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# Digital Life Newsletter For Parents

**This month's newsletter is about finding tips, tricks, and guidelines to get the most out of your children's video game experience.**

What your children look for in a snack might be different from what you look for as a parent. While they focus on taste, you focus on nutrition. Same goes for games. Glitzy, big-name games can be enticing, just like junk food. Some are flashy and addictive but do little to feed kids' curiosity or help them develop.

But truly great video games can help your children grow in ways you never thought possible -- just like delicious, healthful food. So how can you avoid the sugar-cereal equivalents in the game world? Look for these secret ingredients:

**A compelling hook.** Games that draw children in require concentration or imagination and present challenges just beyond their comfort zone. Yes, you may have to set limits for games that suck time at the expense of other activities. But it's a good sign when games put children in a state of "flow." Plus, they're fun.

**Choice.** Having options can make children feel powerful. Children who get to decide which path to take or how to spend their virtual money often feel responsible for their fate in a game. In turn, they feel motivated. Games with lots of choices and opportunities for exploration can help children feel ownership over the experience.

**Age- and interest-appropriate.** Some games are so easy to beat that children quickly lose interest. Others are so difficult that children get frustrated. Use your children's interests and hobbies as a jumping-off point for selecting games.

**Experimentation.** The beauty of most games is that you can try again. And again. And again. Running out of time or lives isn't so bad when you know you have another chance. A willingness to try out several options -- and even fail sometimes -- is a skill that will serve children well down the line.

**Creativity.** Imagine children designing new levels for existing games. Picture creator communities in which kids comment constructively and provide feedback. Many games offer media creation as a key part of the experience. Opportunities to make something new within a game signal to children that their original work has value.

**A social element.** There's nothing wrong with a game of solitaire. But as children get older, games in which the characters (or even real people) socialize and work together can help children flourish. Skills like teamwork and communication are the cornerstone of today's workforce. And having social outlets online can help prep children for the future.

**Relatability.** Some children view video games as an escape from school. Maybe they have trouble sitting still in class but can focus on a video game. Or perhaps a game's material and format feel more relevant to their lives. Whatever the reason, video games can help teach work and life skills.

**"Tell" instead of "show."** Playing great games is like being sucked into a book you can't put down. A distressed prince needs rescue. The world is coming to an end. Try to avoid games that spoon-feed answers to children through quizzing alone or rote memorization, and seek out ones with strong storylines.

**Cool design.** Looks aren't everything, of course. But games with a strong and unified look and feel are really appealing. It's not just that these games are beautiful -- it's that their style serves a higher purpose of drawing players into a unique world.

**Variety.** Games in which children just go through the same motions over and over are OK in moderation. But variety is nicer. Consider games that mix elements of strategy, action, adventure, role-playing, building, and more.

All the information in this article was taken from the following website:

<https://www.common sense media.org/articles/10-surprising-ways-to-spot-a-great-video-game>

