



# Video games can shoot holes in GPA

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By Kate Naseef, USA TODAY

First-year students whose roommates brought a video game player to college studied 40 minutes less each day on average, according to a new study from the National Bureau of Economic Research. Those 40 minutes of lost study time translated into first-semester grades that were 0.241 points lower on the 4.0 grade scale.

The study's authors, Todd Stinebrickner, an associate professor of economics at the University of Western Ontario, and his father, Ralph Stinebrickner, a professor of mathematics and computer science at Berea College in Kentucky, were not trying to prove anything about video games. The study sought to determine how much of an effect study efforts have on grades.

The Stinebrickners say that it might seem obvious that more studying equals better grades. But research has been unable to prove it.

"Everyone knows that studying must matter to some extent, but we just don't know how much it matters relative to other things," such as college entrance exam scores, Todd Stinebrickner says. "And this study shows that it matters quite a lot."

Time-use diaries that asked how much time 210 students spent sleeping, studying, attending class and pursuing other activities were collected four times during Berea's first semester in 2000 and 2001.

The study found that students whose roommate brought a video game console did not exhibit different levels of class attendance, partying, study efficiency or paid employment — all factors that also could affect grades. But there was a substantial drop in time spent studying when one roommate brought a video game player. This means that the lower grades of students whose roommates brought video games can be attributed to the fact that these students studied less, Todd Stinebrickner says.

He added that he does not think these findings mean students should give up distractions such as video games. In fact, happiness also can be a factor in how well a student does in school.

But the findings could help counselors educate students on the importance and impact of studying.

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