

# Violent video games turning gamers into deadly shooters

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Playing violent shooting video games can improve firing accuracy and influence players to aim for the head when using a real gun finds a new study in *Communication Research*.

Authors Jodi L. Whitaker and Brad J. Bushman tested 151 college students by having them play different types of violent and non-violent video games, including games with human targets in which players are rewarded for hitting the targets' heads. After playing the game for only 20 minutes, participants shot 16 bullets from a realistic gun at a life-size, human-shaped mannequin. Participants who played a violent shooting game using a pistol-shaped controller hit the mannequin 33% more than did other participants and hit the mannequins' head 99% more often.

"In the violent shooting game, participants were rewarded for accurately aiming and firing at humanoid enemies who were instantly killed if shot in the head," wrote the authors. "Players were therefore more likely to repeat this behavior outside of the [video game](#) context."

The researcher's findings remained significant even after controlling for firearm experience, attitudes about gun use, amount of exposure to violent shooting games, and overall level of [aggressiveness](#) of the player.

"Just as a person might train how to use a sword by first practicing with a wooden replica, the pistol-shaped controller served as a more realistic implement with which to hone skills that more easily transferred to aiming and firing a gun in the real world," the authors wrote. "These results indicate the powerful potential of video games to teach or increase skills, including potentially [lethal weapon](#) use."

**More information:** Find out more by reading the article, "Boom, Headshot!": Effect of Video Game Play and Controller Type on Firing Aim and

Accuracy" by Jodi L. Whitaker and Brad J. Bushman in *Communication Research*. The article is available free for a limited time at: [crx.sagepub.com/content/early/ .../446622.full.pdf+html](http://crx.sagepub.com/content/early/.../446622.full.pdf+html)

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