

Do video games enhance selective attention in children?

[Entertainment](#), [Video Games](#)



Research: Observing children using gaming consoles can be quite entertaining due to their deeply embedded interest and love for video games. Young boys in particular seem to partake in the interactive environment that gaming allows them to join. Whether it's Nintendo, Xbox, or Playstation, males of all ages always seem so captivated by the virtual world portrayed on their television set. When one focuses on a specific aspect of a scene while ignoring other aspects, such as focusing on the video game you are playing in the same room as many people are speaking, a concept of selective attention is introduced (Wikipedia, 2006).

A normal attention span seems to develop in three stages in children. First, the child's attention is said to be overly exclusive. This is a term used by psychologists to describe attention that is focused on a single object for long periods while tuning out all other stimuli (Child Development Institute, 2006). Second, a child's attention develops to where it is overly inclusive. This refers to a "wide span of attention that is constantly and rapidly changing from one object to another such as a toddler who is running from one toy to the next never able to stay with any one toy for any period of time" (CDI, 2006).

A child who is stuck at this stage might be diagnosed as having attention deficit disorder. Third, the child develops selective attention where he or she is able to shift the focus whenever he or she pleases from being inclusive to being very exclusive. This is considered a mature pattern of focus and concentration which is needed in a classroom setting. Some reasons a child may have poor attention, concentration, and impulse control are due to anxiety, depression, slow psychological development, learning disabilities,

lack of sleep, poor nutrition, low motivation, and especially boredom due to lack of challenge (CDI, 2006).

Boredom due to a lack of challenge definitely cannot be a characteristic of video games to the male population who spend hours a day playing; especially not the nine year old Austin who I have babysat for or Brian, another boy I know who is ten years old. Video games were first introduced in the 1970s. " By the end of that decade they had become a preferred childhood leisure activity..."(Cesarone, 1994). Advocates of video games imply that they may be a friendly way of introducing children to computers, and may increase children's hand-eye coordination and attention to detail.