

Problematic Use of Digital Technology Screening and Assessment Tools

There are a variety of screening and assessment tools developed for problematic internet use. Several of these instruments have been proven to be reliable and valid for use with children and youth [1]. Following are some of these screening and assessment tools.

Internet Addiction and Concurrent Disorders Screening Tools

The CAGE Questionnaire:

This questionnaire is a brief and popular screening instrument used in clinical practice initially for patients with alcohol problematic use. CAGE is an acronym representing four areas of user thoughts and behaviors: Cut Down, Annoyed, Guilt, and Eye Opener. It is helpful as an initial screening to determine if further assessment may be needed. Responses on the CAGE are scored 0 for “no” and 1 for “yes. For a total score of 2 or greater, further assessment is required. The CAGE questions can be used in the clinical setting using informal phrasing and a client’s clinical history.

CAGE has been translated into several languages and there are also modified versions of this questionnaire to measure a person’s relationship to other potentially addictive substances or practices such as food, internet, and sex addiction. By adapting the questions, service providers can use this tool to identify the nature and severity of the impact of a young person's gaming [2]

- Cut Down – Have you ever felt you should cut down on your playing?
- Annoyed – Have people annoyed you by criticizing your playing?
- Guilt – Have you ever felt bad or guilty about your playing time?
- Eye Opener – Have you ever started playing first thing in the morning? Do you think about playing when you’re not playing?

Gain Short Screener (GAIN-SS):

The GAIN-SS (Global Appraisal of Individual Needs – Short Screener) is a brief screening tool that identifies one or more behavioral health disorders (e.g., internalizing or externalizing psychiatric disorders, substance use disorders, or crime or violence problems). It is appropriate for youth populations (ages 12 and up). The GAIN-SS has included diagnostic categories to the original tool such as problematic eating, traumatic stress, disordered thinking, gambling, video game, and internet use. It can be completed in 5-10 minutes and can be self- or staff-administered on paper in diverse settings. If your team is considering using the GAIN-SS for client services, please contact Alberta Health Services Concurrent Capable Practice Supports Team for licensing information, mandatory online training requirements, and face-to-face training opportunities.

https://www.assessments.com/assessments_documentation/gain_ss/GAIN-SS%20Manual.pdf

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Technology Addiction (internet addiction, cyberaddiction):

This screening tool is designed to provide a quick screening of whether an individual might have problems with technology and internet addiction [3].

<http://www.ementalhealth.ca/index.php?m=survey&ID=47>

Internet Addiction Assessment Tools

The Compulsive Internet Use Scale (CIUS)

This is a valid instrument to assess the severity of compulsive internet use. It consists in 14 items that represent the core elements of compulsive or addictive behavior with a 5-point rating scale: 0, never; 1, seldom; 2, sometimes; 3, often; and 4, very often. It can be administrated by any service provider or even self-administered [4].

<https://www.netaddictionrecovery.com/compulsive-internet-use-scale-cius/>

Problematic Internet Use Questionnaire (PIUQ-SF-6)

The short version of the Problematic Internet Use Questionnaire (PIUQ-SF-6) is a self-administrated questionnaire that is created to evaluate internet users at risk of developing problematic internet use. It is based on the full Psychometric Instrument Problematic Internet Use Questionnaire (PIUQ), which consists in 18 items that measure 3 factors: obsession with internet activities; neglect basic needs or everyday activities; and control disorder about the subject's inability to stop using the internet. Specifically, the obsession subscale refers to mental preoccupation with the internet and feelings of anxiety when it is inaccessible; the neglect subscale is about carelessness towards everyday activities and personal needs; the control disorder subscale is concerned with difficulties in managing time spent online, despite efforts to manage it. Service providers can use the short (6-item) version, which is advantageous due to its brevity and the increasing chance of completion rates; the shortened PIUQ uses a 5-point rating scale: 1, never; 2, rarely; 3, sometimes; 4, often; and 5, always [5].

