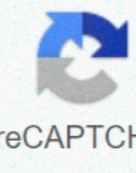


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"What in the World Is 'Final Fantasy?' A Beginner's Guide to the Biggest RPG Series on the Planet." Kotaku. Aug. 7, 2012. (Jan. 13, 2015) Anthony. "Top 10 Old School Mortal Kombat Characters." Game Revolution. Feb. 3, 2014. (Jan. 9, 2015) Elliott. "Mortal Kombat: Deception." Electronic Gaming Monthly. November 2004, Issue 184, Pages 72-73. (Jan. 9, 2015)Square Enix. "Final Fantasy VII." (Jan. 13, 2015) Cheats. "Top 10 Video Game Hoaxes of All Time." Nov. 20, 2013. (Jan. 2, 2015) Tropes. "Urban Legend of Zelda." (Jan. 11, 2015) Game Museum. "Expert Gamer (Issue 58 April 1999)." (Jan. 12, 2015) John. "Lara Croft - NUDE!" GamesRadar. Aug. 22, 2007. (Jan. 11, 2015) 25Since the early days of video games, young gamers have whispered secrets on the schoolyard and spent long hours trying to make the most outrageous gaming myths come true. Some kids heard their best friend's cousin found Mew under a truck in "Pokemon"; others were fully convinced there was a secret way to find the Triforce in "The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time." Before gamers banded together on the Internet and used their collective knowledge -- and the ability to hack into games and parse their code -- to rule out the impossible, any schoolyard whisper could turn out to be the truth.The video game world is no insular that you'd have to be a dedicated gamer to even hear certain rumors and myths -- the one surrounding a code that revives Aeris in the game "Final Fantasy 7" is a good example. Other rumors are more scandalous, like the one about a cheat code that allows players of "Tomb Raider" to defrock Lara Croft. But gaming myths extend beyond secret characters and gamer gossip. There are myths about gaming, too -- like the idea that gaming directly causes violence or that only boys play video games.Because these ideas are funny, intriguing or just plain misguided -- and because we like debunking myths -- we now present 10 of the most common myths about video games.As far as silly video game myths go, this one is pretty darn eerie. Around the year 2000, game developer and publisher Electronic Arts began featuring football players on the cover of its popular "Madden NFL" game every year. And a weird thing started happening. For several years, nearly every player to grace the cover of the game ended up being injured the following season. Some merely turned in poor performances. Star athletes were seemingly struck down left and right by the Madden curse.Of course, there's a logical explanation for how the Madden curse came to be. Athletes picked for the cover are always coming off of great seasons, and football is a rough game. It happens in the NFL all the time: Some athletes turn in weak seasons, and others get injured. The curse is well-known, but that doesn't mean appearing on the cover of a video game magically causes players to sprain ankles.In 1996, "Tomb Raider" was a revelation. It was the atmospheric, adventure-laden Indiana Jones-style video game we'd always wanted. There were ancient ruins, mythological treasures and dinosaurs. Lara Croft was gaming's new icon, but that was due to her appearance as much as her game. The buxom adventurer was a strong, independent character, but her design was straight out of male fantasy. Naturally, rumor's quickly started flying around claiming there was a nude code in "Tomb Raider" that would strip Lara down to her birthday suit.The code never existed, but that didn't stop gamers from trying. Fake codes and secrets made the rounds on the Internet (in its early days in 1997) and throughout gaming culture. "Tomb Raider" actually does have codes that gamers can enter for other purposes, but nothing that gets Lara Croft naked [source: CheatCC]. Despite being a myth, the "Tomb Raider" nude code is notorious to this day -- Lara Croft's status as a gaming sex symbol ensured that.And in the end, mischievous gamers got the last laugh. While there's no nudity built into any of the "Tomb Raider" games, game modders eventually created nude character models for Lara that could be loaded into the PC versions of the game.Rockstar Games' "Grand Theft Auto" has long been a controversial series, but scandal erupted around "Grand Theft Auto: San San Andreas" when media attention focused on a mod for the game called Hot Coffee. Game modders dug around in San Andreas and found an abandoned sex minigame -- the protagonist is invited into his girlfriend's house for coffee, and naughtiness ensues. Outraged politicians and the media jumped on the game, and the Entertainment Software Ratings Board re-rated the game from Mature to Adults-Only. Rockstar had to re-release the game for PC, PlayStation 2 and Xbox, and the whole ordeal cost its parent company Take-Two Interactive millions of dollars [source: IUP].Now here's the