

READING

ONLY A GAME?

Are computer gamers victims of addiction or prejudice?

Computer games are the latest media scare. If you believe the hype, they are highly addictive and almost as dangerous as cigarettes or alcohol. Features on gaming dwell on the horror stories - the players who stare at a monitor for days, weeks or months at a time, barely pausing to sleep or eat, never mind study or socialize. Mistakenly convinced that gaming ruins grades and lives, parents and teachers then demand that teenagers immediately put down their joysticks and switch off their computers. Some even call for games to be banned! But is this concern really justified? Gaming is a hugely popular hobby, with millions of players worldwide. Surely not all of these people are hopeless addicts and loners?

Helen Mackay is one player who contradicts the stereotype. She is both a high-flying student at a prestigious US university, and a site administrator on *EverTalk* - a chatroom where fans of the online game *EverQuest* swap ideas and game cheats. But she wasn't always an enthusiast. "Until last year, my experience of computers was limited to checking emails and downloading music, and I prided myself on not being very technologically minded, in other words, not being a geek! I'd never even heard of *EverQuest* until my boyfriend Tom bought a subscription. Back then I didn't get the appeal and frankly, I thought Tom was too old for that kind of stuff. But I held my tongue, convinced he'd soon get fed up and log out for the last time."

"When months went by and he still showed no signs of losing interest, I got increasingly bothered. I even considered 'accidentally' spilling coffee over his keyboard so he'd be forced to stop - but I knew that would start a row and he'd only carry on playing anyway. And then I thought, this isn't me, why am I behaving like this? So I had a go in secret, in a bid to be more sympathetic. I didn't really expect to enjoy it. But after a few clicks of the mouse I was hooked!"

"The game was fun and surprisingly challenging. Every action has a consequence, so you have to think very carefully! Yes, the characters - or avatars as I've learned to call them - are rather silly (I'm an elf!). However, they're liberating too. When you're acting out a role in cyberspace, you can't be judged by your looks, age or background. Through the game I've made friends with a skater-punk in Alaska and a 91-year-old Korean physicist. So-called 'reality' could learn a lot from this virtual world."

Does Helen consider herself a computer addict? "Of course not. Tom and I play games for about ten hours a week. That's much less time than the average American spends surfing the internet - or watching TV! I think gamers are often treated very unfairly. We don't sneer at people in the same way for being sports fanatics, and compulsive readers are praised for being clever! But what's the difference? Just because some hobbies have been around for longer doesn't mean they're necessarily better for you. Different things suit different people, that's all."

However, anti-gaming prejudice may at last be starting to wane. Many professional organisations, including NASA, the Armed Forces and medical schools, are now designing computer game software especially for staff. Cynics have claimed that this is merely a gimmick to attract younger applicants. However, it seems more likely that employers have been influenced by the latest scientific research. Extensive studies have suggested that although playing computer games can't significantly alter IQ, it does help people to become better at analysing details and working out solutions - all essential workplace skills. The fact that it also reduces stress is an added bonus!

Of course, as with any pleasure in life, you can have too much of a good thing. Devoting yourself entirely to one activity is never healthy, whether your passion is gaming - or studying! But maybe it's time for the technologies to relax a bit? A few hours a week playing computer games might not be the end of the world, after all ...

READING

I. Read the article and answer the following questions:

1. How did Helen use to feel about computer games?

She wasn't into it.

2. How does she feel now?

She is a fan now.

II. For questions 1-8 choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text:

1. What's the writer's main point in the first paragraph?

- A. Addiction to gaming is a common problem.
- B. The press exaggerates the negative side of gaming.
- C. Gaming is as harmful as smoking.
- D. Gaming seriously affects students' performance at school.

2. What does Helen mean by 'geek' in the second paragraph?

- A. someone who is obsessed by technology to an embarrassing degree
- B. someone who is not very experienced at using technology
- C. someone who is praised and admired for their technological expertise
- D. someone who is not interested in technology

3. When her boyfriend first subscribed to EverQuest, Helen

- A. did not say anything about the game.
- B. found playing the game boring.
- C. told him that the game was childish.
- D. became enthusiastic about the game.

4. What does 'this' refer to in the underlined line?

- A. damaging the computer
- B. allowing Tom to play games
- C. feeling upset and annoyed
- D. arguing with Tom

IV. Write a summary of the text in about 50 words:

5. What does Helen say she likes about EverQuest now?

- A. It allows her to do whatever she likes.
- B. It is full of realistic characters.
- C. It is almost as good as real life.
- D. It allows everyone to play as equals.

