60 - Video Games

It might be hard to imagine, but there was actually a time before Video Games existed! We know...shocking. As it turns out, Video Games are less than 50-years old. But who invented them and can they help your brain GROW?

The first video game console was called the Magnavox Odyssey. It was revolutionary because it hooked right up to your television. But even though it was an incredible technological feat, it was hard to play and didn't catch on. It wasn't until another company came out with its console that video games really took off.

ATARI helped pioneer the video game industry and popularized such classics as Pac Man, Ms. Pac Man, Space Invaders, Centipede, Frogger, Missile Command and Asteroids. But that's not where video games got their start.

In 1972, Atari created a video game version of ping pong, called PONG - that became so popular it launched the entire video game industry!

Like with many things, playing too much video games can be bad for your eyes and turn you into a couch potato. However, the news isn't ALL bad! New research shows playing video games can actually be GOOD for you. That's right. Researchers scanned the brains of participants both before and after having them play Super Mario for 30 minutes a day for two months. When the players' brains were scanned the second time, they found the grey matter in the right hippocampus, right prefrontal cortex, and the cerebellum had all increased -- compared to a control group that hadn't played any video games.

What You'll Learn

1. How and when were video games first invented?

2. Who is the most popular video game character of all time?

3. Can video games actually be good for your brain?

Activities

1. Video games are known for their memorable artwork. You can get creative and try these video game inspired art projects!

2. Have a dress like your favorite video game character day! Mario wears a red cape and red hat, Yoshi is green, and the Among Us characters wear a single color with swim

goggles! Get creative and use what you already have at home. We'd love to see your pictures!

3. It's time to play video games with an adult! Chances are good that they grew up playing some type of video games. If they have an old system in the basement, dust it off and learn how to beat vintage villains! If you don't, teach your adult how to play Minecraft or Among Us! Maybe you can even catch them being the imposter!

Additional Resources

Did you know that you need to speak a different language to create a video game? This language is called coding. Coding is an important skill for kids as well as adults. Some adults even code for a living. You can check out these fun coding games!

Kid News

Seven months ago, NASA sent a robot to Mars called Perseverance. It landed mid-February and will learn more about possible life on Mars and test new inventions. One of the biggest challenges to landing Perseverance is that it is going 12,000 miles per hour and only has 7 minutes to slow down enough to land safely. It happens so fast that we don't have a way to relay information back to Earth in real time for scientists to help make decisions. You can read more about this amazing project here.[1]

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[1] This activity guide is for the Who Smarted? podcast www.WhoSmarted.com