

# A GUIDE TO BRAND SAFETY IN INTRINSIC IN-GAME ADVERTISING

For a long time, brand safety has remained a barrier to advertising adopting gaming as an ad format, and this concern still remains for many advertisers. The IAB's 2024 Gaming Advertising State of the Nation report listed brand safety as [the number one barrier](#) to increasing investment in games.



## MUCH OF THIS STEMS FROM THE IDEA THAT:

- Gaming ads are intrusive and negatively impact the gaming experience
- Regulations are not in place to protect advertisers and audiences
- Targeting is still a nascent concept, meaning ads might be shown to vulnerable audiences
- Video games are violent and not a suitable place for brands to run ads
- The gamer community hates ads, so these types of ads could negatively impact brands

Intrinsic in-game advertising (IIGA) has emerged as a viable solution that addresses many of these issues. This is the process of showing ads within non-disruptive ad placements, carefully positioned within the gaming world, built into locations where you would expect to find ads in the real world, like around sports stadiums, alongside race tracks, and on the sides of buildings.



In this example, you can see a number of intrinsic in-game ad placements built into the PC game Engine Evolution.

This guide has been compiled to address the above brand safety concerns. It outlines exactly what is possible today from a brand safety perspective when it comes to intrinsic in-game advertising, along with suggestions and areas of focus for brands new to the space.

## WHAT'S COVERED?

<a href="#">Understanding Brand Safety and Suitability .....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Legal and Regulatory Compliance .....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Preventing Disinformation for IIGA .....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Preventing Ad Fraud for IIGA .....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Ethical Considerations and Practices for IIGA .....</a>	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">Understanding the Difference Between Content and Advertising .....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>

# UNDERSTANDING BRAND SAFETY AND SUITABILITY FOR IIGA



## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY BRAND SAFETY?

Like other digital channels, when it comes to brand safety in IIGA, it simply means protecting your brand's reputation and image from harm caused by inappropriate, harmful, or controversial content.

To delve deeper into the legal side of how brand safety works in intrinsic in-game advertising, you can read Anzu's brand safety, you can read Anzu's brand safety policy [here](#).

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY BRAND SUITABILITY?

Brand suitability refers to the alignment between your ad's content and the game's overall tone, theme, and values. Your brand messaging should match the game's narrative, aesthetics, and user experience without disrupting or offending players.

To achieve this, it's important to take into account the genre, storyline, target audience, and cultural sensitivities included in the games your ads will appear in. This ensures that the ads enhance rather than detract from players' immersion and enjoyment.



Here is a great example of an intrinsic in-game ad from Levi's within Ubisoft's Trackmania, which strikes the perfect balance between complementing the gameplay and capturing attention.

## LEGAL AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE FOR IIGA



Let's take a look at how intrinsic in-game advertising typically maintains compliance.

### RESPECTING PLAYERS

IIGA doesn't disrupt gameplay or hurt the player experience. Ads are smoothly integrated into the game, avoiding intrusive placements that could take away from the experience.

Anzu's [in-game advertising report](#) found that 75% of gamers are positive or neutral toward in-game advertising and that younger gamers are more optimistic. 32% of gamers aged 18-34 and 50% of those aged 25-44 stated that in-game ads enhance the gaming experience if done right.

### DATA PRIVACY

Ad content is vetted to ensure it's appropriate for the game's audience, [especially kids and teens](#). IIGA follows industry standards to ensure ads are suitable and avoid promoting products or services that aren't right for the game's demographic. You should also ensure you're working with an in-game supplier that adheres to privacy laws and regulations. Some of the most well-known ones include:

 <p>COPPA in the US</p>	 <p>CCPA/ CPRA and CPA in the US</p>	 <p>GDPR and ePrivacy in Europe</p>	 <p>The UK Data Protection Act (incorporating GDPR) <i>in the UK, and where applicable, the Children's Code</i></p>
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## PRIVACY SIGNALS

IIGA follows data privacy regulations when collecting and using player data for ads. Advertisers must rely upon a proper privacy signal (e.g., consent and legitimate interests (under GDPR and ePrivacy), or opt-out/ DNS signals in the US) for data collection and to protect player privacy during the entire ad process. You should also work with in-game providers that are compliant with privacy signals, including [TCF 2.2](#) for those working in Europe.

