

# Student Opinion: Video gaming can have negative effects on kids' brains and bodies

By Margaret Buckler, Student Contributor, adapted by Newsela staff on 08.16.18

Word Count **740**

Level **950L**



Is playing video games bad for kids' brains? One student argues that they are. Image: Newsela staff

It's an invasion! Nope, not an alien invasion – a video game invasion. Many kids spend hours in the virtual worlds of their computer and TV screens.

Rather than studying for school or going outside, they are spending all their free time playing video games.



## About the Writer:

Margaret Buckler is a middle school student and writer. She is eager to reach new people through writing, and open them up to new topics and opinions.

In fact, a 2011 study by research group NPD claimed that more than 9 out of 10 kids played video games. That number has probably only gone up.

It's not just kids either. According to Medical News Today, more than 150 million people in the United States play video games for at least 3 hours per week. That is more than 1 out of 3 people in the U.S.

Children have growing minds and bodies. The continuous need to play video games has several negative, unhealthy effects on children. These effects can include slowing students' education, promoting violence and affecting their physical health.

Fortnite, Roblox and Minecraft are popular online multiplayer games. In the last 30 days, Fortnite was one of the most searched topics on Google. It was searched for more than U.S. history topics. Searches for the game Roblox were higher than searches for biology. Minecraft was searched more than an SAT preparation resource. The SAT is a test high school students take to help them get into colleges.

## **Education Takes A Backseat To Video Games**

This increase in searches for video games shows that they have become a higher priority than educational subjects.

More students than ever are searching for and playing video games. It is clear video game addiction is taking place in schools. With newly convenient availability to computers and tablets, it's easy for students to switch from educational sites to computer games. Personally, I see this very often. Video games are all kids want to do these days, at school and at home.

Adults sometimes say that too much television or screen time can make your brain lose cells. Believe it or not, this is actually true. Studies from the University of Montreal discovered that playing "shooter" games can harm the hippocampus area of the brain, killing brain cells. Damage to this part of the brain can also increase the chances of Alzheimer's disease, which causes severe memory loss. It can also lead to mental illnesses like depression.

Everyone feels sad every once in a while. Being seriously depressed is different because it prevents someone from being able to function.

Mental illness refers to a range of mental health conditions. These are disorders that can affect mood, thoughts and behavior. Many people have mental health concerns at some point. Most mental illnesses can be treated with medication and therapy.

## **Mindless Gaming Is Bad For The Brain**

That said, all of these health concerns could make it harder for a person to get a decent education.

Not only are video games taking time out of education, but they can also promote violence. Popular video games, such as Fortnite and Grand Theft Auto, include guns and vulgar language. Younger children often play these games. According to many studies, violent video games can increase aggressive behavior.

A study asked some participants to play violent games in their lab, while others played nonviolent games. Then, they measured the behavior of each group in social experiments afterward. These studies show that playing violent games results in instant changes to behavior. Many people know aggressive behavior can be caused by many mental health issues, and even physical injuries. However, people do not know that it can also be caused by video game addiction.

Constantly playing video games can also be negative for physical and mental health. It can worsen personal hygiene and cause eye strain. Stressed eyes can lead to migraines, which are really intense and painful headaches. Studies show that video game addiction is connected with depression and substance abuse. These are problems kids should not be facing at such young ages.

It's unhealthy for children to stay indoors looking at a screen all day long. Instead of going outside and playing sports, kids are sitting inside playing sports connected to a screen.

With video gaming being so popular, it's difficult to realize all the negative effects it causes to the brain and body. It's time we take a closer look at these negative effects before mindlessly gaming all day.

*Do you have an opinion to share on an issue affecting your school or community? Students may submit their original opinion piece to [editorial@newsela.com](mailto:editorial@newsela.com)*

**Quiz**

- 1 What is the author's MAIN purpose in including information about the number of kids playing video games?
- (A) to explain how video games have changed over time
  - (B) to highlight specific warning signs of video game addiction
  - (C) to suggest that video game addiction is a widespread problem
  - (D) to describe the most popular types of video games
- 2 The author wrote this article MOSTLY to argue that children should play video games less often. What did the author do to illustrate this point in the article?
- (A) The author highlighted some specific physical and mental effects of playing video games.
  - (B) The author included statistics about the use of video games among different age groups.
  - (C) The author quoted several children whose lives have been negatively impacted by video game addiction.
  - (D) The author provided data about how playing video games can lead to lower grades.
- 3 In the article, the author claims that violent video games can cause players to become more violent in real life. HOW does the author support this claim in the article?
- (A) by highlighting the story of one player who became violent after playing a "shooter" video game
  - (B) by explaining that playing video games can hurt players' memories and brain cells
  - (C) by suggesting that video games can cause serious headaches that influence decision-making
  - (D) by citing a study that showed increased levels of violence among video game players

- 4 Which of the following claims is supported by logical reasons and evidence in the article?
- (A) It is likely that even more children play video games now than they did in 2011.
  - (B) People who play video games earn lower SAT scores than people who do other activities.
  - (C) Video game addiction influences children's actions both at school and at home.
  - (D) It is important for children to go outside to play games and sports with each other.

**Answer Key**

- 1 What is the author's MAIN purpose in including information about the number of kids playing video games?
- (A) to explain how video games have changed over time
  - (B) to highlight specific warning signs of video game addiction
  - (C) to suggest that video game addiction is a widespread problem**
  - (D) to describe the most popular types of video games
- 2 The author wrote this article MOSTLY to argue that children should play video games less often. What did the author do to illustrate this point in the article?
- (A) The author highlighted some specific physical and mental effects of playing video games.**
  - (B) The author included statistics about the use of video games among different age groups.
  - (C) The author quoted several children whose lives have been negatively impacted by video game addiction.
  - (D) The author provided data about how playing video games can lead to lower grades.
- 3 In the article, the author claims that violent video games can cause players to become more violent in real life. HOW does the author support this claim in the article?
- (A) by highlighting the story of one player who became violent after playing a "shooter" video game
  - (B) by explaining that playing video games can hurt players' memories and brain cells
  - (C) by suggesting that video games can cause serious headaches that influence decision-making
  - (D) by citing a study that showed increased levels of violence among video game players**

- 4 Which of the following claims is supported by logical reasons and evidence in the article?
- (A) It is likely that even more children play video games now than they did in 2011.
  - (B) People who play video games earn lower SAT scores than people who do other activities.
  - (C) **Video game addiction influences children's actions both at school and at home.**
  - (D) It is important for children to go outside to play games and sports with each other.