



Gaming Communities

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Introduction

As gaming increases in popularity, many players also turn to the activity as a means for socializing. But is gaming actually a healthy social activity? In the two essays presented here, the authors examine the benefits and pitfalls of using video games as a social platform. Both essays present strong opinions about the topic. Which do you find more convincing?

“Multiplayer gaming brings people together.”

NOTES

Skill:
Arguments
and Claims

The title of this article clearly shows the author's opinion in favor of gaming. The last sentence states his claim that gaming improves communication skills. I think the point about electronic devices helps build supporting evidence.

Gaming Communities: Do They Encourage Positive Communication?

Point: Gaming Helps Develop Communication Skills by Joshua Vink

- 1 Today, communication is more complicated than ever. Electronic devices have become increasingly important tools of communication in the last thirty years. People rely on their smartphones more than any other device. Communication is vital to doing well in today's society. A great way to improve your communication skills is through gaming.
- 2 Multiplayer gaming brings people together. Chat features allow gamers to meet people from all over the world. They can make friends while having fun. They can also play with family or longtime friends. The reading and writing that comes from chatting with these people can **foster** positive communication.
- 3 Suppose you begin chatting online with a new player, and you find out the person is from Kazakhstan¹. You have never heard of this country, and you look for it on a map. Then you ask the person some questions about his or her country. You find out that Kazakhstan has major oil deposits. Large U.S. oil companies do business there. You receive a valuable geography lesson just by playing a game.
- 4 Some students do not enjoy reading and writing at school. If they find it difficult, it gives them a negative attitude toward communication. It is important to find enjoyable ways for these students to read and write. That can help them to develop their communication skills. Gaming provides this kind of practice.



Friends playing a multiplayer game.

1. **Kazakhstan:** a landlocked republic to the south of Russia and to the northeast of the Caspian Sea; a former Soviet republic

NOTES

Skill:
Reasons and
Evidence

First, Vink gives a reason for his claim about gaming. Then he uses a quotation to add strong support for his reasoning about online chat. The quotation is from a psychologist, so that seems like a reliable source.

With two thirds of young people in the United States playing video games (Duggan), everyone should participate to gain its benefits. The constant reading and writing that goes on in gaming chat gives players the opportunity to increase their vocabulary and improve their expression. People enjoy this type of communication more than the type of communication practiced in English class.

Chatting online not only helps gamers make new friends. It also can improve self-esteem. Berni Good is a psychologist in London who works with gamers. She says, “Research tells us that players feel greatly rewarded sharing their gaming experiences with others on social media and also in multiplayer **environments**” (Wells and Blaghorn). When something improves self-esteem, people gain an appreciation for it.

This means that people who do not game are missing out on invaluable benefits. If people want to improve their self-esteem, they should game. Today's video games are so advanced that people owe it to themselves to explore them and develop advanced skills. Communication is more than just reading and writing.

In addition to improving self-esteem, gaming can also give people digital literacy. Digital literacy provides the tools needed to interact electronically. Our society has entered a digital age. Business and government rely on computers and other electronic business to handle most activities.

James Paul Gee, a linguist and professor of literacy studies at Arizona State University, thinks we should expand the traditional definition of literacy beyond reading and writing because language isn't the only communication system available in today's world (Levasseur). Digital literacy is an example of one such system. Learning to use electronic devices for communication is a key part of digital literacy. Game chat provides users with practice using these devices.

The value of gaming to the economy is shown by how large companies are using gaming. These companies have realized that training needs to be engaging for employees. What could be more engaging than games? “Google and Microsoft have created games to increase worker morale, quality control, and productivity” (Schawbel).

If major technology companies are using gaming to improve workers' communication and digital literacy, there must be something to it. These companies have billions in dollars in **revenue** and count on training to improve efficiency. Increases in efficiency means increases in profits. All companies need to use gaming to train their people so that they can maximize success.

People interested in getting jobs with these companies would be wise to have plenty of gaming experience.

- 12 Gaming helps improve both traditional communication skills and digital literacy. Our world increasingly relies on communication to make economies run smoothly. Gaming will have an increasingly important role to play. Gaming's lasting popularity means that we should put it to the best possible use.

Sources

Duggan, Maeve. "Gaming and Gamers." *Internet & Technology*, Pew Research Center, 15 Dec. 2015. Online.

Levasseur, Aran. "The Literacy of Gaming: What Kids Learn from Playing." *PBS MediaShift*. August 3, 2011. Online.


