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# Getting Gamers: The Psychology of Video Games and Their Impact on the People who Play Them

*By Jamie Madigan*



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## Getting Gamers: The Psychology of Video Games and Their Impact on the People who Play Them By Jamie Madigan

Video games are big business. They can be addictive. They are available almost anywhere you go and are appealing to people of all ages. They can eat up our time, cost us money, even kill our relationships. But it's not all bad! This book will show that rather than being a waste of time, video games can help us develop skills, make friends, succeed at work, form good habits, and be happy. Taking the time to learn what's happening in our heads as we play and shop allows us to approach games and gaming communities on our own terms and get more out of them.

With sales in the tens of billions of dollars each year, just about everybody is playing some kind of video game whether it's on a console, a computer, a web browser, or a phone. Much of the medium's success is built on careful (though sometimes unwitting) adherence to basic principles of psychology. This is something that's becoming even more important as games become more social, interactive, and sophisticated. This book offers something unique to the millions of people who play or design games: how to use an understanding of psychology to be a better part of their gaming communities, to avoid being manipulated when they shop and play, and to get the most enjoyment out of playing games. With examples from the games themselves, Jamie Madigan offers a fuller understanding of the impact of games on our psychology and the influence of psychology on our games.



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**Getting Gamers: The Psychology of Video Games and Their Impact on the People who Play Them By Jamie Madigan Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #84430 in Books
- Brand: imusti
- Published on: 2015-10-16
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.37" h x 1.08" w x 6.23" l, 1.40 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 320 pages



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### Editorial Review

#### Review

This is a smart, thorough, and funny journey into the world of video games. Madigan, a psychologist, takes a scholarly approach, incorporating notable studies from the past, such as Philip Zimbardo's experiment of having subjects supposedly administer painful electric shocks, related here to the 'reduced social accountability' observed in online game play. He bolsters the scientific subject matter with humor and a personable and accessible tone, especially when sharing his own experience as a gamer. His theories about mental focus don't seem particularly specific to video games, but rather are relevant to most forms of electronic and social media. . . . This is also a considerably conceived discussion, with handy bullet points at the end of each chapter. Madigan's work . . . [is] enough to get the attention of intellectually curious gamers. (*Publishers Weekly*)

Psychologist Jamie Madigan covers a wide range of topics associated with game consumption, design, and development, yet he manages to address each in detail. In contrast to those primarily interested in the emotions of gaming, Madigan lets the data do the talking and provides reasoned, balanced commentary around the data based on his long experience as a game player, analyst, and consultant. He explores recent phenomena such as the success of free-to-play and in-app purchases, using commercial game examples to make the book both comprehensible and useful to nonplayers. He also treats topics such as cheating, pay to play, trolling, and the effects of video game violence, dealing with them in a refreshingly frank and open-minded way. The bibliography alone makes this book a useful resource for students and faculty in academic game programs. Each chapter concludes with a list of central points. Madigan makes an excellent case for the role of psychology in video games, not only as a means of improving games but also as an area in which human nature is on display in many forms and can be fruitfully observed and studied. A great book.

Summing Up: Essential. All readers. (*CHOICE*)

I love a book that has a great opening sentence. *Getting Gamers* opens with 'The history of video games started in a small Norwegian village during the 1680's when a precocious young fisherman names Billy 'SadPanda42' Jackson created *Call of Duty 3* out of sticks and moxie.' ?That, my friends, is a great opening sentence. Not only can Madigan write a good opener, he gets better as he goes. He takes complex concepts such as 'deindividuation' or 'spacial presence' and make them easily understandable. More than just understandable, but relatable. Using examples from casual games to intensely committed game fans, he shows the influence that the psychology behind the games can exert. . . . As a teacher, these concepts are [fascinating to] me. . . . [I]t has a wealth of ideas and concepts that teachers and administrators should be embracing to change the landscape of education for the better. (*Making The Awesome: A Blog About Life, Education and Everything*)

Cognitive dissonance theory, social comparison theory, social identity theory, social learning theory, self-determination theory, self-perception theory, self-categorization theory, deindividuation, priming, psychological reactance, emotional contagion, Asch phenomenon, law of diminishing sensitivity, loss aversion bias, status quo bias, benign versus malicious envy, ego depletion, variable schedules of reinforcement, big-fish-little-pond effect, anchoring effect, Dunning-Kruger effect, and reciprocity effect, Zeigarnik effect. If you took Psychology 101 in college you no doubt recognize at least a few of these terms, and if you followed that up with a mid level course in social psychology you may recognize most of them. Jamie Madigan defines and uses all of these terms, quite appropriately, in his delightful book, *Getting*

