

Video Games

Nearly two million Australian homes have a video game system. About one quarter of all toy sales are videogames. Video games are exciting and so popular now that they have even taken a chunk out of the time that children used to spend in front of TV. Like TV, videogames have their supporters and those who think they are a waste of time.

Video games are a fun way to introduce children to computers and other technology. All the basic ingredients are there — monitor, keyboard or control pad, and software. Just like their parents, some children when faced with a computer are afraid of pressing the wrong button or breaking it. Video games will bring children a lot closer to the electronic world of the future than TV ever will.

Playing video games can be very friendly activity. Most consoles have at least one extra control pad so that two children can plug in and play. Some consoles allow four players at once. Children also talk about and share new games, swap magazines, discuss how to skip levels and other tricks. Children will play by themselves if bored, but most find it more fun to play the games with a friend.

Videogames improve coordination, reflexes, and reaction time. The games that are designed specifically to improve these skills for physically or intellectually disabled children usually operate on computers.

Because it is such a new and quickly changing technology, very few scientific studies have been done on the effect of videogames. Too few studies have been completed to be certain about harmful effects. However, some parents and child experts have talked about worries similar to those raised about TV and computers.

How easily is the violence of shoot-em-up games copied? What effect does settling problems with violence on videogames have on children in real life? Does seeing and using this behaviour over and over on video games encourage children to choose violence rather than peaceful ways of solving problems?

What has been proven is that the speedy action and challenge of video games is very exciting or stimulating for some children. Children may become cranky for half an hour or so after playing, because of over-excitement.

A few children (and quite a few adults!) do turn into real video-game addicts. They would play for six to eight hours a day if you didn't stop them.

As with TV, videos and computers, video games can take up the time a child should put aside for reading, learning, playing with friends and outdoor activities.

Videogames may cause health problems. Playing for hours at a time can lead to headaches, eyestrain and aching joints.

In conclusion, it is up to the parent to keep an eye on how much a child plays video games and what types of games the child plays. Parents need to teach children to be responsible in the way they play video games and help decide which games are suitable for the child's age group and interests.



Remember

- 1 Approximately how many Australian homes have a video-game system?

- 2 How many scientific studies have been done on the effect of video games?

- 3 Why might children be cranky for half an hour or so after playing video games?

Understand

- 4 What are two good or positive sides of playing video games mentioned in the article?

- 5 What are two bad or negative sides of playing video games mentioned in the article?

- 6 What is the main idea of the last paragraph?

Apply

- 7 Would this information be useful if you were developing a new classification system for video games? Explain.

- 8 What is another example of violence being used in entertainment for children?

Analyse

- 9 What is the difference between adventure games and violent games?


Evaluate

- 10 If the violent games were banned, would video games still be as popular? Explain.

Create

- 11 Devise your own way to stop people becoming addicted to video games. List five alternative activities and the benefit of each activity.

Hands on

-  Design promotional material for a video game. It can be written, graphic or performed. Note special features within the game — sound, graphics, skills, speed.
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