

# Violent Video Games: Does it affect the mind?

## Introduction

Violent video games have been known to have both a positive and negative effect on different people. These effects have been hotly debated: some people adopting a more lenient policy on these games, and some adopting a stricter policy, suggesting bans and bars on violent games. Many of these arguments rely on experience, studies, polls and drawing experience from prior outcomes. In each argument exists the question: Is there a connection between violent video games and violence, and if so, what connects the two?

## Debaters



*Etienne, Student*



*Josh, Student*



*Serina, Student*



*Hansa, Student*

## Different games affect performance



*Hansa is a student from Hightstown High school in New Jersey who has seen acts and behavioral changes through violent video games.*

Imagine your child comes home from school one day and you notice them rushing to finish their food. After quickly eating they get to their homework. Your child does every problem so quickly that half of the answers are inaccurate. When they are finished with all their homework they relax for several hours by playing their favorite violent video game. This whole concept of finishing all your tasks just to play a video game seems strange, right?

Well, research shows that violent video games have been known to have a negative effect on the person playing them.

**People who played action video games did tasks faster; however, they also did the tasks less accurately.**

Rolf Nelson, a psychology professor who studies human visual perception, did research regarding whether the video game type has an effect on people. The studies revolved primarily around two different types of video games, violent and strategic. He found that people who played action video games did tasks faster; however, they also did the tasks less accurately. While people who played strategy games did things more accurately and slowly. He also

found that students who just played an action video game have less patience than ones who play

strategic games. Results showed that people who played violent video games were faster in their interactions while strategic games caused someone to be in a more accurate mode of interaction.

**Different genres of games have different purposes and effects on the person playing them.**

In our generation today, many young children and teenagers are introduced to violent video games at a young age. When these young adults come home from school they quickly did their tasks, causing it to be less accurate just so they could play an action video game. Each video game, whether strategic or violent, causes a person to think a certain way. It also causes people to approach their surrounding differently by making them to act differently in a certain environment. Some people might say that the type of person who is playing the game has an effect on what it does to them. However, evidence shows that different genres of games have different purposes and effects on the person playing them. Overall, the effect of playing violent video games depends on the type of video game being played. Therefore, different types of video games have different effects on people whether it is action or strategic games.

Overall, the playing of violent video games affects a person's mind negatively by causing them to be less accurate and have less patience. A strategic game did the exact opposite by positively affecting the mind and allowing people to be more accurate, patient, and do tasks slower. Therefore, different video games have different outcomes and emotions on the person playing them.

### **Violent games not fueling violent behavior**



*Etienne is a 15 year-old all-honors honor-roll student enrolled at Hightstown High School. He plays numerous video games, including but not limited to: The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim, Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3, and Minecraft.*

Imagine a world completely destroyed; cities in ruin, corpses on the streets, and discharged firearms lay everywhere to accompany the scene. Gruesome, right? Now you're thinking that it couldn't get any worse, but now imagine if someone told you this all happened because somebody blew a video game out of proportion, doing what they saw in the game. Can pixels forming people shooting each other really cause an individual to snap? In most cases, it seems irrational and far-fetched, doesn't it?

**The average person loses 78% weapon accuracy when their target exceeds 5 meters.**

One of the main controversies I have seen lately is the speculation that the playing of violent video games (i.e. the Call of Duty series) causing bad behavior. From what I have seen from being both a researcher *and* teenage gamer, video games do NOT induce violent behavior in teens.

In 2010, a scientist by the name of Ferguson conducted a study that showed violent media and video game influences on youth. A sway in the study showed that crime rates remained the same, even while the youth of the study played violent games.

Some people may tell you that teens who play violent games are more likely to be aggressive or confrontational. If a teen does do this in response to playing these kinds of games, he or she should know to limit themselves, or at the very least, their parents should for letting them get the game. Many also say that teens who play violent games show substantial declines in academic achievement. My

perspective is that a teen SHOULD always be aware of his/her academics, and it is be them and their parents' faults for not intervening. After all, minors buying mature-rated games must have their parents' consent anyway.

People always tell me that violent games make young children more likely to confuse fantasy violence and real violence, and may mimic the acts that they see in a game. In my opinion, violent games

should be played at the user's discretion, and I believe that.

Sure, people may be concerned that people who play war

games will know how to effectively use a weapon, but did

they ever hear this? Also, over 80% of all teens own

violent games, but only 0.01% have been involved in acts

of violence (breaking the law in some way shape or form

involving violence).

**Parents should be aware that their "young child" (estimating 8-12 yrs.) playing games is THEIR decision.**

Studies even show *drops* in violent behavior when teens

play games, because psychologists see teens using these games as "a medium for doing things that normally aren't socially/politically acceptable." This essentially de-stresses teens. Moral of the story:

Don't pin modern day violence on the violent game-developers' heads.

**Don't just blame the game**



Joshua

*Joshua is an avid video game enthusiast, who has gone to several video game conventions, including two years at PAX East, one of the largest gaming conventions to date.*

I've spent most of my life gaming; far too much of it, according to my parents. Apparently, staying in the basement for days at a time playing "Minecraft", only leaving for short breaks, is "frowned upon" in my household. But sometimes people play games in which there is more to do than simply place blocks in a creative environment -- sometimes people take to playing violent video games, and, depending on external factors involving that person, those games may end up polluting that person's mind. Sure, video game activists everywhere will say with utter assurity that the games are harmless -- and that is true for the majority of users. But just as medicine can be perverted into harmful substances, the games to which my generation is addicted can also be twisted. Depending upon the mind of the person playing, getting a "killing spree" in "Halo" may mean more than just a new high score.

