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# Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World

By Jane McGonigal



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**Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World** By Jane McGonigal

**A visionary game designer reveals how we can harness the power of games to boost global happiness.**

With 174 million gamers in the United States alone, we now live in a world where every generation will be a gamer generation. But why, Jane McGonigal asks, should games be used for escapist entertainment alone? In this groundbreaking book, she shows how we can leverage the power of games to fix what is wrong with the real world—from social problems like depression and obesity to global issues like poverty and climate change—and introduces us to cutting-edge games that are already changing the business, education, and nonprofit worlds. Written for gamers and non-gamers alike, *Reality Is Broken* shows that the future will belong to those who can understand, design, and play games.



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### Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

### Practical Advice for Gamers by Jane McGonigal



*Reality is Broken* explains the science behind why games are good for us--why they make us happier, more creative, more resilient, and better able to lead others in world-changing efforts.

But some games are better for us than others, and there is too much of a good thing.

Here are a few secrets that aren't in the book to help you (or the gamer in your life) get the most positive impact from playing games.

This practical advice--5 key guidelines, plus 2 quick rules--is scientifically backed, and it can be summed up in a single sentence:

*Play games you enjoy no more than 21 hours a week; face-to-face with friends and family as often as you can; and in co-operative or creator modes whenever possible.*

#### **1. Don't play more than 21 hours a week.**

Studies show that games benefit us mentally and emotionally when we play up to 3 hours a day, or 21 hours a week. (In extremely stressful circumstances--such as serving in the military during war-time--research shows that gamers can benefit from as many as 28 hours a week.) But for virtually everyone else, whenever you play more than 21 hours a week, the benefits of gaming start to decline sharply. By the time you're spending 40 hours or more a week playing games, the psychological benefits of playing games have disappeared entirely--and are replaced with negative impacts on your physical health, relationships, and real-life goals. So always strive to keep your gaming in the sweet spot: 7–21 hours a week.

#### **2. Playing with real-life friends and family is better than playing alone all the time, or with strangers.**

Gaming strengthens your social bonds and builds trust, two key factors in any positive relationship. And the more positive relationships you have in real life, the happier, healthier and more successful you are.

You can get mental and emotional benefits from single-player games, or by playing with strangers online--but to really unlock the power of games, it's important to play them with people you really know and like as

often as possible.

A handy rule-of-thumb: try to make half of your gaming social. If you play 10 hours a week, try to play face-to-face with real-life friends or family for at least 5 of those hours.

(And if you're not a gamer yourself--but you have a family member who plays games all the time, it would do you both good to play together--even if you think you don't like games!)

### **3. Playing face-to-face with friends and family beats playing with them online.**

If you're in the same physical space, you'll supercharge both the positive emotional impacts and the social bonding.

Many of the benefits of games are derived from the way they make us feel--and all positive emotions are heightened by face-to-face interaction.

Plus, research shows that social ties are strengthened much more when we play games in the same room than when we play games together online.

Multi-player games are great for this. But single-player works too! You can get all the same benefits by taking turns at a single-player game, helping and cheering each other on.

### **4. Cooperative gameplay, overall, has more benefits than competitive gameplay.**

Studies show that cooperative gameplay lifts our mood longer, and strengthens our friendships more, than competing against each other.

Cooperative gameplay also makes us more likely to help someone in real life, and better collaborators at work--boosting our real-world likeability and chances for success.

Competition has its place, too, of course--we learn to trust others more when we compete against them. But if we spend all our time competing with others, we miss out on the special benefits of co-op play. So when you're gaming with others, be sure to check to see if there are co-op missions or a co-op mode available. An hour of co-op a week goes a long way. (Find great co-op games for every platform, and a family-friendly list too, at Co-Optimus, the best online resource for co-op gaming.)

### **5. Creative games have special positive impacts.**

Many games encourage or even require players to design and create as part of the gameplay process--for example: Spore, Little Big Planet, and Minecraft; the Halo level designer and the Guitar Hero song creator. These games have been shown to build up players' sense of creative agency--and they make us more likely to create something outside of the game. If you want to really build up your own creative powers, creative games are a great place to start.

Of course, you can always take the next creative step--and start making your own games. If you've never made a game, it's easier than you think--and there are some great books to help you get started.

## **2 Other Important Rules:**

*\* You can get all of the benefits of a good game without realistic violence--you (or your kids) don't have to play games with guns or gore.*

If you feel strongly about violence, look to games in other genres--there's no shortage of amazing sports, music, racing, puzzle, role-playing, casual, strategy and adventure games.

*\*Any game that makes you feel bad is no longer a good game for you to play.*

This should be obvious, but sometimes we get so caught up in our games that we forget they're supposed to be fun.

If you find yourself feeling really upset when you lose a game, or if you're fighting with friends or strangers when you play--you're too invested. Switch to a different game for a while, a game that has "lower stakes" for you personally.

