

Read the “Do Video Games Have a Major Effect on Players’ Physical Health?” passage set.

Do Video Games Have a Major Effect on Players’ Physical Health?

Source 1: Action-Packed Video Games a Sight for Sore Eyes

by Lisa Stein

- 1 Could it be? Could playing video games . . . be good for something? Studies have linked nonstop video gaming to such ills as carpal tunnel syndrome¹ and tennis elbow, not to mention the current obesity epidemic plaguing this nation’s young.
- 2 On the positive side, some research has shown that playing video games can improve eye-hand coordination and visual attention—the ability to search for a target in a jungle of objects, to monitor several items at once, and to keep track of a steady stream of objects zipping swiftly by.
- 3 And now comes more good news for video game aficionados.² A new study . . . in the journal *Psychological Science*, shows that playing fast-paced, action-filled video games significantly sharpens vision
- 4 The reason? “Action video game play changes the way our brains process visual information,” says study author Daphne Bavelier, noting that after just 30 hours, video gamers showed “a substantial increase in the spatial resolution of their vision.” Translation: “They could see figures like those way down on an eye chart more clearly,” she says, “even when other symbols crowded in.”
- 5 Bavelier, an associate professor of brain and cognitive sciences at the University of Rochester, says the findings are helping scientists design a way to aid people with amblyopic or “lazy” eye.³ . . .
- 6 “We think action video game playing trains the same part of the visual cortex (located in the back of the brain) as that which has a dysfunction⁴ in people with lazy eye,” Bavelier says. “This is showing us a new path forward for rehabilitation with these games”
- 7 She notes that researchers were surprised by the findings, because it was previously believed that the adult visual cortex could not easily be retrained or taught new things. And yet, the results indicate that is exactly what happened. . . .

¹carpal tunnel syndrome: an injury to a nerve in the wrist

²aficionados: people who really enjoy something

³“lazy” eye: reduced vision in one eye caused when the brain and eye do not work together properly

⁴dysfunction: the state of not working properly

- 8 But lest you think that is an excuse to start playing video games all the time—forget it. “There’s more to life than vision,” Bavelier chuckles. Besides, she notes, obsessive play will not necessarily lead to benefits, even in people with lazy eye. “It needs to be done properly,” she says about integrating video games into a treatment plan. “Usually people only have one amblyopic eye. We need to train the bad eye to become better, and the two eyes need to work together.”

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Source 2: Video Games and Physical Health

by Joseph Green

- 9 There’s no doubt about it: young people love video games. A 2008 Pew Internet & American Life study reported that 97% of Americans ages 12 to 17 play video games. That’s a lot of people! But how might this gaming affect their physical health?
- 10 Some people play video games for too long. They hold their body in one position for hours. They perform the same movements over and over. This tension¹ and repetition can strain body parts such as the neck, wrist, or elbow. The strain can cause pain. However, in many cases the pain doesn’t last. It goes away if people stop playing the games so much.
- 11 Video games have also been blamed for the rise in obesity. People may choose video games over physical activity. This problem can be avoided by making time for physical activity. Also, some video games can actually help people be more physically active. These games allow players to move their bodies to control the game. Some people say these games don’t have the same benefits as “real” physical activity. Others see them as a good way to encourage people to move more.
- 12 Playing video games may lead to some health problems. But many of these problems occur when the games are played excessively. Moderate game playing doesn’t usually harm people’s physical health over the long term.

¹tension: the condition of being stretched tight

“Video Games and Physical Health” by Joseph Green. Written for educational purposes.

Source 3: Teens' sleep cut short by high-tech toys

by Vikki Ortiz Healy

- 13 A relaxing summer evening for 18-year-old Ross Nikides last week went like this:
- 14 He and five friends brought laptops to another friend's house to play "World of War Craft" and other Internet games against each other.
- 15 Around 4:15 a.m., one of the guys craved a milkshake, so they piled into two cars and drove around Carol Stream, Ill., in search of an ice cream shop still open.
- 16 An hour later, they were back at the friend's house, slurping down their drinks while checking Facebook and playing Xbox until they finally fell asleep—cellphones by their sides—around 6:15 a.m.
- 17 "It was a good bonding experience with friends," said Nikides, who woke up 7 hours later and had enough energy to go for a run.
- 18 Nikides and other teens are averaging 6.5 to 7.5 hours of sleep a night, well below the 9 hours recommended in a newsletter . . . by the Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine.
- 19 Hanging out with friends and staying up late may not be different from what some teens did 30 years ago, but new research suggests technological distractions that teens have access to today cut into the quality of their much-needed rest. . . .
- 20 Yet despite years of warnings about the risks of insufficient sleep—including poor school performance, obesity and, as presented in June at an annual meeting of sleep researchers, links to depression—teens and their parents say adolescent exhaustion remains a fact of life.
- 21 And the best they can do is to balance their teens' need for sleep with their need to keep up with today's technology.
- 22 "Teens don't value sleep because there's too many things going on to distract them," Nikides said. . . .
- 23 One night last week, Ryan Cassidy, an 18-year-old recent high school graduate, began playing Xbox at 10:30 p.m., using two-minute breaks within the game to play another game on his cellphone. After two hours, he moved on to his laptop, on which he watched a TV program and checked his Facebook page during commercials.
- 24 Cassidy eventually decided to go to sleep at 2 a.m.
- 25 "I'll wake up a little tired, and I know it's because I stayed up late playing games or something, but to me, it's almost worth it," the Geneva, Ill., teen said. . . .
- 26 Teens need adequate deep and REM sleep to rebuild long-term memory for learning, focus attention for driving and maintain health and fight obesity, said Dr. Matthew Edlund, director of the Center for Circadian Medicine and author of "The Power of Rest."
- 27 "From a public health standpoint, I look at this and I am scared stiff," Edlund said. "They're so connected to their machines that they're treating themselves as though they don't need any rest."