Many external factors can play key roles in a person's mind corrupting the video games which they play. These factors can include age, home environment, prior mental health issues, experiences of bullying or other related abuses and any other risk factors.

Studies show that younger children are more likely to blur the line between fantasy and reality; this could simply manifest itself in the harmless playing of imaginative games. But it could also manifest itself in more violent tendencies, if the child is exposed to excess violent media, such as video games.

The combination of violent media and an inability to correctly interpret this media may lead someone to

bring the virtual violence into the real world; but neither the game,

**The combination of violent media and an inability to correctly interpret this media may lead someone to bring the virtual violence into the real world**

nor the blurred lines alone would have the same effect.

Children who have poor home environments also are subjected to more mental stress than other children, and this may cause an

increased tendency to misconstrue violence as acceptable means of handling a situation.

Bullying has quite a similar effect on these types of people; the belief that one must defend themselves physically, which can cause the victim of bullying to do extremely violent things. While it is not necessary for violent video games to be played in order for a bullying victim to lash out, it can certainly be a contributing factor.

Other factors can have a similar effect on these gamers, however, all suggest that a video game alone will not cause violent tendencies. These violent effects are obviously not seen in everyone who plays a video game.

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excitement**

It is perhaps this inconsistency with results that most supports the philosophy that games alone do not cause violence. For example, one study conducted by two doctors in the field, Doctor Christopher Ferguson and Doctor Cheryl Olson suggests that there is “no association between the playing of violent video games and subsequent increased delinquent criminality”. Meanwhile, other studies show that “violent video games increase angry feelings, aggressive thoughts, aggressive behavior, shortening of temper & physiological arousal”. This difference in opinion speaks volumes, suggesting that no conclusion can be made, because testing for the effects of violent video games without taking into account other factors will undoubtedly yield skewed results.

If the previously discussed factors are present in a person, sometimes he or she will begin to desire more than just a screen's worth of excitement. The previously discussed factors can sometimes make a person more susceptible to taking out aggression in violence, and video games can serve as a catalyst for duress.

Most gamers who play video games will, indeed, be unaffected; video game activists strongly

support this fact, though it is necessary for them to accept the fact that there sometimes can be a correlation between video games and violence.

Seeing others use violence to solve situations can sometimes make it seem acceptable, or even "cool" for them to do so, which is one of the reasons people play violent video games in the first place. Some users simply find enjoyment in the rush of getting a headshot in Call of Duty. Some find it fun to do things they would, but can't, do in real life, such as committing violent crimes in games like Grand Theft Auto.

Video games like these can be beneficial, or detrimental to the development of a child. Some games promote creative, constructive thinking and strategy; others... not so much. The context in which a game is used (that is to say, the factors in place) affect the way a game can be perverted from "all in good fun" to something much more serious.

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duress.**

### **Violent Video games are harming our children**



Serina



*Serina is a Hightstown High school Student who has played violent and watched violent video games from a very young age and has seen the affects it caused on the people she played the games with.*

Video games are something the vast majority plays, and the opinion of what the impact is on the children who play it is very much divided. Although there are some good things that can come out of playing video games, like hand-eye coordination and problem solving skills, there are also long lasting effects that could be extremely harmful to the development of a child. The violence in the games could translate into everyday life, which could be a problem with fitting into society.

**...it can skew their perception of reality and make it difficult to differentiate between fantasy and actual violence.**

Violent video games are harmful to young children because not only can it make them more aggressive, it can skew their perception of reality and make it difficult to differentiate between fantasy and actual violence. Praise and repetition can also play a role in the development of a child because it could actually go and

**Young children are more likely to feel increasingly hostile..**

promote violent behavior among the younger gamers.

Most children appreciate and crave praise for things they do, and violent video games do exactly that by saying things like “Good shot!” or talk about the number you get from a kill streak. Praise and repetition could be a harmful mixture because the more praise someone gets for a certain behavior, the more likely they’re going to repeat said behavior. With repetition, if you do something at least 50 times, it becomes a habit. If you keep shooting people in games and killing everything in sight that has two legs, that kind of behavior becomes a habit. That being said, it could translate into daily life

in a harmful way. The presence of fantasy violence repeatedly could numb the person to things like shootings and bombs, so when that emergency arises, they could react in a way that is out of the norm.

The effects from playing violent video games may go beyond mimicking behavior and skewing the difference between actual and fantasy violence. The aggressive behavior stems from the aggression in certain games. Putting a stop to this could be a simple solution, which is to make it more difficult to get a hold of these games, putting laws on not selling them to minors, or just not letting your child play certain games until they're mature enough to do so.

Aggressive behavior is very much linked to people who play violent video games. Aggression could lead to fights with teachers and other students, a decline in academic achievement, shortening of tempers, and cause them to lack empathy for others. The aggression could be controlled if stricter rules were in effect. Stricter rules could prevent children from playing M-rated games which would be helpful in the proper development of a child. Halting children from playing games that are inappropriate will keep the confusion between fantasy and real violence at bay, and they'll less likely get into altercations with peers and teachers. "They'll grow out of it" might take a little longer than it used to.

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