BRITISH COUNCIL

LearnEnglish Teens

Reading skills practice: Video games are good for you – exercises

You know all those people that told you that video games are bad for you? They were wrong. Read this to find out more.

Preparation

Write the type of computer game next to the description.

Fighting game	Role-playing game (RPG)	Strategy game
Platform game	Racing game	Shooter

1. A game that involves travelling and jumping across platforms, often with obstacles and other elements like ladders. _____
2. A game that focuses on one-on-one combat against an opponent. _____
3. A game whose main focus is combat involving guns or other projectile weapons such as missiles. _____
4. A game in which the player controls a central character. They explore the game world, solve puzzles and take part in tactical fights to complete their quest. _____
5. A game that requires careful planning and tactics to achieve victory, often from a godlike perspective over the game world. _____
6. A game in which the player races against opponents in some type of transportation. _____



For years video games have been criticised for making people more antisocial, overweight or depressed. But now researchers are finding that games can actually change us for the better and improve both our body and mind.

Games can help to develop physical skills. Pre-school children who played interactive games such as the ones available on Wii have been shown to have improved motor skills, for example they can kick, catch and throw a ball better than children who don't play video games. A study of surgeons who do microsurgery in Boston found that those who played video games were 27 per cent faster and made 37 per cent fewer errors than those who didn't. Vision is also improved, particularly telling the difference between shades of grey. This is useful for driving at night, piloting a plane or reading X-rays.

© The British Council, 2012 The United Kingdom's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. We are registered in England as a charity.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Reading skills practice: Video games are good for you – exercises

Games also benefit a variety of brain functions, including decision-making. People who play action-based games make decisions 25 per cent faster than others and are no less accurate, according to one study. It was also found that the best gamers can make choices and act on them up to six times a second, four times faster than most people. In another study by researchers from the University of Rochester in New York, experienced gamers were shown to be able to pay attention to more than six things at once without getting confused, compared with the four that most people can normally keep in mind. Additionally, video games can also reduce gender differences. Scientists have found that women who play games are better able to mentally manipulate 3D objects.

There is also evidence that gaming can help with psychological problems. At the University of Auckland in New Zealand, researchers asked 94 young people diagnosed with depression to play a 3D fantasy game called SPARX and in many cases, the game reduced symptoms of depression more than conventional treatment. Another research team at Oxford University found that playing Tetris shortly after exposure to something very upsetting – in the experiment, a film of traumatic scenes of injury and death was used – can actually prevent people having disturbing flashbacks.

The effects are not always so positive, however. Indiana University researchers carried out brain scans on young men and found evidence that violent games can alter brain function after as little as a week of play, affecting regions in the brain associated with emotional control and causing more aggressive behaviour in the player. But Daphne Bavelier, one of the most experienced researchers in the field, says that the violent action games that often worry parents most may actually have the strongest beneficial effect on the brain. In the future, we may see many treatments for physical and neurological problems which incorporate the playing of video games.



1. Check your understanding: multiple choice

Circle the best option to complete these sentences.

1. Only relatively recently have people started to realise ___.

   a. the harmful effects of video games
   b. the beneficial effects of video games
   c. how much we don't know about video games' effects
   d. how much video games affect the people that play them

2. Very young children show improved ___ after playing video games.

   a. muscle control and co-ordination
   b. social interaction
   c. decision-making
   d. ability to differentiate between different colours

© The British Council, 2012 The United Kingdom's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. We are registered in England as a charity.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

3. Playing video games helps doctors ___.

a. do operations and read X-rays
b. make decisions under pressure
c. operate complex equipment
d. tend to more than one patient at a time

4. Video gamers' decision-making speed is significantly improved by ___.

a. years of gaming experience
b. long periods of game playing
c. playing video games in short bursts
d. certain types of video game

5. Women who play video games demonstrate ___.

a. faster reaction speeds
b. reduced stress levels
c. better spatial awareness
d. better multitasking ability

6. In one research study, the video game Tetris helped people to ___.

a. improve their concentration
b. overcome depression
c. forget disturbing experiences
d. make decisions faster

7. Research shows that violent video games ___.

a. have no negative effects on players
b. only affect players' brains after extended hours of play
c. may have positive and negative effects on the brain
d. only affect players' brains in beneficial ways

8. In the future, computer games may be used for ___.

a. treating a variety of medical problems
b. training doctors to deal with emotional pressure
c. helping parents to deal with difficult teenagers
d. treating prisoners with a history of violent behaviour

© The British Council, 2012 The United Kingdom's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. We are registered in England as a charity.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

2. Check your vocabulary: gap fill

Complete the gaps with a noun from the box.

shades	attention	decisions	behaviour	
errors	skills	field	scans	difference

1. Playing video games improves the speed at which people can make _____.
2. Video gamers also demonstrate an improved ability to pay _____ to several things at once.
3. Pre-school children who play video games have been shown to have improved motor _____.
4. Playing video games also has a beneficial effect on vision, increasing players' ability to tell the _____ between varying _____ of grey.
5. Surgeons who play computer games work faster and make fewer _____.
6. Researchers from Indiana University investigated the effects of violent video games by doing some brain _____ on video gamers.
7. Their research showed that violent video games affect emotional control and may cause more aggressive _____.
8. Daphne Bavelier is one of the most experienced researchers in her _____.

Vocabulary Box	Write any new words you have learnt in this lesson.

Discussion
What kind of computer games do you like? Do you think they are good for you? Why or why not?

© The British Council, 2012 The United Kingdom's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. We are registered in England as a charity.

LIVEWORKSHEETS