<http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0159409>

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The Generalized Problematic Internet Scale 2 (GPIUS 2):

This self-administered scale, first developed by Caplan in 2002, assesses the amount of problematic internet experienced by a person. It is a 15-item Likert-type scale in which participants indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement. Responses range from 1 (strongly disagree- Definitely disagree) to 8 (strongly agree- definitely agree), with stronger agreement indicating the strength of the thoughts and behaviors associated with problematic internet use. Completing the GPIUS should take participants approximately 20 minutes. It should not be used for diagnostic purposes [6].

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338046960_GENERALIZED_PROBLEMATIC_INTERNET_USE_SCALE_2_GPIUS_2_Scale_Items_Instructions

The Internet Addiction Test (IAT)

This psychological assessment is the first validated measure of internet and technology addiction. It is a self-reported instrument for adolescents and adults that measures the presence of addiction to the internet, electronic entertainment, social media, and general use of electronic devices. Responses can range from rarely or never, every once in a while, sometimes, often, and always; results describe the severity of addiction on a continuum from mild to severe. This test should be administered by a qualified clinician.

The Internet Addiction collection of tests brings together the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) and the Internet Addiction Test for Families (IAT-F) described below. Both instruments can be used together to obtain a comprehensive profile of a client's internet addiction.

Addiction Test For Families (IAT-F)

This test evaluates the problematic behavior associated with compulsive use of technology, including online porn, online gambling, and compulsive use of online games and social media in a population of elementary school through high school. Administration time is approximately 5-15 minutes, if administered verbally to parents or caretakers. The IAT-F contains the Parent-Child Internet Addiction Test (PCIAT), a 20-item-questionnaire for adolescents, and the Problematic and Risky Media Use in Children Checklist, an 8-item-checklist for use with children. Both forms may be completed by a person who knows the child or youth well.

Note: To use this test, it is necessary to purchase manuals that provide evidence about internet addiction, research involving use of these assessments, information about interpreting findings, and recommendations for healthy Internet behavior and how to address issues of internet addiction. Service providers must consult with their manager if they want to get access to the test. Manuals can be purchased for each site through the Alberta Health Practitioners agency.

<https://www.stoeltingco.com/internet-addiction-test-kit-iat-kit.html>

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Internet Disorder Scale (IDS-15)

The IDS-15 was developed based on the Internet Gaming Disorders definition in the 5th edition of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5). This scale is a valid and reliable instrument to assess internet addiction. It provides yes or no questions that enable the classification of internet users along a continuum with varying degrees of internet addiction risk across four factors: Escapism and dysfunctional emotional coping (Factor 1), Withdrawal symptoms (Factor 2), Impairments and dysfunctional self-regulation (Factor 3), and Dysfunctional internet-related self-control (Factor 4). Authors state that more research is needed to further validate the IDS-15 in other cultural contexts [7].

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0306460315300125?casa_token=5qE7MXUF1JoAAAAA:gH5Xg-Bf_aaXInuQii-vwcJu5bWEvsd11bJZ9XAQDQgQU-hgkTgVmVFyVTmo5oJFJGHqIkFcRwm

Digital Distraction Test

This test was created by Dr. Greenfield, founder of The Center for Internet and Technology Addiction. It provides 12 yes or no questions that evaluate a possible problematic use of digital technology. This survey is proposed for educational and informational purposes only. If the score is on the higher side, service providers may need to examine whether a client's use or over-use is creating any work-life balance problems.

<https://virtual-addiction.com/digital-distraction-test/>

Child Technology Test: Are your Children too Connected?

This is a simple questionnaire that helps service providers, parents, or caregivers to determine if a child is struggling with the use of digital technology. It contains 12 yes or no questions that evaluate the impact on social, familial, and educational aspects of the child's life. It should be noted that no medical or psychiatric diagnosis can be made solely by a written test or screening instrument alone.

<https://virtual-addiction.com/child-technology-test/>

Virtual Addiction Test

This short, 11 question test is designed to measure the level of dependence to and abuse of internet/smartphones. If service providers are concerned about internet or smartphone use, they

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may wish to consult with a mental health/addiction professional with expertise in internet and Technology Addiction (Process/Behavioral Addictions).

<https://virtual-addiction.com/virtual-addiction-test/>

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