

# Game on? Video-game ownership may interfere with young boys' academic functioning

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Parents of young boys may want to encourage moderation when it comes to their kids' video game habits. According to new findings in *Psychological Science*, a journal of the Association for Psychological Science, owning a video-game system may hamper academic development in some children.

Psychological scientists Robert Weis and Brittany C. Cerankosky of Denison University conducted a study examining short-term effects of video-game ownership on academic development in young boys. Families with boys between the ages of 6 to 9 were recruited for this study. The families did not own video-game systems, but the parents had been considering buying one for their kids.

The children completed intelligence tests as well as reading and writing assessments. In addition, the boys' parents and teachers filled out questionnaires relating to their behavior at home and at school.

Half of the families were selected to receive a video-game system (along with three, age-appropriate video games) immediately, while the remaining families were promised a video-game system four months later, at the end of the experiment. Over the course of the four months, the parents recorded their children's activities from the end of the school day until bedtime. At the four-month time point, the children repeated the reading and writing assessments and [parents](#) and [teachers](#) again

completed the behavioral questionnaires.

The results of this study showed that the boys who received the video-game system immediately spent more time [playing video games](#) and less time engaged in after-school academic activities than boys who received the video-game system at the end of the experiment. Furthermore, the boys who received the video-game system at the beginning of the study had significantly lower reading and writing scores four months later compared with the boys receiving the video-game system later on. Although there were no differences in parent-reported behavioral problems between the two groups of kids, the boys who received the video-game system immediately had greater teacher-reported learning problems.

Further analysis revealed that the time spent playing video games may link the relationship between owning a video-game system and reading and writing scores. These findings suggest that video games may be displacing after-school academic activities and may impede reading and writing development in young boys. The authors note that when children have problems with language at this young age, they tend to have a tougher time acquiring advanced reading and writing skills later on. They conclude, "Altogether, our findings suggest that [video-game](#) ownership may impair academic achievement for some boys in a manner that has real-world significance."

Provided by Association for Psychological Science

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