



# Wee Learn

Wee Mentors

(6+ years):

Can Spending Too Much  
Time Playing Video Games  
Hurt My Child?



According to Douglas Gentile a developmental psychologist, yes! Excessive video-game playing can have a negative effect on a young child for several reasons:

- Kids who spend too much time at the computer are missing out on other activities fundamental to their physical, social, intellectual, and emotional development. Time spent in front of the computer or game console is time taken away from playing with friends, being read to or doing a project with you, and other activities.
- Kids usually play video games alone, and too much time spent alone can foster social isolation.
- Children who watch more than ten hours of TV a week don't do as well in school as kids their age who watch less. When setting limits, it's important to consider the total amount of time your child spends in front of all electronic screens — TVs, computers, movie screens.
- Bad habits can become ingrained and are more difficult to change as children get older.
- If your child regularly plays games with plots based on violence and aggression, research shows he is at risk for increased aggressive behavior.

It's important to remember, however, that video and computer games aren't all bad. Quality games give children the opportunity to practice problem solving and logic skills. They increase fine motor and coordination skills and foster an interest in information technology. And, if you're playing the games with your child — something I highly recommend — they provide an occasion for you to do something together. Your best bet is to limit video game playing now while your child is still young. In addition, be a smart consumer and choose video games for your child that are age appropriate and that aren't sending the wrong message.

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