

The McDonalds Game: Impact Guide

For Players

The McDonalds Game is an online game created by an Italian company known as La Molleindustria. Released in 2006, the game is a member of the “anti-advergaming” genre, which creates games that parody and critique specific businesses—in this case, McDonalds. The game itself is a simulation game, where a player takes on the role of the McDonalds CEO and must run the business by juggling between four modes – agriculture, beef farming, restaurant management, and decisions at Headquarters. In each section of the business, players face morally difficult choices, and must decide how to run the business while trying to keep it successful. The choices given to the player demonstrate the complexity of running a big business, as well as strong messages about businesses like McDonalds and their practices.



How to use this guide: Players – We’ve identified several interesting or important themes in the game. As you play through, reflect on your play. How have you experienced these themes? Are there other important ones present in the game? What kind of impact does your play allow in the larger world? Answer the questions we’ve provided – but feel free to add more at www.gamesandimpact.org.

Warning: Questions contain some spoilers about the games.

Theme: Choices

In *The McDonald's Game*, the player must make many business choices about the company to try and maintain a profit. Some choices are simple – to hire more workers in the restaurant kitchen or not? To raise cows on this piece of land or grow soy? But many of the choices are a bit more complicated, touching on moral issues such as the use of industrial waste in cow feed, or the corruption of government officials. These morally questionable choices are built into the success (or failure) of the business in this game, and there is no real profit when avoiding all the less savory choices.

Game

- *What are the range of choices in this game?*
- *How are the choices that are morally questionable portrayed in the game? What does this say about the makers of the game’s views on these decisions?*
- *There are consequences for different choices in the game. How accurate do you think these consequences were? What consequences outweighed the profit of a choice?*
- *In order to run a successful and profitable business in the game, how do the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ choices balance out?*
- *Is there any way to successfully run the business while avoiding all the morally questionable choices? What does this say about this business?*

Player

- *How did you feel when making morally questionable choices? What choices did you not mind? What choices bothered you the most?*
- *When playing the game, did you feel it was more important to make a successful, profitable business, or to make decisions that you were comfortable with?*
- *Is there anything you would have changed in the game to make the choices have more of an impact on you?*
- *The game showcases many bad choices. If there were more positive courses of action in the game, how would your overall view of the business in this game change? Would it affect the impact of the game?*

World

- *In the game, making morally questionable choices is expected and accepted as part of how the company runs. Do you think those kinds of choices are as accepted in large companies in real life?*
- *Has the game changed the way you might view one of these choices in real life?*
- *Do you think the impacts of the morally questionable choices seen in the game are any larger or smaller in real life?*

Theme: Spatial Awareness

The McDonald's Game puts the player into the role of CEO of a Big Business. Their job is to keep the company running and earn a profit. The entire game focuses on the running of a Big Business, and every aspect of the game tries to say something about such a business. This game is in the genre of “anti-advertgames”, meaning that it is designed to parody and critique Big Business.

Game

- *How does the game portray McDonalds and other big businesses like it? What methods does the game use to create this portrayal?*
- *How is a big business set up in this game? What are the parts and how do they depend on one another?*
- *Are there any parts of the business that do not need to be made use of in order to succeed? What do you think that means?*
- *Was success easy to attain? What does that say about big business?*
- *In the game, there is a delicate balance needed to keep the business profiting. Is this balance sustainable? What does that say about the sustainability of Big Business?*

Player

- *Were you conflicted about anything you had to do to make the business succeed? If so, why did those things bother you?*

- *Did you find the McDonalds in this game to be believable? What parts of the game affected your answer?*
- *Did the game change your opinion of big businesses like McDonalds? If so, how did your opinion change?*

World

- *How do you think the McDonalds in this game compares to the actual company, or other similarly large companies? What aspects, if any, do you think were left out?*
- *Do you think a game like this can change how many people view big businesses?*