Writing Portfolio

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This writing portfolio includes a range of work from two freelance pieces to an instructional document and spec work. The writing presented here reflects a variety of tone, style, and content.

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Freelance Work: Article Written for HeR Interactive

Link to article:

"5 Games For Back-To-School" is a piece written for HeR Interactive and published on August 31, 2022. This article demonstrates my ability to research, develop a topic and theme, and write in a personable manner.

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5 GAMES FOR BACK-TO-SCHOOL

Video Games That Promote Learning

Hints of fall are on the horizon. The summer nights are cooler and the back-to-school season is upon us. You may already be busy planning for that first day of school and settling into a new routine. As you're getting ready, don't forget to make some time for video games. Yes, video games! Gaming has many educational benefits including creativity, goal setting, problem solving, and teamwork. In addition to these benefits, gaming is associated with cognitive growth. An article from Wiley provides eight cognitive benefits associated with video games including increased coordination, improvements to memory, and social skills. While some games are transparent about their educational benefits (I'm looking at you, *Oregon Trail*), games don't need an 'educational' label to have merit.

For example, when I was growing up, I played a number of *Nancy Drew* games. I can remember playing *Nancy Drew: Secret of the Scarlet Hand* with one of my siblings hovering over my shoulder. In that game, Nancy is tasked with figuring out who has stolen a treasured artifact from a museum exhibit in Washington D.C. Not only were we enthralled by the Maya history shared in the game, but we were caught up in collecting clues and solving puzzles. These kinds of games also promote reading and exploration in environments where it is safe to fail and try again. I can remember walking through one of the opening areas of the game, reading carved panels and listening to the ambient jungle sounds of the exhibit. I was immediately intrigued and curious for what would come next. That's part of the beauty of video games. They're able to create such vivid worlds and environments that engage multiple senses.
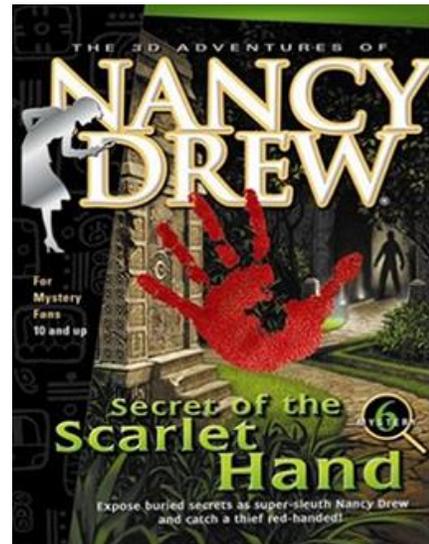
Whether we talk about children or adult players, video games offer many real-world benefits and skills. So let's get to it! Here are five video games that promote learning and make for great additions to any back-to-school video game list.

Games for Back-to-School Season

1. *Nancy Drew: Midnight In Salem*
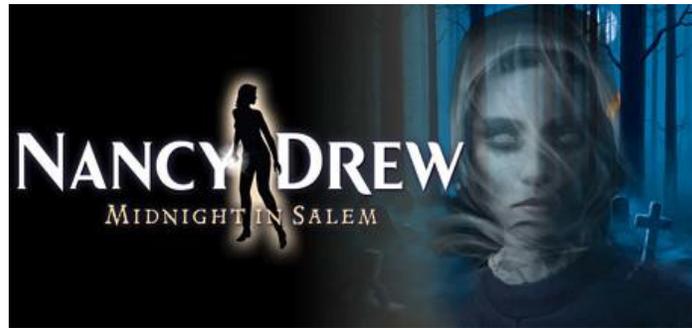
The *Nancy Drew* franchise has produced multiple first-person puzzle adventure games. Through an easy to learn point-and-click interface, players set out to solve a variety of mysteries by way of clues, interrogations, and puzzles. The latest game in the franchise, *Nancy Drew: Midnight In Salem*, finds Nancy investigating a case of arson while interrogating both the past and present. She's challenged by apparent supernatural occurrences and must hurry to solve the mystery. *Midnight In Salem* engages players with puzzles, problem-solving, history, and a haunting setting. Due to the game's point-and-click mechanics, it's easy to get into and learn, and both children and adults will find enjoyment in the mystery.

Nancy Drew: Midnight In Salem is available on PC and Mac.

