

25 Benefits of Internet, Computer and Console Gaming

By Judy Arnall

Can't get your child off the screens this summer without major battles? Relax! Parents are well advised of the risks of the internet and gaming, but are not often pointed to the many benefits of this new technology. All is not lost. Your child's brain will do more work this summer if you don't pull them off the computer and gaming console. And if you can't beat them, join them! It's fun, keeps your brain in shape, and a great way to connect with your children.

Benefits of the Internet

- A compact, portable, easily accessible, limitless source of information for research purposes, homework or just gaining general or specific knowledge on any topic. Saves parents many trips driving to the library.
- A communication tool via e-mail, video, or voice from anyone in the world to anyone in the world. Children can easily stay in touch with relatives and friends.
- Access to worldwide contact information for corporations, markets, news and small businesses. Easier than picking up the phone and no more long distance charges. Plan trips, outings and shop with the ease of a mouse click.
- Allows the disabled, elderly, poor and confined, access to information and communication that would otherwise be a barrier to them. There are no physical barriers to accessing information.
- Enables people to communicate without visual stereotypes. People are judged first on their words, not age, gender, culture or looks.
- Is a limitless source of entertainment in video and audio format. Name your entertainment and it's there.
- Encourages literacy; reading, writing, and spelling skills. Children who hate workbooks can practice literacy skills in a format that really motivates them to do so.

Benefits of Video and Computer Gaming

Academic

- Games teach critical thinking, analytical thinking, strategy, and problem-solving skills. Many games marketed for boys rely heavily on these skills and are especially great for girls that may not acquire the same practice in games marketed for girls which focus on decorating and care-giving. Girls that don't get enough gaming time miss out on these critical "boy game" skills.
- Players learn to manage many forms of information and options usually under the stress of time limits and competitors, which is great practice for adult life.
- Games that require reading, writing and spelling build literacy skills.

- Players often have to juggle competing interests, and learn how to multi-task again under time constraints.
- Games develop pattern recognition and use math operations, reasoning and logic to solve problems.
- Games provide a different medium outlet for creative inspiration such as generating art, music, writing, video creation, etc
- Games initiate interest in many topic areas in history, art, cultures and science that spur research and reading.

Life Skills

- Games help players to zone out, de-stress, escape into fantasy worlds, and relax.
- Games teach delayed gratification skills. Players have to work their way up levels and can't shortcut without other's help.
- Games teach focusing skills especially in a background of music, noise, chattering and distractions.
- Games build self-esteem and confidence in a skill that is peer admired, and is especially important for children that don't excel in academics, sports or the arts.
- Games provide a source to teach and practice emotional intelligence.

Socialization

- Multi-player games lend themselves to team building, co-operation, strategy formation and group problem-solving with other players, in the game, and also outside the game, in the form of coaching, watching and advising the child handling the controller.
- Provide opportunities for negotiation within the game to further levels, and outside the game, in the family when there are not enough computers for children to play and they have to negotiate time limits.
- Provides a playground for groups of children that are not micro-managed by adults. Children make the rules or the game makes the rules, not the parents. When children get together face-to-face, they speak a gaming language that is not understood by adults and bonds them together in a secret world.
- LAN and TeamSpeak technology enables children separated physically by neighborhoods or continents to play together in the same game. Children can play with their best friend who can't catch a ride over, or play with their favourite cousin who lives in Ireland, or even a Grandmother from California.
- Connects parents and children in mutual fun when they play together or against each other in a friendly battle between the generations.
- At a cost of pennies per hour, it's good value fun for a group of children! Just hide the refrigerator.

If you can't limit screen time without some serious scream time from your child, remember that they are keeping their brains and fingers sharp in time for September's pens and paper. They may even be ahead of their peers that are banned from screens for the summer!

Judy Arnall is a professional international award-winning *Parenting Speaker*, and Trainer, Mom of five children, and author of the best-selling, "***Discipline Without Distress: 135 tools for raising caring, responsible children without time-out, spanking, punishment or bribery***" She specializes in "**Parenting the Digital Generation**" www.professionalparenting.ca (403) 714-6766 jarnall@shaw.ca

Copyright permission granted for "reproduction without permission" of this article in whole or part, if the above credit is included in its entirety.

