

Decades of research seem to support this, too. Three common ways that researchers test levels of aggression in a laboratory are with a “hot sauce paradigm,” the “Competitive Reaction Time Test,” and with word or story completion tasks.

In the hot sauce paradigm researchers instruct participants to prepare a cup of hot sauce for a taste tester. They inform them that the taste tester must consume all of the hot sauce in the cup and that the taste tester detests spicy food. The more hot sauce the participants put into the cup, the more “aggressive” the participants are said to be.

In the Competitive reaction test participants compete with a person in the next room. They are told that both people must press a button as fast as possible when they see a light flash. Whoever presses the button first will get to “punish” the opponent with a blast of white noise. They are allowed to turn up the volume as loud and as long as they want. In reality, there is no participant in the next room; the test is designed to let people win exactly half of the games. The researchers are measuring how far they turned the dial and how long they held it for. In theory, people who punish their opponent more severely are more aggressive. During a word or story completion task

participants are shown a word with missing letters or a story without an ending. Participants are asked to guess what word can be made from those letters or to predict what will happen next in a story. When participants choose “aggressive” words (such as assuming that “M \_\_\_ E R” is “murder” instead of “mother”) or assuming that characters will hurt one another, they are considered more aggressive.

These tests have been used to examine whether violent games increase aggression. Several representative studies are summarized below. In each study, the participants assigned to play a violent game seemed more prone to acting or thinking aggressively than those who played a non-violent game for an equivalent amount of time.

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