

[IMAGE]

Video Games Help the Brain

By Editorial Staff

Video games get a bad rap. There are several stereotypical reasons underlying this perception, including the graphic content in some games; the time some kids spend playing them (instead of doing homework, studying or engaging with "the world"); and the image of the 30-year-old in their parents' basement who can't seem to pull away from the screen and "grow up." While there may be kernels of truth to all of the above, video games also play a *positive* role in brain development, suggests new research.

video game - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Kids who play video games have superior cognitive abilities compared to kids who don't. In arriving at that conclusion, researchers asked more than 2,000 9- and 10-year-olds to report their average daily video gaming time. Children who played video games (at least 21 hours per week) were compared to children who reported zero hours of gaming per week. Video gamers exhibited "better cognitive performance involving response inhibition and working memory as well as altered [blood oxygen level-dependent] signal in key regions of the cortex responsible for visual, attention, and memory processing" compared to non-gamers.

In case you wonder if these findings apply to video watchers, the answer is no, at least not in this study. After accounting for video watching as an element of their findings, the researchers concluded, "children must actively engage with a video's content, as opposed to passively watching a video, to exhibit altered brain activation in key areas of the brain involved in cognition."

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