Schawbel, Dan. "Adam Penenberg: How Gamification Is Going to Change the Workplace." *Forbes*, 7 Oct. 2013. Online.

Wells, Jonathan, and Francis Blaghorn. "Is Video Gaming Bad for You? The Science For and Against." *The Telegraph*, 8 Aug. 2017. Online.

"Gamers are more interested in winning competitions than in making new friends."

Counterpoint: Gaming Does Not Promote Positive Communication by Caroline Rodgers

- 3 Although gaming has become a leading leisure activity, the benefits as far as communication goes are minimal. More than half of the people in the world's industrialized² countries identify as gamers ("Gaming Gone Global" 2016). Yet the negatives of gaming are clear. You just have to look at how it affects relationships and language use.
- 14 Gaming damages relationships by reducing communication between gamers and their family and friends. A study at Brigham Young University examined the gaming habits of college students across the country. As the amount of time spent gaming went up, the quality of relationships went down (Hadfield). People need family and friends as the **foundation** of their life. Gaming damages this foundation.
- 15 The loss of communication outside of gaming is just part of the issue. An even greater problem is the communication that goes on within the games themselves. This communication takes place in what is called game "chat." The competitive nature of gaming seems to encourage rude and inappropriate comments.
- 16 Negative communication is a big part of the gaming experience for committed and casual players alike. Trash talk is common for all forms of competition, but it is especially bad in an online gaming environment. Bullies and sore losers can shout or type insults from the comfort of their own homes. Some people seem to think that it is okay to say things online that they would not say to a person's face. This has to do with the anonymous nature of chat in many games.
- 17 Many of the players who use negative speech online are able to hide behind avatars or fake names. So they feel no consequences for their bad behavior. "When people hide behind a **moniker** they think they can say hateful, hurtful

 Skill:
Reasons and
Evidence

Rodgers gives a reason that gaming promotes harmful communication. She then supports the reason with a quotation. The quotation is from a writer who specializes in gaming articles, which lends authority to Rodgers's argument.

2. **industrialized:** having the full advantages of infrastructure, technology, and trade



things, and harass people simply because they can get away with it," noted Morgan Lewis of the online zine *Gamer Professionals*.

- 18 There's a word for a person who posts nasty comments anonymously. That word is *coward*.
- 19 Yet, some players are proud of their cruel insults. These players are called trolls. These individuals play online games specifically to ruin the experience for other players. Many times, these are low-level players who are not skilled at the game. Their only enjoyment comes from making other players angry. What's worse, other players sometimes encourage them. Trolls post about their worst insults on gaming message boards or post videos of the interaction online. These posts and videos often receive positive comments from players who think the insults are funny. Such encouragement makes the online environment worse for victims of these verbal attacks.
- 20 There are options to combat trolls, but they are often temporary. For instance, players can mute these trolls in some games, but that's not a long-term solution. A player can also make a complaint to the game company. That might get the offender banned. Even then, friends of the banned person may flame the player who made the complaint. Often the banned person will get a new account with a new avatar or be able to log on from a different computer. Then the player can go right back to making nasty comments.
- 21 Studies have shown that negative communication is especially directed toward female players. Professors at Ohio University have identified that female gamers are treated differently from males in chat situations. In their study, these researchers played against 1,660 unique gamers. They broadcasted pre-recorded audio clips of either a man or a woman speaking. "Findings indicate that, on average, the female voice received three times as many negative comments as the male voice or no voice" (Kuznekoff and Rose).
- 22 The easiest way to solve the problem with chat is to require players to use their real names. Unfortunately, this creates security issues, especially for kids. Gaming companies should consider making more efforts to inform parents of bad online behavior by their children.
- 23 Gaming is not an effective form of communication. Gamers are more interested in winning competitions than in making new friends. As long as negative language is such a major part of game chat, gaming will do more to harm communication than to improve it. Our society needs a better sense of community. It does not need more gaming.

 Skill:
Compare
and Contrast

Both writers talk about chatting online. Vink says it has positive effects on self-esteem, but he doesn't distinguish between males and females. Rodgers implies that it can't have a positive effect on girls because they receive more negative comments. They cite different studies to support their views.

Sources

- "Gaming Gone Global: Keeping Tabs on Worldwide Trends," *Insights*, The Nielsen Company. 31 May 2016. nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2016/gaming-gone-global-keeping-tabs-on-worldwide-trends.html
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