Computer Games & Your Child

How much is too much?

When does it become a problem? The most asked question a parent wants answering is "How much videogame playing is too much?" To help answer this question use the following checklist. It is designed to check if a child's videogame playing is getting out of hand:

Ask these simple questions. Does your child:

- Play videogames almost every day?
- Often play videogames for long periods (over 3 to 4 hours at a time)?
- Play videogames for excitement or 'buzz'?
- Get restless, irritable, and moody if they can't play
- Videogames?
- Sacrifice social and sporting activities to play
- Videogames?
- Play videogames instead of doing their homework?
- Try to cut down their videogame playing but can't?

If the answer is 'yes' to more than four of these questions, then the child may be playing too much.

What impact does playing violent video games have on my Child?

Another negative impact is that players are rewarded for their violent acts. The interactive quality of video games differs from passively viewing television or movies because it allows players to become active participants in the game's script. Players benefit from engaging in acts of violence and are then able to move to the game's next level.

Gentile & Anderson (2003) state that playing video games may increase aggressive behavior because **violent acts are continually repeated** throughout the video game. This method of repetition has long been considered an effective teaching method in reinforcing learning patterns. The researchers concluded that players who had prior experience playing violent video games responded with an **increased level of aggression** when they encountered confrontation (Bushman & Anderson, 2002).

What can you do?

So what can you do if a child is playing videogames too much?

First of all, check the content of the games. Try and give children games that are educational rather than the violent ones. Parents usually have control over what their child watches on television – videogames should not be any different.
Secondly, try to encourage video game playing in groups rather than as a solitary activity. This will lead to children talking and working together.
Thirdly, set time limits on children's playing time. Tell them that they can play for a couple of hours after they have done their homework or their chores – not before.
Fourthly, parents should always get their children to follow the recommendations by the videogame manufacturers (e.g., sit at least two feet from the screen, play in a well-lit room, never have the screen at maximum brightness, and never play videogames when feeling tired).

Finally, if all else fails, temporarily take away the games console and then give it back to them on a part-time basis when appropriate.