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Game Over for Video Games?
Are they really that bad for you?

Have you noticed how, in the media, video games are only ever portrayed as horrible, addictive, life ruining gifts from hell? This is a bias that has been spread for far too long. The truth needs to be unveiled. Video Games are far from being as awful as they are portrayed.

The media targets mainly kids playing video games however recent studies show that the average age of a gamer is FAR over a kid/teen, being an average of 35 years old. Video-Games are not and have never been solely or directly aimed at children.

Video games inspire generations of people who enter their worlds of Monsters, Futuristic cities, Space exploration, Fantasy dungeons, etc in a way no other media can. They

immerse gamers in universes made to seem near infinite. They spark the creativity in every player, offering them the chance to create a character, backstory and lore around them, playing the game in such a way that no two people will experience it in the exact same way.

They are also a huge part of the industry, earning roughly £70 Billion ($90 Billion) per year. This is a vital part of the economy and makes up a large amount of jobs worldwide, with video game developers, designers, testers and even entire divisions in companies such as *Nintendo, Sony and Microsoft*. Without videos games, unemployment rates would be a lot higher than they currently are, and the economy would be shifted massively.

Video-Games also play a large part in communities on sites such as *YouTube, Twitch, Twitter*, etc. Communities are built around regular people having fun and playing video games and can even lead to huge fundraising/charity events where said regular people play video games and chat with their fans whilst people donate to charity, for example a YouTuber, Sean Mcloughlin (known as "*jacksepticeye*") does monthly charity livestreams for various different charities often raising over £76,000 ($100,000) in just a few hours with donations from up to 22 million people. This shows just how positive of an impact video games can have not only for the economy but on people's entire lives.

Another example of this is another YouTuber, Craig Thompson (*"MiniLadd"*) who, with the help of his fans, raised over $100,000 (£76,885) and made 4 wells in 4 Swaziland towns that did not have clean drinking water.

A lot of people complain that video games are anti-social. This could not be further from the truth. Online multiplayer has expanded to the point where millions of people can connect, play and chat with people from across

the world. This can create friendships, or even romantic relationships that otherwise would never have existed.

However, they are also social offline as well, allowing parents, family, friends, etc to play games together with ease, which can further the bond between parent and child in a way films or books never could.

The majority of parents main problem with video games is the graphic content included in some of them, which is often blamed for causing crimes or mental issues in real life. If you are worried about your child witnessing this content, there is a easy solution. Video game consoles (and more notably the *Nintendo Switch*) have built in parental systems which allow you to block your child from accessing such content, or even playing games under a certain age limit, requiring a pin code or password to be entered to do so. Stores will also not allow your child to purchase video games with such content in, unless they are over 18, so there is no way the child could access this content without you allowing them to do so.

"But what about children playing video games for hours on end?", you might say. "Surely there's no way to stop that, right?" Wrong. This can again be solved by the previously mentioned parental controls, which allow a time limit to be set per day, after which the console blocks them from playing games, even allowing for different amount of hours allowed depending on the day, so you could, say, allow 3 hours on weekdays and 5 on weekends. If that isn't enough some consoles allow you to remotely lock the user out of it for as long as you want.

Even science and the medical world support video games. For example, take the 2015 study in The Journal of Neuroscience where 69 people were invited and split into three groups, one playing *Super Mario Bros 3D* for 2 weeks, one playing *Angry Birds*, and one playing nothing. The people who played *Mario* ended up doing better on follow-up memory tasks whilst the others showed no improvement.

Furthermore, Video Games are also used to help with medical problems such as Dyslexia, helping the patients to read better or ADHD to help the patient's focus, and other mental problems such as anxiety and depression.

Overall, Video-Games are nowhere near as bad as they are made out to be in the media. They inspire, support and develop us as people, create and strengthen friendships, host a multitude of opportunities in the world of work and allow us to escape from reality into a calm relaxing world where we can be whatever we want to be, without consequence or restrictions.