

As many of my audience know, I'm a gamer. I play laser tag, and paint ball, and Call of Duty. My friends game. My Dad games. So you might think that the reason I speak in defense of gaming is that I like to game. There's more to gaming than entertainment though. Gaming teaches kids a lot of important lessons, including lessons about perseverance, problem-solving, and collaboration.

One of the most important reasons these games are good is that they teach kids about perseverance. Kids need to learn to persevere. Games like Killer teach them to do that. When things get tough, they have to stick it out. Killer is a game that kids and adults play, where squads have assigned "hit lists" and the winning squad is the one that gets all its hits and survives. Resolute kids at St. Anne's in Brooklyn play it, and they play it all out. That might mean staying out all night, or traveling all over. In a startling example, in High-Jinks Shoot Out, it says "Since the start of the game, the twelfth graders had been sleeping on futons in a couple of vans borrowed from their parents." This late night escapade shows that these hardy teens were willing to stay out in the cold, and sleep in a car, just to try to win. It also shows that it's not the actual "hit" that matters—it's the hard work it took to get to that moment.

There's a less obvious reason these game are good for kids as well—the kids not only learn about perseverance, they learn to problem-solve. For example, the determined kids from St. Anne's tackle problems of strategy and problems from computer coding to figuring out kids' schedules to reaching out to people in the neighborhood. They have to use all their skills—including ones they probably hardly ever get to use in school. They manage to "engineer" calls from remote computers, to convince local taxi drivers to participate, and to figure out where their classmates will be at given hours. Later in life, these resilient kids will know they are great at strategy and problem-solving. If they want to be analysts, or work for the Peace Corps, this "violent" game will have given them skills they can put to work.

Role-playing games, including a lot of video games, also get kids to form teams and to collaborate. Sometimes you pair up with another player to form a team. Sometimes you make alliances. Sometimes these players don't even live near you—they might live around the globe. That's exactly what it will be like if you want to work in the real world—people can talk to each other and work together using their computers. So the games make you into ingenious and loyal team-mates.

Some people worry that violent games teaches kids to be violent. There's evidence, though, to the contrary. "Violent crime, particularly among the young, has decreased. During the same period of time, video games have steadily increased in popularity and use, exactly the opposite of what one would expect if there were a causal link" (esa.com). This information is not surprising to a gamer. Any gamer knows that often you play to relax—so after playing, you let go of emotions like being upset, or angry. It's really no different from playing a sport—though some people think that's a problem too. The truth is, that if you didn't let kids play *Killer* or *Call of Duty*, they would just make up their own games. Kids have been playing games for hundreds of years. The Iroquois played lacrosse with hundreds of players, and those games included a lot of danger. It helped prepare them for their world.

There's a lot of reasons that games that include violence can be helpful to kids, including these lesson in teaching kids about perseverance, problem-solving, and collaboration. There is one last thought that I leave my audience with—and that is, we don't live in a world that is a lot safer than these games. We live in a world that includes Katrina and Sandy and September 11th and Columbine and Sandy Hook. I know I would want my kid, if something goes bad in his school, or his town, or his city, to know that he could band together with other kids, he could try to get to safety, he could use his brains and his courage to help others. All stuff he would have learned from these "games."