

Computer shoot-up games set young minds firing

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Playing violent computer games for up to eight hours a week has many benefits for young people.

Research by Unitec computing lecturer Paul Kearney suggests games such as Counter Strike and Medal of Honour - where the aim is to massacre other characters in wartime settings - can improve attention span, hand-eye co-ordination and the ability to multi-task.

Such games, known as "first-person shooters", are often criticised for their brutal content and blamed for violent behaviour in young people.

But Mr Kearney, who heads the country's first computer-game research lab, said his study showed the games could increase cognitive abilities by an average 2 1/2 times.

"I'm not condoning these games or even entering the argument over whether they make people more violent," he said.

"I just wanted to see whether certain abilities were more advanced among game-players than others."

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