**Resolved: Video games are, on balance, harmful.**

**PRO**

My partner and I affirm the resolution: Video games are, on balance, harmful.

Before we begin, we would like to define a couple of keywords and phrases relevant to this resolution.

* According to Oxford English Dictionary, “on balance” is defined as “with all things considered.”
* According to the World Health Organization, “gaming disorder” is defined as an "excessive and uncontrollable obsession with video games, resulting in significant personal, social, academic, or occupational harm for at least 12 months.

My partner and I are going to show that video games are designed to be addicting, that extensive amounts of gaming are detrimental to one’s physical and mental health, and that individuals with a “gaming disorder addiction” suffer both personal and social consequences because of their excessive gaming. My partner and I will also show that understanding video games, on balance, are harmful things is key in preventing and treating gaming disorder addictions.

**Contention 1: Addiction**

Video game addiction is a real problem affecting millions of gamers worldwide.

* According to the National Library of Medicine, October 2020, “3-4% of gamers are addicted to video games. In a 2021 systematic review and meta-analysis, the global prevalence of gaming disorder was found to be 3.05%. That means there can be as many as 60 million people (or more) suffering from gaming disorder.”
* According to Psychiatric Times Magazine, April 2015, “game developers intentionally design video games to be addictive. Game designers are motivated to make their games more interesting so that users spend more time playing.”
* According to researchers at GameQuitters.com, a gaming educational resource, “gaming companies are enlisting the help of Ph.D. behavioral psychologists using state-of-the-art research and data to make their games as addictive as possible.”

Impact: Understanding that video games, on balance, are harmful is the first step in creating laws and other regulations limiting what game developers are permitted to do when creating video games that could contribute to addictive behaviors.

* According to the National Library of Medicine, in June 2012, online gamers who played excessively had a higher incidence of comorbidities, including internet addiction, depression, and social phobia. Depressive symptoms increased in severity with longer weekly online gaming hours and, as one would expect, decreased in severity with fewer weekly online gaming hours. (National Library of Medicine, June 2012)

**Contention 2: Health**

**Video games are, in many ways, detrimental to one’s physical and mental health.**

* According to Harvard Health Publishing (HHP), December 2020, “There are numerous health risks that come from too much gaming, including repetitive stress injuries, overuse injuries, obesity, and psychological problems, to name a few."
* According to Harvard Health Publishing, December 2020, “Repetitive stress injuries, or overuse injuries, are caused by repeated use of muscles and tendons to the point that pain and inflammation develop. If these injuries progress, numbness and weakness can develop, often leading to permanent injury. Overuse injuries of the hands and arms are rampant among gamers.”
* According to the World Health Organization, May 2018, “a wealth of recent scientific evidence shows that elevated levels of gaming have numerous negative effects on one’s physical health including stress/overuse injuries, obesity, and poor dieting, nutrition, and overall well-being. Video games, especially those with gratuitous violence, can also cause serious psychological problems.”

Impact: Moderation is key. Suppose we do not begin to recognize and understand the seriousness of gaming disorder addictions and better moderate the amount of time spent playing video games. In that case, people’s health will suffer, and people will die.

* According to Andrew Przybylski, a psychologist at the Internet Institute at Oxford University, May 2014, “those who played video games less than an hour per day were more emotionally stable, more physically fit, and were more likely to manage normal daily responsibilities. Therefore, when it comes to video games, moderation is key.”

**PRO**

**RESPONSES TO CON CONTENTIONS**

**Response to Contention 1: Mental Health**

**As the popularity of video games has grown and the community of players has expanded, certain negative consequences and mental health impacts have become increasingly evident.**

* According to the World Health Organization, 2019, " ‘gaming disorder’ is now recognized as an official mental health condition, and in 2022, it was officially added to the International Classification of Diseases as a legitimate addiction.”
* According to GameQuitters.com, “with an estimated 150 million to 231 million active gamers in the United States and global prevalence of gaming disorder between 1.96% and 3%, we estimate there are between 3 million and 6.5 million disordered gamers in the United States.”
* According to the Journal of Health Psychology, December 2017, “gaming disorders are linked to greater loneliness, anxiety, depression, sleeping problems, social problems, and many other psychological-social problems.”

Impact: Unless we recognize and admit that video games, on balance, are harmful, mental health issues such as loneliness, depression, and social anxiety will continue to increase.

**Response to Contention 2: Social Benefits**

**Social consequences are a very real part of gaming addiction.**

* According to Video-Game-Addiction.com, August 2020, “The lack of social interaction that results from obsessive gaming can have long-term social consequences. An addicted teenager will not develop effective social skills, which will hinder their ability to develop and maintain healthy relationships in college and beyond. Suddenly, he is twenty-one but has the social skills of a 15-year-old.”
* Researchers believe that “the consequences of gaming addiction — relationship breakdown, depression, and anxiety, among others — can further deepen people’s problems with video games. Kids who are addicted to virtual reality have lost, or may never have had, the ability to comfortably communicate with people face to face.” (Video-Game-Addiction.org)

Impact: Video games not played in moderation have social consequences that could negatively impact kids for years to come.

**CON**

My partner and I negate the resolution: Video games are, on balance, harmful.

My partner and I are going to show that video games are not, on balance, harmful but are beneficial in several ways.