crazy part about the Hot Coffee scandal: Almost no one could actually play the minigame. It wasn't accessible in "GTA: SA" at all. It wasn't a part of the game. But the content was still on the disc, and modders found it. Only by modifying the game could gamers possibly play Hot Coffee. That wasn't too difficult on the PC, but some real work for the console versions.Parents naturally didn't care about the distinction, even though games with a mature rating aren't meant to be played by children. Rockstar was hardly the first developer to leave unused code on a game disc, but Hot Coffee served as a clear warning: Even if it's not an active part of the game, someone's going to find it.Here's a shocker: Kids love video games. It's true! Millions of kids all over the world love Mario and Sonic and Pikachu and the games that spawned them. But there are many, many more gamers who grew up playing "Mario Bros.," and "Sonic the Hedgehog" -- or older games on the Atari -- who are now adults and still love video games. In many ways, the video game industry has grown up alongside them, offering more sophisticated and violent games like "Call of Duty" that are akin to R-rated action movies.In 2011, 53 percent of gamers fell within the 18 to 49 age range. And within that range, the average gamer was surprisingly mature -- 37, in fact. "Casual" games, like Flash Web browser games and Nintendo's "Wii Sports" and "Wii Fit," have brought older people into the gaming world. Gamers 50 and older now represent 29 percent of the market [source: ESA].Only 18 percent of gamers are under the age of 18, according to the Entertainment Software Association. There are plenty of games still out there for kids, but the average gamer has definitely grown up.Video game culture has a reputation for being a nerdy indoor hobby -- gamers sit in their rooms or their mothers' basements staring at the TV day in and day out, never going outside to socialize with their peers. Even if that image may be accurate for some gamers, the anti-social stigma of video gaming fans has never been less true. Internet connectivity has been a part of PC gaming since the 1990s with online multiplayer games like "Quake," and since the launch of Xbox Live in late 2002, Internet gaming has grown into a huge feature on consoles as well.Thanks to high speed Internet connectivity, gamers can play with one another from across the globe. Some games are even designed for millions of simultaneous players. Blizzard's "World of Warcraft" has more than 10 million subscribers paying a monthly fee to log onto servers and play in a virtual world populated by other gamers [source: Gamasutra]. Microsoft's Xbox Live service has 23 million subscribers [source: Technet].More and more games are designed with cooperative play or competitive multiplayer in mind; time spent playing games often means time spent socializing. While competitive gaming also brings out a lot of trash talk in online communities, online play gives gamers the opportunity to spend time with distant friends or make new ones.Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, the two teenagers who carried out the 1999 Columbine High School massacre in Littleton, Colo., were fervent "Doom" players. German 17-year-old Tim Kretschmer killed 15 people a decade later with moves he stole from the game "Counter Strike." When youths engage in violent behavior, the brutal video games they played before they committed their crimes are generally cited as reasons for their tendencies. Logic simply follows: Violent video games make kids violent.This idea remains conventional wisdom, although some studies of kids and aggressive video games have turned up evidence to the contrary. One 2005 study of people ages 14 to 68 who were asked to play 56 hours of the massively multi-player role playing game (MMRPG) "Asheron's Call 2" in one month found no noticeable change in aggressive behavior among players after the game. Nor did the researchers turn up an increase in aggression among gamers when compared to the control group who didn't play [source: PhysOrg].Other studies have come to different conclusions, though some psychologists believe that many studies connecting real-world violence to video games are biased [source: Kierkegaard]. As it turns out, nothing does more to undermine the notion that video games increase violence in real life than crime statistics. While video games continue to sell -- sales rose from \$5.5 billion to \$9.5 billion from 1999 to 2007 -- violent crime among youth actually declined. In 1999, 1,763 people under age 18 were arrested for homicides in the U.S.; in 2007, that age group accounted for 1,063 murders there [source: Safe Youth, FBI].When the home video game console first became widely available in the early 1980s, games were generally asexual -- or at least unisex. Titles like "Frogger," "Dig-Dug" and "Q-Bert" lacked