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Computer Games: Good or Bad?

Computer games are very popular with young people, but they are also controversial. For example, opponents argue that they are harmful to brain development, cause children to neglect reading and encourage violent or anti-social behaviour. Supporters, however, claim that the games help to develop advanced thinking skills and are often played cooperatively rather than alone. What is the truth of the matter? Your task in this assignment is to find out.

You must explore the list of webpages below and make notes about the information contained in each. Then, using your notes you can make up your mind about whether computer games are good or bad. You will be required to present your arguments as an essay.

You may find the table below useful for taking notes as you read. (You will be graded on your note-taking as well as your essay.) It is acceptable to do *some* cutting and pasting, but please remember that you are supposed to be taking notes! You can cut and paste, but then reduce the points until they are notes, not sentences.

An example of how to take notes

The following information is copied from an Observer newspaper webpage: http://www.observer.co.uk/international/story/0,6903,539166,00.html

> "… the level of brain activity was measured in hundreds of teenagers playing a Nintendo game and compared to the brain scans of other students doing a simple, repetitive arithmetical exercise. To the surprise of brain-mapping expert Professor Ryuta Kawashima and his team at Tohoku University in Japan, it was found that the computer game only stimulated activity in the parts of the brain associated with vision and movement.
>
> In contrast, arithmetic stimulated brain activity in both the left and right hemispheres of the frontal lobe - the area of the brain most associated with learning, memory and emotion.
>
> Most worrying of all was that the frontal lobe, which continues to develop in humans until the age of about 20, also has an important role to play in keeping an individual's behaviour in check.
>
> Whenever you use self-control to refrain from lashing out or doing something you should not, the frontal lobe is hard at work.
>
> Children often do things they shouldn't because their frontal lobes are underdeveloped. The more work done to thicken the fibres connecting the neurons in this part of the brain, the better the child's ability will be to control their behaviour. The more this area is stimulated, the more these fibres will thicken.
>
> The students who played computer games were halting the process of brain development and affecting their ability to control potentially anti-social elements of their behaviour."

Here is **the same information in note form** (you may copy it if you wish):

<u>Jpn. research</u>

- <u>Nintendo</u> game only stimulated parts of brain associated with vision and movement
- <u>Arithmetic</u>
  stimulated both left and right hemispheres of the frontal lobe - associated with <u>learning, memory and emotion</u> (including control of anger)
- therefore: playing computer games may limit brain growth and lead to anti-social behaviour

Please keep a record of the sites you have used for your research. You will need to include these in a bibliography at the end of your essay.

NOTE: The following webpages are <u>not</u> sorted into "for"/"against" or any other kind of categories. You must decide for yourself how to categorise the information.

Webpages to explore

How computer games can be bad for yourbrain

http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/helthrpt/hstories/hr161004.htm

Video games "stimulate learning"

http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/education/newsid_1879000/1879019.stm

Computer games are good for you!

http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/uk/newsid_1879000/1879361.stm

Computer games pose injury risk

http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/health/newsid_243000/243589.stm

Computer games get OK from educators

http://www.teem.org.uk/aboutteem/press/article?nid=101

Computer games stunt teen brains

http://www.observer.co.uk/international/story/0,6903,539166,00.html

Video games do no harm to children (Will Wright, creator of The Sims)

http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2007/oct/26/games.childrens?gusrc=rss&feed=networkfront

The Internet and computer games reinforce the gender gap

http://www.apa.org/monitor/oct00/games.html

Gender Stereotyping

http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/parents/video_games/concerns/gender_videogames.cfm

Review of "Growing Up Digital" (by Don Tapscott)

http://kinderjazz.blogspot.com/2008/12/do-endless-hours-on-computer-harm-our.html

The quest to end game addiction

http://www.wired.com/news/holidays/0,1882,48479,00.html

Video game addiction

http://www.theparentreport.com/resources/ages/preteen/kids_culture/130.html

Doom with a view

http://www.guardian.co.uk/online/story/0,3605,678207,00.html

Video and computer games

http://www.media-awareness.ca/eng/issues/stats/congam.htm

Violent media is good for kids

http://www.motherjones.com/reality_check/violent_media.html

	Computer Games are Good	**Computer Games are Bad**
Brain development		
Learning (e.g. reading, Maths etc.)		
Social skills		
Health		
Violence		
Gender stereotypes		

Try to do this research by yourself, but if you need some help, you can check a completed table of notes (with essay writing instructions) on this page.

Your essay

Once you have completed your notes, your next task is to write a first draft of your essay. This will be a discursive essay - looking at both sides of the argument in a fairly balanced way. For an example of how to organise a discursive essay, check this page:

- A discursive essay about car use