

Video games and health

Do you think playing computer games is bad for your health?
Why? / Why not?

Read the text. How many different video games does the writer mention by name? What are they?

Teenager dies after playing video game for 40 hours without eating or sleeping (Daily Mirror)

Playing computer games encourages obesity (Daily Mail)

Overload of screen time 'causes depression in children' (Independent)

1.32



Many people assume that video games have a negative effect on young people. A lot of time in front of a screen is bad for the mind and the body, they believe. Newspaper headlines often express the same opinion – and combat games cause the most concern because of the violence. But is there any evidence for this view? According to a report in *American Psychologist*, the truth is not so simple. Playing video games is sometimes good for children's education, health and social skills.

Research shows that video games can actually improve certain mental skills. This is especially true for combat games. These games teach players to think about objects in three dimensions and this makes them better at studying science, technology, engineering and maths. Other types of video game do not usually provide these benefits.

However, other types of video game can have other positive effects. In 2013, scientists did some research into the effect of role-playing games (RPGs) on children. The research showed that when children spend a lot of time playing RPGs, they get better grades at school than children who do not play them. Other research showed that playing any kind of video game, including violent games, improves children's creativity. But using a computer or smartphone for emails or other tasks does not provide this benefit.

Quick and simple games like *Angry Birds* can improve players' mood and prevent them from feeling anxious. This emotional benefit is important, the report suggests. Feeling relaxed and happy is good for your health. The report also describes another emotional benefit of video games: they teach children how to react well to failure. In video games, players continually fail and try again. This makes them emotionally strong in real life.

Video games can improve social skills too, the report says. More than 70% of gamers play with a friend, not alone, and millions of people take part in huge online games like *Minecraft* and *Farmville*. The players learn useful social skills: how to lead a group, how to work together and how to make decisions. Overall, the report does not deny that some video games can have negative effects; but it is important to think about the benefits too. And remember: you mustn't believe everything you read in the newspapers!

Circle the correct answers (a–d).

- 1 Newspaper headlines about video games
 - a only talk about violent games.
 - b always present the same view.
 - c do not tell the truth.
 - d usually present a negative view.
- 2 You learn to think about things in three dimensions when you
 - a play combat games.
 - b play any kind of video game.
 - c study engineering or maths.
 - d do scientific studies.
- 3 Research shows that role-playing games
 - a are the only games that make children more creative.
 - b do not provide as many benefits as violent games.
 - c help children to do well at school.
 - d help children to learn how to use computers.
- 4 The report also suggests that video gamers
 - a spend a lot of time on their own.
 - b learn some useful skills by playing with others.
 - c usually fail in other areas of their lives.
 - d spend a lot of time feeling anxious.
- 5 According to the report, the effect of video games on children
 - a is mostly good.
 - b is mostly bad.
 - c is not known.
 - d is not very important.

VOCABULARY Complete these verb + noun collocations from the text using the words below.

cause do express get have make
provide take part in use

Collocations: verb + noun

- 1 _____ a positive / negative effect
- 2 _____ an opinion
- 3 _____ concern
- 4 _____ a benefit
- 5 _____ research
- 6 _____ (good) grades at school
- 7 _____ a computer / smartphone
- 8 _____ online games
- 9 _____ a decision

Answer the questions using information from the text.

- 1 What do many people assume about the effects of video games on young people?
- 2 What kinds of skills can combat games improve?
- 3 What can simple games like *Angry Birds* prevent?
- 4 What kind of game helps children to get better grades at school, according to a 2013 report?
- 5 What kind of game teaches children how to work together?

Complete the questions with *How much* or *How many*.

- 1 _____ different types of screen do you use regularly?
(phone, computer, tablet, TV, etc.)
- 2 _____ time do you spend watching TV or DVDs
each day?
- 3 _____ different video games do you play?
- 4 _____ different people do you play video games with?
- 5 _____ different tasks do you use a computer for?
(games, emails, homework, etc.)
- 6 _____ time do you spend in total each week in front
of a screen?



Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs below.

cause do express get have make
provide take part in use

- 1 I often _____ online games like *Minecraft*
with my friends.
- 2 Video games can _____ many benefits, such
as improving memory and creativity.
- 3 The scientists _____ a lot of research on the
topic and published the results yesterday.
- 4 I prefer to _____ a smartphone rather than a
computer.
- 5 Video games can sometimes _____ a
positive effect on teenagers.
- 6 The amount of violence in video games can
_____ concern for a lot of parents.
- 7 Newspapers sometimes claim that video games are
bad for children, and parents often _____
the same opinion.
- 8 Playing computer games in groups can help
you to work together with other people and to
_____ decisions more quickly.
- 9 Do you think playing computer games helps you to
_____ better grades?

Read the text and answer the questions.

- 1 What does Jenny do? _____
- 2 Which country did she visit? _____
- 3 What kind of natural disaster did Jenny experience in 2011?

STAYING SAFE

When you ask most people about the benefits of apps on their smartphone, they say they use them to play games, surf the net, keep in touch with people and organise social events. But Jenny Harlow, a scientist from London, has got an app that does something much more important: it warns her when she is in danger. The app is called Safety Tips and it gives users real-time earthquake and tsunami warnings. The Japan Tourist Agency had the idea for the app after the 2011 earthquake in Japan, when many foreign tourists in the country were confused about what was happening and what they should do. Jenny was on a business trip to Japan when the earthquake struck. 'Although there are a lot of earthquakes in Japan, it was the first time I experienced one. All the warnings and information on the internet, radio and TV were in Japanese, and I couldn't understand. It was really confusing and I didn't know what to do.' She had to rely on Japanese colleagues to help her.

The Safety Tips app sends an alert to users when a major earthquake happens, and also tells them if a tsunami is likely to arrive at the coast. The app gives lots of tips about what to do, where to go and how to stay safe, as well as a list of useful Japanese phrases such as 'Is this an earthquake?' and 'Is it safe here?' Importantly, all the information is in English, and there are plans to add other languages. The Japan Tourist Agency plans to advertise the app at airports and tourist information centres in Japan. In order to get the app, people visit a website and download it. 'I'm coming to Japan again next year and I will definitely watch out for alerts from the app,' says Jenny.



Answer the questions

According to the text, most people

- a don't value apps very highly.
- b don't know what the main benefits of apps are.
- c use apps mainly for fun and social situations.
- d think apps are useless in dangerous situations.

The main purpose of the Safety Tips app is to

- a prevent an earthquake like the one in 2011.
- b warn people who are visiting Japan about earthquakes.
- c warn Japanese people about earthquakes.
- d warn business people about earthquakes.

Jenny had problems

- a because no one told her what to do after an earthquake.
- b because she couldn't understand the advice on Japanese media.
- c because there was no information for tourists about what to do in an earthquake.
- d because her Japanese colleagues didn't know what to do.

At the moment, the app

- a is available in a number of languages.
- b is available at airports and tourist information centres.
- c warns about earthquakes but not about tsunamis.
- d is in English, with Japanese phrases.