

Video Game Academy

Skills in Video Games

Transcript



HackingHighSchool.net

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Different kinds of skills learn in video games besides gaming skills.

As we've seen, there are a lot more things you can learn in video games besides gaming knowledge and gaming skills.

As with knowledge, the skills you learn in video games are not always obvious, or plain. They are often implicit or unstated. You obviously master them in the process of playing a game, but often, you don't realize what skills you are mastering.

Our goals today are to:

- 1) recognize what skills you're learning, and
- 2) apply those skills to life outside the video game.

This exercise we're going to walk through today—and that is in your worksheet—is adapted from information in a book called *How Computer Games Help Children Learn* by David Williamson Shaffer.

The best way to do this exercise, of course, is to discuss it: student and parent. Of course, if that's not an option, write your answers in the workbook or find some other way to answer the questions—like a video or piece of artwork, however you communicate best.

What are you learning to do in the game?

Game-specific skills (how to use items in the game, what buttons control what part of the game) For example, in *Mario Kart*: learning how to race, use the items, use the controller optimally, how to not fall off the path.

Come up with at least 10 skills to start with, to get your brain flowing. I am confident there are far more than 10 skills you're learning, so coming up with 10 will be possible.

Can you define the game-specific skill in another, more generic way?

For example, using the controller optimally in *Mario Kart* is a combination of fine motor skill (or dexterity) and detailed observations.

Are there other situations, outside the game, that these skills might be useful?

When would you need dexterity? When you're a doctor performing a surgery? When you're an artist, painting a masterpiece? When would the skill of being able to observe with details might be useful? As a detective, like Monk? As a writer creating characters and worlds? As a parent, diagnosing your child's behavior problems or illnesses? Being detail-oriented is beneficial in just about everything you want to do well.

Consider things like job titles and functions, roles in life, and family responsibilities: jobs, roles, and responsibilities that affect you right now, today, and that will or may affect you in the future.

Bonus: save your answers for your college admissions essays.

Consider writing an admissions essay on why and how video games have prepared you for this college or for a future career as a doctor or teacher.



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Are there other circumstances or situations where similar skills would help you solve similar problems?

Most of us will not be racing go-karts in trees like in *Mario Kart*, but is there a similar situation or a similar problem you are facing? Maybe a precarious situation where you need balance—like a difficult ethical decision? Or a situation where your observation of detail will save you or benefit you?

Are there other circumstances or situations where these skills are not appropriate or useful?

In a shooter game, you arguably learn to shoot people, but that skill is not appropriate or useful for most of us, unless we're in the military on the front lines.

Is there another way you can use that skill that would be appropriate or useful?

How does the game bring the different kinds of skills together?

How do you combine different kinds of skills in your life outside games? Can you create a different combination of skills that you haven't considered before?

Decisions

What decisions are you making in the game?

Game play is about making decisions. When you have an opportunity to make a decision, discuss it. Be clear about the strategy, tactics, and decisions you're using and making in the game. Often these things will be implicit and unspoken, but when you make them explicit and examine them, you can make use of them in other situations.

Talk about strategy—for example, in *League of Legends*, why would you or would you not go attack the dragon Baron? What influences your decision?

Can you define that decision, strategy, or tactic in a more generic way?

Almost all decisions can be defined in terms of risks and rewards. But there are other ways to broadly describe your decisions. The decision to Baron in *League of Legends* is often a matter of being a high enough level.

So is there a similar situation where you can use that strategy?

You're obviously not going to be slaying dragons for gold in real life, but is there a similar situation?

To Baron, you need to be a high enough level: a similar situation in outside life: you don't apply to be the CEO of Disney or President of the United States until you are a high enough level (with enough experience and knowledge and skills). Or you generally don't ask that girl you're interested



