



Alternatives to Gaming

Nearly 100% of children aged 2-17 play video games. In small doses, gaming is great, but when parents don't enforce strict gaming limits, it can turn into a negative habit.

Let's face it: video games are here to stay. These amazing virtual adventures immerse our children, and often ourselves, in exciting challenges and absorbing game-play.

Too much of a good thing.

As parents, many of us have a sinking feeling that our children are spending too many hours on video games. We are right to be concerned. While 30 minutes of video gaming per day may even be good for your child's problem-solving and spatial skills, more than that can have a deleterious effect on your child's developing brain. And here's the rub: it can

be awfully difficult to separate your child from his or her video game after 30 minutes. That's why we're giving you a few techniques to ensure that your child doesn't engage in too much of a good thing.

Tip 1: Confine video games to weekends.

Make a hard rule that video games are for the weekends only. Stay firm and your child will soon give up pestering you to play video games after school.



Ground your children in real-world activities such as sports, arts, community service and school, and they will be less likely to overuse video games. For one thing, they won't have the time!

Tip 2: Have an exit strategy.

When you provide your child with video gaming time on Saturday or Sunday, make sure that after 30 minutes, the family has to leave the home to go on a fun outing, such as a walk in the park or a play date. Having an exit strategy will ensure that your child knows that stopping the video game is non-negotiable.

Tip 3: Model responsible gaming yourself.

Many adults play hours and hours of video games each day. This makes it difficult to enforce limits on children's gaming. Limit your gaming to after children are in bed or are out of the house.

Tip 4: Offer fun alternatives to gaming.

Children have never stopped loving board games such as Battleship, Clue, and Monopoly. Stock your home with these games and offer to play them with your kids during their down time. Charades, hide and seek, tag and twenty questions are lots of fun and require absolutely nothing to play. Just see if your child doesn't jump at the chance to play any of these traditional children's games with you.

Readers Theatre is a big hit at Icahn Charter Schools. Have your child bring some scripts home and act out some stories as a family. You'll be amazed at just how great an actor your child is and this fun activity will improve your child's reading fluency.

Taking a trip to the local library as a family is a fantastic way to access high quality movies, books, board games and other resources that can enliven a weekend. It is completely free and shows the neighborhood's commitment to education and literacy.

Playing music and having a dance-a-thon at home is a fun way to let kids burn off some steam, express themselves creatively and exercise their bodies. Whatever you do, make it fun and do it together!