOS & Flex AI Literacy Model](#)
- [Tips for Middle and High School Educational Success](#)
- [Violent Video Games and Gaming Addictions](#)
- [Skills for Online Success](#)

HCOS & Flex AI Literacy Model

At HCOS and Flex, we know that artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly becoming a part of life. We want to help our students learn how to use AI wisely without losing the skills that make them thoughtful and creative. Our goal is for students to become wise, discerning, and creative learners, rooted in God's love, who can use AI for good in school and in life.

Why We Teach AI

- We want students to be **AI-equipped, not AI-dependent**. AI can help with learning, but it should never replace critical thinking or personal responsibility.
- We aim to teach students to **see the line** between when AI is helpful and when it gets in the way of authentic learning and growth.

What Students Learn

We teach about AI in ways that match appropriate student development:

- **Middle School:** Students learn what AI is, how it shows up in daily life (e.g., ads, images, online searches), and why safety and honesty matter.
- **High School:** Students go deeper with AI by using it for projects, problem-solving, and research. They practice checking facts, thinking critically, and exploring how AI affects society, all while keeping a Christian perspective.

Core Focus Areas

Students practice:

- **Privacy & Fairness:** Keeping information safe and watching for bias in AI.
- **Critical Thinking:** Asking questions and checking if AI answers are accurate.
- **Creativity:** Using AI to support ideas, while still using their own imagination.
- **Human Connection:** Remembering that AI is a tool, not a replacement for people.
- **Integrity:** Using AI responsibly, within clear boundaries.

How AI is Used in Courses

Teachers set clear rules for using AI in Grades 7-12. There are three levels:

1. **Limited Use:** Students should not use generative AI without the teacher's permission, except in special cases.

2. **Partial Use:** Permits some use with guidance and/or with citations and supplemental material.
3. **Full Use:** Focuses on allowing and encouraging generative AI use to demonstrate to students both limitations and possibilities.

No matter the level, students must always do their own work and cite AI correctly when used.

Tips for Middle and High School Educational Success

Navigating regular in-person, online and hybrid courses together can be challenging for students. Here are a few tips to help your child find success in their courses at Flex Academy.

No one ever sets out to fail!

We know students want to succeed with their in-person, online and hybrid courses. Students **will** hit roadblocks and technical difficulties. It is important to keep a positive mindset about these things, and for students or families to reach out for help from their Education Assistants, Learning Coaches, Teachers, Tech support or School Administrators. We are here to help!

1. Role of Teachers

We are here to provide great courses and a positive learning experience with a teacher ready to support your student and give feedback to their work. Flex teachers care about each student. If your student is struggling, please get in touch with the teacher involved.

2. Role of Students

Students are responsible for showing up consistently throughout the school year. That means being active in their course and being “present” with their teacher through assignment responses, Zoom, email and Learning Labs.

3. Role of Parents

Parents are an essential part of the learning process. We value when families are involved throughout the school year. Your student needs your encouragement and interest. Plan to sit down together at the computer **every week** to see where your child is at in their courses. Just asking, “Are you done?” is not enough. It’s easy for a student to say “Yes, Mom” when they are not done at all. It happens all the time.

You are your student’s advocate, so don't be afraid to ask questions of your student or their teacher.

4. Quality Communication

- Most teachers prefer Email or Zoom for all communication.
- Use good manners. Please start all communication with a polite greeting.
- Teachers are committed to answering within 48 hours. Please respect the fact that they may be unable to answer more immediately than that at times.

- Parents are encouraged to respond to grading comments, and report card comments, and communicate with the teacher if the student is experiencing problems. The teacher only knows what you tell them.
- If you find you or your child is becoming overwhelmed by workload or struggling due to a learning need, remember every course can be adapted to suit your child's learning needs – a conversation is all it takes to develop a plan for your student.
- Students are encouraged to speak with their teacher about assignments. In hybrid and online courses, this becomes important as sometimes a student may become stuck and not able to move forward in their course due to an ungraded assignment that the teacher may not even know is sitting there. A polite request is always welcome and shows initiative.

Flex Academy cares about your family's online experience. If you are thrilled with your experience, We would love to hear from you. Likewise, if you feel you are not being well served, please get in touch with [Bri Dyck](#), Director of Flex Academy.

Violent Video Games and Gaming Addictions

Video games have become a dominant form of entertainment in today's digital age. While games can provide cognitive benefits such as problem-solving skills, hand-eye coordination, and social interaction, they also raise significant concerns, particularly when they involve violent content or lead to addictive behaviours. Understanding the potential impact of violent video games and gaming addiction on children and teens is essential to developing healthier gaming habits and mitigating negative consequences.

