

The Benefits of Digital Gaming

The majority of children around the world play games either on their smartphones, computers, or consoles. The market for digital gaming is growing every year, and more people around the world seem to be taking up the hobby—so why are video games seen as such a negative influence on children and teenagers? According to information gathered in Christina Lyons' report in CQ Researcher, families argue that video games in early years made their children violent, when it has been proven there is no heavy data to show any correlation between acts of violence and video games (Lyons). While many parents see video games as something their children should avoid, games can help shape mental and physical skills, as well as important values that can be used in other areas of life.

One of the biggest issues parents have with digital gaming is the notion that games turn innocent children into vicious adults. Children and teenagers may think about doing things that were shown on television or in a game, but the biggest influence in a child's life is the actions of their parents or family. Video games do not solely make violent adults, and acts of violence committed by these individuals are not a result of "inappropriate" media alone. As the American Academy of Pediatrics states, destructive children are sculpted if their "home life, self-esteem, support network, [and] health and temperament" are poorly balanced (qtd. in Ault). Alicia Ault, a researcher who reported about the topic on CQ Researcher, stated the cause of aggression cannot be narrowed down to a single factor when dealing with humans, and digital gaming during childhood would not be a key contributor to violence. Video games are a relatively new addition to our world, and multiple professors have pointed out that generations that did not grow up alongside them are intimidated by the new technology (Ault).

Among worries regarding violence, parents also fear that video games will make their children "unsocial", which is simply not true. Just as families caution against their children reading too many books because they won't "get out enough," parents want their children to avoid video games so that they won't get detached from friends or social groups. As an avid

gamer myself, I can confirm the idea that video games make teenagers less social is false, because the wide majority of games are connected to the internet and almost all of them allow players to communicate across the globe. This link between children of all ethnic groups is making them more social than ever, and it may be the best way currently to let children see other views from around the world. Observers on the subject of gaming point out that most multiplayer games rely heavily on communication and cooperation, and children who play these games become strong in social areas (Ault). A program director from the National Science Foundation states, “games can enhance... things like leadership, teamwork, and agency” (qtd. in Ault). Games reinforce alternative identities, friendships, and relationships by letting players communicate with other players without the physical aspect, but this does not mean they do not build skills like they would in person. In fact, children can feel more confident talking with other individuals online than in person, and there is a possibility for stronger and longer-lasting friendships. I myself met my best friend through console gaming and can testify that the relationship I made online was and is closer than any other friendship I have experienced. Children who are able to play games learn valuable skills such as teamwork and cooperation, and communication is key in any situation. These skills can be used in their daily lives and are the most sought for characteristics in any worker when looking for a job. Video games improve these skills and help shape cooperative and successful adults.

Digital games can be utilized to boost other mental skills, and they also play an important part in physical reflexes. Fast-paced games have been proven to improve reaction time and muscle memory, while games that focus more on strategy promote problem-solving and alternative thinking. Sources from Ault’s report confirm multiple schools are adopting games into their curriculums because of their academic benefits and engaging nature, and many studies have already shown their promise. Teachers themselves are starting to develop games to further along their students’ learning, and more educational games are being made every day (Ault). Technology is steadily being integrated into every school system, and for good reason.

According to professionals in the American Psychological Association, video games promote “spatial navigation, reasoning, memory and perception” (qtd. in Ault). The classroom is not the only place video games can make a positive impact on children. Many games today immerse players in complex worlds where problems are abundant, and players are often encouraged to deal with these in creative ways. Sandbox games, games that have no rules or limitations, are very popular because players are free to make unique creations or find different ways to solve their problems. Strategy games are equally important to problem-solving skills, and games with this type of platform quickly hone critical-thinking abilities. Greg Toppo, the author of *The Game Believes In You: How Digital Play Can Make Our Kids Smarter*, writes that video games are excellent with “helping them design their own solutions, collaborate with friends and create natural ‘affinity groups’ that help bring learning alive outside the classroom” (qtd. in Ault). Building skills is not the only way children learn from games. Most games offer some amount of information, such as war games possessing history lessons or simulation games showing how real machinery or systems work. All games can teach their players one thing or another, and most of them contain information that can be worked into daily conversation. Games do not make children stupid, not in any sense of the word.

With all the claims families make against video games, many of them are unfounded. Multiple professionals studying the subject have said that there is no correlation between violence and video games. Additionally, they have pointed out the many benefits of gaming from reaction time to gaining important skills. The wide majority of concerns related to gaming can easily be dismissed, and the benefits of gaming outweigh the negative outliers. Digital gaming is here to stay, and the future for their development is bright.

Works Cited

Ault, Alicia. "Video Games and Learning." *CQ Researcher*, 12 Feb. 2016, pp. 145-68, library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/cqresrre2016021200.

Lyons, Christina L. "Media Violence." *CQ Researcher*, 14 Feb. 2014, pp. 145-68,
library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/cqresrre2014021400.