

Pointers For Parents

Playing With A Purpose

(NAPSA)—Playing video games amounts to more than just fun and games for many Americans, according to a recent survey.

The survey, commissioned by the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA), found there are some important reasons 145 million Americans—almost 60 percent of the population—enjoy video games.

Evidence suggests video games can be:

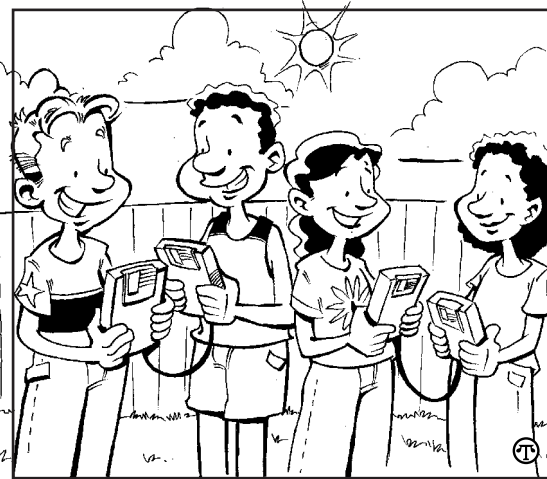
Socially Beneficial

According to the survey, the majority of people who play video games (59 percent) do so with family and friends. The group says the findings confirm a widely held belief that interactive entertainment can help bring people together:

- 33 percent of gamers play with their siblings.
- 27 percent play with their spouse.
- 25 percent play with their parents.
- 43 percent play with other family members.

Educational Tools

The IDSA says increased demand for problem solving and role playing games represent a consumer shift from action-based games (popular in the past) to more thought-provoking ones—a belief supported by Celia Pierce of The USC Annenberg Center for Communication.



A study found that video games can help teach children important social skills.

Pierce says, “Today’s best-selling games are about discovery and experimentation.” Pokémon Crystal for Game Boy Color, for example, uses popular characters to encourage users to solve problems and think creatively.

Players must decipher the language of the “Unown,” where at first glance, the language looks almost like hieroglyphics, but upon closer inspection, are actually English words that need to be read correctly to unlock mysteries.

Tools In Schools

At a recent Massachusetts Institute of Technology conference, education expert Bonnie Bracey re-

ferred to video games as powerful learning tools. “The striking worlds created by game developers offer exciting potential to each,” she said.

Experts speculate that future video games will let students take virtual field trips to geographically diverse environments and even witness historical events “first hand.”

Skill Builders

The IDSA reports that games are often used to help victims of post traumatic stress syndrome cope with difficult past emotional experiences.

Other studies have documented cases in which video games have helped improve eye-hand coordination, cognitive and cooperative play skills.

Players in Pokémon Crystal, for instance, need to maneuver characters on screen and make real time decisions. In addition, the game can be made more complex by linking different users to the same game, allowing for group play—and a greater mental challenge.

For more information, visit the Web sites www.pokemon.com or www.idsa.com.