

## Girls Needed to Play Tetris; Study To Look At How Brain Grows

By Jackie Jadrnak  
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Many people have seen the commercial that shows a frying egg while a stern voice warns, "This is your brain on drugs."

Well, Rex Jung wants to be able to show your brain on video games. And to come up with the pictures, he's paying kids up to \$100 to play Tetris for three months.

Sounds like an offer young teens would leap at, right? Maybe if they're boys. But Jung, a research scientist at the Mind Research Network in Albuquerque, is looking for girls 12 to 15 years old—and they haven't been flocking to take him up on his offer.

"Girls are texting; they're talking on the phone—and they're playing video games only when they're with the boys," Jung said. "They're not drawn by nature to playing video games."

He's caught in something of a Catch-22. Boys can get downright obsessive about playing video games. Unfortunately for Jung, that means that he wouldn't see a difference from what they're doing in his study from what they're doing on their own.

Why does anyone need to know how video games affect the brain?

The thought is that playing the games builds up brain matter—just as physical exercise builds up muscle—in the visual-spatial parts of your brain, Jung said. Other research has shown that build-up around the parietal lobes happened to people as they learned to juggle.

That ability to judge how objects relate to one another in space deteriorates when a person gets Alzheimer's disease, Jung said. If that portion of the brain could be "exercised," then perhaps a person's abilities would remain intact for a longer time.

Girls in the study will be asked to play Tetris 30 minutes a day, six days a week, for three months. Images will be taken of their brains before and after, as well as while they are playing the game.

The machines making the pictures use magnetism, which has not been found to be harmful, Jung said.

### Who to call

People interested in participating in the study can call research coordinator Ranee Barrow at 272-3832, or Rex Jung at 272-5783.