

Action video games boost reading skills, study finds

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Researcher Simone Gori's daughter enjoys a video game. Credit: *Current Biology*, Franceschini et al.

Much to the chagrin of parents who think their kids should spend less time playing video games and more time studying, time spent playing action video games can actually make dyslexic children read better. In fact, 12 hours of video game play did more for reading skills than is normally achieved with a year of spontaneous reading development or demanding traditional reading treatments.

The evidence, appearing in the Cell Press journal [Current Biology](#) on February 28, follows from earlier work by the same team linking dyslexia to early problems with visual attention rather than language skills (see medicalxpress.com/news/2012-04...g-dyslexia-kids.html).

"Action video games enhance many aspects of visual attention, mainly improving the extraction of information from the environment," said Andrea Facoetti of the University of Padua and the Scientific Institute Medea of Bosisio Parini in Italy. "Dyslexic children learned to orient and focus their attention more efficiently to extract the relevant information of a written word more rapidly."

The findings come as further support for the notion that [visual attention](#) deficits are at the root of dyslexia, a condition that makes reading extremely difficult for one out of every ten children, Facoetti added. He emphasized that there is, as of now, no approved treatment for dyslexia that includes video games.

Facoetti's team, including Sandro Franceschini, Simone Gori, Milena Ruffino, Simona Viola, and Massimo Molteni, tested the reading, phonological, and attentional skills of two groups of children with dyslexia before and after they played action or non-action video games for nine 80-minute sessions. The action video gamers were able to read faster without losing accuracy. They also showed gains in other tests of attention.

"These results are very important in order to understand the brain mechanisms underlying dyslexia, but they don't put us in a position to recommend [playing video games](#) without any control or supervision," Facoetti said.

Still, there is great hope for early interventions that could be applied in low-resource settings. "Our study paves the way for new remediation programs, based on scientific results, that can reduce the dyslexia symptoms and even prevent dyslexia when applied to children at risk for dyslexia before they learn to read."

And, guess what? Those kids will also be having fun.

More information: *Current Biology*, Franceschini et al.: "Action Video Games Make Dyslexic Children Read Better."

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