

GAMEWISE

Apps to
help you
study

In this
edition's
Brain
Games

New VR
releases

All parents need to
know about anticipated
virtual reality games

VIRTUAL REALITY

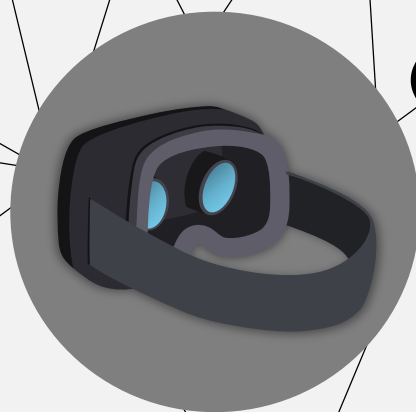
What does it mean for gamers and games ratings?



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FROM THE GRA

Hello and welcome to the first issue of our new e-magazine. As the nation's video games regulator, our prime job is to ensure that video game consumers are supplied with all the information they need about video games in order to make informed buying decisions.

We think this mag goes some way in achieving that aim and we hope you find it interesting, useful and informative. We'd love to hear your feedback!

Happy and safe gaming – The Editor



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GAME GUIDE

We write additional consumer information for every game we rate. These ACIs tell you exactly why the game received its rating and what you should look out for when playing.

In this issue, we're dedicating our Game Guide to some highly anticipated VR releases. Perfect for thrill seekers, just remember to check the rating before diving in!

To find out more about any other game, go to **gamesratingauthority.org/GRA/** and 'search for games'.



EVE: VALKYRIE

This game was rated PEGI 12 for occasional use of mild swearing and offensive language.

EVE: Valkyrie is a multiplayer dogfighting shooter game which uses virtual reality headset technology and is set in the EVE Online universe.

The game received a PEGI 12 rating for bad language alone. It contains use of the words 'b****rd' and 'cr**py'.

Gameplay mainly consists of missions, some of which require offensive or defensive action against waves of enemy craft. When craft are hit, they explode and disappear.

The game also features online playing capability, which may bring players in contact with each other in real time.



VR WORLDS

This game was rated PEGI 16 for frequent realistic violence and strong language. It is not suitable for under 16 year olds.

VR Worlds is a collection of virtual reality experiences featuring: The London Heist in which you prepare for and carry out a robbery; Ocean Descent where players are submerged into the ocean within a suspended shark cage; Scavengers Odyssey where players take control of an alien craft and explore a treacherous nebula; VR Luge in which players hurtle along busy roads; and Danger Ball, a pong-like game played from a first person perspective.

The PEGI 16 rating was attained by one particular part of the game: The London Heist, which features violence towards human characters and strong language throughout. Violence mainly consists of your character shooting rival security or gang members from a first person view, though there is also a notable instance where two men fight and one is slashed across the neck with a knife. Characters' reactions are realistic and feature moderate amounts of blood. There is also very frequent use of the word 'f**k'.



UNTIL DAWN: RUSH OF BLOOD

This game is rated PEGI 18 and is only suitable for adults. The rating was given due to frequent strong violence.

This is a standalone title set in the Until Dawn universe in which players take a rollercoaster ride through several terrifying locations.

The game features frequent instances of gross violence. As you ride through the levels in the coaster cart, you must shoot the ghostly apparitions, masked killers and other demonic creatures which attack you.

Enemies include human characters, whose heads and arms may break apart into bloody chunks when you shoot at them. There are also depictions of violence against vulnerable persons when a human character, strung up by the wrists, is bisected at the waist by a saw blade.

The game also features some infrequent strong language, with use of the word 'f**k'.



BRAIN GAMES

Brain Games is dedicated to games and apps that encourage players to learn while they play!

Carrying on the virtual reality theme, we're taking a look at some VR apps that can be used as learning aids for younger players. In this edition, we look at apps that can be used for History, English, Biology and Physics.

WAR OF WORDS VR

Inspired by the BBC's documentary of the same name, which explored the work of Britain's First World War poets, this free app presents Siegfried Sassoon's 'The Kiss' as a virtual reality experience.

