The Gaming Grandma

When one of Shirley Curry's four sons gave her his old computer, she was thrilled. She loved cooking and had many recipes that she wanted to file nicely into categories. But together with the computer came a videogame — *Civilization II*. Nobody imagined that 78-year-old Shirley would become a game addict, but she did. Soon she discovered *Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* and started her own channel on YouTube. At first she just watched others play and left comments. This is how she got people to know her and gained her first 300 followers. But then one day she recorded her own gameplay. Somebody reposted it on Reddit and it went viral.

Shirley still remembers how she woke up the next day and couldn't understand what had happened — there were thousands of comments on her video! Most of them were nice. But quite a few were hurtful. Some people didn't want to accept an elderly person into the gaming community. "You don't belong here," they wrote her. "Get on a rocking chair and knit!" Some other comments were a lot worse. This was all new to Shirley. But she learnt to answer them politely. "Like a Grandma explaining the obvious to a silly kid," she laughs. Soon other gamers started calling her 'Grandma' and the rude comments stopped.

Shirley fell in love with *Skyrim* the minute she first saw somebody play it. She finds the scenery in the game particularly mesmerizing. It reminds her of her younger days when together with her large family she would go camping in the forests of California. She likes the quests, too. But unlike many other gamers, Shirley doesn't like playing quickly, trying to get to the end of the game. She enjoys storytelling, and this is one of the reasons others like watching her gameplay. For each of her characters, she invents their own story. She never uses bad language, which makes her gameplay **stand out**. Sometimes she gets messages from grateful parents who say they are glad their children follow her.

Shirley is 84 now and is in the *Guinness Book of Records* as the oldest gamer that uploads on YouTube. But she is sure there might be others even older than her who are just afraid to show their identity because of the possibility of getting nasty comments. Shirley thinks that it's wrong that video games are associated with young people only. There are no ads where you see an elderly person playing a video game even together with a grandchild. "It's a hobby just like any other hobby," she says.

Shirley doesn't just stay at home playing. She goes to gaming conventions! The first time she went she was amazed at how many people would come up to her and ask "Are you Grandma Shirley?"

Shirley has a social life outside of her YouTube Channel. She belongs to a quilting guild. Her friends there know about her gaming and find it fascinating although they don't play any videogames themselves.

Not long ago, 50 thousand gamers all over the world signed a petition to make Shirley into a character in the upcoming Elder Scrolls VI. Bethesda, the developer of the game, agreed and invited Shirley to their studio to take Shirley's pictures and necessary measurements to design her character. "After I'm gone, I'll still be in the game," says Shirley. "And that's cool. My grandkids can meet my character." Shirley has nine grandchildren and two great grandchildren of her own. But since her followers started calling her Grandma, she's been addressing them as Grandkids in her gameplay. At the moment she has almost a million of them!

Which of the following helped Shirley get rid of rude comments?

1. Making fun of rude people.
2. Being patient in her replies.
3. Ignoring these comments.
4. Uploading better videos.