

Learning English podcasts... from the
Hellenic American Union©

Level: Lower Intermediate

Lesson: 1

Title: "Video Games"

Summary:

Vanessa and James interview James Paul Gee who wrote a book about how good it is for kids to play computer games.

Welcome to the **Learning English Podcasts** produced by the Hellenic American Union.

In this broadcast, Vanessa is in the middle of a live show interviewing James Paul Gee. Listen to their conversation and answer the question that follows about the main idea.

Dialogue:

Vanessa: Hello and welcome to our show. James Paul Gee is with us today to tell us more about his book 'Everything Bad is Good for You'. James, thanks for being here today.



James: My pleasure.

Vanessa: Your book's main argument is that playing video games is actually good for kids. So, James, do video games make kids smarter? I gotta tell ya, I **don't buy** it.



James: Well Vanessa, what are kids doing when they play these games?

Vanessa: They're wasting their time if you ask me. Why do you think they're doing something useful?

James: Don't forget that computer games need a great deal of concentration, and ask the player to plan, create strategies and use tactics...



Vanessa: **What are you driving at?** Are you trying to tell me that computer games are actually beneficial for children?



James: **In a nutshell.** You see... these games offer a mental exercise that can benefit their overall development as children give them their undivided attention and try to solve difficult problems.

Vanessa: **I see where you're going,** sort of like a 'mental workout'?



James: Exactly.

Vanessa: Okay, but what are they learning?

James: Not as much as they could. But if educators got together with software developers to make simulations that take say Sim City, Age of Empires and Civilization,...

Vanessa: **Sorry to butt in,** those are all computer games, right?



James: Yeap...anyway, as I was saying, if they could take these games but use real information about what happened ... and let people play alternate versions of history...

Vanessa: So they'd be learning as they play?

James: **Absolutely...** and not only that. What is our children's working environment going to be like in the future? It's sure to involve computers and rapid decisions!



Vanessa: So, we could use computer games to train our children



James: **You've got it.**



Vanessa: Thanks James this has been most interesting.



Now answer the following question . . .

What does James think about computer games?
That they can be good for children.

Now listen again to the dialogue in parts. After each part there will be 3 to 4 questions on some details...

Part 1

Vanessa: Hello and welcome to our show. James Paul Gee is with us today to tell us more about his book 'Everything Bad is Good for You'. James, thanks for being here today.

James: My pleasure.

Vanessa: Your book's main argument is that playing video games is actually good for kids. So, James, do video games make kids smarter? I gotta tell ya, **I don't buy it.**

James: Well Vanessa, what are kids doing when they play these games?

Vanessa: They're wasting their time if you ask me. Why do you think they're doing something useful?

James: Don't forget that computer games need a great deal of concentration, and ask the player to plan, create strategies and use tactics...

Vanessa: **What are you driving at?** Are you trying to tell me that computer games are actually beneficial for the children?

James: **In a nutshell.** You see... these games offer a mental exercise that can benefit their overall development as children give them their undivided attention and try to solve difficult problems.

Vanessa: **I see where you're going,** sort of like a 'mental workout'?

James: Exactly.

Now answer some questions . . .

1. Vanessa says, **"I don't buy it"**. What does "I don't buy it" mean?

"I don't buy it" is an expression used when we want to show that we don't believe someone or something.

2. Vanessa asks, **"What are you driving at?"** What does "what are you driving at" mean?

"What are you driving at" is an informal question and it means "what do you mean."

3. James says, **"In a nutshell"** What does "in a nutshell" mean?

"In a nutshell" means using as few words as possible. Here he means that Vanessa is basically right but he doesn't want to repeat the whole thing.

4. Vanessa says, **"I see where you're going."** What does "I see where you're going" mean?

"I see where you're going" is an expression used to show the other person you understand what he wants to say even if they haven't said it yet.

Now listen to part 2 . . .

Part 2

Vanessa: Okay, but what are they learning?

James: Not as much as they could. But if educators got together with software developers to make simulations that take say Sim City, Age of Empires and Civilization,...

Vanessa: **Sorry to butt in**, those are all computer games, right?