6. Why does Helen think that people are more critical of gaming than other hobbies?

- A. It doesn't require much intelligence.
- B. It is too time-consuming.
- C. It is not a traditional hobby.
- D. It does not offer many benefits.

7. The writer thinks some institutions are using computer games at work in order to

- A. employ greater numbers of young people.
- B. make employees more intelligent.
- C. help employees to solve problems.
- D. help employees to feel calmer and more relaxed.

8. What do we learn about the writer's opinion of computer games from reading this article?

- A. They do not have negative consequences.
- B. They have been unfairly criticised.
- C. They can be enjoyed by everyone.
- D. They can superior to most other hobbies.

III. Find words or expressions in the text that match 1 - 7:

1. stop the flow of power to something (par.1)

switch off

2. copying a file from the internet (par.2)

downloading

3. leave a game or website (par.2)

log out

4. something you use to represent yourself in a computer game or online (par.4)

avatar

5. not real; created by a computer (par.4)

virtual

6. browsing different webpages (par.5)

surfing

7. programs used to operate a computer (par.6)

software

I. Use of English. Circle the best possibility:

- 1b
2d
3c
4a
5b
6c
7a
8d
9a
10d
11c
12c
13d
14b
15b
16d
17d
18c
19b
20c
21a
22b
23a
24c
25d
- Well, I think it's time we _____ on our way.
a) will be b) were c) are d) have been
 - If I _____ any help, I'll ask you.
a) needing b) needed c) will need d) need
 - Several years ago, someone succeeded _____ across the Channel in a bicycle-powered airplane.
a) to fly b) at flying c) in flying d) to flying
 - I would have cleaned the house if I _____ you were coming.
 a) had known b) have known c) knew d) would have known
 - He asked me _____ sheep were in the field.
a) how much b) how many c) what a lot of d)) what great amount of
 - The policeman stated that he _____ the thief standing near the shop at the time of the robbery.
a) was seeing b) has seen c) had seen d) sees
 - How can you put _____ such vandalism?
 a) up with b) down with c) out of d) off
 - I would be grateful if you could give me some _____ about what to say in the interview.
a) advises b) advise c) advices d) advice
 - Anne _____ Sophie of breaking her bracelet.
 a) accused b) denied c) avoided d) prevented
 - _____ a car when they were living in London?
a) Were they having b) Had they c) Have they had d) Did they have
 - There are chestnut trees on _____ side of the path.
a) both b) other c) either d) double
 - I am sure. She _____ cheated – to achieve such results.
a) could have b) might have c) must have d) can't have
 - In some countries _____ dark all the time in winter.
a) is b) there's c) there is d) it is
 - I'd like to know why _____ so early yesterday.
a) John leaves b) John left c) did John leave d) did you leave John
 - They married twenty years ago and it _____ a very happy marriage so far.
a) is b) has always been c) had always been d) would have always been
 - There's _____ room in that car for me and my dogs.
a) a lot b) many c) lot of d) lots of
 - Jane and Margaret _____ to live next door to each other at one time.
a) got used b) were used c) have used d) used
 - Jane began to eat strawberries in large quantities _____ their high price.
a) despite of b) in the contrary to c) in spite of d) on the contrary to
 - They were having _____ a nice time at the party that they didn't want to leave.
a) very b) such c) so d) that
 - "I really shouldn't go to pubs so often." " _____."
a) Either should I b) So should I c) Nor should I d) I should neither
 - I wish you _____ him yesterday.
 a) hadn't called b) didn't call c) don't call d) wouldn't call
 - When he _____ typing his letter, I will take it to the post.
a) will finish b) has finished c) was finished d) will have finished
 - He had to work long hours, _____?
 a) didn't he b) had he c) hadn't he d) would he
 - Please, _____ to buy some postcards.
a) remind b) not forget c) remember d) suggest
 - Our house _____ at the moment.
a) is decorated b) has been decorated c) was being decorated d) is being decorated

II. Transformations. Use the word IN BOLD and other words to complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first one. You must use between two and five words, including the word in BOLD. Contracted forms (don't) count for two words.

