



Picture News

Advanced

27th April 2020

What's going on this week?



The World Health Organisation (WHO) have partnered with technology companies around the world campaigning to show how gaming can help fight coronavirus and 'save lives'.

The WHO and video game producers have come together to work on the #PlayApartTogether initiative amid the coronavirus pandemic. The campaign aims to spread the importance of WHO guidelines, that will slow the spread of COVID-19, to the global audience of the gaming industry.

WHO guidance includes hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette (including face masks, and covering your mouth when coughing) and social distancing. Social distancing is particularly effective in gaming and is a great way to keep people entertained, whilst being still socially connected with others.

This week's news story: <https://bit.ly/2xi6sgG>

This week's useful video: <https://cnb.cx/3cp0XKj>



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Main question:

Are video games the next best thing to our real lives?

Listen, think, share

- Read through this week's story and talk about our own experiences of computer and video games. Do we play them? Do we own a games console? Or do we prefer to spend our time doing other things?
- Talk about how the time people are spending on computer games during the lockdown period has increased. Does it surprise us that more people are spending time on computer games? Discuss if we think this is a positive change at this moment in time? Would we in other circumstances?
- One of the reasons there is thought to have been a surge in computer games is the fact that they are immersive and interactive. The experience of playing is comparable to taking a break from the current news cycle and the constant scroll of social media. Another reason is that video games have often been called a "waste of time" by some, but in our current situation, some have a lot of time, of which much will be spent indoors. Computer games can also help to keep us connected with our friends and family. Games such as Animal Crossing can cross age barriers to be played with younger siblings, parents, or even grandparents. In her review of Animal Crossing game reviewer, Jen Glennon, writes that the "straightforward, laid-back gameplay rhythm is also a welcome distraction in scary times." Do you agree with these reasons and can you think of any more to add? Are there some games that you can think of that help us to be more sociable?
- Do we think that computer games, where we play with other people (friends and family), offer more or less benefits than the games we play on our own?
- While more research is needed, some mental health specialists have speculated that they believe that potentially games could help with mental health concerns. Puzzle games, like Tetris and Bejeweled, are thought to help reduce depression, stress, and prevent traumatic flashbacks. Scientists agree that games could potentially complement other forms of therapy and that studies just need to catch up to what players report anecdotally. Why do you think that games may help in this way? Can we think of other activities that we think may provide a similar support?
- The World Health Organisation's (WHO) #PlayApartTogether campaign is trying to slow the spread of the virus and help limit the impact of COVID-19 by encouraging people to spend more time indoors, playing on computer games with family or friends. They have received criticism, however, as it comes after the WHO named "gaming disorder" as a specific disease in 2018, in a decision that caused upset to some gamers. It warned then that while the disorder only affects a small number of gamers, everyone "should be alert to the amount of time they spend on gaming activities", especially if it was happening to the exclusion of other activities. Do you think the new campaign contradicts this disease warning or do you think that this situation is different? Explain your thoughts.

Further questions for discussion

- Do you think that it is the responsibility of the World Health Organisation to encourage the direction of how we spend our time during a pandemic such as COVID-19?
- Can you think of other activities we should be being encouraged to do during this time?