

Do video games, phones and the internet impact children's cognition?

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Children have an increasing attraction towards electronic media in their play. With video games, phones and the internet in abundance, this article in Educational Psychology examines if such leisure activity is impacting children's cognition or academic performance or whether it would be more beneficial to read.

After a busy day children do need downtime to rest and relax. Increasingly kids leisure time is spent gaming, but does it detract from homework or would kids be better off reading a book? Historical research shows in some cases that interactive gaming can have positive effects for cognition by promoting memory, attention and reasoning. Other speed oriented games have been shown to improve perception and motor skills, so should gaming for relaxation be encouraged? Lieury et al investigate whether type of leisure activity produces a 'transfer effect' influencing learning processes thus improving student performance at school. With an emphasis on gaming and reading they linked patterns of leisure activity with performance in phonology, reading and comprehension, maths, [long term memory](#) and reasoning. Fascinatingly gaming previously thought to improve fluid intelligence showed little or no positive correlations to performance whilst reading did, particularly in memory and comprehension. It seems then despite lack of a causal link that reading may be more likely to enhance [academic performance](#).

Should we assume that time spent gaming and away from homework is harmful to students? A further comparison of reading and gaming to most frequent leisure activities showed no negative patterns but

interestingly resting had a favourable effect on performance as well as reading. So frequent leisure activity is not necessarily harmful to progress, or always at the expense of homework but can be enriching. The authors conclude "we think that video games are mainly recreational activities and the cognitive stimulation provided is very different from school learning. On the contrary, the results of this survey fully justify the educational role of parents and teachers in promoting reading."

More information: "Video games vs. reading and school/cognitive performances: a study on 27000 middle school teenagers" by Alain Lieury, Sonia Lorant, Bruno Trosseille, Françoise Champault & Ronan Vourc'h. Published in *Educational Psychology*.

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