Or, especially if you play with strangers online, you might find yourself surrounded by other players who say things that make you uncomfortable--or who just generally act like jerks. Their behavior will actually make it harder for you to get the positive benefits of games--so don't waste your time playing with a community that gets you down.

Meanwhile, if you start to wonder if you're spending too much time on a particular game – maybe you're starting to feel just a tiny bit addicted--keep track of your gaming hours for one week. Make sure they add up to less than 21 hours! And you may want to limit yourself to even fewer for a little while if you're feeling too much "gamer regret."

From [Booklist](#)

People who spend hours playing video or online games are often maligned for "wasting their time" or "not living in the real world," but McGonigal argues persuasively and passionately against this notion in her eminently effective examination of why games are important. She begins by disabusing the reader of some inherent prejudices and assumptions made about gamers, such as that they're lazy and unambitious. Quite the opposite: McGonigal finds that gamers are working hard to achieve goals within the world of whatever game they are playing, whether it's going on a quest to win attributes to enhance their in-game characters or performing tasks to get to a higher level in the game. Games inspire hard work, the setting of ambitious goals, learning from and even enjoying failure, and coming together with others for a common goal. McGonigal points out many real-world applications, including encouraging students to seek out secret assignments, setting up household chores as a challenge, even a 2009 game created by The Guardian to help uncover the excessive expenses of members of Parliament. With so many people playing games, this comprehensive, engaging study is an essential read. --Kristine Huntley

Review

"McGonigal proposes a fascinating and provocative, if troubling, manifesto that adds to our understanding of the appeal and potential power of digital games. . . . McGonigal is a clear, methodical writer, and her ideas are well argued. Assertions are backed by countless psychological studies." --*The Boston Globe*

"Once you read this remarkable book, you'll never look at games--or yourself--quite the same way." --Daniel H. Pink, author of *Drive* and *A Whole New Mind*

"Jane McGonigal is worth hearing out--her point in this provocative manifesto is that the energy and devotion that gamers pour into video games is a powerful force and that we are fools if we fail to harness it. . . . McGonigal marshals convincing evidence in smart and snappy prose, delivered in an old-fashioned book for techno-peasants such as me." --Janice P. Nimura, *Los Angeles Times*

*"Reality is Broken* is a compelling exploration of why playing games makes us feel so good, and why, far

from being a distraction from reality, technology-led games are increasingly providing solutions to our daily dissatisfactions. . . . Despite her expertise, McGonigal's book is never overly technical, and as with a good computer game, anyone, regardless of gaming experience, is likely to get sucked in." --*New Scientist*

"Powerful and provocative . . . McGonigal makes a persuasive case that games have a lot to teach us about how to make our lives, and the world, better." --*San Jose Mercury News*

"Jane McGonigal's insights have the elegant, compact, deadly simplicity of plutonium, and the same explosive force." --Cory Doctorow, author of *Little Brother*

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Joseph Williams:**

As people who live in the actual modest era should be revise about what going on or data even knowledge to make these individuals keep up with the era which can be always change and move ahead. Some of you maybe may update themselves by looking at books. It is a good choice for you personally but the problems coming to an individual is you don't know which one you should start with. This Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World is our recommendation to help you keep up with the world. Why, since this book serves what you want and need in this era.

#### **Earl Hess:**

Nowadays reading books are more than want or need but also get a life style. This reading behavior give you lot of advantages. Advantages you got of course the knowledge the rest of the information inside the book in which improve your knowledge and information. The info you get based on what kind of reserve you read, if you want attract knowledge just go with knowledge books but if you want sense happy read one using theme for entertaining for example comic or novel. The Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World is kind of e-book which is giving the reader unforeseen experience.

#### **Ben Hernandez:**

Spent a free time and energy to be fun activity to accomplish! A lot of people spent their sparettime with their family, or their own friends. Usually they undertaking activity like watching television, about to beach, or picnic from the park. They actually doing same task every week. Do you feel it? Do you wish to something different to fill your current free time/ holiday? May be reading a book could be option to fill your no cost time/ holiday. The first thing that you ask may be what kinds of reserve that you should read. If you want to attempt look for book, may be the reserve untitled Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World can be excellent book to read. May be it can be best activity to you.

#### **Heather Wade:**

A lot of people always spent their very own free time to vacation as well as go to the outside with them

family members or their friend. Did you know? Many a lot of people spent many people free time just watching TV, or perhaps playing video games all day long. If you want to try to find a new activity this is look different you can read the book. It is really fun for yourself. If you enjoy the book that you just read you can spent the whole day to reading a publication. The book Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World it is quite good to read. There are a lot of folks that recommended this book. These were enjoying reading this book. Should you did not have enough space to develop this book you can buy often the e-book. You can m0ore easily to read this book from a smart phone. The price is not too expensive but this book possesses high quality.

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