James: Yeap...anyway, as I was saying, if they could take these games but use real information about what happened ... and let people play alternate versions of history...

Vanessa: So they'd be learning as they play?

James: **Absolutely**... and not only that. What is our children's working environment in the future going to be like? It's sure to involve computers and rapid decisions!

Vanessa: So, we could use computer games to train our children

James: **You've got it.**

Vanessa: Thanks James this has been most interesting.

Now answer some questions . . .

1. Vanessa says, **"Sorry to butt in"**. What does **"sorry to butt in"** mean?

"Sorry to butt in" means sorry to interrupt.

2. James says, **"Absolutely"**. What does **"absolutely"** mean?

"Absolutely" means "yes".

3. James says, **"You've got it"**. What does **"you've got it"** mean?

"You got it" means you've understood it. So here James wants to show that Vanessa is right.

Please visit our site at www.hau.gr to find the transcripts, explanations and activities.

GLOSSARY

Waste (verb): to spend too much time, money, or energy doing something which is not important or necessary

E.g. She went shopping and spent too much money.

Great (adjective): very large in amount or degree, it is more formal than big

E.g. The house had great windows.

A great deal of: a lot of

E.g. A great deal of money is needed to build the new road.

Mental (adjective): the process of thinking or developing the mind.

E.g. Mathematics helps the mental development of children.

Benefit (noun): advantage

E.g. Playing sports benefits children.

Develop (noun): the gradual growth of something

E.g. Education is important for the development of a country.

Simulation (noun): the production of something that looks or sounds real

E.g. Cars are tested to see how much damage they suffer in simulated crashes.

Civilization (noun): a society with its own culture and social system

E.g. These statutes are from the ancient civilizations of central Asia.

Alternate (adjective): If something happens on alternate days, it happens every second day

E.g. Take these pills on alternate days.

Version (noun): a form of something in which some details are different

E.g. : Ludo is a version of an ancient Indian racing game.

Rapid (adjective): something which happens very quickly

E.g. : The rapid economic growth in the 1980s.

Involve (verb): to include someone or something in something, or to make them take part in or feel part of it

E.g. Running a business involves a great deal of time and energy.

Undivided (attention) (adjective): complete attention

E.g. An only child has the undivided attention of his parents.

ACTIVITIES

Activity 1

Practice using the words in the glossary. Choose the most appropriate word to fill in the blanks.

1. Nicky's job ___ spending a lot of time with other people.	A. undivided
2. Technological development has caused ___ changes in education.	B. wasted
3. The paint ___ makes this wood look like stone.	C. civilization
4. Cars are banned from the city on ___ days.	D. version
5. I believe in the ___ of regular exercise.	E. mental
6. The TV ___ of the movie is designed for family viewing.	F. alternate
7. I'll give you my ___ attention as soon as I finish.	G. simulation
8. Come on we've ___ too much time already.	H. rapid
9. As the disease progressed his physical and ___ health got worse.	I. involves
10. His new book is about the lost ___ of the Aztecs.	J. benefits

Activity 2

Complete these sentences.

1. If I could live anywhere in the world I ___ in London.	A. would be
2. If you could go home and think about it, I think you ___ the right decision.	B. had
3. If he could come back tomorrow, I ___ him to see the flat.	C. paint
4. If they could get a cheap ticket, I think they ___ for the holidays.	D. wouldn't suffer
5. I would be really grateful, if I ___ your car.	E. would understand
6. We could buy this house, if we ___ a good deposit.	F. would make
7. They could sell their house at a good price, if they ___ it.	G. would take
8. If I could speak Spanish, I ___ understand what they're saying.	H. could borrow
9. If scientists could find the cure for cancer, many patients ___.	I. would come
10. If you could do me this favor, I ___ extremely happy.	J. would live

KEY TO ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: 1.i. 2. h. 3. g. 4. f. 5. j. 6. d. 7. a. 8. b. 9. e 10.c.

Activity 2: 1. j. 2. f. 3. g. 4. i. 5. h. 6. b. 7. c. 8. e. 9. d. 10.a.