28 The shift has left parents struggling to set rules that will keep their teens rested in today's age.

29 Stephanie Cassidy, Ryan's 48-year-old mom, said summer rules are more lax, but over the school year she and her husband banned computer use—except for homework—on week nights. They also enforced a 10 p.m. bed time and put limits on Xbox and other game use at night.

30 "Sometimes I'd like to take all the electronics and throw it out the window," Cassidy said. "They need their sleep . . . and until they learn and see the reality of it for themselves, they might not know how to do that."

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Source 4: Heart group backs video games in obesity campaign

by Joel Schectman

31 The American Heart Association and Nintendo Co. are teaming up to promote the popular Wii video game console, as the health advocacy group concedes¹ that its campaign for traditional exercise isn't working.

32 The surprising partnership, announced Monday, comes amid growing concern about obesity among kids who spend much of their time watching television and playing video games. . . .

33 "We can keep beating the drum on traditional exercise and make small changes to the obesity epidemic, or we can try something that is really provocative² and new," Clyde Yancy, the AHA's president, said in an interview.

34 Numerous studies show a correlation³ between obesity and the amount of time children spend with television and video games. Jeffrey Levi, executive director of Trust for America's Health, said the best solution is simply to cut the cord and encourage youths to spend less time in front of screens.

35 But the AHA said it is endorsing the Wii because it will encourage sedentary⁴ Americans to take the first step toward fitness. With 70 percent of Americans doing no regular physical activity at all, the AHA wants to find a way to reach out to people turned off by gyms and traditional sports.

36 The organization said its studies show that 40 percent of those who don't exercise say that it's not entertaining enough. The AHA says the Wii addresses the fun factor.

¹concedes: admits

²provocative: causing a strong reaction

³correlation: possible connection

⁴sedentary: inactive

Grade 7 Scoring Sampler Passage Set and Prompt

- 37 The Wii, which has sold more than 30 million consoles across the Americas, comes with a controller that encourages people to physically move as they play. Sports-style games such as baseball and boxing let players move their arms Nintendo also makes a foot pad accessory, the Wii Fit, that allows players to try dance steps or yoga.
- 38 The heart icon⁵ covers the Wii console itself along with two of its more active games, Wii Fit Plus and Wii Sports Resort. . . .
- 39 Wii players say that the level of physical exertion⁶ varies greatly by player.
- 40 Maria Lambiris, an 18-year-old illustrations student at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, said the game system recently helped her lose five pounds.
- 41 “You really get into it sometimes and you can use your whole body,” Lambiris said. . . .
- 42 But while many of the games may not offer the same level of physical activity as traditional sports, they may help get some people started on a healthier lifestyle.
- 43 “It is a first step for someone who is entirely sedentary,” Yancy said.
- 44 Yancy said that once that person becomes motivated, he or she can access a website Nintendo and the AHA are developing to help monitor exercise and diet plans.

⁵heart icon: symbol of the AHA endorsement

⁶exertion: effort

Excerpt from “Heart group backs video games in obesity campaign” by Joel Schectman, from the *Seattle Times*.
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Writing Prompt

Write an essay for your school newspaper arguing whether playing video games significantly affects physical health. Your essay must be based on the ideas, concepts, and information that can be determined through analysis of the “Do Video Games Have a Major Effect on Players’ Physical Health?” passage set.

Manage your time carefully so that you can

- read the passages;
- plan your response;
- write your response; and
- revise and edit your response.

Be sure to

- include a claim;
- address counterclaims;
- use evidence from multiple sources; and
- avoid overly relying on one source.

Your response should be in the form of a multiparagraph essay. Write your response in the space provided.