

## Technology/Media Choices

Month: Mar.

Week #: 26

Day: d. Thur. Time: 30 min.

# Video Games: Good or Bad?

Life Tree Learning Systems ©

### Objectives/Aims

The students will: learn both the negative and positive effects of video games; learn to make appropriate choices about the use of these games.

### Materials

none

### Illustration

Wow, Number 7 doesn't look so good... I wonder how long he's been playing the game and what kind of game it is. I hope he'll be okay.

### Background

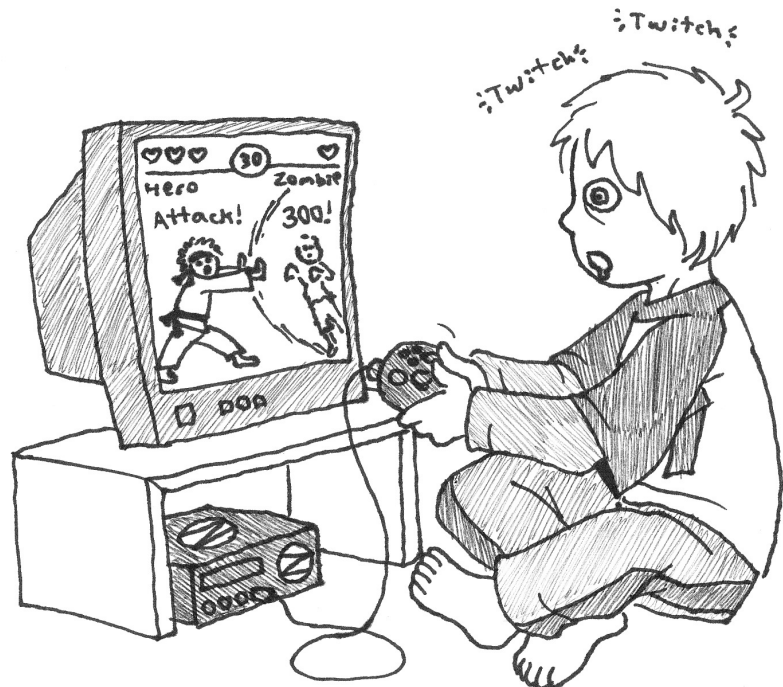
The effect of video games on children and adolescents is currently stirring strong debate. While there has been some research done on the subject, it is by no means extensive. Although there is some consensus forming relative to the results of these limited studies, it is not yet either totally conclusive or persuasive.

The source for the following information can be found at:  
National Institute on Media and Family

(11/2006) Effects of Video Playing on Children. Accessed at: [http://www.mediafamily.org/facts/facts\\_effect.shtml](http://www.mediafamily.org/facts/facts_effect.shtml) (last visited: 2/07).

Facts:

- The U.S. video game market reached nearly \$10.5 billion in sales in 2005, with the projected worldwide market expected to grow to \$46.5 billion by 2010 (Business Week Online, 2006).
- A recent report showed that 45% of heavy video game players and nearly a third of avid gamers are in the 6 to 17 year-old age group (NPD Group Inc., 2006).
- The Federal Trade Commission reported that 69% of unaccompanied 13-16 year-olds were able to purchase "M" rated video games from retailers (Federal Trade Commission, 2004).
- Of computer and video game purchase in 2005, as reported by the NPD Group, 49% were "E" rated games, 4% were "E10+" 32% were "T" rated games, and 15% were "M" rated games (Entertainment Software Association, 2006).
- A study of over 2,000 8 to 18 year-olds (3rd through 12th graders) found that 83% of them have at least one video game player in their home, 31% have 3 or more video game players in their home, and 49% have video game players in their bedrooms (Roberts, Foehrer, and Rideout, 2005).
- In the same study only 21% of kids reported that their parents set rules about which video games they can play, 17% reported their parents check warning labels or ratings on video games, and 12% reported they play video games they know their parents don't want them playing (Roberts, Foehrer, and Rideout, 2005).



### **Group Activity**

1. Say, "Yesterday we discussed how much time we spent interacting with computers. One form this screen time takes is video games. These can be viewed on a computer, on a portable Game Boy or through a console, like X-Box, which is viewed through your TV. How many of you, by a show of hands, think video games are bad? Good? At this point, many people, including experts, are researching and debating this very question: Are video games good or bad? To help us both understand and make good choices about the computer, we're going to hold our own debate."
2. Ask for several volunteers who would like to debate this issue. Give each opposing team the sheet (See, "Computer Generated" above) listing the arguments either for or against video games. (Older students could research this on their own.) Encourage the students to be dramatic in their presentations by modeling a dramatic delivery of a statement. The format for the debate can be either the following simplified version, or you can follow the formal rules of debate. The simplified version would take the form of 'point/counterpoint' with each side alternating turns giving their 'point' and then having the other side give the 'counterpoint.'

### **Group Discussion Questions**

1. By a show of hands, how many think video games are good? Bad? Or do you think it depends on the particular video game, how much it is played and the age of the student?  
A: It depends on the particular video game, how much it is played and the age of the student.
2. What are ways in which video games can be good?  
A: See notes used in the debate.
3. What are ways in which video games can be bad?  
A: See notes used in the debate.

### **Variations/Extensions**

### **Conclusion**

Say, "These are the recommendations that the National Institute on Media and the Family makes to parents concerning the use of video games. I'll be sending this list to your parents in the next newsletter."

### **Tips for Parents**

- 1) LIMIT game playing time.
- 2) CHECK the age game ratings and descriptors on the box.
- 3) USE other content sources and reviews to help you choose a game.
- 4) CHECK KidScore for parent generated game reviews.
- 5) AVOID the "first person shooter", killing-machine games.
- 6) REQUIRE that homework and chores be done before game playing.
- 7) DO NOT PUT video game consoles or computers in children's bedrooms.
- 8) PLAY AND ENJOY a game with your child; check in as your child moves into deeper levels in the game.
- 9) TALK about the content of the games. Ask your child what's going on in the game.
- 10) EXPLAIN to your children why you object to certain games.
- 11) ASK your local retailer or rental store to implement policies preventing the sale or rental of M-rated (Mature) games to children or youth.
- 12) Finally, ENCOURAGE your child to play with friends, or other activities away from the video game set.



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**I hope he'll be okay**

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### **Positives**

- Video game playing introduces children to computer technology.
- Games can give practice in following directions.
- Some games provide practice in problem solving and logic.
- Games can provide practice in use of fine motor and spatial skills.
- Games can provide occasions for parent and child to play together.
- Players are introduced to information technology.
- Some games have therapeutic applications with patients.
- Games are entertaining and fun.

### **Negatives**

- Over-dependence on video games could foster social isolation, as they are often played alone.
- Practicing violent acts may contribute more to aggressive behavior than passive television watching. Studies do find a relationship between violent television watching and behavior.
- Women are often portrayed as weaker characters that are helpless.
- Game environments are often based on plots of violence, aggression and gender bias.
- Many games only offer an arena of weapons, killings, kicking, stabbing and shooting.
- Playing violent video games may be related to aggressive behavior (Anderson & Dill, 2000; Gentile, Lynch & Walsh, 2004). Questions have been raised about early exposure to violent video games.
- Many games do not offer action that requires independent thought or creativity.
- Games can confuse reality and fantasy.
- In many violent games, players must become more violent to win. In "1st person" violent video games the player may be more affected because he or she controls the game and experiences the action through the eyes of his or her character.
- Academic achievement may be negatively related to over-all time spent playing video games. (Anderson & Dill, 2000; Gentile, Lynch & Walsh, 2004)