

What can parents do?

It is very easy for parents, especially parents of children with special needs, to give in to children over computer games for the sake of a quiet life.

However parents have a key role in managing how much access their children have to computer and video games and can help their children develop a healthy well balanced lifestyle.

- They can make sure that computers and TVs are in areas where they can monitor the use and content of games.
- They can encourage children to buy games related to other areas of interest such as football, racing, history, music etc rather than ones containing fighting and violence.
- They can encourage children to access other interests and activities outside the house such as going swimming, playing football with friends.
- They can limit the amount of time children spend on the games.
- They can have rules that the age rating codes on the games children are using are appropriate to their age and ask older children to keep their games away from younger brothers and sisters.

This leaflet is based upon information from the Byron review, which was conducted for the Government in March 2008 by Dr Tanya Byron. (More widely known for her role in 'Little Angels' and 'The House of Tiny Tearaways').

The final version was produced after consultation with parents.



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Information for Parents 'The effects of playing Video Games on Children and Young People'



CAMHS
Child and Adolescent
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Introduction

Many parents worry about their children getting into trouble at school and showing angry behaviour. They also worry about their children getting into fights with other children and possibly getting into trouble with the police. They may try to get help with these difficulties but sometimes don't consider that there are other influences that can make a difference.

Recent research suggests that in order to help keep young people safe and healthy parents can play a key role in managing their children's use of video and internet games.

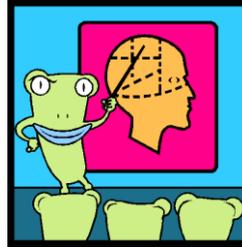
Children are still developing evaluation skills and will often need the help of responsible adults to help them make decisions about what games to play.



Video games- the Research

Children's use of internet and video games is seen by some researchers as linked to violence and destructive behaviour. It seems that a child's individual characteristics such as their age, personality and ability to learn affects the level of risk. As the brain develops children become better at identifying and managing risks.

Most recent research conducted by the University of Bonn has shown that heavy use of 'shooting type' games (more than 2 hours a day) has an impact on the brain and affects the young persons ability to understand feelings and to control their emotions



Most research has been carried out on older children so we don't know the full effect that playing violent games may have on younger children but we do know that when they repeat patterns of behaviour they build up pathways of learning in the brain therefore we can assume that excessive playing of violent video games is likely to have a detrimental effect on the development of their values, ideas and behaviour.

This is why age rating codes are important, as younger children are less likely to be able to recognise risk and manage this appropriately. It is important to keep this in mind with children who may be functioning at a level which is lower than their actual age in terms of social skills and learning. What may be OK for their peers may not be suitable for them due to their different stage of development.

Young children's perception and expectations of the real world can be affected as they are developing the ability to identify between fact and fiction.

Some research suggests that people act differently online and may do things that they wouldn't normally do.



This is important because young children are still learning how to behave in the real world and being able to see the reactions of people around them in response to the things they do is an important part of this learning.

Playing video games can also increase a child's level of arousal (excitability) and lead to symptoms of stress.

There are also concerns that if used a lot video games may take over from other activities and interaction with friends and family so children miss out on social development opportunities and a chance to find out what skills and talents they have in other areas.



