

# Videogames

Videogames are not necessarily harmful. It's how you use them. EndeavorRx is a videogame approved by the FDA to treat ADHD. It is similar to Mario Kart, with one important difference: It shuts off after 25 minutes of play.

Exergames games like Wii Sports improve cognition in children and adults, but too much play limits the brain's ability to grow and build other skills. Limiting game time is not easy. These things are addictive by design. Below are tips for parents to build healthy gaming habits in the family.



- Keep gaming devices and computers in common rooms like the living room.
- Limits how much your child is allowed to play, for instance, 1 hr/day for children, and 2 hr/day for teenagers. During weekends or holidays, game time can be increased to 1–3 hr/day.
- Have 1 or 2 days per week without video games.
- Inform your child clearly about the rules you will put into practice regarding video games. If possible, include the child in a discussion about how the rules should be.
- Consider using gaming as a reward, such as allowing play after completing homework or chores.
- Be conscious of yourself as a role model for your child. For instance, you might avoid sending text messages or be online during meals, and do not play video games in the timeframe when the child is prohibited from playing.



- Keep the child's bedroom free of electronic media devices (PC, TV, video games, tablets, and cell phones).
- Avoid letting the child play video games during the last hour before bedtime.
- Support and encourage the child to engage in physical activity. For instance, you can take the child hiking; enroll them in a sports club.
- Encourage your child to spend time on other hobbies and interests other than video games.
- Have rules that prohibit them from prioritizing video games over homework and family meals.
- Do not let the child play during meals.
- Do something pleasurable together with the child at least one or two times per week, for instance cooking, go to the cinema or visit a water park.
- Assess whether the game content is appropriate for the age of your child. Be aware of the fact that some online games can put your child in contact with others, including adults, who might have a negative influence on your child.
- Gather information about the games your child plays. You might also play together with the child. Explain the difference between fantasy and reality in the games.

- Choose games that foster knowledge and skills.
- Encourage them to tell you about a favorite game and explain to you why this game, in particular, is their favorite.
- Communicate openly with your child if you think that they play games to avoid difficult thoughts or feelings.
- Create opportunities for the child to spend time with others. Let your child invite friends over to play video games, or do other activities together.
- Praise your child for doing homework and other duties before playing video games.
- Supervise how much money the child spends on equipment, breaking obstacles, leveling up or the like in games.
- Talk with other parents and compose common rules for video games.
- If your child spends a great deal of time home alone, consider carefully whether you need to restrict your child's access to the Internet, e.g., by applying router access restrictions.
- Be prepared to confiscate video games and/or gaming consoles for a day or a weekend if the child violates the rules repeatedly.
- Pay attention to how much your child plays and ensure you have access to passwords used by the child to play games online.

Adopted from Krossbakken E et al, *J Behav Addict.* 2018;7(1):52-61.

## Healthier Videogames

### Creative and Problem-Solving Games

Games like *Minecraft* encourage creativity, building, and problem-solving skills. *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* promotes creativity, social interaction, and a relaxing atmosphere.

### Cognitive Skill Games

Games like *Brain Age* and *EndeavorRx* focus on memory, attention, and other cognitive skills.

### Multiplayer and Social Games

Games like *Mario Kart*, *Splatoon*, and *Rocket League* encourage friendly competition and social interaction.

### Role-Playing Games

Games like *Disney Dreamlight Valley* and *Alba: A Wildlife Adventure* can be both fun and educational.

### Sports and Exergames

These get people moving and are among the best studied games for improving cognition in all ages. They include dance games (*Just Dance*, *Dance Dance Revolution*); sports simulations (*Wii Sports*, *Wii Fit*, *Island Run*, *Kinect Sports*); and adventure games (*Ring Fit Adventure*).

—Chris Aiken, MD, updated 7/2/2025