

FACTSHEET

Do video games make players violent?

Why do we keep hearing that video games make people violent?

One of the most common myths about video games is that video games make players violent and aggressive. Exposure to violent media, in general, is an easy scapegoat for media figures to blame when violence is perpetrated by teenagers and young adults. The fact that a perpetrator played violent video games is often presented as a cause of their action in media because of the myth that video games make people violent which in turn reinforces the myth.

Science has not established a link between playing games and committing violence

The logic behind thinking that playing violent video games makes players violent is that if players spend time punching and shooting things in games, they feel encouraged to do it in real life. First, this would be ignoring the cathartic effect of culture. But maybe, more importantly, there is no scientific proof that (violent) video games make players commit violence. There was a debate until the beginning of the 2000s that playing games can raise one's adrenaline or cause frustration (especially when games are difficult), which can make players more impulsive in the minutes after playing. Such experiments in laboratories are now considered to be hardly replicable in real life and might suffer from a confirmation bias (Jones et al., 2014).

Having said that, it is important to bear in mind that studies could still contradict one another. Psychologist Lalo argues that studies tend to be inconsistent because it is difficult to have the right samples and the right games in studies. Ideally, to measure the true effect of video games, the best would be a worldwide study on the same game that would take into account all the environmental factors of the subject for the

previous 10 years to make sure all factors would be taken into account (Mourgues, 2019).

Why do people play violent games?

For someone who does not play any form of video games or any games depicting some form of violence, it can be shocking to see youngsters having fun while punching their friend's character in a game, shooting realistic characters, or acting in a morally questionable way.

First, not all players play extremely violent games, and what violence is in games can be perceived differently. Technically, Super Mario Bros makes the player crush their enemies by jumping onto their head or throwing fireballs at them. Most players of The Sims have had fun torturing their characters just because they could. However, defining what violent video games are might not be the most important thing.

The examples above might not be perceived as violent by the players because they are directed against virtual avatars, and they can relax players as they allow them to spend extra tension or energy in a virtual environment without any strings attached. Regarding players enjoying games, violence does not seem to be a significant factor compared to the challenges and freedom of action in games (Przybylski et al., 2009).

How can I manage students' anger and excitement when playing in class?

The most practical issue for educators would be to manage students' emotions when playing in class. The excitement or the frustration that players can feel might make your students burst out in the classroom or at each other. Let us check a few examples and see how you can transform these behaviours into positive group energy:



Source: People vector created by freepik - www.freepik.com

What do I do if my students start shouting at or insulting one another?

Sit the students down and ask them to tell you what happened. Then, ask the class if they have ever felt the same in relation to the game, and how they managed to overcome their frustration. Bear in mind that some games can have design flaws and can be frustrating at times.

What do I do if my students get mad because they lost a game? What can I do if some students do not manage to play or win a game?

Allow the student to calm down, then ask students who are more used to the game to teach them how to play as calmly as possible. Tell them about the importance of trial and error in the learning process, as it applies to video games as well. Be clear that you are not forcing the student to enjoy the game, but to think critically about their playing experience.

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