



VIDEO GAMES FOR GOOD

SECONDARY RESOURCES



Gaming for good: can virtual worlds change real lives? Professional gamers compete at the 2017 eSports World Convention in Paris, France. (Photo credit: Getty Images, Chesnot)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- About half a billion people play at least an hour of video games a day. Young people are especially likely to play games on a regular basis—about 94 percent of girls and 97 percent of boys under the age of 18. ([HuffingtonPost](#))
- There are now a roughly equal number of male and female gamers. Studies show that approximately 48 percent of gamers are women, although only 15 percent of video game characters are female. ([BBC](#))
- Researchers have explored the difference in the way female and male characters are depicted in video games. One study of images in video game magazines showed that female characters are much more likely than male characters to be sexualized (60 percent versus one percent) or scantily clad (39 percent versus eight percent). ([ResearchGate](#))
- The average gamer spends 10,000 hours playing games by the time they turn 21. This is approximately equal to the total

- amount of time they spend in middle and high school. There are about five million gamers in the U.S. alone who spend more time playing games than they would spend working a full-time job. ([HuffingtonPost](#))
- In his book *Outliers*, author Malcolm Gladwell studied the habits of history's most talented individuals within certain disciplines. He discovered that in most cases, these people had spent 10,000 hours actively training their craft before they became masters. ([Business Insider](#))
- Club Penguin is a massive multiplayer video game that donates 10 percent of all proceeds to charity. Every year the game hosts a Coins for Change drive where players can donate their in-game coins to choose how the company uses its proceeds. ([The Globe and Mail](#))
- Nonprofits benefited by Club Penguin include WE Charity, Partners In Health, Partners in the Horn of Africa, Playground Builders, Rare and War Child. ([Club Penguin](#))

NOTE TO EDUCATORS

The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects.

Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom.

In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. The activity is structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Students are encouraged to further reflect on the issues.

Core Skill Sets:

These icons identify the most relevant core skills students will develop using this resource. Learn more about the WE Learning Framework at www.WE.org/we-at-school/we-schools/learning-framework/.

KEY TERMS

Gender discrimination—unfair treatment on the basis of someone's gender.

Accessibility—the state of being available to all people without them having to overcome barriers.

Livestreaming—using the Internet to transmit video of an event as it happening.

THEMES AND COURSE CONNECTIONS

- **Themes:** Activism, Community, Local Issues
- **Course Connections:** English, Social Sciences and the Humanities, Computer Studies

MATERIALS

- Front board
- Paper and writing utensils
- Computer/tablet with Internet access

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS AND LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- Explore ways to use gaming for good
- Recognize how different mediums can be used to create change
- Consider ways that games can be accessible for those with different abilities

DISCUSS

1. If you game, what do you like about it? If you don't game, why not?
2. Have you ever thought of using gaming for causes you care about?
3. How much time would you estimate you spend playing video games? Are you on track to hit 10,000 hours by the time you are 21-years-old? Does this number surprise you?
4. What would you like to be a world-class master of? Are you prepared to spend 10,000 hours working for it?
5. What skills do you think might be developed through gaming? How can you apply them to school, a job or a career in the future?

DIVE DEEPER

Option 1

After students have read the article ask them to use think-pair-share to identify ways gaming can be used for good, either from the article (extra life, epic gear upgrades, world's worst road trip, levelling up) or ideas that they have on their own. Record the ideas on chart paper and place them around the room. Each one will be a centre.

Tell students that they will be investigating the ways gaming can be used for good. For the idea that they select, they will create a two to three minute pitch that will be presented to the rest of the class. Instruct students to go to a centre that interests them.

Once students have selected their centre, encourage them to discuss the video games they play or know of, and think of how they can use them to further the causes they care about.

For the pitch, students should:

- Identify a cause

- Explain how they intend to use gaming to support the cause
- Share a plan to spread the word and gain support from others in the school or community

Once students have their pitch ready to present, hold presentations. After every group has presented, allow students to ask questions about the pitches. Hold a class vote to select one idea to take action on.

Option 2

After reading the article, have students explore the accessibility of their favourite games. Create a list of the most popular games used by students in the class. Record the names of the games on separate pieces of chart paper. Place the papers around the room. Instruct students to select a game to investigate and sit by the paper. If there are students who are not familiar with any of the games, take a moment to have knowledgeable students share the premise of each game.

In the groups, students should briefly discuss how the game works including manual functions gamers need to complete and the ways in which players are successful in the games. Once students have an understanding of how the game works, students should consider who might be excluded from playing the game due to their different abilities. They should then discuss what could be done to make the game more inclusive. For example, in-game adaptations or added assistive technologies. After students have had time to come up with ideas, have groups share their thoughts with the rest of the class. Encourage students to go a step further by contacting the game providers to share their ideas or by connecting with AbleGamers.

Option 3

After reading the article, have students explore gender roles in popular video games. Create a list of the most popular games used by students in the class. Record the names of the games on separate pieces of chart paper. Place the papers around the room. Instruct students to select a game to investigate and sit by the paper. If there are students who are not familiar with any of the games, take a moment to have knowledgeable students share the premise of each game.

In the groups, students should briefly discuss the purpose of the game and describe how gender is portrayed. Once students have an understanding of the game, students should consider the affects these portrayals have on the gamers and how they could be better portrayed. Encourage students to go a step further by contacting the game providers to share their ideas.

RESOURCES

Extra Life www.extra-life.org

AbleGamers www.ablegamers.org

Desert Bus for Hope www.desertbus.org