## REGULATORY COMPLIANCE












Besides industry self-regulation, advertisers working with in-game advertising are required to adhere to and follow all relevant laws and regulations on privacy, consumer protection, and privacy. This includes instructions and guidelines from the relevant supervisory authorities, such as the ICO (UK), CNIL (FR), and the FTC (US).

## INDUSTRY STANDARDS

Adherence to voluntary industry standards, such as those outlined by the [Interactive Advertising Bureau \(IAB\) and MRC](#), ensures that IIGA meets best practices and ethical guidelines.

### TOOLS TO HELP WITH COMPLIANCE

IIGA is subject to many of the same legal and regulatory rules as other digital advertising formats. In-game supply partners should ensure the following measures and tools are in place:

 App store category include/exclude lists	 ESRB / PEGI content rating include/exclude lists	 In-game chat and UGC filters to exclude games with chat & UGC	 Publisher/App/ Placement include/exclude lists
 App Store user rating filter	 Extensive publisher, game & placement compliance checks	 100% viewability with a CPMV pricing model	 Keywords include/exclude lists on apps & placements
 The ability to block competing brands by names and IAB content category include/exclude lists	 COPPA filter that makes it easy to filter out users identified as kids and apps that are directed/marketed to kids	 IAB Spider & Bot list updated on a regular basis with the stricter double-pass filtering methodology	

# PREVENTING DISINFORMATION FOR IIGA



## VERIFYING THE SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Everyone involved needs to ensure that the information in ads comes from credible and trustworthy sources. All IIGA content should be verified for accuracy. Advertisers and developers should also have access to fact-checking systems to spot and fix false information.

## REPORTING AND HELPING END-USERS IDENTIFY DISINFORMATION

The publishers behind the games you're working with should encourage players to think critically and check information. There should be systems to help players spot and avoid disinformation. Any complaints about false info should be reported right away to the relevant parties.

# PREVENTING AD FRAUD FOR IIGA



## WHAT DOES AD FRAUD LOOK LIKE IN-GAME?

Like other digital ads, ad fraud in IIGA involves tricks that fake or manipulate ad metrics, making advertisers pay for fake or ineffective ad impressions.

## KEY POINTS ON AD FRAUD IN IN-GAME ADVERTISING:

### Low Fraud Rates

IIGA has much lower fraud rates than other digital ads, thanks to the complex 3D gaming environments. For example, cybersecurity company [HUMAN](#) found that Anzu's invalid traffic (IVT) averaged 0.16% on mobile and 0.47% on PC, and [Comscore](#) found Anzu's overall IVT score for video is 0.39% and for display is 0.44% vs. a 6% mobile average for video and display.

### Advanced Fraud Detection

There are now many fraud detection tools for IIGA, including third-party integrations that check impressions and spot invalid traffic.

### Partnerships With Trusted Vendors

Collaborations with trusted AdTech vendors enhance IIGA's credibility and reliability, maintaining the integrity of ad metrics.

### Compliance With Industry Standards

The Media Rating Council (MRC) and Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) have outlined [industry measurement standards for IIGA](#), helping reduce ad fraud with clear ad viewability and verification guidelines. In addition to these, there are industry standards on both sides to help bolster brand safety in IIGA. Some of these include:

- 100% App-Ads.txt covered publishers
- TCF 2.2 Verified
- Pre-bid IVT Filtering using IAB Spider & Bot Lists
- Post bid IVT & Viewability Measurement by MRC accredited vendors
- Sellers.json & Supply Chain objects support
- Only targeting games published in major app stores that pass compliance checks and include ESRB / PEGI ratings
- TAG Brand Safety & Fraud Certified
- InfoSec certifications such as ISO 27001 and SOC 2

### Technological Innovations

New technology, like Anzu's [patented 3D ad tracking engine](#), now offers real-time viewability measurement to ensure ads are genuinely viewed by players in what is a difficult to track 3D environment.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND PRACTICES FOR IIGA



### HOW ARE USERS AND PERSONAL DATA PROTECTED?

Ad platforms must comply with local privacy regulations like GDPR and CCPA, providing transparent information on data collection and usage. Opt-in consent mechanisms also help players control how their data is used, building trust and accountability within the gaming community.

