How do you Find the Best Video Games for your Child to Play?



If you are the parent of a 5-, 10-, or 15-year old (or anywhere in between) you've probably noticed that he loves to play video games and to talk to you about them as well. Whether it is your 6 year old who asks if they can use your cell phone to play a game when driving to school or your 12 year old who can't get enough of Minecraft, you need to know something about the games that they are playing, so you can monitor his play and also engage in an intelligent conversation. Considering there are thousands of games and apps that are available, it is extremely difficult for parents to find the best video games for their child in terms of appropriateness and the potential for learning. So, how do you find the best video games for your child to play?

When you start looking for games for your children, it becomes

important to consider a number of issues. Most importantly, choose a learning game that is fun so your child plays it enough to learn from it. Secondly, you need to find games that are appropriate for your child, that are tailored to his maturity level, and his interests. Thirdly, take into consideration his sensitivities to violence, whether it be real or cartoon-like, and his willingness to take on challenge and difficulty. Finding the best games for learning and teaching your child skill sets such as planning, organization, and flexible thinking is much easier than it was in the past. Not only are many games and apps inexpensive or free, but also websites such as learningworksforkids.com and commonsensemedia provide parents with a wealth of information to find games that are best suited for their child.

Here are a number of other strategies for finding the best games for your child to play:

l. Look for age-appropriate games. Pay attention to ESRB ratings and LearningWorks for Kids ratings.

2. Find games that match your child's interest or introduce games that could create new interests. For example, there are compelling data that indicate that playing sports video games increases the likelihood that children will play these sports.

3. Encourage your child to play a variety of games. For example, if your child likes to play only fighting games, insist that the child also begin playing other types of games such as racing, sports, or active games.

4. Encourage your child.to choose games that you might enjoy playing with them. This will help you observe and track your child’s progress as well as strengthen your bond.

5. Help your child to select games that may not seem educational, but are in fact educational. For example, many of the popular games described in LearningWorks for Kids Playbooks practice important thinking and problem-solving skills, but are not identified as educational games.

6.Choose games that are social. Select games for your child that have multi-player options so that the child’s game play is not a solitary activity and can be done with their friends at home or online together.

7.Sprinkle in some “serious” games. Serious games refer to video games that are designed both to be fun and to expose a child to real human issues.