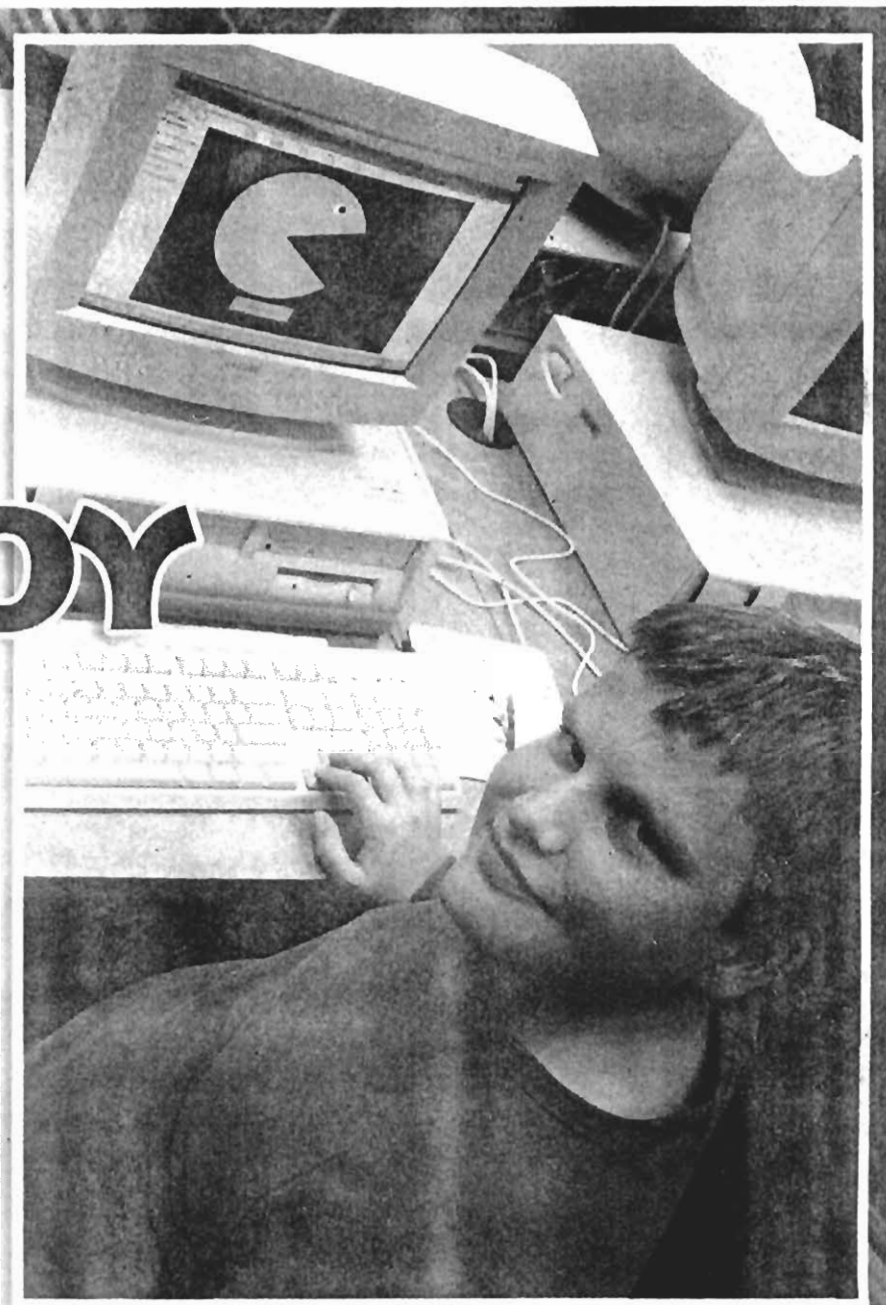
Have you ever wanted to make your own video game? Thought only certified professionals could do it? Well you can make your own video game too!

BECOMING A GAME BOY



By: Torrin Age: 12

All you need is some game-making software, a little instruction, some imagination and in no time you'll be making super Mario Brothers fly across your screen! Two game-making programs that I have come into contact with recently are Gamemaker 5.0 and Visual basics.

I'll start by telling you about the Game Maker course I went to in the summer through the Children's Technology Workshop. I went to my course through the Bay City Learning Centre in Burlington but they have courses available all over the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). These courses are run by educators, technologists and engineers and there are so many different themes to choose from!

There are 11 different camp Missions with titles such as Mission to Mars, Gamemaker Guru, Animation Alive, Fashion Designer, Architect and Medieval Missions. I went to a week-long summer camp and took the Gamemaker Guru mission. From that, I learned to use the Gamemaker 5.0 software and ended up designing my own versions of four classic video games. After the camp was over, I was able to purchase the software and download my games to play at home. It was a great first step into understanding program design.

A few weeks ago, I was invited to attend a special workshop called Real Programming 4 Kids. This company specializes in Game Design programming classes in C++, Java and Virtual Basics for Kids and Teens.

My instructor, Bobb Burgess is the co Founder and Author of Curricula for Real Programming 4 Kids. He was really fun to work with and made it all seem so simple, I really understood what I was doing! He told me that the company offers summer camps, weekly classes and free assessments. Also, whenever you take a course with them, they evaluate how well you do because there are three levels of difficulty available and they want to make sure that you can make a smooth transition to each one. The levels of difficulty are "Frogger and PacMan" (Beginner), "Donkey Kong" (Medium), "Super Mario" (Advanced). Each level has different challenges and things you can do.

By the end of the one hour workshop, I was actually working in code in Visual Basics - can you believe it? I couldn't! I asked for a printout of some of my programming - get a load of this:

```
If e.KeyCode = Keys.Down Then
If Pacman.Top > 700 Then
Pacman.Top = 0
Else
Pacman.Top = Pacman.Top + 10
End If
End If
```

And I actually understand what all of this means! This code instructed my cursor character (in this case Pacman) to go down the screen when I pressed the down arrow. If he leaves the screen he reappears at the top and continues his descent.

Easy, huh? It was really cool!

One thing I did learn is that when writing actual programming code you use a *lot* of math and physics - sounds a bit overwhelming for those of you who don't like these subjects but it is fun learning how to make these things work towards building something real. They say that learning a new language is easier the younger you begin. The same can be said about programming.

Real Programming 4 Kids bills itself as a place where young and teenage video game addicts become junior programmers. My Mom was really impressed with the fact that they maintain a maximum class size of four students - this means that you really get personal attention!

To find out more about The Children's Technology Workshop, go to www.icamp.ca or dial 1-866-566-4366. To find out more about Real Programming 4 Kids, visit www.realprogramming.com or dial 1-877-307-3456.

Both programs have many different courses available in both weekly courses and camps for all over the Toronto, Mississauga, Oakville, Burlington, and Vaughan areas.

Ask your parents if you can learn a bit about programming and then write in and tell us about it!