2. *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*

Animal Crossing: New Horizons is an adorable game that allows for the setting of goals, creativity, and invention. The player gets to create their own character (choosing from cosmetic items like hair style and color) and then settles on a beautiful island. The game also teaches financial responsibility. At the start of the game, the player is in-debt to Tom Nook who provides houses, upgrades, and other services. Players can plant fruit, collect bugs, and fish to earn bells and pay off that home loan. But don't worry! *New Horizons* offers more than loans and fishing. Players get to customize their islands using items they've purchased or found. Want to design your island after

Jurassic Park? Go for it! Creativity is a major part of *New Horizons*. [An article from *TheGamer*](#) highlights some of the awesome designs people have incorporated into their islands.

Animal Crossing: New Horizons is available on the Nintendo Switch.

3. *Stardew Valley*

Similar to *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*, *Stardew Valley* presents players with a low-stakes environment. The game starts off by introducing the dilapidated farm the player has inherited and the local community with its charming and curious cast of characters. *Stardew Valley* is a delightful RPG that focuses on country living and offers its players a lot of freedom. You can build relationships (both romantic and otherwise), explore, mine, farm, and even engage in light combat. But all those elements are optional as *Stardew* Valley is very much a flexible game that allows for individual goal setting. I have started a handful of farms over the years, and each time I play the game differently depending on the goals I establish for myself. *Stardew Valley* can also be played together with friends via local or online co-op.

Stardew Valley is available on PC, Mac, Linux, Xbox One, PlayStation 4, Nintendo Switch, iOS, and Android.

4. *Planet Zoo*

Planet Zoo is a simulation game from the developer of games like *RollerCoaster Tycoon* and *Zoo Tycoon*. This game is truly a gem. At its core, *Planet Zoo* is a game about running zoos, but it offers depth in its mechanics and presents players with much to learn about creating exhibits, animal welfare, and contributing to conservation efforts. I've experienced hours of fun simply designing zoo layouts, customizing exhibits, and planning for the needs of my guests. If you've played games like *RollerCoaster Tycoon* and *Zoo Tycoon*, you'll likely feel at home with *Planet Zoo*. If you haven't played a simulator like this before, it's worth checking out. The game teaches players how to manage the happiness of animals and guests while also instilling messages about wildlife conservation.
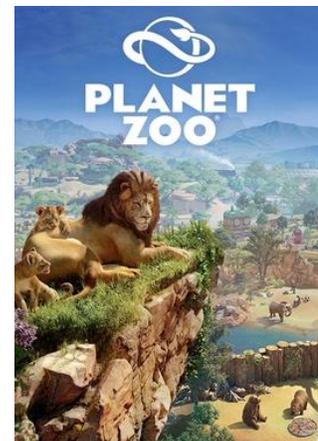
Planet Zoo is available on PC.

5. *Overcooked 2*

Teamwork is the name of the game when it comes to *Overcooked 2*. *Overcooked 2* is a cooking simulator in which up to four players work together to master individual levels. Players will need to collect ingredients, prepare and cook those ingredients, and then serve meals on plates which must be delivered promptly. All of this is done in absurdly designed levels that often require players to take turns and commit to certain tasks. If it sounds like chaos, you're not far off. But this chaotic cooking simulator is a ton of fun and best played with family or friends as it requires constant communication and cooperation to successfully complete each level.

Overcooked 2 is available on PC, Mac, Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Xbox One, and Xbox Series X/S.

Whether you're interested in solving mysteries or learning more about wildlife conservation, there are many options for video games that entertain and educate for back-to-school.

What are some of your favorite back-to-school games that help foster skills like creativity and problem-solving? Let us know in the comments!

Images:
Animal Crossing: New Horizons - https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=62712014
Stardew Valley - https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=49645861
Planet Zoo - https://www.frontier.co.uk/news/press-releases/planet-zoo-launches-5-november
Overcooked 2 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Overcooked_2_cover_art.png

Freelance Work: Content for the Alta Community Library "About" page
This project involved rewriting existing material on the "About" page for clarity, content, and voice. In addition, original copy was produced for the "Our Library" portion of the page.

Page Title: About

Header: Mission Statement

Text: The Alta Community Library enhances the quality of life for community residents by:
- Providing residents of all ages with popular materials to meet their recreational interests (Current Topics and Titles)
- Assisting students to attain their educational goals (Formal Learning Support)
- Providing access to information and answers to questions on a broad array of topics (General Information)
- Striving to be a primary contributor to lifelong learning (Lifelong Learning)

Header: Our Library

Text: The Alta Community Library provides free services to residents within the City of Alta and residents of rural Buena Vista County. Library services are available to others for a fee. The library is supported by taxes paid by the community.

The library system holds over 25,000 physical materials including books, periodicals, movies on DVD, and various puzzles/kits. In addition to this material, 100,000 e-books and audiobooks are available to patrons through the state library system.

Patrons are welcome to visit during regular business hours to access library resources and to participate in the library's community events.