The Appeal of Violent Video Games

Many video games, especially those popular among youth, contain violent themes. From first-person shooters to action-packed adventure games, children are often immersed in virtual worlds where conflict, destruction, and combat are the primary modes of interaction. These games are often highly stimulating, offering fast-paced action, exciting graphics, and a sense of accomplishment after completing challenges. The appeal of violent video games lies in their ability to engage players by providing immediate rewards, progression systems, and, in multiplayer formats, social validation from peers.

The Bible teaches us that we are called to pursue peace and love others as Christ loved us. In Matthew 5:9, Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." Violent video games, which often glorify aggression and conflict resolution through force, stand in contrast to this biblical calling to be peacemakers in our actions and thoughts. Regular exposure to virtual violence can desensitize children to real-world suffering, making it more difficult for them to cultivate empathy and kindness.

The Psychological Impact of Violent Video Games

From a biblical standpoint, what children watch, listen to, and play matters because it influences their hearts and minds. Proverbs 4:23 instructs us to "guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." When children immerse themselves in violent games, they are allowing potentially harmful content to shape their attitudes and perceptions.

Critics argue that exposing children to violent video gaming content can desensitize them to real-world violence, potentially lowering their empathy for others and increasing aggressive behaviours. Some studies suggest that prolonged exposure to violent imagery and aggressive narratives can normalize violence, making it seem like a more acceptable response to conflict.

Social and Developmental Implications

The social consequences of violent games and gaming addiction are far-reaching. Children who excessively play violent games may struggle to develop empathy and cooperation skills, which are crucial for real-world relationships. Furthermore, video game addiction can hinder a child's emotional development by limiting their ability to experience boredom and find creative ways to engage their time outside the virtual world.

Violent video games often emphasize aggression, competition, and self-promotion, whereas the Bible calls us to humility, gentleness, and selflessness. If their primary source of engagement comes from violent games that prioritize aggression, competition, and individual success over collaboration, children may be at risk of developing skewed perceptions of how relationships should function. Helping children balance gaming with activities that promote these virtues—such as service, prayer, and face-to-face relationships—will foster their spiritual and emotional growth.

Behavioural Changes: Aggression and Impulsivity

Children who regularly play violent video games may show signs of increased impulsivity, irritability, and reduced self-control. These behavioural changes can manifest in school environments or at home, leading to conflicts with peers, teachers, and family members. Kids who are highly engaged in violent gaming are sometimes more likely to interpret ambiguous social situations as hostile, which can fuel aggression in their real-life interactions.

Yet, it's essential to understand that not every child reacts the same way. Factors such as personality, emotional regulation, and family dynamics can all influence how a child internalizes and reacts to violent game content. A child with strong emotional support and healthy coping mechanisms may be less likely to experience negative behavioural changes than one who feels isolated or stressed.

Gaming Addiction: A Growing Concern

Gaming addiction is characterized by excessive time spent playing games to the point where it interferes with a child's academic performance, social interactions, and even physical health. The World Health Organization (WHO) has officially recognized "Gaming Disorder" as a mental health condition, defined by an inability to control gaming habits, a prioritization of gaming over other interests and daily activities, and continuation of gaming despite negative consequences.

Beyond violence, gaming addiction is an issue of increasing concern for parents and educators. Addiction, in any form, leads to a loss of self-control and enslavement to the desires of the flesh. The Bible is clear about the dangers of anything that controls us. In 1 Corinthians 6:12, Paul writes, "I have the right to do anything, but I will not be mastered by anything." Gaming addiction, which can consume a child's time, energy, and attention, risks becoming a master over them, drawing them away from their responsibilities, relationships, and their walk with God.

The Effects of Gaming Addiction on Kids

Children who become addicted to video games often suffer from a range of negative consequences, including:

- **Poor Academic Performance:** Time spent gaming can detract from studying, completing homework, and engaging in extracurricular activities. As gaming becomes a priority, children's academic performance may suffer.
- **Social Isolation:** Addicted gamers may withdraw from social interactions, spending most of their time in virtual worlds rather than engaging in face-to-face relationships. Over time, this can lead to loneliness, social anxiety, and a loss of real-world social skills.
- **Physical Health Issues:** Gaming addiction can contribute to a sedentary lifestyle, which may lead to obesity, poor posture, eye strain, and sleep disturbances. Children who game excessively often sacrifice physical activities, which are vital for healthy growth and development.
- **Emotional Disturbance:** Some kids may develop anxiety, depression, or irritability as a result of excessive gaming, particularly if their addiction leads to conflicts with parents or poor performance at school. The highs of gaming (success, rewards, and achievements) can create a contrast with real-world challenges, leaving children frustrated when their actual lives don't mirror the instant gratification they get from games.