From the front lines, Sassoon became renowned for his unflinching criticism of the upper classes and his uncompromising depictions of the brutality of the trenches. Now, he is a staple in both English and History classes. Students who look at war poetry in Key Stage 4 English classes, or have been asked to use the war poets' work to contextualise their

understanding of the First World War in History class, may find the app an engaging and memorable way to consider the tone, themes and message of the poem.

Developed by BDH for Google Cardboard and other virtual reality phone mounts, users will follow minimalistic animations in virtual reality as a voice-over reads Sassoon's 1916 poem. There are some disturbing scenes, as human figures are shot and bayoneted, with the inclusion of small blood effects highlighted in red, so parents will want to view the app before deciding whether it is suitable for their child.

BRAIN GAMES • BIOLOGY

ANATOMY YOU VR: 3D HUMAN ANATOMY

This app for mobile devices, used with virtual reality mounts like Gear VR and Google Cardboard, aims to take users on an immersive 3D trip inside the body.

Designed to simulate minimally invasive procedures, such as an endoscopy, players can navigate around various tubular structures in the body such as the digestive, respiratory, circulatory and gynaecological systems.

Developed with assistance from medical professionals and technical specialists from the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, the app was designed to be of use to medical and

nursing students who are studying minimally invasive procedures. Even so, it may simply be interesting to budding scientists as a unique and engaging look into the human body.

The app is free, but parents should be aware that there are in-game purchases, in the form of add-on maps: the Transbronchial tree and Urinary tract.

TITANS OF SPACE

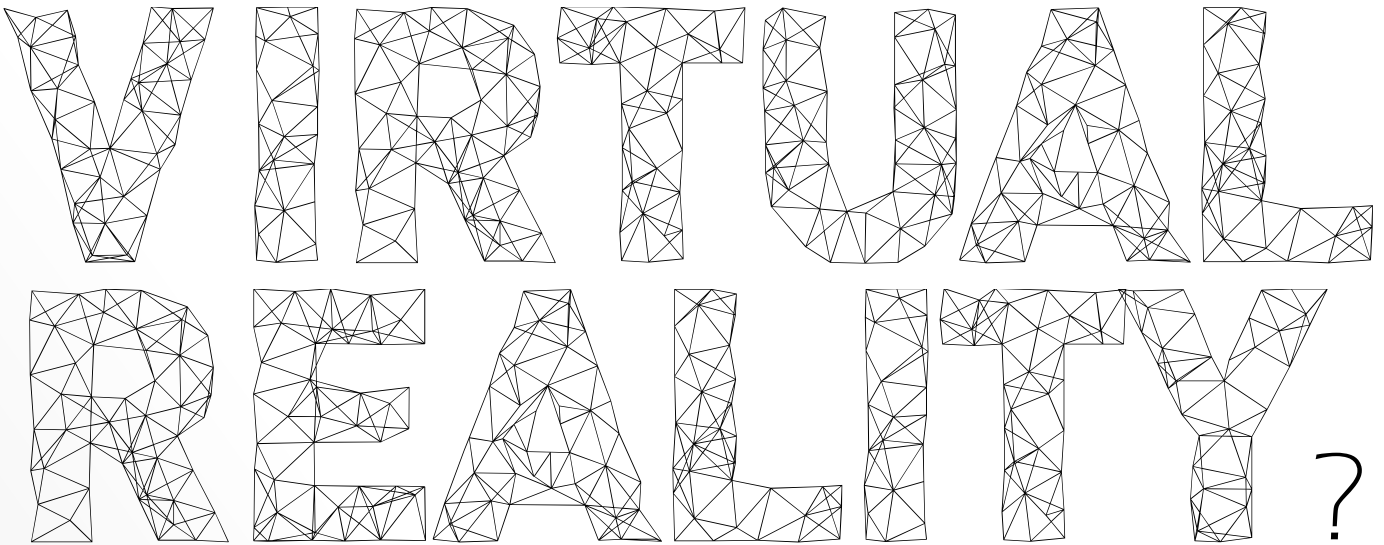
Titans of Space is a virtual reality simulation which takes users on a guided tour of our solar system.

Players pick up facts about the galactic bodies at designated points as they whiz around the planets and moons.

