

So, it's conclusive: [brain training games don't work](#) .

As someone who took part in the study, playing the BBC's actively mind-numbing "brain training" games, I can honestly say that I'm a little frustrated with this result. I suppose I did want to hear that they worked, at least to some extent. But I can't argue with the application of science to the over-hyped claims of this industry.

I've also been using Posit Science's "Brain Fitness Program" software for some time. It's quite enjoyable and staged in a way that certainly makes you feel like you are making progress. It's really an entirely different animal to the games in the BBC study, and I'm not sure what the implications of that are. Perhaps there need to be wider studies, taking in more types of software, in order to really call this one.

Anyway, why did the BBC have games designed specifically for this study? It would have been rather more entertaining if they had used the commercially-available software and rubbished that in their programme. Or was this yet another case of the BBC running scared from potential law suits.

I liked the section of the programme about activities that *can* actually boost cognitive function. Good old-fashioned exercise raised its ugly head again. Looks like there's no escaping that one. Also, listening to music, be it Mozart or Blur, prior to undertaking cognitive tasks, can have a measurable positive effect.

It's good to know that many of the facets of ordinary everyday life, can have a beneficial effect on one's brain power; but I suspect that's not what most of us are really after when we play these games. We're really trying to find ways of being smarter than the average bear, in order to get ahead in life and work. Personally, I'm just really interested in brains, and the idea of being able to experiment and play with my own (while leaving it in situ) appeals to me.

I won't be ditching the brain training anytime soon. I'll just be looking for better designed and more interesting products. I'll also be looking much more closely to see how rigorously the products have been scientifically tested.

Brain Salad Drudgery

Written by nuncio

Thursday, 22 April 2010 13:38

I've also taken up a musical instrument, and I know that's doing something because practising makes my head hurt.