Do computer games do more harm than good?

Affirmative (Computer games do more good than harm)

1st Speaker

1. Computer games do more good than harm (Introduction)
2. People would benefit if there were no computer games (Definition)
3. Governments should limit computer game sales (Allocation)
4. We would be better off if there were no computer games (Team Line)
5. 79% of American children now play computer or video games on a regular basis. (Example 1)
6. The division of games that feature violence, gore, and antisocial behaviour has raised concern among parents, educators, child advocates, medical professionals, and policy makers. (Example 2)
7. ‘History of Computer Games’

1st Speaker (Part 2)

1. Argument against opposition.
2. More examples. (2)
3. “Computer games are bad for us.”

Main Reasons: violence, nudity, sexuality, themes, morality, racism. (For examples)

Computer and video games have been the subject of controversy and censorship, due to the depiction of graphic violence, sexual themes, racism, consumption of illegal drugs, consumption of alcohol or tobacco, propaganda, extremism or profanity in some games. Among others, critics of video games sometimes include parents’ groups, politicians, organized religion groups, and other special interest groups, and may become a part of new laws and legislation in the United States and other countries. In recent years, particularly notable controversy was generated with the discovery of a downloadable modification that unlocked a sex driven minigame in the highly popular Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas.

Video game censorship is defined as use of state or group power to control the playing, distribution, purchase, or sale of video games or computer games based on a valuation of the game's content. Video game censorship is a polarizing subject, with both proponents and opponents of censorship displaying passion for their views.

Definitions

‘Racism’ is a belief or concept that inherent differences between people (such as those upon which the concept of race is based) determine cultural or individual achievement, and may involve the idea that one's own 'race' is superior.
‘Graphic violence’ is the depiction of particularly vivid and realistic acts of violence in visual media such as film, television, and video games. It may be real, simulated live action, or animated.

The "graphic" in graphic violence is a synonym for "explicit", referring to the clear, unabashed, and unobstructed nature of the violence portrayed; this is what differentiates true graphic violence from lesser forms of violence in media productions, including "cartoon" violence and "fantasy" violence.

### Playing Violent Video Games Makes a Difference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Students Involved in Physical Fights</th>
<th>Low Hostility</th>
<th>High Hostility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Violent Game Play</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Violent Game Play</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Children are more likely to imitate the actions of a character with whom they identify. In violent video games the player is often required to take the point of view of the shooter or perpetrator.

2. Video games by their very nature require active participation rather than passive observation.

3. Repetition increases learning. Video games involve a great deal of repetition. If the games are violent, then the effect is a behavioral rehearsal for violent activity.

4. Rewards increase learning, and video games are based on a reward system.

While the research base conducted on video games is small compared to that conducted on television, early results are showing that the concern is indeed warranted. Anderson &
Bushman have conducted a meta-analysis of 35 different studies of violent video games (2001).

1. Exposure to violent games increases physiological arousal.

Studies measuring the physiological responses to playing violent video games (compared with physiological responses to non-violent games) have shown that violent games increase physiological arousal. Heart rate, systolic blood pressure, and diastolic blood pressure all increase when playing violent games. Ballard & Weist (1996) showed that playing a violent game (Mortal Combat, with the depictions of blood "turned on") resulted in higher systolic blood pressure increases than playing a non-violent game or Mortal Combat with the blood "turned off." Studies by Lynch (1994, 1999) have shown that the effect may be even greater for children who are naturally more aggressive. Students who scored in the top 20% on a trait hostility scale showed much greater increases in physiological response than students scoring in the bottom 20% of the hostility scale. Children who were more hostile also showed much greater response in adrenaline, nor-adrenaline, and testosterone than children who were less hostile after playing a violent video game. These physiological effects are important because these are the same types of physiological reactions bodies have when engaged in a fight. The interaction with trait hostility is important because it suggests that the effects of playing violent games may be even greater for children who are already at risk for aggressive behaviour.

2. Exposure to violent games increases aggressive thoughts.

Studies measuring cognitive responses to playing violent video games (compared with cognitive responses to non-violent games) have shown that violent games increase aggressive thoughts. These findings have been found for males and females, children and adults, and in experimental and correlation studies. Kirsh (1998) found that exposure to a violent video game increases hostile attribution bias (defined below) in the short term, relative to exposure to a non-violent video game. The term hostile attribution bias has been used to describe the manner in which aggressive children perceive the actions of peers. Children who tend to interpret ambiguous social cues as being of hostile intent (i.e., have a hostile attribution bias) are more aggressive (e.g., Crick & Dodge, 1994). Furthermore, there is a robust relationship between hostile attribution bias and children’s social maladjustment, such as depression, negative self-perceptions, and peer rejection (Crick, 1995). Gentile et al. (under review) also found that children who play more violent games are more likely to have a hostile attribution bias.

3. Exposure to violent games increases aggressive emotions.
Studies measuring emotional responses to playing violent video games (compared with emotional responses to non-violent games) have shown that violent games increase aggressive emotions. Adolescents themselves often seem to recognize this. When asked to name the "bad things" about computer games, many students reported that they make people more moody and aggressive (Griffiths & Hunt, 1998). In this study, students who were more "addicted" to video games were significantly more likely to be in a bad mood before, during, and after play than were non-addicted students.

4. Exposure to violent games increases aggressive actions.

Studies measuring aggressive behaviours after playing violent video games (compared with behaviours displayed after playing non-violent games) have shown that violent games increase aggression. In one study of college students, students played either a violent or non-violent game. After playing this game, they were given a competitive reaction time task in which they played against another student. If they beat the other student, they got to deliver a loud "noise blast," and were able to control how loud and how long the noise blast would be. Students who had previously played the violent video game delivered longer noise blasts to their opponents (Anderson & Dill, 2000).

In a study of 8th and 9th graders, students who played more violent video games were also more likely to see the world as a hostile place, to get into frequent arguments with teachers, and to be involved in physical fights (Gentile et al., under review). It has often been suggested that violent video games are not the culprit for these types of behaviours; instead, the cause is underlying hostility. The argument goes, "Hostile kids get into more arguments and more fights. They also like to play more violent games." While this is true, it is not the whole story. This study measured children’s trait hostility, and found that exposure to video game violence is a significant predictor of physical fights, even when students’ sex, hostility level, and amount of video game playing are controlled statistically. If hostility were the whole story, then in general, only hostile children would tend to get into fights, and children with the lowest hostility scores would not get into physical fights regardless of their video game habits. Figure 1 shows the percentages of students who report being involved in physical fights within the previous year. Children with the lowest hostility scores are almost 10 times more likely to have been involved in physical fights if they play a lot of violent video games than if they do not play violent games (38% compared to 4%). In fact, the least hostile children who play a lot of violent video games are more likely to be involved in fights than are the most hostile children who do not play violent video games.