

Dark Secret Confession Of A Tetris/Minesweeper Addict

[computer.gif](#)

By Elbert Ventura

The man who invented Tetris should be shot. Well, shot may be too harsh, but a good beating is in order. That man has been responsible for more time-wastage this century than anyone else. OK, maybe that Rubik's Cube guy tops him, but still. Much valuable time has been sucked away by that little game of his. Not to sound bitter or anything.

I confess: I am a Tetris addict.

I play the game non-stop.

I am consumed by the prospect of reaching that Tetris nether-world where the score just starts going into negatives because it can't count that high. Whenever the computer is on, a Tetris game cannot be far behind. I have not been engaged in this obsession long. I already had my Tetris phase years ago, when Gameboy was still new, and I had less to do. About a month ago, a friend of mine started playing it again on my computer. I didn't even realize it was there. Then, one day, while stuck on a paper, I started playing it again. Now, I can't stop.

I am hooked yet again.

It's not just Tetris either. Other computer games have victimized me before, digging their claws into my subconscious while hapless me thought I was playing just *one* game. Of course, it never works out that way. A little foray into Minesweeper to get your mind untracked quickly devolves into a four-hour marathon session. A round of Solitaire, before you know it, becomes an attempt at winning two in a row, and then three, and so forth.

They're like a drug, these games. You think it's gonna be just a tiny taste. But before you know it, you are helpless and hooked. You have to keep taking it and taking it. What's it like being hooked on Solitaire? Take the best orgasm you've ever had, multiply it by ten thou--no wait, that's heroin. Solitaire was never that good. The point is, these games are killers. They have eaten away valuable time. It's time to stop. It's time to Choose Life.

Even now, the problem persists. It has taken me approximately an hour to get this far in the article. I have played Solitaire and Minesweeper in the process (I will not humiliate myself further by telling you how many games). No doubt they won't be my last ones during the writing of this article.

Perhaps what annoys me the most about these games is that I never asked for them. They came with the computer. I had no choice in the matter. Of course, I didn't care then. I figured I was mature enough to resist the lure of the primitive little buggers. Besides, my video game-playing days were behind me. I could find no conceivable reason why I would be playing any of them. Then one day, while printing a final paper for a high school English class, I got bored. So, while waiting for the tome to print out, I decided to explore and sample the games. The first I tried was Solitaire. I played it straight. I played it with scoring. I played it with Draw One and Draw Three. I couldn't stop. It was all downhill from there.

From Solitaire, I went to Minesweeper. For the uninitiated, Minesweeper is a devilish little guessing game where, through luck and logic, you have to weed out a certain number of mines from a board of little squares. The boards go from Beginner (8 x 8, 10 mines), to Intermediate (16 x 16, 40 mines), to Expert (16 x 30, 99 mines).

For the adventurous ones, there is also a Custom-made board option. It is hard to pull yourself away from this game. For me, it all started about a year and a half ago. I was working on a paper for a History class and was stuck in a spot (Do you see a pattern developing here?). So I shrunk Word and proceeded to play Solitaire. My roommate then suggested I give Minesweeper, his time-waster of choice, a try. After a couple of games, I came upon a painful realization. I liked it. I liked it a lot. I couldn't stop playing it.

The rest of the year saw Solitaire take a back seat to the bigger, more complex, more challenging game of Minesweeper. It was a habit I couldn't shake off, not even during the summer. When my boss wasn't looking, I would occasionally take a much-needed respite from my work to play the game on the office computer. At first, I felt really guilty, until a couple of weeks into my stint when I came in on my boss and found her playing Solitaire. Everyone did it, even grown-ups. That made me feel much better, and more importantly, less guilty. And the vicious habit continued.

So now, I find myself addicted to Tetris. The game has endured through the years, shifting in and out of public consciousness, and yet still maintaining a certain unnoticed ubiquity, like a bad syndicated TV show (i.e. *Baywatch*, *Xena*). Though there have been variations on the game that have been made (like *Quadtris* and *Welltris*), Tetris the original is still the most popular choice. Many people have tried to account for the popularity of this most clever of games. Some say it's a mental thing--people love the challenge. Others say it's because of it's simplicity--it's shapes and stuff. I think it's even more basic than that. Tetris is popular because it's there. It's there when you need it. It's there when you want to waste time. It's as close to intellectual procrastination gets (hey, at least you're thinking right?). Not one person I know has willingly sought out to get a copy of Tetris. Yet almost everyone I know who has a computer has it. Somehow, it winds up on everyone's desktop. It's a bit scary, really, like some mad Russian conspiracy to turn us into mindless zombies. We won the Cold War, though, so there goes that theory.

I managed to get through writing this article playing Tetris only twice. That's progress. I am seriously considering deleting the game from my hard drive. Come to think of it, I'm thinking of erasing all of them. These games have wasted enough of my time and brain cells. It's time I Choose Life and stop with the games. Tomorrow morning, those games are history. Tetris will be the first one to go. Just one more game, and that baby's gone.



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