

It's Not All Fun — Video Games Can Engage and Educate

Written by Jenna Sherman

Video games are often vilified by parents and educators alike. But the truth is that digital gaming isn't the bad guy. In fact, there are a plethora of benefits associated with getting a good thumb workout. [Bloom Academy](#) has discussed this before. Here is more insight into the wonderful world of video games for children.

The Good (And The Bad)

Dana Foundation has written extensively about both the [positives and negatives](#) of video gaming. On the downside, violent video games do tend to desensitize young people to images of things like blood, gore, and extreme rage. On the upside, however, playing some video games — ideally, an hour or so each day — can improve a child's cognitive abilities, fast-track their hand/eye coordination, and even encourage social interactions.



Image via [Pexels](#)

Gaming Tips

If you are looking for ways to allow your child to safely enjoy their digital gaming experience, you're in luck. There are many ways to do just that. A few tips include:

- Understand the ESRB rating. The Entertainment Software Rating Board separates [video games into categories](#). These range from Early Childhood (EC) to Adult Only (AO). As a good rule of thumb, children in the 10 and under crowd can enjoy anything rated EC, E10+, and E. Older children and teenagers can safely dip their toes into gaming with games rated T.
- Watch your internet. A fiber-optic internet connection is usually best because it offers a faster connection — meaning reduced lag time and faster reactions. But make sure that your service provider also makes it possible to turn the connection off when needed. Your web access should be fast enough to download games quickly and strong enough to [power multiple devices](#).
- Set limits. While children should be free to explore all learning platforms, as a parent, it is your responsibility to ensure they do so without inadvertently harming themselves. Set screen time limits, and make a point of logging into their games periodically to make sure they are not [communicating with people](#) outside of your (and their) comfort zone.

Types of Video Games

Depending on how old you are, your idea of video games probably includes things like Legend of Zelda and Super Mario Brothers. Since then, there have been many other games that gained popularity, and they each have their pros and cons.

- Simulation games. A simulation game might help children understand how things, like construction and civilization, work. Popular simulation games include [SimAnimals](#) and Roller Coaster Tycoon.
- Action. Action games are further broken up into platform, shooter, fighter, stealth, survival, and a few others. Action games are often played in groups, whether online or in person. Street Fighter and Subnautica are examples of action games, with the former having an element of violence and the latter offering scientific exploration.
- Learning games. Learning games are arguably the most beneficial out of all the different video game types. These games can teach everything from ELA to critical thinking and spelling. Wordscapes and National Geographic Challenge are two of the most [popular learning games](#) available today, according to Cnet.

Although largely unwarranted, videogames get a bad reputation. Like any other activity or entertainment, games do have their ups and downs and pros and cons. With foresight, proper guidance, and a healthy attitude toward gaming, however, parents and children alike can benefit from technology. Gaming can help improve academic skills while allowing children the unique opportunity to play without boundaries.

Jenna Sherman is the creator of [Parent-Leaders](#), a website dedicated to parents, and what they can do to make sure their children grow up to be strong, independent, successful adults. By providing a collection of valuable, up-to-date, authoritative resources, Parent-Leaders hopes to help other parents acquire the skills they need to accomplish this.