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# LITERACY THE INTERNET & ELECTRONIC GAMES



**L**iteracy has evolved from traditional print-based reading and writing to multiple literacies. Today varied electronic forms of communication rule with most boys – blogs, video editors, email, spreadsheets, presentation software, video podcasts, instant text messaging, listservs, electronic bulletin boards, avatars, and virtual gaming worlds.

With shocking headlines about internet addiction – especially internet pornography – worried parents and educators are asking whether these forms of literacy are doing more harm than good.

For most boys however, computer use and video game play is integrated into their lives in a balanced healthy manner. For others, time spent on the computer or video game is out of balance, and has displaced school, friends, and even family.

Clearly, when there are no household restrictions to the use of the Internet or electronic games your boy may be at risk of developing problem usage.

Rather than blame electronic games and their multiple literacy counterparts, many parents and teachers report success when they embrace technology.

**Engaging in your son's electronic world means taking the awkward steps to appreciate it rather than criticize it.**

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Let's face it, technology offers boys unique and abundant ways of reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing and representing communication that are complex and multidimensional. Besides being fun for boys, many of these games facilitate strategizing as well as logical problem solving.

Today's gaming technology is not just for youth! Even Microsoft's Xbox has a new game geared for the fitness-minded adult that features a computer-generated personal trainer who guides users through a customized set of exercises and diets.

## LITERACY, THE INTERNET AND ELECTRONIC GAMES...CONTINUED

# BOYS



also learn complex problem-solving skills, perseverance, pattern recognition, hypothesis testing, estimating skills, inductive skills, resource management, logistics, mapping, memory, quick thinking, as well as reasoned judgments.

In the gaming world boys are engaged in vivid three-dimensional worlds filled with moving images and musical soundscapes, demanding all encompassing attention and complex muscular movements. They are challenged to read, reflect, analyze, interpret, evaluate, and communicate in a variety of textual environments.

Boys also tell me that they appreciate being able to reboot a game when the going gets tough and negativity sets in. Sometimes a fresh start is the best way to sustain motivation.

Video games and electronic media are also one of the few settings in which boys can be the teachers when adults take the time to participate.

Engaging in your son's electronic world means taking the awkward steps to appreciate it rather than criticize it. Indeed, your son will likely be more cooperative when you speak from personal experience and take the time to understand his attraction to technology. Mostly, you will become informed and confident to discuss reasonable limits.

Despite the many benefits of this new and exciting world of literacy boys still need lots of physical activity and time away from the computer – to play outside and pursue more physical adventures.

In the next newsletter we'll explore the dark side of technology and how a parent can recognize and prevent addiction.

**Media-Awareness.ca** offers tips and tools for making technology and the Internet safe, fun and productive. It addresses such topics as rules for online safety - blogging, chat rooms, cyber bullying, as well as recent research.

For more information visit

<http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/>