

## Are Video Games Hurting Your Child?

The short answer- no. Although video games have long been derided by educators as being useless and violent, but your child can't tear himself away from the screen. While many games do condone needless violence and feature explicit scenes inappropriate for children, there are a number of games available that can promote manual dexterity, problem solving skills, imagination, and even physical fitness. The key lies in doing a little monitoring. Here are a few tips to help you feel good about your child's gaming habits.

**Be Involved:** Make sure you know which games your child is playing. Check the ratings, Google parent reviews, and ask your child to teach you how to play. If your child is embarrassed or reluctant, there's probably a good reason he doesn't want you playing next to him. Remove games that are too violent or mature in nature for your child's age, and peek in occasionally.

**Be Proactive:** Do a little research on educational games (they do exist!) and choose one or two that receive good reviews. A few good choices include "Smarty Pants" a fully customizable trivia game(Wii), "Brain Age" for ages 7 and up (Nintendo DS), "Pajama Sam 3", a fun adventure/problem solving game with mini nutrition lessons for ages 5-8 (PS3), and "Final Fantasy XIII", a beautiful, non-gory RPG for ages 13 and up(PS3 & Xbox360). Incorporate these games into your child's allotted gaming time by designating time specifically for instructive games.

**Avoid Being Shut Out:** Allow game systems to be hooked up only in family areas like living rooms and rec rooms. No bedrooms. This allows you to keep a closer eye on what and how much your child plays.

**Upgrade to Motion Gaming:** The Nintendo Wii and Xbox360 both offer motion gaming, where players move not only their thumbs, but their entire bodies. Both systems offer several fun and family-oriented games that will encourage bonding and have everyone on their feet and moving. Who says you can't have the best of both worlds!