

Nick: Seaside towns like Blackpool and here in Southend are home to entertainments like sandcastle building, donkey rides, eating fish and chips and ice cream.

These towns are famous for their piers. This pier is more than two kilometres long. It's the longest pleasure pier in the world. There's even a train to take you to the other end.

A hundred years ago the pier was an important part of seaside entertainment. Visitors could walk out across the sea and feel like they were on a ship. It was a thrilling experience. It doesn't feel very scary now.

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These days the pier is still home to traditional shows like Punch and Judy, a puppet show about Mr Punch and his adventures. Mr Punch is often naughty.

Martin Scott Price has been performing in Blackpool for thirty-five years.

Martin: In my show, I do have a very frightening crocodile. Mr Punch is a very naughty boy at times. And then Judy comes along, she has the sausages for tea and unfortunately the crocodile comes along and steals them and he drops them on the floor, sometimes you know. And the children go to put them back and – my gosh – he nearly eats their fingers and they go running away. Aw, my favourite character sadly is not Mr Punch, it's the crocodile! Ha ha ha! I love children, especially to eat. Ha ha ha!

Nick: Parents and children seem to like traditional entertainment. But not all visitors want to see a show or go to the beach.

What about modern attractions? Amusement arcades like this one feature virtual entertainment.

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Young lady: I like being on a dance mat because it's fun, and it's good exercise and I like dancing to the music.

Young man: I like to come and play in the arcades because it's good fun. I like to try and beat my friends at the games.

Young man 2: I like playing driving games because they're fun, fast and exciting.

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Young people seem to enjoy arcade games. But can playing on a computer actually make someone better at sport? Dr Matthew Taylor is a Sports Scientist at the University of Essex. His work looks at how playing on a computer can affect physical activity.

Nick: Can playing these computer games increase real sports skills?

Dr Taylor: Research has shown this not to be the case. It's not going to improve your football skills or your tennis skills, for example. But it will improve your hand-eye coordination.

Nick: Can playing a computer game improve other skills?

Matthew: Formula One racing drivers practise on computer simulators to learn different tracks and also surgeons may increase their surgical skills by playing computer games.

Nick: So do they improve physical ability in any way?

Matthew: The more active video games will improve your physical fitness but it's no real substitute for the real thing. And also you must remember that you shouldn't play these games for too long.

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One hundred years on and the seaside is still a popular place for entertainment and enjoyment. In the past it was a simple walk on the pier – these days it's virtual games and amusement arcades.

But you can't come to the seaside without trying a stick of rock.