



Ten Reasons to Turn On to Game-Based Learning and Edutainment

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Whether we use the term game-based learning or edutainment, it all boils down to recognizing that play and learning are closely bound together. For very young children this simply means that play equals learning.

Even in the world of corporate training, there is an increased understanding that learning through well-designed games can improve motivation, attention, retention, and most importantly — staff performance.

So why should it be any different for children and young people? If it works for preschoolers and employees, why not for learners aged 6-12?

A few years ago, I was asked to choose ten reasons to turn on to game-based learning or edutainment. I chose the following which still look pretty good today:

High-quality learning experiences

The best learning experiences are intrinsically motivating; the reward is built into the learning rather than bolted-on as an afterthought. They provide clear goals and offer immediate feedback on performance.

Surface Learning

There is no escaping from the fact that some learning is routine, but that's no excuse for being dull and uninteresting. Well-designed games can transform tedious practice-and-drill teaching materials into highly motivating and fun experiences. For example, multiple-choice questions can be more efficient when re-presented as an interactive game.

Deep learning

Developing critical skills that go beyond memorizing facts and figures, such as hypothesizing and critical thinking, helps us all to learn and achieve at higher levels. The best-designed games have a lot to offer here.

Self-paced learning

We all learn in different ways and being able to learn at our own pace is an essential condition for success. Many games allow kids to find the right pace to suit their needs rather than having to work at a pace determined by others, such as the teacher or their classmates.

Reflective learning

Language and social related subjects in game experiences can be written in the form of learning reflections. These reflections can then help enhance formal education lessons.

Learning to be creative and innovative

Some games encourage players to create new levels or modify existing levels, helping kids hone those difficult-to-achieve skills that lead to creativity and innovation.



Cooperative and Collaborative Learning

In role-playing games, for example, kids must team up with other players, either human or computer, to overcome challenges. Experience like this helps them to learn important social skills in a relatively safe environment.

Paratext of learning

Videos of game walkthroughs, screenshots of in-game action, and game reviews are all examples of paratexts. With proper guidance from parents, teachers, or tutors, they can become useful teaching and learning materials.

Recognition of learning

We all need to have our achievements recognized. Games provide instant recognition of success and give us clear targets to do even better, whether that is a place among the high-scores or simply achieving a personal best score.

Making learning fun

Learning is not always easy, but neither are the best computer games - as every parent or teacher who has tried knows only too well! Finding the right level of challenge is the secret to successful learning. Too difficult and we give up. Too easy and we get bored. Games can make learning just hard enough to continue to be fun. Game-based learning or edutainment may not always be the best way to learn, but it takes a lot of beating!