

Evidence based guidelines for wise e-game use

By Professor Leon Straker, School of Physiotherapy and Exercise Science,
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Table 1 - Evidence based guidelines for wise e-game use: Parents

- * Be aware of what e-game playing your child does
- * Ensure e-game technology is protected
- * Create an e-game playing zone that is safe from electrical, trip and bump hazards
- * Ensure online interaction safety
- * Be involved with your child's e-game playing
- * Model appropriate use of e-games and participation in real world activities
- * Set, and enforce, rules around e-game use
- * Be aware of windows of opportunity – after school and weekend time – and provide support environments that encourage non-sedentary activity
- * Create screen-free bedrooms
- * Use child interest in e-games as platform for broader interest/learning
- * Encourage e-game playing to be social
- * Avoid violence, racism or otherwise anti-social games
- * Limit total and prolonged bouts of sedentary leisure including e-games
- * Encourage breaking up sedentary e-game bouts every 30 minutes to provide an active break for body and eyes
- * Replace sedentary e-games with active e-games
- * Encourage real world physical activity and ensure it does not get displaced by e-games
- * Encourage good 'technique' and safe playing space to avoid muscle and bone discomfort and injury

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Table 2 - Evidence based guidelines for wise e-game use: Children

- * Keep the e-game equipment, surrounding furniture and yourself safe when you play
- * Use an avatar for all online e-games and never give your personal details to anyone online
- * Choose e-games that you enjoy and help make you feel happy when you finish playing, help you develop useful skills and respect yourself and other people
- * Be social when you play – play with friends and family
- * Talk with your family about your e-game playing
- * Swap sedentary with active e-games – you will enjoy the feeling of your body moving
- * Minimise the time spent on e-games that require repetitive button clicking or wrist actions
- * Be aware of being in awkward postures (being uncomfortable) when playing – try and be comfortable
- * Break up your e-games every 30 mins to give both your body and eyes a rest
- * Be aware of how long you play for, and try to minimise the time when you are sitting still making time for active play both inside and outside
- * For any new active e-game, or after a break, start with short turns to allow your muscles to get used to the activity

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Table 3 - Evidence based guidelines for wise e-game use:
Health/development/education professionals

- * Be aware of what children are doing with e-games
- * Use their interest in e-games as a platform for health intervention and learning
- * Raise importance of e-games exposure with parents and children
- * Educate parents about the negative effects of screens in bedrooms
- * Encourage socially positive games
- * Encourage limiting sedentary leisure and enhancing active leisure – virtual and preferably real world
- * Discourage poor and sustained postures, repetitive actions, high accelerations, high forces during e-game play
- * Encourage breaking up sedentary e-game bouts every 30 mins to provide an active break for body and eyes
- * Encourage games with demonstrated learning benefits, skill benefits or educational content
- * Encourage enjoyment in all play!
- * Use e-games as a supplement to aid intervention for special populations and rehabilitation
- * Use e-games as a vehicle for learning, for example serious games for health education

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Table 4 - Evidence based guidelines for wise e-game use: Game industry

- * Develop/promote games with appropriate postures and movement (eg not high acceleration or high repetition)
- * Develop/promote games with positive social content
- * Develop/promote games with beneficial education/learning
- * Develop/promote games where children have fun
- * Create game play to support break taking/moderate exposures (for example accelerated fatigue in role play and strategy games and the ability to pause game and save points so that a break can be taken easily)
- * Provide clear information on the nature and content of game play (for example the level of violence and the overall game aims)
- * Provide clear information on the nature and intensity (light, moderate, vigorous) physical activity involved in playing active input e-games

For more information about these guidelines, please visit:

<http://news.curtin.edu.au/media-releases/game-protecting-childs-health-electronic-world/>

To access the research paper, please visit:

Straker, L., R. Abbott, R. Collins and A. Campbell (2014). "Evidence-based guidelines for wise use of electronic games by children." *Ergonomics* **57**(4): 471-489.
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00140139.2014.895856#.U2Mq36OQ-71>