

4 Reasons People Watch Gaming Content on YouTube

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Gaming videos are a head-scratcher. Why watch someone play when you could just ... play? To find out, we asked gamers directly. This new research uncovers four key reasons people watch gaming content. For brands marketing to gamers, knowing these motivations can enable more meaningful connections.

It's official: [Gaming has gone mainstream](#). According to Nielsen, [64% of the U.S. population 13+ plays video games](#) on some device today.¹ And that popularity is reflected in the videos people watch on YouTube, such that two of the top five channels with the most subscribers worldwide are gaming-related.²

If you're still surprised that gaming isn't just a thing you can love to do—but a thing you can love to watch—let this sink in: Forty-eight percent of YouTube gamers say they spend more time watching gaming videos on YouTube than playing games.³

The implications for brands are real. [Gamers are a highly influential audience](#) with major purchasing power. But to truly connect requires

think with 

knowing a bit more about why people are tuning into game-related video content.



Two of the top five channels with the most subscribers worldwide are **gaming-related**.

Source: YouTube Data, Global, classification as top channel is based on creator channels by subscriber count, May 25, 2017.

Through new research in partnership with Ipsos and Flamingo, we set out to discover why people watch game-related videos.

1. For the community—to be part of something larger than oneself

To game is to plug directly into new, immersive worlds. It can be [entertaining](#). It can be [absorbing](#). It can be downright [spellbinding](#). But, with just you and the screen, it can also be isolating.

That’s why the emerging community element of gaming is so striking. Online communities break down barriers between gamers and allow them to celebrate the characters and worlds they love together, with other real people who feel the same way. As Salina, 25, put it, “Gaming is a simple thing to bond about, and it traverses a lot of other typical blockers for interacting with people.”

According to Ipsos, 56% of YouTube gamers say YouTube is where they connect with their gaming community.⁴ By connecting socially through “[let’s plays](#),” [walk-throughs](#), [reaction videos](#), and [reviews](#), gamers get the chance to double their love for the activity, for their favorite games, and for the gaming scene overall. “I love that sense of community you get on YouTube, for gaming especially,” says Jordan, 24. “I follow this guy Dunkey and he’s great, but what I really love is reading the comments on his page and responses to his videos.”

56% of YouTube gamers say YouTube is where they connect with their gaming community.

2. For the inclusion—to feel accepted

If you're still holding on to any stereotypes about who gamers are, [it's time to let them go](#). Gamer demographics probably aren't what you think. Today's gamers come in all stripes, and anyone you know—your boss, your neighbor, your barista—could be a gamer. As Naomi, 27, said, "It doesn't really matter what you look like or how old you are, because if you enjoy video games you enjoy video games. That's what makes you a gamer."

Inclusivity is particularly meaningful for female gamers, who have found other women to connect with and learn from on YouTube. According to Ipsos, 66% of female YouTube gamers watch gaming videos on YouTube when they want to hear from people they can relate to.⁵ "It's not a 'boys' club' anymore," as Salina, 25, put it. "And it's so much stronger to be inspired by someone you connect with."



66% of female YouTube gamers watch gaming videos on YouTube when they want to hear from people they can relate to.

Source: Google/Ipsos Connect, "Human Stories," U.S., n=4,917 U.S. respondents aged 18–54, May 2017.

For the fun of it—to escape

Gaming has become a popular spectator sport. According to Ipsos, 73% of YouTube gamers say they enjoy watching others play games on YouTube.⁶ Why? For the same reasons folks might watch a movie or read a novel.

Maybe it's for a laugh. As Scott, 27, put it, "You see these people having fun and being goofy. It talks to me."

Perhaps they're hoping to get swept up in someone else's experience and get a vicarious thrill. Jennifer, 36, said she likes gaming videos because they "put you in the position to experience something. I'll never go skydiving or bungee jumping, but my heart races when I see stuff like this."

And sometimes it's simply about taking a break. Jordan, 24, said, "I don't always want to play. Sometimes I just want to relax, watch someone else play."

73% of YouTube gamers say they enjoy watching others play games on YouTube.

For the desire to improve—to learn new skills

Finally, let's not forget almost every game has a goal. That's what keeps gamers in the game. For those looking to upgrade their skills, gaming videos can provide plenty of help. According to Ipsos, 74% of YouTube gamers say they go to YouTube to learn how to get better at a game.⁷

Whether through [step-by-step level walk-throughs](#) or [gamer-to-gamer character guides](#), gaming videos save time and energy when it comes to improving technique. According to Scott, "YouTube allows you to 'see' how to do things. It's so hard to understand something based off a manual,

but with YouTube you can actually see how another gamer is doing something. That alone has helped me get better as a gamer.”



74% of YouTube Gamers say they go to YouTube to **learn how to get better at a game.**

Source: Google/Ipsos Connect, "Human Stories," U.S., n=4,917 U.S. respondents aged 18–54, May 2017.

What these motivations mean for brands

Brands looking to reach gamers would do well to consider reflecting diversity and inclusion, creating immersive content, and fostering community and self-improvement in their videos. Those that do may have a better chance at holding the attention of this passionate and influential audience.

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Sources

- 1 Nielsen Games, "U.S. Games 360 Report: 2017."
- 2 YouTube Data, Global, classification as top channel is based on creator channels by subscriber count, May 25, 2017.
- 3-7 Google/Ipsos Connect, U.S., "Human Stories," n=4,917 U.S. respondents aged 18–54, May 2017.