

GETTING FIT WITH VIRTUAL REALITY

For decades, video games have been viewed as a **sedentary** activity, completely at odds with physical fitness and exercise. But the idea of combining virtual reality and video games to encourage movement is a new and creative achievement in the search of fitness; likely coming to a gym or your home in the not too distant future.



Virtual reality fitness, or VR fitness, is the idea of using revolutionary, immersive VR technology to create a whole new workout environment anywhere in the world. These games feature a **boxy** headset that blocks out light from the real world and sets you right into the middle of a virtual environment where you can engage in all kind of games and challenges, from bowling and boxing to shooter games and cognitive tasks.

When using VR fitness tools, your body acts as the controller. Instead of sitting and watching your avatar move on a screen as in traditional gaming, you make the movements with your body that you want to see your virtual **persona** accomplish.



WHAT MAKES IT SO INNOVATIVE?

It's the **immersion** factor that makes VR for exercise such a fascinating idea. Being immersed in a VR environment creates a distraction that keeps the brain busy, which means the user so absorbed with the game itself that they don't realize how much their body is working.

Adapted from US news article.

Howley, E. K. (2021, April). Exercise and Virtual Reality. US News - Health.
<https://health.usnews.com/wellness/fitness/articles/exercise-and-virtual-reality>

QUESTIONS

In this reading, there are certain words in bold. Match the word with its meaning.

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| 1. sedentary | • a role or character adopted by a player. |
| 2. boxy | • deep mental involvement. |
| 3. persona | • lifestyle with little physical exercise. |
| 4. immersion | • shaped like a box. |

Why are video games considered at odds with physical activity?

- a) Because exercise does not represent a mental challenge as video games do.
- b) Because video games lack the physical movement that exercise implicates.
- c) Because video games demand a higher level of intelligence.

What's the difference between traditional gaming and VR fitness gaming?

- a) you have to activate it with a voice command.
- b) You don't have to customize your character as the console scans your physical features into your avatar.
- c) To control your character, you have to use your body as the controller and move the way you want your avatar to.

What is the purpose of immersion in the VR fitness gaming experience?

- a) It makes the player feel as if they are actually in the game so they feel they might get hurt, which makes them more careful.
- b) It tricks your brain into being more focused on the game than in the physical hard work.
- c) It creates an identical 3-D version of the player which makes them more conscious of their decisions.

REFLECT ON THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- Would you like to exercise using VR technology? Why or why not?
- What kind of activity would it be fun to try with this technology?
- Do you think VR fitness will be able to substitute going to the gym?
- Do you prefer the conventional way of playing videogames?