- Lucy started preparing dinner an hour ago. **BEEN**
Lucy has been preparing dinner (for) an hour.
- She wasn't well enough to go to school that day. **ILL**
She was too ill to go to school that day.
- Anna doesn't often speak in front of crowds. **USED**
Anna isn't used to speaking in front of crowds.
- Sheila shouldn't come home so late. **RATHER**
I would rather Sheila didn't come home so late.
- They fixed our leaking roof yesterday. **HAD**
We had our leaking roof fixed yesterday.
- "Will she ever behave herself?" he asked himself. **WONDERED**
He wondered if she would ever behave herself.
- Many people think Steve stole the money. **BELIEVED**
Steve is believed to have stolen the money.
- Do you own that stereo? **YOURS**
Is that stereo yours ?
- "How about going to the cinema tonight?" Cindy said. **SUGGESTED**
Cindy suggested going to the cinema tonight.
- As he practises more, he becomes better. **THE**
The more he practises, the better he becomes.

III. Word Formation. Complete each sentence with the correct word derived from the word in CAPITALS at the end of the line.

- Some people do not show kindness to animals. **KIND**
- There is a strong probability that he succeeds. He has never failed so far. **PROBABLE**
- We apologize for the late arrival of the aircraft. **ARRIVE**
- Yesterday we spent a peaceful afternoon by the river. **PEACE**
- There are no easy solutions to the problem. **SOLVE**
- Sarah is the most unreliable person I have ever known. You can never count on her. **RELY**
- We were unpleasantly surprised by her (in)ability to express her ideas clearly. **ABLE**
- Vipers are poisonous snakes. You must be careful not to step on them. **POISON**
- We had to accept her decision. We had no choice. **CHOOSE**
- Do what you are told and don't argue with me! **ARGUMENT**
- He lost his sight in a terrible accident. **SEE**
- Unfortunately, I had to make a complaint because the service was not what I had expected from a five-star hotel. **COMPLAIN**
- I find your behaviour unacceptable ! Make sure it does not repeat! **ACCEPT**
- My former teacher was a man of considerable knowledge. **KNOW**
- She spoke with disapproval of your bad manner. **APPROVE**

IV. Cloze Test. Read the text below and decide which answer (a, b, c, d) best fits each gap. Circle it. There is an example at the beginning (0):

Example: a) mad b) done ©made d) had

KITCHEN STAR

Peter White has (0) _____ such a great success of his new restaurant "Tastes" that he has just received a second star. The fourteen-table restaurant is fully booked every evening this year, and two receptionists are on full-time duty to ensure the business (1) _____ smoothly. Not only is he fulfilling a lifelong ambition, he is also (2) _____ more than he ever dreamt possible - he's just bought a new Ferrari to add to his (3) _____.

However, life hasn't always been so easy for Peter. He (4) _____ in Northern Ireland, in a family which, although poor, always (5) _____ on eating well. After doing a (6) _____ at catering college, and (7) _____ his exams with distinction, he moved to London to work in one of the city's (8) _____ restaurants. On his first day Peter remembers two things - the smell of baking bread and the chef throwing a pan of sauce at him because he hadn't (9) _____ it enough! Peter (10) _____ that he doesn't treat his own (11) _____ in such a manner, (12) _____ he does admit to regular shouting and bursts of anger!

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|-----|--|--|---|--|
| 1. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> a) runs | b) happens | c) flows | d) moves |
| 2. | a) taking | b) gaining | c) winning | <input checked="" type="radio"/> d) earning |
| 3. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> a) collection | b) store | c) set | d) group |
| 4. | a) brought up | b) put up | <input checked="" type="radio"/> c) grew up | d) showed up |
| 5. | a) promised | <input checked="" type="radio"/> b) insisted | c) accepted | d) maintained |
| 6. | a) training | b) work | <input checked="" type="radio"/> c) course | d) lecture |
| 7. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> a) passing | b) succeeding | c) graduating | d) qualifying |
| 8. | a) head | b) peak | <input checked="" type="radio"/> c) top | d) lead |
| 9. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> a) stirred | b) chopped | c) grated | d) turned |
| 10. | a) tells | <input checked="" type="radio"/> b) claims | c) denies | d) speaks |
| 11. | a) crew | b) troop | <input checked="" type="radio"/> c) staff | d) band |
| 12. | a) despite | b) because | c) even | <input checked="" type="radio"/> d) although |