any sort of gender bias and gaming wasn't relegated to boys or girls. As gaming became more sophisticated, however, titles began to skew more toward young males than females.Public perception of video games as an almost-strictly boys' pastime still remains; the relative lack of popularity of even the most obvious effeminate titles supports this notion. But does the fact that "Metal Gear Solid" vastly outsells Barbie titles on PlayStation mean that girls just don't play video games? Absolutely not.In fact, from January to August 2008, females ages 18 to 45 came in second only to males of the same age group as the biggest spenders in video game industry (37 percent versus 38 percent) [source: Lee].In late 2000, reports emerged along both the grapevine and mainstream media that Iraqi president Saddam Hussein was stockpiling PlayStation 2 systems, which had debuted that autumn. More than 4,000 consoles had made their way to Iraq in just a couple of months, having circumvented the arms embargo on Iraq imposed by the United Nations more than a decade earlier.The game consoles were, after all, kids' toys at their essence, so what was the harm? Further down in the reports of the PS2 stockpile (and often in the headlines) was a more alarming idea -- that Hussein valued the consoles for their chips. Fears grew that the leader had found a loophole in the embargo and was planning to string together 10 to 20 of the consoles to create a supercomputer powerful enough to guide missile systems [source: ZDNet].Reality would undermine this concern almost as quickly as it emerged. Technically, one could connect a series of PlayStation 2 consoles and use their 128-bit processors in conjunction, but it would require unique software that Iraq would have needed years to develop after the PS2 debuted. In other words, the rumor was pure myth.History was made in Sunnyvale, Calif.'s Andy Capp's Tavern on Nov. 29, 1972 [source: BartonandLoguidice]. Ted Dabney and Nolan Bushnell -- two computer programmers who had just founded Atari -- had set up and unveiled a new arcade game by the name of "Pong" that night. The game's debut represented the birth of the video gaming industry, which would reach global revenue of \$38 billion just 34 years later [source: ABIResearch].The world's first video game was born. Except, it wasn't. "Pong" was born that day, sure, but it already had a few older siblings. The common conception that "Pong" was the world's first video game is actually a myth.Actually, another arcade game had been released a full year prior to "Pong"'s debut at Andy Capp's Tavern. Contrary to popular belief, it turns out that the relatively little-known "Computer Space" holds the title of world's first arcade video game [source: Barton and Loguidice]. It was based on a computer game called "Spacewar!" that was a bit too difficult for gamers since, at that time, every gamer was a novice. "Pong" was slightly more everyone's speed; its popularity blew the doors off of "Computer Space" and led to the myth that it was the first video game.Sometimes what sounds like a myth is actually the truth -- sort of. This is the case with the longstanding rumor that there are millions of Atari game cartridges buried in the New Mexico desert.In September 1983, 14 trucks containing somewhere in the neighborhood of 10 million unwanted -- hated, even -- Atari game cartridges showed up at the Alamogordo landfill [source: Snopes]. They dumped their cargo there and went along their way, leaving behind evidence of the birth of one of the earliest video game rumors.The reason for the mass dumping is a matter of public record: Atari's fourth-quarter earnings report for 1982, to be precise. The company had a year that was far worse than expected, largely because it had stacked so much on two pivotal releases: its home console version of "Pac-Man" and a game based on the blockbuster film, "E.T." Both titles hit so far below company and public expectations that around 5 million copies of each were returned to the company. Stuck with millions of the games, Atari opted to bury them.Unfortunately, nostalgic video game hunters who visit the landfill in search of a souvenir will be sorely disappointed. The company had the landfill owners crush the cartridges with a steamroller, and the whole pile was paved over with concrete [source: Snopes].Bailey, Kat. "Take-Two Settles 'Hot Coffee' Lawsuit." Sept. 2, 2011. (Dec. 7, 2011) Matt and Loguidice, Bill. "The history of Pong: avoid missing game to start industry." Gamasutra. January 9, 2009. . "Top 10 Best Cheat Codes Ever!" CheatCC.com. (Dec. 5, 2011) Frank. "World of Warcraft Loses Another 800K Subs In Three Months." Gamasutra. Nov. 8, 2011. (Dec. 6, 2011) Michael. "Don't blame Germany's school shooting on a video game." The Telegraph. March 14, 2009. Software Association. 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