The app may act as an engaging tool for children in Key Stage 2 who are being introduced to the solar system, to help them develop their understanding of space. The Year 5 curriculum in particular requires pupils to describe the movement and shapes of the planets, moon and sun.

A preliminary version of the game is available for mobiles compatible with VR mounts. While there is nothing which may disturb younger players, parents should be aware that the game offers in-app purchases, such as the option to add narration. An early access version of Titans of Space 2.0 is also available on Steam, Oculus and HTC Vive.

WHAT'S THE FUSS ABOUT



Gianni Zamo takes a look at what virtual reality means for gamers and games ratings.


I am sitting (I think) in a darkened room with the faintest sound of traffic audible in the distance. A lance of daylight cuts through the darkness from a skylight and provides just enough illumination to see the silhouetted outlines of machinery and equipment, though it is difficult to make them out exactly. Suddenly, a switch is heard clunking into action and a bare bulb suspended from the roof illuminates and reveals that I am sat in some sort of workshop.

I hear footsteps and looking to my left the outline of a man starts to approach me. He steps into the light and I am confronted by a shaven-headed, muscular, heavily tattooed 'geezer' who bears a striking resemblance to Grant Mitchell. He lights a cigarette, takes a drag and then, in the finest of Sarf London accents, begins threatening me.

Am I reporting live from the headquarters of some criminal enterprise? Am I on the set of the next British gangster movie? No! I am, in fact, fully immersed in the world of a VR video game demo and it's quite unsettling. The 'gorilla' in front of me has swung a punch and I flinch, I actually flinch, from something that my brain is telling me is not really there.

Whilst I have 'test flown' similar VR systems in the past, this one responds smoothly and accurately to my movements though the two suspended gloves in front of me, representing my virtual hands, do struggle occasionally to pick up items. When they do work, however, I can twist and turn an object in any direction and without any lag. The technology has clearly moved on in leaps and bounds, but with it will inevitably come the questions about how we will respond when immersed in these VR games for hours at a time.

Already some commentators have indicated that VR games must affect ratings since the games will be so much more 'realistic' than 2D games. Others have suggested that they probably won't make much difference since we will always recognise the fact that we are dealing with an animated rather than real world however immersed we may be. No doubt an army of behavioural psychologists will soon be researching their way into any conceivable 'effects'. Given past experience, we will probably end up with the usual camp roughly divided into those who believe there are negative effects, those who don't, and those who don't care either way!



From my experience thus far, the only problems I foresee are centred around the physical effects of playing VR games. For example, leaning out to reach an object, I almost lost my balance and went over, so maybe we will be obliged to sit down at all times. Another issue which is likely to be more problematic is that of the effects of motion-sickness on those who are susceptible. It will be interesting to see how developers tackle this particular challenge.

These problems aside, however, there is no doubt that the prospect of being so completely inside a game will add a whole different dimension (no pun intended) to video game playing; one which will make the experience so much more exciting and entertaining. Now excuse me, I've just turned 180 degrees and spotted someone else coming towards me and he doesn't look best pleased. Time to get outta here!


HOW DOES VIRTUAL REALITY

The head mounted display, or headset itself, serves to immerse the user by creating a life-sized world without the boundaries of a computer or television screen.

ACTUALLY WORK?


Tracking software built into the headset monitors the user's head movements so that the computer can alter the image accordingly. This is an important part of making the user feel that they are actually in another world.

The speed at which the computer processes the user's interactions has a significant effect on immersion. If it lags too much, it can destroy the illusion and even make users feel sick.



The headset isn't the only key to an immersive experience. High quality 3D audio which makes it seem like the sound is coming from different directions can work together with the visuals to heighten the virtual experience.

Images are fed to either one or two (one for each eye) displays. Lenses between the picture and your eyes reform and focus the picture, producing a 3D image with depth. A high quality image and high frame rate is important for making the virtual reality illusion more convincing.



There are different methods for making users move around in the virtual world. Though many VR systems require users to stand in front of a camera, VR apps actually often rely on other inputs for movement. Different inputs include normal controls, motion-sensing controllers or even treadmills.

Motion is important because if users' movements in virtual reality and real life are unmatched, it can make them feel very nauseated!



THANKS FOR READING THIS
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