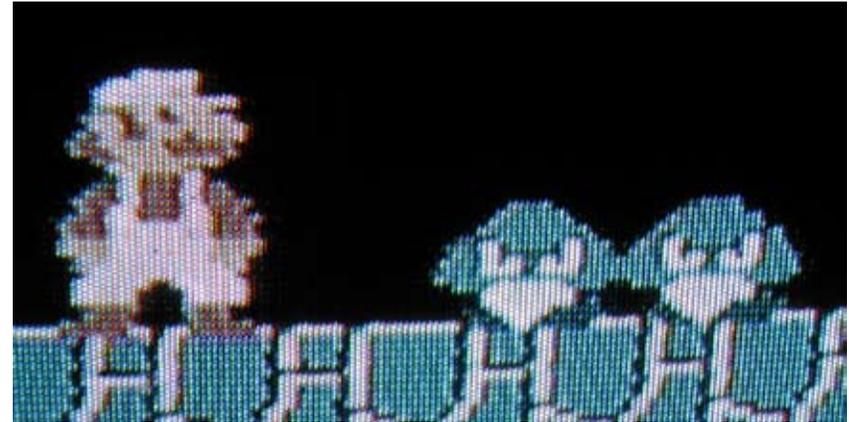
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in out on a date until you're a high enough level—however you want to determine that—and you can be reasonably sure she won't laugh in your face.

Further questions:

How are decisions, strategies, and tactics justified in the game?

What alternatives could you have chosen? What would have happened?
Why didn't you choose that?



Risk taking

What kind of risks do you take in video games?

What do you base your decisions on?

Is there a different situation or problem where you can apply those ideas so you can take calculated risks in your life outside games?

Ethics

What are the ethical implications of the decisions in the game?

When would those values be appropriate or not appropriate in life outside the game?

In *How Computer Games Help Children Learn*, Shaffer states, "young people grow and develop, in part, by exploring possible selves: by trying on different images of who they are and how they might act in the world."

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What kind of person does the game let you be?

What are the benefits and drawbacks of the different identities you find in the games you play?

Shaffer reminds us that the game, what comes in the box, is always a simulation. The game is what you, the player, makes of it. The simulation is an opportunity for you to gain experiences that help you think in productive, innovative ways.

21st century skills

The idea of teaching 21st century skills is a hot topic among educators, but for good reason. The world is changing. With more and more jobs outsourced or computerized, students need different types of skills than their parents and grandparents.

One education author stated, "If we are to reach tomorrow's leaders today, it is crucial we design curricula around the foreseen skills needed to be successful in the 21st Century. Income and wealth in the 21st century will come from applying technology and new ideas to create new products and processes."

In his book, *A Whole New Mind*, Daniel Pink boldly claims that "the future belongs to a very different kind of person with a very different kind of mind—creators and empathizers, pattern recognizers, and meaning

makers. These people . . . will now reap society's richest rewards and share its greatest joys."

The table you see in the worksheet shows what Dan Pink claims are the six senses that must prevail for someone to be successful in today's society.

How do you use these senses in your video game? How do your games improve these senses?

The next chart you'll see in your worksheet is based on Route 21's list of 21st century skills that you could use to base your curriculum on. (Route 21 website: <http://www.p21.org/route21/>)

The skills cover things like:

- flexibility and adaptability
- initiative and self-direction
- creativity and innovation
- critical thinking and problem solving
- communication and collaboration
- and information literacy

So what's the best news about all these 21st century skills? Most—if not all—are easily learned through video games. Gamers naturally learn these skills as they play their games. All they need to do is

- 1) recognize the skill they've learned, and
- 2) discuss ways they could apply them outside the game.



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Voila! An instant, amazing education that will teach them all the 21st century skills they need to know.

Marc Prensky, in his book, *Don't Bother Me Mom, I'm Learning!* said, "Despite fears to the contrary, the overwhelming proportion of gamers wind up being successful, productive members of society, just as their rock-and-roll-dancing and TV-watching forebears did. The difference from those earlier obsessions: skills learned in gaming are actually useful in work life."

In fact, gamers learn these 21st century skills so well, and there's so much concrete evidence of this learning, that Harvard Business School published a book on how gamers make better businesspeople.

The book, *Got Game: How the Gamer Generation is Reshaping Business Forever*, shows that gamers are better at business because they:

- are good at collaborative problem solving
- are committed to professional excellence
- put a high premium on skill and adding value
- have a strong sense of competence
- see the world through the lens of competition
- have both highly developed teamwork skills and the desire to be part of a team
- care about their organization
- love data

- are comfortable taking measured risks
- multitask well
- learn on the fly
- think globally
- don't count on fixed organizational structures
- expect themselves to actually deliver

The authors of the book state: "Gamers have amassed thousands of hours of rapidly analyzing new situations, interacting with characters they don't really know, and solving problems quickly and independently...in a world that has also emphasized tangible results and given them constant, critical feedback...Even compared to team sports, aren't these skills they are learning more directly relevant to professional work?"

