

Digital Games

A summary of the scientific literature on the impact of digital games on children aged 6-12.



How This Impacts Children's Development

Though the use of interactive media has been well-studied among young children and adolescents, very little research has been conducted on the effects of digital media on children ages 6-12 years old. Caregivers and

teachers need research-based guidelines to understand how to support learning and cognitive development in middle childhood.

[Read the brief: understanding and addressing the effect of digital games on cognitive development in middle childhood. 2019](#)

Talking Points from the SRCD Brief

- Two-thirds of interviewed parents played games with their children and found them beneficial.
- Children ages eight to eighteen played games for an average of one hour and twenty minutes a day.
- In a survey circulated to teachers of grades K-8, 74% reported using digital games for instruction, and 80% primarily used educational games and apps.
- Educationally oriented games may enhance executive functions, mental rotation skills, basic math understanding, and problem-solving abilities.
- What comprises a high-quality game or app that supports children's cognitive development and learning is relatively unknown.

Policy Considerations in the Brief

- Federal agencies could fund technology, app, and game development aimed at fostering students' academic skills, together with research on effects on child development.
- Legislative proposals such as the Child and Media Research Advancement (CAMRA) Act could inform research and policy by providing federal funding to examine impacts of digital media on children and adolescents' cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and behavioral development.
- Federal agencies could develop research-based guidance or regulation for app stores on what constitutes an educational app.
- While 22 states have adopted statewide media literacy standards, they widely vary. Research on how and when digital media use in middle childhood benefits children's cognitive development could inform the further development of state standards.

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