

A short history of video games

Previous compulsory steps / Prior students' knowledge	None
Learning objectives	Learning more about video games and their history
Subjects	History, Media education, English as a Foreign Language
Recommended Age	15 - 18
Material needed	Technological equipment to show the videos, video trailers, printed or digital version of the handout
Sequence duration	45 – 50 minutes
Individual or group activity	Group activity
Skills developed (after learning objectives)	Critical thinking, collaboration & teamwork, communication, Learning to learn
Price range of the game	Free videos are used for this sequence
Extension / differentiation activities (at the end of the sequence)	This sequence can also be organized as an exploration of character development during the years, for example, with the game Super Mario or Sonic the Hedgehog
Tips to make the sequence more accessible or inclusive	The videos used in this sequence are in English. However, the students don't need to focus on the language but the image and visual representation in the game.

Step by step: how to implement the sequence

- **Step 1 – Introduction of the topic and the first assignment (5 minutes)**

In this sequence, we will explore video games developed in different periods and get a brief overview of the history of video games. The students will see videos of 6 different well-known video games.

The games used in this sequence:

- Pac-Man
- Super Mario
- Grand Theft Auto: Vice City
- Sonic the Hedgehog
- The Sims 3
- Minecraft

Before watching the trailers, tell your students to draw a timeline on paper and that during the video projection, they will need to place the games on the timeline.

Tip: you can also tell the students to create the timeline in reverse chronology, starting from the newest game to the oldest one.

- **Step 2 – Projecting the videos and finalising the first assignment (10 minutes)**

Here are the videos to show:

- [The Sims 3](#)
- [Pac-Man Original](#) (from 0:18 until 1:25)

- [Super Mario Bros.](#)
- [Minecraft](#)
- [Grand Theft Auto: Vice City - Trailer](#)
- [Sonic the Hedgehog](#) (0:11 until 1:11)

At this step, students will work individually on placing the games in the right place in the timeline.

- **Step 3 – Small group discussion and sharing thoughts with the whole class (10 minutes)**

After each student creates their own timeline with the games, they will discuss their decisions in pairs or in small groups. Ask them to share which game is the oldest, which one is the newest and how they came to that conclusion. What did they have to pay attention to while deciding where to put the game on the timeline? Following the small group discussion ask some students to share what they discussed with the whole class.

- **Step 4 – A brief history of video games (15 minutes)**

At this step you can print out (or give a digital copy) the following 2-page handout and give it to the students to read and explore by themselves. Then ask them to go back to their initial timeline with games and ask if there is something they would change about their initial choices.

Parts of the text below are taken from the first Intellectual Output of this project: The booklet [When videogames meet education.](#)

Brief history of video games

Video games are now a huge part of our cultural landscape; however, they have not always been around us - video games did not exist before the 1950s (Wolf, 2001). Even after gathering all known information about the invention and development of video games, there is still a debate about who was the first inventor of video games.

- 1952, A.S. Douglas, a British professor, as part of his Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Cambridge, created OXO (noughts and crosses or tic-tac-toe).
- 1958, W. Higginbotham created for the yearly visitor's day of the Brookhaven National Laboratory in Upton, New York, 'Tennis for Two'. This was created on a large analogue computer and a connected oscilloscope screen.
- 1962, S. Russell invented Spacewar! at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Spacewar! is a space combat video game based on the computer for Programmed Data Processor-1 (a then highly advanced computer usually found at universities). This was the first ever video game that was playable on different computer installations.
- 1967, developers led by R. Baer, created "The Brown Box", a multi-program, prototype multiplayer video game system which was played on television. Baer, also known as the "Father of Video Games", gave the license of his device to Magnavox, an American electronics company.
- In 1972, Magnavox sold the system to customers as the first video game home console named the Odyssey.
- In 1977, Atari released a home console called the Atari 2600 – also known as a Video Computer System – including joysticks and game cartridges for playing multi-coloured games.
- In 1980, Pac-man was released.

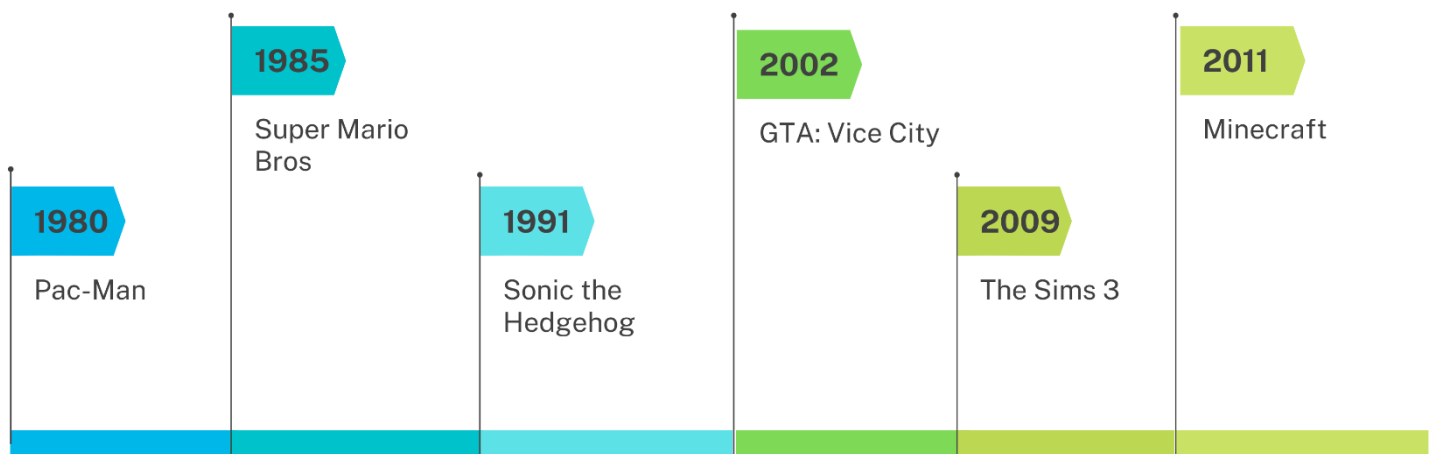
- In 1985, Nintendo released several video game franchises still known and used today. This includes, “Super Mario Bros.”, “Metroid”, and “The Legend of Zelda”.
- In 1989, Nintendo releasee the “Game Boy” device.
- In 1991, the first Sonic the Hedgehog was released.
- The first GTA game was released in 1997. GTA 2 followed in 1999, GTA III in 2000 and then, in 2002. GTA: Vice City was released.
- The first Sims game was released in 2000, The Sims 2 followed in 2004,
- Fast forwarding to the early 2000s - In 2005-2006, kicking off the modern age of HD gaming, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, and Nintendo’s Wii were released, a tense competition of opponents.
- In 2009, the Sims 3 came out.
- Minecraft was fully released in 2011.

Of course, video game development and creation did not stop there. Today, there are over five million video games available (National Today, 2022).

In 2020, there were 2.69 billion active video gamers worldwide (Gough, 2020). The ‘love of gaming’ is common among among the youth and old, and in recent years there has been a rise in female gamers. And the number of video games and gamers continues to rise!

- **Step 5 – Sharing the right timeline and conclusion (5 minutes)**

Here is the timeline that also contains the years of the release of certain video games that you can share with your students. You can ask the students if there is something more they would like to share now after seeing the timeline with all the games on it.



References

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