

Videogames boost skills, but also harmful

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New research shows video games boost visual and cognitive skills, but that too much of the activity is linked to behavioral problems

Good news and bad news for video gamers: new research shows game play boosts visual and cognitive skills, but that too much of the activity is linked to behavioral problems.

In one of two studies published this week, Brown University [researchers](#)

found gaming not only improves visual skills but also may improve learning ability for those skills.

"It may be possible that the vast amount of visual training frequent gamers receive over the years could help contribute to honing consolidation mechanisms in the brain, especially for visually developed skills," the researchers wrote in the study published Tuesday in *PLoS One*, a scientific journal published by the Public Library of Science.

"A lot of people still view video games as a time-wasting activity even though research is beginning to show their beneficial aspects," said Aaron Berard, a graduate student and lead author.

"If we can demonstrate that video games may actually improve some cognitive functioning, perhaps we, as a society, can embrace newer technology and media with positive application."

The researchers said the study doesn't necessarily prove whether playing video games improves learning ability or whether people with an innate ability become gamers because they find gaming more rewarding.

A separate study by Oxford University researchers offered a more mixed outlook on the question of whether video games are harmful for children.

The researchers concluded that children who [play](#) video games for more than three hours a day are more likely to be hyperactive, get involved in fights and not be interested in school.

But the Oxford team found that the problems were linked to the amount of time spent gaming rather than the types of games played and found no link between playing violent games and real-life aggression or a child's academic performance.

They also found playing games for less than one hour a day might be positive for children's behavior.

"These results highlight that playing video games may just be another style of play that children engage with in the digital age, with the benefits felt from the act of playing rather than the medium itself being the significant factor," said researcher Allison Mishkin of the study published in the journal *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*.

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