

16-year-old drops out of school to play Guitar Hero

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Regular readers know that I love video games as much as the next guy. In fact, my right ankle is still sore from drumming my way through a marathon Rock Band session last night (who knew calibrating the TV would make such a difference!?), and I'm always looking for the latest titles to pop into my Xbox.

But how much gaming is too much? For North Carolina native Blake Peebles, there's no such thing. Guitar Hero is his title of choice. "I usually play till I can't anymore," he says, [in this profile from the News & Observer](#).

In fact, young Mr. Peebles is dropping out of high school... in order to focus on Guitar Hero full time. Peebles hopes to join the small but growing crew of players looking to make gaming a job. Citing his victories in Guitar Hero tournaments, which include "gift certificates, gaming equipment, and chicken sandwiches," Peebles thinks he has the chops to play competitively and earn actual money in the process. As the story notes, top gamers on the competitive circuit can earn up to \$80,000 a year (though \$25,000 is more common). Peebles, of course, can count his 52 Chick-fil-A combo meals toward that total.

I was at first inclined to disparage the decision by his parents to let Peebles drop out of school, but it seems a little less ridiculous when you delve into the facts. Peebles hadn't been doing well in school and wasn't liked, and even now he isn't gaming full time. He has a tutor that provides a private education, and his parents say he's doing well with the more focused instruction and that their son now even does his homework without complaint. (Presumably he can hit the axe sooner after he's finished his studies.)

However, I worry that Peebles, who's just 16, may have a tough road ahead trying to break into competitive gaming. The costs of traveling to tournaments alone can totally outstrip earnings, and the amount of training can be grueling. Sponsorships are often a pipe dream. And then there's the issue of games going out of date and being replaced by something new. Traditional athletes never have to worry about, say, distance running being upgraded with a new version, but many games can go out of style, fast. In the end, there's just not much cash there: One gamer, quoted at the end of the linked article, says that in eight years his total earnings are about \$25,000 total, and that's including a national championship in Halo 2.

What do you think, parents? [Did Peebles' folks do the right thing in letting their son drop out of school?](#)