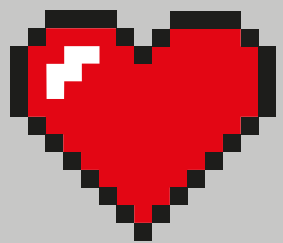# Video games impact student well-being

While some view digital gaming as a common pastime to decompress and socialize, others find video games foster a competitive environment. As a popular hobby in the school, community members share the highlights and pitfalls of their gaming experience.

Eden Leavey | Culture Editor: Print

11.9%

of gamers in an online sample fulfilled the diagnostic criteria of addiction.
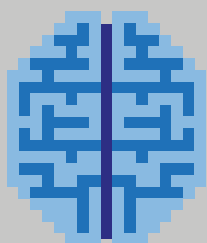
Source: CyberPsychology & Behavior

1 in 5

adolescents are currently "dependent" upon computer games according to analysis.

Source: Sage Journals

Lowered academic achievement is correlated to time spent playing video games.

Source: American Psychological Association

Across the High School, both students and faculty play video games with genres ranging from action to adventure. Yet, inconclusive studies and myths surrounding video games can leave players wondering if the games they play enable social interaction or promote social isolation.

Health Teacher Tori Haynes said she occasionally plays video games such as Mario Kart with her daughter and recognizes the appeal of these games to teenagers as she said they can be quite enjoyable and function as a break from studies.

"They use it for socializing, having fun, competition, sometimes to build skills and sometimes for learning," she said.

Ruby Read ('23) said she plays video games around three times per week, playing mostly on the weekends in order to her prioritize schoolwork.

Although Read said her interest in video games originated from watching gaming videos, she has more recently developed a passion for playing "cartoonish games or any sort of indie game."

Felix Destin ('24) said he plays video games on a daily basis and prefers more technical games that have a "very mechanical aspect" where he can develop his skills and feel accomplished in terms of his progress.

Furthermore, Destin said when he plays multiplayer games, he enjoys the sense of community because of the interests he shares with his teammates.

"If you don't have six friends who play the same game, sometimes it can be hard to put together a team," he said. "So you will play with people you don't know and you all share something in common off the bat."

However, Read said many gaming communities can also be perceived as unsupportive, where players utilize the anonymity of their screens to voice malicious comments.

"You'll hear the word toxic going around," she said. "That's actually true because there's that barrier of being online, where they're able to say the things that they want to say."

Even so, Read said she values the connections formed through gaming and has had remarkably positive experiences when playing with others online.

In light of COVID-19, Haynes said video games and other forms of digital interactions have been a beneficial method of forming connections during a time when many feel isolated.

Additionally, Technology Coordinator Mariam Mathew, who teaches Grade 9 Health, said gaming can potentially benefit players' mental health, according to a recent study con-

ducted by the University of Oxford.

"There's still a lot of research to be conducted on this, but in terms of people's well-being, it actually has a positive correlation that makes people feel a little bit better," she said.

Mathew said students in her advisory organized an online chess tournament during distance learning which not only fostered connections but had certain advantages that playing on a physical chessboard would not.

"It could give you strategies to improve your game, it could keep track of what kind of levels you play against," she said. "It was just amazing to me that, you know, something that I played as a child on a board suddenly opened up all these different forms of growing in understanding the game."

Read said design elements and attention to detail are also aspects of gaming where she has seen recent development, and she said such features

enhance her gaming experience.

"I love all of the nitty-gritty stuff about how, like the voice actors have to sound a certain way or the graphics look," she said. "It all just comes down to enjoyment and looking at really nice visuals and having a fun time."

Destin said music is a component of video games that can either amplify the intensity of the game or hinder it. He said both Destiny and Halo are games with soundtracks that he appreciates listening to while playing.

> "
> ## I love all of the nitty-gritty stuff about how, like the voice actors have to sound a certain way or the graphics look.
>
> **Ruby Read ('23)**

Moreover, Mathew said a principal contributor to the success and high demand of certain video games is audio and visual quality.

Nevertheless, Haynes said if one becomes over-attached to playing video games it may lead to an overall decline in well-being, which she said can be overcome with methods of responsible playing, such as time management and ensuring one takes digital breaks.

"Use technology, but also consider how much time you're spending on screen," she said.

However, Mathew said finding a balance varies between individuals, which she said can be "tricky because what's going to be too much for one person might be different for another person."

Destin said he is still developing a strategy for organizing his schedule to balance his passion for video games with other activities but aims to minimize external distractions and complete his academic tasks first.

"The issue isn't stopping playing it, it's knowing when to start, making sure that you've gotten everything done, wrapped everything up, that you're in your free time and not having backward priorities and putting games above all else," he said.

Ultimately, Destin said while video gaming often has a negative connotation, one can develop numerous skills by playing that can be applied to everyday life.

"Everybody thinks that if you play games you're instantly addicted or rude," he said. "It's just another hobby and I think that people need to realize exactly how many positive benefits it has from reaction time, engagements, social interactions to entertainment."

GAME OVER
PLAY AGAIN?
YES   NO

GRAPHICS BY EDEN LEAVEY