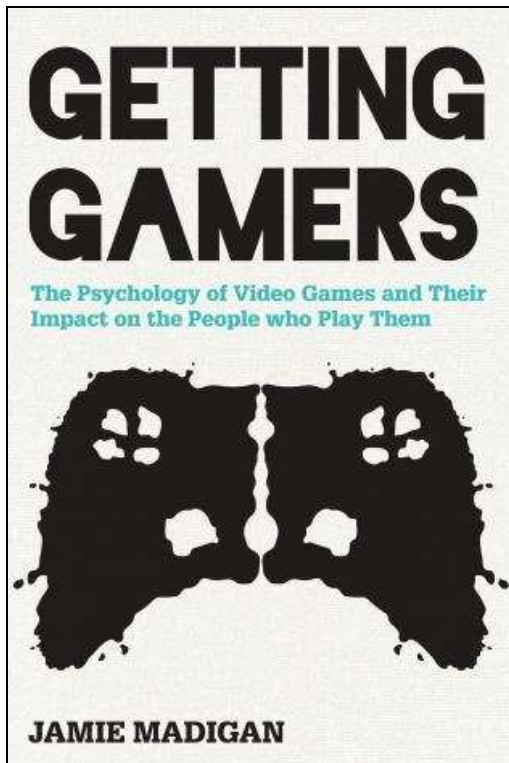# Getting Gamers

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF VIDEO GAMES
AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE PEOPLE WHO PLAY THEM

By Jamie Madigan, Ph.D.
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Every year, hundreds of millions of people play video games on consoles, computers, or phones. These games are carefully constructed and slyly marketed according to research on human psychology. *Getting Gamers* discusses how the psychology behind games shapes our behavior, manipulates our beliefs, and rigs our purchasing decisions.

Each chapter examines scientific research on psychology, motivation, and decision-making that answers questions like:

- Why do normal people become raving lunatics online?
- Why do players cheat and peek at strategy guides?
- Why are fanboys and fangirls so ready for a fight?
- Why do we get nostalgic about good old games?
- How do games get us to keep score and compete?
- How do games get us to grind & chase achievements?
- How do games keep us excited for new loot?
- How do games immerse us in imaginary worlds?
- Why do we go crazy for digital game sales?
- How do mobile games get you with in-app purchases?
- How do games keep players paying and playing?
- How do games get players to market to each other?
- Do we shape our game avatars or do they shape us?
- Is video game violence a problem? Why do we like it?
- Do video games make you smarter?

Jamie Madigan has become an expert on the psychology of video games and seeks to popularize understanding of how it can be used to understand why games are made how they are and why their players behave as they do. He has written for various magazines, consulted with game development companies, and talked at conferences about how game developers can incorporate psychology principles into game design and how players can understand how it affects their play.

Reviews and Praise for *Getting Gamers*:

"Jamie takes us as deep into the minds of gamers as is possible without a scalpel. It's a fascinating and essential read."
— Nir Eyal, author of *Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products*

"Jamie Madigan's fascinating exploration of the psychology of gaming blends provocative research findings with lively anecdotes and witty prose. It is accessible, insightful, and a must-read for gamers and game designers."
— Nick Yee, author of *The Proteus Paradox: How Online Games and Virtual Worlds Change Us--And How They Don't*

"Madigan repackages research from familiar names in behavioral psychology such as Dan Ariely, Drazen Prelec, Amos Tversky, and Daniel Kahneman, into delightful, yet thought-provoking anecdotes that seek to understand and explain how psychology affects the world of games. His easy-to-read style and liberally-sprinkled humorous asides makes what could have been a dry, academic tome into a page-turner. Whether you are a game developer or game player, you will likely come away second-guessing pretty much everything about how and why we play!"
— Dave Mark, President and Lead Designer, Intrinsic Algorithm

"For those interested in the interplay between the science of the mind and the science of game design, there is no better place to begin than with this book."
— Mike Ambinder, Ph.D., Experimental Psychologist, Valve Corporation

"Jamie Madigan has put together something fun, engaging, and seriously interesting, and not just for people who love games, but for people who wonder why we can be so weird online or inside our social media. I guarantee you will come away from this book with not only a better understanding of human behavior, but with advice on how to apply the latest research in your own life and profession.
— David McRaney, author of *You Are Not So Smart* and *You Are Now Less Dumb* and host of the You Are Not So Smart Podcast

"For years now, Jamie Madigan has served as the unofficial psychologist of the games industry. If you want to understand how human behavior and games interact, this is the book for you."
— Ian Bogost, Ph.D., Ivan Allen College Distinguished Chair in Media Studies, Professor of Interactive Computing, Professor, Scheller School of Business Georgia Institute of Technology

Full Author Bio:

Jamie Madigan Ph.D. has become an expert on the psychology of video games and seeks to popularize understanding of how various aspects of psychology can be used to understand why games are made how they are and why their players behave as they do. Madigan has written extensively on the subject for various magazines, websites, blogs, and his own site at www.psychologyofgames.com. He has also consulted with game development companies and talked at conferences about how game developers can incorporate psychology principles into game design and how players can understand how it affects their play. Finally, he has appeared as an expert on the psychology of video games in dozens of print, radio, and web outlets such as The Washington Post, the Chicago Tribune, BBC Radio 5, the BBC, The Guardian, and more. He is a lifelong gamer.