Gamers.... If you are a video gamer, the book's insights may help you appreciate the games all the more; help you become more rational in your choices of games and manner of playing them; and make you less likely to fall for gimmicks designed to part you from your hard-earned, real-world money or trap you into game routines that are ultimately more tedious than fun.... If you are a student or would-be student of psychology, you will find here accurate, fun-to-read descriptions of basic psychological theories, principles, and research findings, along with their applications to video games. Although this is a serious, thoughtful, well-researched book, it is written in a refreshingly breezy, often humorous style. (*American Journal of Play*)

Jamie takes us as deep into the minds of gamers as is possible without a scalpel. It's a fascinating and essential read. (Nir Eyal, author of *Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products*)

Jamie Madigan's fascinating exploration of the psychology of gaming blends provocative research findings with lively anecdotes and witty prose. It is accessible, insightful, and a must-read for gamers and game designers. (Nick Yee, author of *The Proteus Paradox: How Online Games and Virtual Worlds Change Us-- And How They Don't*)

Madigan repackages research from familiar names in behavioral psychology such as Dan Ariely, Drazen Prelec, Amos Tversky, and Daniel Kahneman, into delightful, yet thought-provoking anecdotes that seek to understand and explain how psychology affects the world of games. His easy-to-read style and liberally-sprinkled humorous asides makes what could have been a dry, academic tome into a page-turner. Whether you are a game developer or game player, you will likely come away second-guessing pretty much everything about how and why we play! (Dave Mark, President and Lead Designer, Intrinsic Algorithm)

For those interested in the interplay between the science of the mind and the science of game design, there is no better place to begin than with this book. (Mike Ambinder, PhD, Experimental Psychologist, Valve Corporation)

Jamie Madigan has put together something fun, engaging, and seriously interesting, and not just for people who love games, but for people who wonder why we can be so weird online or inside our social media. I guarantee you will come away from this book with not only a better understanding of human behavior, but with advice on how to apply the latest research in your own life and profession. Madigan exposes how game designers have solved so many of the behavioral problems we see in other domains, and what you learn about their process will no doubt be useful in yours. Madigan's lively, quirky approach to the topic is sure to provide fresh insights, even if you've read a psychology book or two. Whether it is exploring immersion, grinding, why we cheat, why we lob insults, or how freemium games subtly guide our hands toward our wallets, Madigan wonderfully explains in detail the deeper phenomena at play. (David McRaney, author of *You Are Not So Smart* and *You Are Now Less Dumb* and host of the *You Are Not So Smart* Podcast)

For years now, Jamie Madigan has served as the unofficial psychologist of the games industry. If you want to understand how human behavior and games interact, this is the book for you. (Ian Bogost, Professor, Georgia Institute of Technology)

#### About the Author

**Jamie Madigan, PhD**, has become an expert on the psychology of video games and seeks to popularize understanding of how various aspects of psychology can be used to understand why games are made how they are and why their players behave as they do. Madigan has written extensively on the subject for various magazines, websites, blogs, and his own site at [www.psychologyofgames.com](http://www.psychologyofgames.com). He has also consulted with game development companies and talked at conferences about how game developers can incorporate

psychology principles into game design and how players can understand how it affects their play. Finally, he has appeared as an expert on the psychology of video games in dozens of print, radio, and web outlets such as The Washington Post, the Chicago Tribune, BBC Radio 5, the BBC, The Guardian, and more. He is a lifelong gamer.

## **Users Review**

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#### **Angel Garcia:**

Do you have something that suits you such as book? The reserve lovers usually prefer to select book like comic, small story and the biggest some may be novel. Now, why not trying Getting Gamers: The Psychology of Video Games and Their Impact on the People who Play Them that give your entertainment preference will be satisfied by means of reading this book. Reading practice all over the world can be said as the opportunity for people to know world a great deal better then how they react towards the world. It can't be explained constantly that reading addiction only for the geeky particular person but for all of you who wants to possibly be success person. So , for all you who want to start reading as your good habit, you may pick Getting Gamers: The Psychology of Video Games and Their Impact on the People who Play Them become your own personal starter.

#### **Matthew Venegas:**

Is it you actually who having spare time after that spend it whole day simply by watching television programs or just resting on the bed? Do you need something totally new? This Getting Gamers: The Psychology of Video Games and Their Impact on the People who Play Them can be the answer, oh how comes? The new book you know. You are thus out of date, spending your free time by reading in this new era is common not a nerd activity. So what these textbooks have than the others?

#### **Lorenzo McAvoy:**

That guide can make you to feel relax. This particular book Getting Gamers: The Psychology of Video Games and Their Impact on the People who Play Them was colorful and of course has pictures on there. As we know that book Getting Gamers: The Psychology of Video Games and Their Impact on the People who Play Them has many kinds or type. Start from kids until adolescents. For example Naruto or Private eye Conan you can read and think that you are the character on there. So , not at all of book are generally make you bored, any it offers up you feel happy, fun and chill out. Try to choose the best book for you personally and try to like reading that.

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