**Contention 1: Mental Health**

**Not only is playing video games NOT harmful, but many mental health benefits can come from gaming.**

* According to GameQuitters.com, July 2022, “Video games, when played in moderation, have many positive benefits including improved cognitive abilities and critical thinking skills, increased hand-to-eye coordination, and better multi-tasking abilities. Other benefits include faster and more accurate decision-making skills, enhanced pro-social behaviors, and better eyesight, to name a few.”

Impact: In moderation, video games are essential tools that provide numerous psychological and educational benefits.

From Web MD and Medically Reviewed by Dan Brennan, MD on October 25, 2021:

(<https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/mental-health-benefits-of-video-games#:~:text=Benefits%20of%20Video%20Games%201%20Mental%20stimulation.%20Video,how%20to%20cope%20with%20failure%20and%20keep%20trying>.)

“Playing video games has numerous benefits for your mental health. Video games can help you relieve stress and get your mind going. Some benefits include:

Mental stimulation. Video games often make you think. When you play video games, almost every part of your brain is working to help you achieve higher-level thinking. Depending on the complexity of the game, you may have to think, strategize, and analyze quickly. Playing video games works with deeper parts of your brain that improve development and critical thinking skills.

Feeling accomplished. In the game, you have goals and objectives to reach. Once you achieve them, they bring you a lot of satisfaction, which improves your overall well-being. This sense of achievement is heightened when you play games that give you trophies or badges for certain goals. Trying to get more achievements gives you something to work toward.

Mental health recovery. Regardless of the type, playing games can help with trauma recovery. Video games can act as distractions from pain and psychological trauma. Video games can also help people who are dealing with mental disorders like anxiety, depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Social interaction. Multiplayer and online games are good for virtual social interaction. In fast-paced game settings, you’ll need to learn who to trust and who to leave behind within the game. Multiplayer games encourage cooperation. It’s also a low-stakes environment for you to test out talking to and fostering relationships with new people.

Emotional resilience. When you fail in a game or in other situations, it can be frustrating. Video games help people learn how to cope with failure and keep trying. This is an important tool for children to learn and use as they get older.

Despite what people may think, playing video games boosts your mood and has lasting effects. Whether you’re using gaming to spend time with your friends or to release some stress, it's a great option.”

**Contention 2: Social Benefits**

**Video games are effective and essential in the development of social skills.**

* According to a study by Pew Research, “studies in the last decade or so have discovered that online gaming is a very social activity and, online gaming has become so mainstream that 75% of teenage boys and 57% of teenage girls game online.
* According to the [American Psychological Association](https://www.apa.org/monitor/2014/02/video-game), May 2014, “online gaming has many benefits for kids. More than 70% of gamers play online with friends, breaking many stereotypes of online gamers being social outcasts.”
* According to KIDAS.com, May 2022, “Online video games help people connect, the same way that football or soccer does. It gives kids a common interest to discuss at lunch or on the playground. It can unite individuals who might not otherwise have much in common.”

Impact: Playing video games helps people connect and plays a vital role in developing social skills.

* "Those who played video games less than three hours per day were more emotionally stable, in better physical shape, and were more likely to manage daily responsibilities than those who did not," says Andrew Przybylski, a psychologist at the Internet Institute at Oxford University (May 2014). Therefore, when it comes to video games, moderation is vital."

**CON**

**RESPONSES TO PRO CONTENTIONS**

**Response to Contention 1: Addiction**

Studies are skewed and biased. "Gaming Disorder" has been officially classified as a "disease," not an "addiction." It is not possible to become addicted to a behavior.

* According to Video-Game-Addiction.org, May 2018, “Video games have always received a bad rap, mostly due to negative media surrounding links between video game playing and violence, especially violence directed at children. For example, after the Columbine school shooting in 1999, several studies were released blaming video games, especially first-person shooter games, for violence such as what took place at Columbine.”
* According to the World Health Organization, October 2019, “the idea that someone can be addicted to a behavior, as opposed to a substance, remains debatable.”
* According to Andrew Przybylski, Director of Research at the Oxford Internet Institute, October 2019, “It is absolutely not an addiction. This whole thing is a complete dumpster fire. People enjoy and are enthusiastic about countless other activities — for example, fishing, baking, running — and yet we do not typically categorize those as addictions.”

**Response to Contention 2: Health**

**We agree with the Pro team regarding the fact that moderation is essential when it comes to gaming. However, video games, in general, are not harmful. Playing video games, like most anything else, can negatively impact one's health if not done in moderation. In moderation, however, video games are, in fact, healthy, not harmful.**

* According to Ellen Garbarino, Professor at the University of Sydney Business School, July 2019, “Researchers have found that video games, enjoyed in moderation by school-age teenagers, are unlikely to have any impact on depression levels, loneliness, resilience, or overall quality of life.”
* "Overall, we find no evidence that the time spent gaming has any positive or negative significant impact on depression, loneliness, resilience or quality of life for those who game less than three hours per day," says Professor Garbarino. “However, when teens game more than three hours a day, they report being more depressed and lonelier than those who game less than three hours a day. This shows that, like anything else in life, moderation is key.”
* According to Andrew Przybylski, a psychologist at the Oxford Internet Institute in Oxford, England, August 2014, "Studies suggest that the quantity of video game play may not be the best place to focus our efforts in understanding and shaping how young people interact with games. Other factors, such as family gaming and understanding kids' motives for play, may be more important.”

**Impact: As previously stated, moderation is key. In moderation, video games are, on balance, healthy, not harmful.**