

# Fire up the Xbox, power down the guilt

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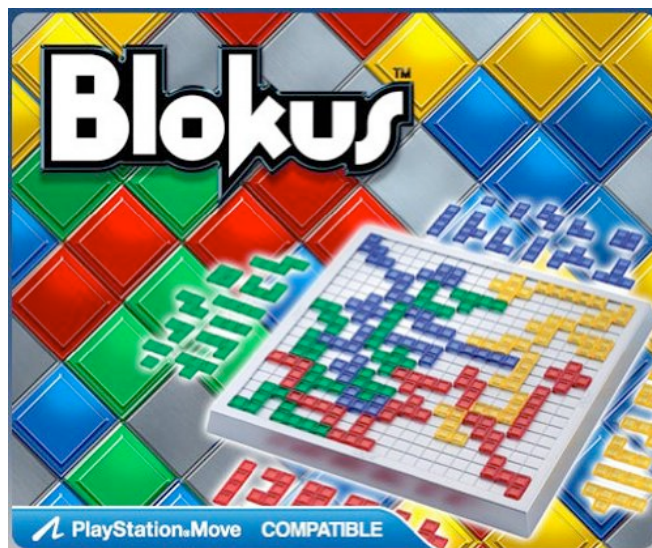
Good news! Turns out video games are not the devil, and we have a certified smart guy to back us up on this one. Barry MacDonald, a Vancouver-based clinical counsellor and the founder of [MentoringBoys.com](http://MentoringBoys.com), says that far from being time-wasting brain-mushers, a lot of video games are useful in various areas of child development, from hand-eye coordination to spatial reasoning.

In other words, you could do a lot worse than a little family game time. Here, Macdonald shares three of his favourite games.



**Why:** It's interactive family fun that's as entertaining for 10 year olds as it is for grandparents, says MacDonald. Better yet, it's available on whichever console you own.

For Xbox, PS3, Wii. \$54.99, [GameStop.ca](http://GameStop.ca)



**Why:** This multi-player game (in which players compete to capture the board using shapes that resemble Tetris blocks) has not only won numerous awards, including the Mensa and the Teacher's Choice Award, "it's particularly good for girls, who frequently lag in terms of visual-spatial problem solving abilities," says MacDonald.

Free online, [Blokus.fr](http://Blokus.fr)

## Club Penguin (online)

**Why:** This hugely popular kids game works a bit like *World of Warcraft*, but with cuddly penguins on G-rated missions. "I was recently talking to a parent who didn't want her child to use online 'cheats,'" says MacDonald, "but I think they're a great way to help young people learn how to use the internet to solve a practical problem."

\$5.95/month, [ClubPenguin.com](http://ClubPenguin.com)