Addressing the Issue: What Can Be Done?

Parents, educators, and policymakers play a critical role in mitigating the potential harm of violent video games and gaming addiction. Here are several strategies to consider:

- **Monitor and Limit Screen Time:** Ensure all screens are used in common areas of your home. Children and youth do not need to have screens, devices, or phones in their bedrooms. Parents can set daily or weekly gaming limits to ensure that children have a balanced lifestyle that includes physical activity, social interaction, and academic engagement.
- **Encourage Age-Appropriate Games:** Many games come with age ratings and content descriptors. By selecting age-appropriate games, parents can help reduce their children's exposure to violent content and ensure they are playing games that promote creativity, teamwork, and problem-solving.
- **Promote Appropriate Gaming Habits:** Teaching children the importance of moderation and setting clear boundaries around gaming can prevent addiction. Encouraging them to take breaks, engage in other activities, and maintain a routine is crucial for balanced habits.
- **Find Healthy Alternatives:** If children are asked to limit time spent gaming, be sure there are healthy alternative activities for them to enjoy. Ask your child what they enjoy for both indoor activities (e.g., board games, puzzles, Lego, art projects) and outdoor adventures (e.g., sports, hiking, geocaching).
- **Have Open Conversations About Violence and Reality:** Parents should have open discussions with their children about the difference between the virtual world and reality. Helping kids process the violence they see in games and reinforcing non-violent conflict resolution skills can reduce the potential negative effects.
- **Model Healthy Media Consumption:** Children often learn by observing the behaviours of adults around them. By modelling responsible and godly media consumption, parents can show their children the importance of prioritizing what aligns with biblical values. Philippians 4:9 encourages us to "put into practice" what is true, noble, and praiseworthy, setting an example for the next generation.

- **Seek Professional Help if Needed:** If a child exhibits signs of gaming addiction or increased aggression due to violent games, professional intervention may be necessary. Therapists and counsellors can help address underlying issues and provide strategies to manage gaming habits.

Additional Resources

Axis: Connecting Parents and Teens to Jesus in a Disconnected World

- [**A Parent's Guide to Discipling Teens**](#)
- [**A Parent's Guide to Video Games**](#)
- [**How to Talk About Video Games with Your Teen**](#)

Articles

- [**Confessions of a Video Game Addict**](#)
- [**Do Video Games Influence Violent Behaviour?**](#)
- [**How Video Games Affect the Brain**](#)
- [**Shoot to Kill: The Real Impact of Violent Video Games**](#)
- [**When Should Kids Play Video Games?**](#)

Videos

- [**Experiment Looks at Effects of Fortnite on 10-Year-Old's Brain**](#) (4:01)
- [**How to Save a Loved One from Game Addiction**](#) (14:33)
- [**This is Your Child's Brain on Video Games**](#) (4:39)
- [**Three Tips on What To Do If Your Child is Addicted to Gaming**](#) (1:00)
- [**Victory Over Video Game Addiction: Emmanuel Higgins' Testimony**](#) (13:54)

Skills for Online Success

ADST: Skills for Online Success 1

<https://player.vimeo.com/video/705418067?title=0&byline=0>

Course Overview

All Flex Academy Students in Grades 6-9 will take this ADST Module as a Hybrid class. Skills for Online Success introduces students to many tools they will need to use to succeed in their Hybrid and online courses. Topics covered include Brightspace, Zoom, email, file management, screenshots, screen recording, online communication guidelines, scanning and digitizing documents, presentation programs, recording video presentations, and more. This module culminates in a final presentation.

Time Commitment

This module satisfies $\frac{1}{3}$ of the ADST requirements for grades 6-9 students. There are 17 lessons which take between 15-45 minutes. Many lessons are short and practical, introducing skills students will practice and further develop in their future studies. Most of the lessons end with review questions or a short assignment. The final project may take several hours to complete.

This module can be taken at any point in grades 5-9, which is why you will see it offered at each grade level, but please note it is the same module offered at each grade, so it only needs to be taken once.

Tools required

- Computer with webcam and microphone
- Digital Camera
- Scanner or smartphone for uploading content.

Major Units and Topics

Email, Brightspace, Zoom, File Management, Screenshots, Screen Capturing, Digitizing Your Work, Cameras & Scanners, Recording Yourself, and Digital Presentations.