

Do video games
really have benefits,
or are parents right
about everything?

[Business](#)



“ Stop playing that! Go do your homework,” or, “ I’m taking that away from you for a week,” are two of the most used sentences in my family. With ten year old brother, it is rare for me not to hear these words casually fly out of my parents’ mouths daily. There is only one cause to this disturbance: video games. Many parents, similar to mine, believe that video games contribute no benefit to players, their children. The main points my parents have emphasized is that video games worsen your eyesight, are a waste of time and give no overall advantage.

As a result, they end up limiting or restricting their children’s gaming time. Even I was convinced that this was the best and only perspective: video games don’t serve any purpose except to entertain and take up time. I always thought I, along with many others, was right about this, until I put it to the test and did some research. Steven Johnson, author of the controversial new book, *Everything Bad Is Good for You* says, “ All these things that that have long been assumed to be rotting our brains, there might be this hidden benefit.” He claims that, violent or not, video games are actually making kids smarter.

But he is only one out of many who have discovered this aspect. 1.

Producing better surgeons While one would expect a surgeon to be reading or studying about the latest surgical methods, video games are a superb way to better hand-eye coordination. In 2007, Dr. James Rosser, Jr.

and his colleagues conducted an experiment that proved medical students doing better on laparoscopic surgery simulators after playing specific video games. He found that surgeons who had played video games for more than

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three hours per week made 37 percent less mistakes and were 27 percent faster. 2. Improving Logic and Problem Solving Skills Not all video games are violent and gory. Some are simply designed to challenge our brains, such as Cut the Rope, Angry Birds and Candy Crush. Games such as these are constantly making our brains think about the next step and are fun ways to solve puzzles and other short problems.

Some people are solving puzzles and mysteries without even knowing it because of how game-like the video games seem. This is also the reason many people, mostly parents, don't recognize this benefit. It is so well disguised. Even though school may have ruined the "learning is fun" feeling, video games have proved it wrong. 3.

Enhancing Speed and Accuracy Action games, according to a study by the University of Rochester, train players to make faster decisions with unflinching precision. It is especially crucial in the world today to be able to make important decisions accurately and on the spot. Steven Johnson believes that gamers are trained to make many decisions efficiently while still focusing on their main goal. 4. Reducing Stress, Depression and Pain A study, 2009's Annual Review of Cybertherapy and Telemedicine, proved that playing video games helped gamers with mental health issues such as stress and depression. Gamers were allowed to put their frustration towards the aggression of the game.

But video games don't just relieve emotional pain, they also reduce physical pain! Psychologists at the University of Washington developed a game that helped patients in hospitals who were suffering immense pain. They used

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one obvious mental trick: distraction. This game was tested in military hospitals and the solution worked. It helped soldiers recover faster with less pain medicine during recuperation. 5. Helping with Dyslexia Dyslexia is a learning disability that affects about five to ten percent of the world's population.

Researchers at Oxford University say that dyslexia has to do with attention. "These video games require you to respond very quickly, to shift attention to one part of the screen to another," says Vanessa Harrar, an experimental psychologist and lead author of the study. This was put to the test.

Seventeen people with dyslexia and nineteen other participants were asked to press a button as fast as they could when they heard a sound, saw an image, or both. The results showed that the group of dyslexic participants were much slower than the 19 others. The question scientists ask is whether video games will help dyslexic people practice shifting attentions quickly, and eventually overcome dyslexia.

In Italy, another experiment was done, and it concluded that dyslexic kids improved in reading speed and attention skills after playing a large amount of video games. 6. Improving Vision "That's impossible..." you may be thinking right now. That was me about a day ago. It's a no brainer that watching too much TV or staring at the screen for too long is very bad for your eyes. At least that's what we hear from our parents.

But do they have evidence? Daphne Bavelier, from the University of Rochester, conducted an experiment. Volunteers were assigned to play Unreal Tournament 2004 and Call of Duty 2 for fifty hours over a course of

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nine weeks. After playing fifty hours of action video games, the volunteers showed a 43 percent average improvement in their ability to discern shades of grey. They were able to demonstrate the difference between several shades of grey just by playing video games. In addition, playing video games could correct lazy eye in adults. Although lazy eye, or amblyopia, in children can be easily corrected with an eye patch, adults don't have many options.

" A lot of eye doctors start closing the books on successful treatment after age 8 or so because of the widespread belief that amblyopia can only be reversed during a critical window of development in the visual cortex. If the disorder is not corrected in childhood, the damage was thought to be irreversible," says researcher Dennis Levi. Ten adult volunteers with lazy eye spent a twenty hour session playing action video games while a group of three other volunteers played non-action video games. The results showed that both groups of volunteers improved thirty percent in their visual acuity. Doctors who are aware of this study are predicting that video games may be a treatment in the future for adults who have lazy eye.

Who knew your parents were giving you false information all along? I surely didn't. Maybe parents tell us that video games are inefficient or harmful just because they want us to do more homework rather than wasting time. Obviously, video games are misunderstood by so many people and it is important that they know all of the facts before forming their opinions. So the next time someone tells you that video games are no good for you, you know exactly what to tell them. I might even pay my brother a favor and

inform my parents about the great benefits of playing video games. And if that works out, the house will be much more peaceful.

It's a win-win situation!