

John Yi

“Phys Ed: Why Wii Fit Is Best for Grandparents” by Tara Parker-Pope, 2010

With the Christmas video-game-buying season in full swing, now seems the right time to ask, Are active video games being aimed, at least in part, at the wrong audience? Active video games refer, of course, to games that require you to be active. Often also called exergames, they include the Wii Fit, Dance Dance Revolution from Konami and the new Microsoft Xbox Kinect and Sony PlayStation Move systems, among others. Depending on the game, they exhort players to hop, wriggle, serve and volley, left-hook a virtual boxing opponent or, in some other fashion, move. The underlying premise of these games is that, unlike Madden NFL 11 or Super Street Fighter IV, playing them should improve people’s fitness and health.

But the latest science suggests that that outcome, desirable as it may be, is rarely achieved by most players, particularly the young. In theory, active games should come close to replicating the energy demands and physiological benefits of playing the actual sports they imitate. But as most of us might guess, they don’t. Studies consistently have found that active video games, although they require more energy than simply watching television or playing passive video games, are not nearly as physically demanding as real sports and physical activities. A study published earlier this year in *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* found that when adults “exergamed” in a metabolic chamber that precisely measured their energy expenditure, only 22 of the 68 active video games tested resulted in moderately intense exercise, similar to brisk walking. The vast majority were light-intensity activities, which burned few calories and raised heart rates only slightly. None of the games were as vigorous as a run or an actual tennis match, and few lasted long.

Writing Directions

Read the passage above and write an essay responding to the ideas it presents. In your essay, be sure to summarize the passage in your own words, stating the author’s most important ideas. Develop your essay by identifying one idea in the passage that you feel is especially significant, and explain its significance. Support your claims with evidence or examples drawn from what you have read, learned in school, and/or personally experienced.

Remember to review your essay and make any changes or corrections that are needed to help your reader follow your thinking. You will have 90 minutes to complete your essay.