



## Video warfare

Children learn from video games, say Iowa State University psychology professors. So parents may want to shop smart when choosing games for their children. Even if the content is unrealistic or cartoonish, kids learn good behaviors (playing drums) or bad behaviors (aggressive tactics) by practicing.

Professors Craig Anderson and Doug Gentile—leading experts on the effects of video games on young people and authors of the book *Violent Video Game Effects on Children and Adolescents*, say, “Parents and researchers initially believed that what mattered most about violent games was how realistic and bloody they were. Our research now suggests that what matters most is whether you have to harm other characters to advance in the game.”

Follow their advice to parents before making a video game purchase for children:

- Play the game, have someone else demonstrate it for you, or look at clips from the game on the game’s website.
- Then ask yourself the following questions: Does the game involve some characters trying to harm others? Does this happen frequently, more than once or twice in 30 minutes? Is the harm rewarded in any way? Is the harm portrayed as humorous? Are nonviolent solutions absent or less “fun” than the violent ones? Are realistic consequences of violence absent from the game?

Two or more yes answers should cause parents to think carefully about the lessons being taught before purchasing that game for children. Some sports and fun music games may be better choices than warfare games.