## AVOID STEREOTYPES AND OFFENSIVE CONTENT







Like across other platforms, in-game ads should avoid racial, gender, cultural, and social stereotypes. Developers working with in-game providers will have access to allow and block lists for different advertising campaigns. Ensuring your ads do not cause offense or include stereotypes will help keep the game experience positive and inclusive and avoid having your ads blocked.

## BE SENSITIVE TO CURRENT EVENTS

Keeping up with current events is key to making relevant and culturally sensitive content. Advertisers running IIGA need to be aware of global and local events that could affect how ads are received, especially if they are running global campaigns. Ads that are timely and fit the context connect better with players and help avoid causing offense.

## ENSURE YOU'RE WORKING WITH THE RIGHT GAMES

To ensure your ads are shown in brand-safe environments, it's important to ensure you work with a partner that can offer quality publishers and games that have been vetted and deemed suitable for IIGA. Your gaming supply partners should be curating games based on factors like:

 <p>Only approving games from notable publishers listed in specific app stores</p>	 <p>100% direct SDK traffic, no syndicated traffic</p>	 <p>No user-generated content (UGC) or in-game chat</p>
 <p>No controversial game categories or content ratings</p>	 <p>Only games with good user ratings and reviews should be included</p>	 <p>Placements should be manually checked to ensure their suitability</p>



Here's an example of an ad from [Tommy Hilfiger](#) in Dakar Desert Rally. By clearly understanding what games their audience was playing and tailoring the ads to the environment, they were able to launch a highly successful campaign that cut through the noise and resonated with players.

## IN-PLATFORM BRAND SAFETY FILTERS

Contextual include/exclude lists can be used when working with partners to further ensure your ads only appear in games that are suitable for your brand. For example, you might want to avoid overly violent games, or you might feel that sports games are not a suitable environment for your brand. It's important to check with the provider you're working with what filters they offer. Gaming supply partners should offer filters like:

- COPPA traffic/app marked as directed to kids filter
- Game genre and app store category filters
- ESRB/PEGI content rating filters
- Keyword filters at the app and placement level
- Publisher, app, and placement filters
- Has TCF2.2 consent string traffic filter
- App Store user rating filter
- Competitor filtering based on domains & IAB content categories
- 100% covered with publishers using App-Ads.txt and using automatic scans to ensure publisher records are up-to-date
- Sellers.json & Supply Chain objects support in both OpenRTB and VAST tags

## UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CONTENT AND ADVERTISING



Intrinsic in-game ads fit naturally into the game without disrupting the user experience but are still easy for players to spot as ads. They're placed in high-visibility areas to ensure they're seen and recognized, keeping things transparent and making the ads effective.

## IIGA FRAUD MEASUREMENT TOOLS

Several third-party verification providers, including HUMAN, IAS, and Picalate, can be used for fraud monitoring and prevention in IIGA campaigns.

By using advanced detection technologies, following industry standards, and keeping things transparent with detailed reports and analytics, you can make sure your IIGA campaigns deliver real value and stay protected against fraud.





Here's an example of an intrinsic in-game ad campaign for artist Babyface Ray's new album in Axis Football. The ads perfectly complement the stadium while clearly standing out as ads to players.

## MAINTAINING BRAND SAFETY AND PLAYER ENGAGEMENT

IIGA is a reliable and impactful method for brands to connect with audiences within gaming environments. Gaming is no longer a nascent channel; it offers brand-safe ad formats that don't annoy players, supported by advanced brand safety controls that protect both advertisers and game developers. This approach addresses common concerns like intrusiveness and regulatory compliance, ensuring ads are seamlessly integrated into the gameplay experience.

Additionally, IIGA boasts low fraud rates compared to industry standards. The inherent complexities of the gaming environment make it difficult for fraudsters to penetrate while existing protections further enhance security. With well-defined industry and AdTech standards, identifying premium partners has never been easier.

This guide highlights key measures for brand safety and suitability, focusing on ethical practices, legal compliance, and respect for player experiences. By adhering to these best practices, brands can effectively navigate the IIGA landscape, fostering player engagement while upholding high standards of brand safety.

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ANY AREAS  
OUTLINED IN THIS GUIDE, PLEASE  
REACH OUT TO ANZU'S TEAM**

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