Header: History

Subheading: Read about the Alta Community Library's history and its contributions to the community.

Text: In the spring of 1911, a women's club in Alta worked to establish an association library for the community. The women's club collected funds and approximately 500 books. In addition, the Iowa Library Association contributed 100 volumes of literature.

Sponsors from the women's club presented a petition to the city council in 1913 asking for an election to determine a tax in support of the library. The initial vote turned down the tax with 116 voting for and 123 against. With the vote being so close, the women's club was determined to try again, and in 1919, the tax passed with a vote of 165 in favor and 62 opposed.

The first Alta Library was established in the southwest corner of the old opera house in town. After a few years, the library's next location was upstairs in the Lichtenberg Building. The Lichtenberg Building housed the library for five years until a dedicated building was erected. The town of Alta contributed $10,000 toward an American Legion monument and a building where two rooms were set aside for the library and the city clerk's office.

Then, in 1991, the library was moved to the Community Center. This move was facilitated by contributions from an anonymous donor. In 2003, the public library moved again, this time merging with the school library to create the Alta Community Library. This merge was made possible by a contribution from long-time Alta resident Addie Peterson. Since then, a 28E agreement has been established so both the school and the library have equal legal responsibilities.

Instructional Piece: Assignment Prompt

The following assignment prompt serves as an example of the kind of work I frequently produce as an instructor of writing. Assignment prompts and supplemental material often involve delivering complex ideas and activities in an accessible way for a variety of purposes and audiences.

ENGL 200: TECHNOLOGY LITERACY NARRATIVE
FALL 2022

The Technology Literacy Narrative (TLN) assignment invites you to write a narrative essay discussing your use of technology. As a narrative essay, your work should tell a story following a sequence of events. Your TLN essay should also reflect on how your past experiences with technology influence the present.

Instructions:
- Write a 500-word narrative essay describing your early history using technology and reflecting on the ways you currently use and view technology.
  - Consider focusing on a core memory or moment involving technology and build your essay from there.
- Provide a definition of technology. This definition may come from an outside source (be sure to cite appropriately) or you can share your personal definition of technology. This definition should help readers understand your perspective on technology.

Brainstorming Prompts:
- Do you remember how you first came to use a computer? What did you think about computers growing up? How did you use computers? For gaming? Keeping in touch with friends? For Email?
- Do you frequently use a cell phone? What early memories do you associate with cell phones?
- Growing up, did you use social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)? What is the story of your first social media account? Did your parents make you wait until you were a certain age? Did you make any accounts in secret?

Note: The prompts above are provided to help you generate ideas for the essay. You are not limited to these prompts.

Audience: Your audience is not familiar with you or your history with technology. Provide enough detail for readers so they can readily "picture" the memories, events, and technology you describe.

Format & Style: Follow APA standards/rules for the format of your document (refer to the "APA" page on Canvas).

Due Date & Submission: The TLN essay is due on Canvas September 19th by the start of class. This assignment must be submitted to Canvas under the "Assignments" tab as a .doc, .docx, or .pdf file to be considered for points.

Evaluation: This assignment is worth 100 points and your submission will be graded based on its ability to meet the criteria provided in the prompt and in class.

Spec Work: Game Blurbs

The following game blurbs show my ability to write both descriptively and concisely.

Title: *Pet Boarding Sim*

Tagline:
- Care for the cutest pets!

Body: From the developer of *Dog Walking Sim* and *Party Planner* comes the first pet boarding simulator! Care for adorable pets, grow your business, and update your facilities.

Key player benefits:
- Manage a pet boarding facility
- Accept furry clients of all shapes, sizes, and breeds
- Play, feed, and groom your four-legged friends

Artwork notes: Key art should focus on showing multiple dogs (Golden Retriever, French Bulldog, and Poodle) and cats (American Shorthair, Ragdoll, and Siamese) in front of a boarding facility. The tagline can be centered below the main image. Place key player benefits beneath the main art. Recommend including screenshots below player benefits that feature the inside of the boarding facility and various player interactions with the animals (such as a dog being rinsed down during a bath and a cat being brushed).

Title: *The Watchers*

Tagline:
- Beware those not seen

Body: When murder strikes a small coastal town, Detective Allard is assigned the baffling case. Explore the town, question suspects, and solve the mystery. But beware… Allard is being watched.

Key player benefits:
- Solve a case of murder and more
- Explore a beautiful but troubled town
- Choose who to trust
- Question everything

Artwork notes: Art shows a storm developing over the town, with the protagonist standing in the foreground looking up to the sky. Recommend tagline is centered and laid over key art. Player benefits and screenshots appear below key art and feature images of townsfolk, key locations, and Detective Allard.