

Big Questions: Is gaming good for kids?

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In addition to being fun, video games can build real-world skills. Photo: Brothers91/Getty Images

Gamers, are you the first person to spot animals at the zoo? If someone drops candy on the ground, do you know exactly where every piece landed? That may be because you play video games.

Scientists have found that people who play video games such as "Fortnite" have higher visual acuity. This means they can keep track of more than one moving object. They might even see things in the fog or rain that others cannot. It's one of the many benefits of playing video games.

You might know people who think video games are a waste of time or harmful. It might be worth showing them what science has to say.

When you keep an eye on enemies, grab treasure and change items without even looking at the controller, you are exercising your brain. Your brain loves challenges like this. It can actually grow from playing video games. It is one reason why video game players make better surgeons. Some doctors even use video games to warm up before big surgeries.

Developing Skills

Video games can develop other skills, too. For example, they can teach you to never give up, no matter how many times it takes to reach the next level. Being persistent in video games shows that hard work will help you achieve your goals. This is true both inside and outside the video game.

To succeed in video games, you can't just work harder. You have to work smarter, too. Beating another really good player is not simple. You can't just use the same plan again and again. Instead, video games train you to solve problems by finding different solutions.

Think about your favorite games. They give you lots of different problems with several solutions. This makes you realize solving problems can be really fun. Playing video games can teach you critical thinking skills. Combined with hard work, they will bring you success.

One of the best things about playing video games is the friendships. It's not just the new friends you make. It's also hanging out with your old friends, especially when you may not be able to see them in person. Video games provide friends a digital playground, where helping and sharing are encouraged and often needed. Helping each other build the best fort strengthens friendships. So does saving a teammate when they're down. It can even help mend broken friendships.

That's because teammates who help each other in video games are more likely to help each other in the real world. They might be more helpful toward strangers, too. Being a team player teaches you the value of teamwork. This is something you can use for the rest of your life. But if you use video games to be mean to others, you'll miss out on most of these benefits.

Applying Skills To Real Life

You can turn on a video game and quickly feel powerful, in charge and popular. However, remember that games are like playing life on the easiest settings. Real life tends to be more challenging.

Think about how you get bored playing a game on the easiest setting. It suddenly becomes fun again when you increase the difficulty. For the same reason, life can be more rewarding than video games.

Learning to play a guitar is an example. It's harder and more frustrating than playing the video game "Rock Band." However, it's much more fun to play a guitar in real life than it is to play one on "Rock Band."

So enjoy developing your skills by playing video games. But also ask yourself if you are up for the challenges outside of video games.