Play for Performance: Using Computer Games to Improve Motivation and Test-Taking Performance

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ABSTRACT

The importance of testing, especially certification and high-stakes testing, has increased substantially over the past decade. Building on the “serious gaming” literature and the psychology “priming” literature, we developed a computer game designed to improve test-taking performance using psychological priming. The game primed the concept of achievement to increase an individual’s expectation of success and motivation. Our results show that individuals who took a test immediately after playing the game significantly outperformed those who played a placebo computer game designed to have no effect. The effect size was medium (0.63). We believe that these results have important implications for information system education, including improving individual test-taking performance, identifying ways to develop information systems topic-specific games, and the need for more research to better understand how and why such games influence performance.

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