

Science and Star Wars

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Might popular culture, such as the *Star Wars* science fiction franchise be used to boost skills among those involved in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics)? Writing in the *International Journal of Social Media and Interactive Learning Environments*, Stephan Längle of the Danube University Krems in Austria discusses the possibility.

His study is based on the period 2000-2018 and focuses on *Star Wars* as one of the more enduring and well known of the [science](#) fiction franchises, It began in the late 1970s and still persists with a huge fan-base across all kinds of media, not just the original cinematic format. He points out that an increasing number of scientists use pop-cultural elements to communicate scientific theories and methods to the public and *Star Wars* is one of those. Längle suggests that learning through [social media](#) is on the increase among STEM students and the pop culture of *Star Wars* is successfully engaging many students in those areas.

The research suggests that there are two ways in which pop culture might be used in class: science principles might be communicated directly with reference to a fictional world, for instance, or the world might serve as a template for preparing teaching materials. Of course, some learners may not want to learn about the real science behind *Star Wars* and it may not be suitable for every class, some may be fans of *Star Trek* or another fictional world. Educators should, regardless, take into account the interests of their students and do so in a serious way so that those interests might be integrates into everyday school life in a positive way that improves learning.

More information: Stephan Längle. *Star Wars* science on social media! Using pop culture to improve STEM skills, *International Journal of Social Media and Interactive Learning Environments* (2019). [DOI: 10.1504/IJSMILE.2019.10023643](#)

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