

Addiction to Internet 'is an illness'

Level 2 • Intermediate

1 Warmer

addiction – a strong need that someone feels to regularly take an illegal or harmful drug:

There is a growing problem of drug addiction in our cities.

addiction to – a strong need or wish to spend as much time as possible doing a particular activity:

Many people have an addiction to nicotine.

His addiction to the Internet is taking over his life.

Source: Macmillan English Dictionary Online

What things might people become addicted to?

Make a list. Can you divide the list into new or modern addictions and old or traditional addictions?

2 Key words and phrases

Write the keywords and phrases from the article into the sentences.

discussion boards

clinical disorder

irony

significant other

inaccessible

diverse

psychiatrist

excessive

repercussions

withdrawal symptoms

adolescent

self-help group

component

1. When something is _____ it is much more than is reasonable or necessary. (subtitle)
2. _____ are the unpleasant physical and mental effects suffered by someone who stops taking a substance that they are addicted to. (subtitle)
3. A _____ is a medical problem or condition. (para 1)
4. A _____ is a doctor who treats people with mental disorders. (para 1)
5. A _____ is a part, or feature of something. (para 2)
6. When something is _____ it is impossible to reach or use. (para 2)
7. _____ are the bad effects that something has, usually lasting for a long time. (para 2)
8. An _____ is a boy or girl who is not yet a man or a woman. (para 3)
9. Your _____ is the person (or thing) you are having a (romantic) relationship with. (para 4)
10. _____ is a form of humour in which you use words to express the opposite of what the words really mean. (para 6)
11. _____ is another term for online forums. (para 6)
12. When things are very different from each other they are _____ (para 7)
13. A _____ is a group of people who discuss their similar problems and find ways to deal with them. (para 8)

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New evidence shows that excessive use of the Internet causes people to suffer from isolation, tiredness and withdrawal symptoms

David Smith, technology correspondent

March 23, 2008

- 1 Tense? Angry? Can't get online? Internet addiction is now a serious health problem that should be officially recognized as a clinical disorder, says a leading psychiatrist.
- 2 In the respected *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Dr Jerald Block writes that the disorder is caused by excessive gaming, viewing online pornography, emailing and text messaging. He says that the disorder is now so common that it should be included in medical text books. According to Block, Internet addiction has four main components:
 - Excessive use, often associated with a loss of sense of time;
 - Withdrawal symptoms, including feelings of anger, tension and/or depression when the computer is inaccessible;
 - The need for better computers, more software, or more hours of use;
 - Negative repercussions, including arguments, lying, poor achievement, social isolation and tiredness.
- 3 Block says that in South Korea 10 people died from blood clots because they stayed seated for long periods in Internet cafes and another was murdered because of an online game. South Korea now considers Internet addiction one of its most serious public health issues. The government estimates that around 210,000 South Korean children need treatment. 80 per cent of them might need drugs that target the brain and nearly a quarter could need to go to hospital. Since the average high school pupil there spends about 23 hours per week gaming, another 1.2 million are believed to be at risk of addiction and require basic counselling. Many people are also worried about the number of addicts who stop going to school or leave their jobs to spend more time on computers. In China it has been reported that about 10 million adolescent Internet users could be considered addicts.
- 4 Dr Block, a psychiatrist at the Oregon Health and Science University in Portland, writes that it is more difficult to estimate how bad the problem is in America because people tend to surf at home instead of in Internet cafes. But he believes there are similar cases, and says: "Unfortunately it is not easy to treat Internet addiction." He told *The Observer* that he did not believe specific websites were responsible. "The relationship is with the computer," he said. "First, it becomes a significant other to them. Second, they use up emotions that they could experience in the real world on the computer, through any number of mechanisms: emailing, gaming, porn. Third, computer use takes up a huge amount of time in their life. Then if you simply try to remove the computer, they feel they've lost their best friend. That can take the form of depression or rage."
- 5 Harry Husted, a single 51-year-old from New York, spends 16 hours a day on the Internet. He insists that he is not addicted, but admits that he used to be. "I used to work with computers for eight hours, then get home and go online for another seven hours. I stayed up until two or three in the morning, or until I got so sleepy I had to go to bed. I didn't go out to get the groceries and I didn't care about friends, TV, or anything. After a while I realized what was happening and did something about it. Now if I use *MySpace* it's only to advertise my business."
- 6 Internet addiction clinics are opening all around the world, and many people have turned, apparently without irony, to web discussion boards with names such as *Internet Addicts Anonymous*. The Centre for Internet Addiction Recovery in Bradford, Pennsylvania, says Internet addiction has become a growing legal issue in criminal, divorce and employment cases.
- 7 Robert Freedman, editor of the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, said Internet addiction can be diverse. "In Korea, it seems to be mostly gaming sites. In America, it is *Facebook*. Additionally, it's porn, it's games, it's

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gambling, it's chatting with friends. All these things existed before, but now they're a lot easier."

- 8 To beat the addiction, he advised: "A self-help group might be a good place to start, but maybe a real group is better than an online one."

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3 Comprehension check

According to the article, are these sentences *True (T)* or *False (F)*?

- The four basic components of Internet addiction are excessive use, withdrawal symptoms when the computer is not accessible, the constant need for better computers and software and negative repercussions on the user's social life.
- In South Korea, the main cause of Internet addiction is spending time on social networking websites such as *Facebook* and *MySpace*.
- The average South Korean high school student spends 16 hours a day playing online games.
- People have died as a consequence of their Internet addiction.
- South Koreans go online at Internet cafes more often than Americans.
- Internet addiction is easy to treat.

4 Vocabulary: Pronunciation and intonation

Write the words from the article into the following columns according to their intonation patterns.

psychiatry isolation addiction withdrawal repercussion excessive
pornography components significant psychiatrist adolescent specific

oOo	oOoo	ooOo

Can you find any more words in the article that have these intonation patterns?

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5 Discussion: Addictions

Below are four examples of things people might be addicted to:

the Internet	alcohol	smoking	hard drugs (e.g. heroin, cocaine, etc.)

Work in groups or pairs and make notes about how being addicted to one of them affects the addict's life. Think about, money, social life, family, time, health, etc.

- What similarities and differences do you find?
- Is one addiction worse than the others?
- What advice would you give an addict?

6 Webquest

Go to the website www.netaddiction.com. Here you can take tests, read about real-life cases of internet addiction, listen to podcasts and watch videos.