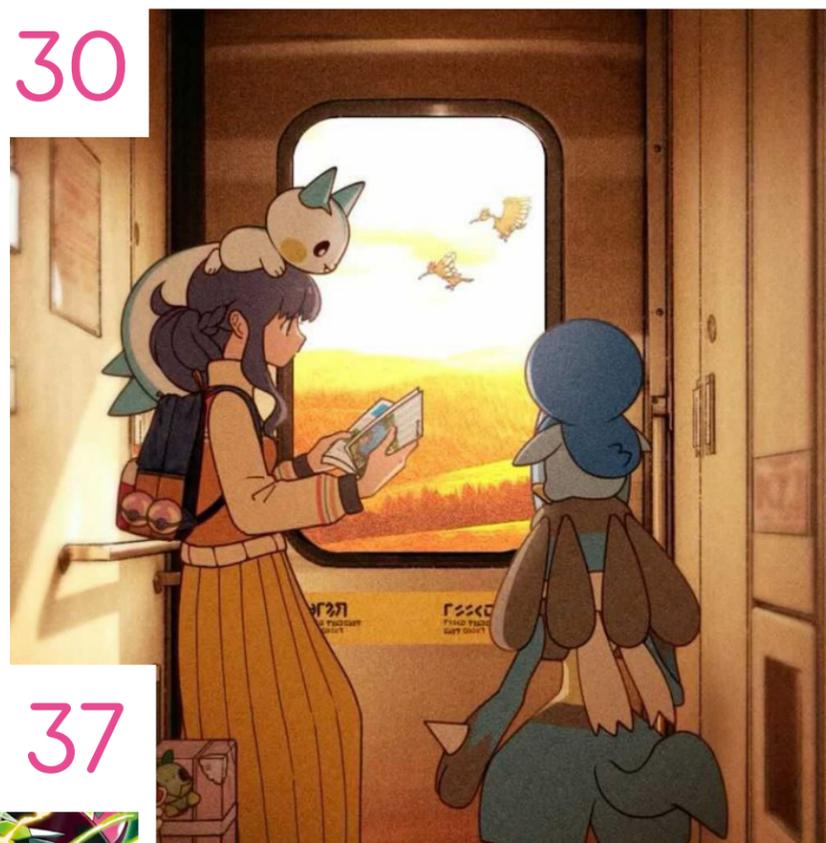


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Hello! This is the editor, Haley, and I just wanted to fill you in on what Easymode is about.

Video games can often contain stressful or toxic environments and experiences for all users. Often these negative experiences can overshadow the positive and enjoyable parts of the video gaming experience. Easymode is designed to evoke that experience and remind users of the comfortable, relaxing, happy experiences that come with playing video games.

This publication is centered around the cozy and enjoyable nature of video games. Our goal and focus is to highlight video games, communities, gaming experiences that bring inspiration and positivity to users. Video games are meant to be enjoyed by everyone, and we want to be a reminder of all the good things this community holds.

Thanks for reading Eazymode!

STARDEW VALLEY



RELAXING FARMLIFE

BY RIKA SOWERS

Stardew Valley is a beloved indie farming simulation game developed by ConcernedApe. Originally released in 2016, it has become one of the most successful and enduring games in the genre, offering players a peaceful and fulfilling experience of managing their own farm, making friends, and exploring a vibrant world. Available on a variety of platforms, including PC, consoles, and mobile devices, Stardew Valley has garnered critical acclaim for its depth, charm, and the freedom to make your own choices.

At the start of Stardew Valley, players inherit a run-down farm from their grandfather in a small rural town called Pelican Town. The main objective is to restore and expand the farm by planting crops, raising animals, and engaging in various activities. The game is set in a world that runs on a day-night cycle with changing seasons, requiring players to plan their farming activities carefully to ensure success.



WHY PLAYERS ADORE THIS GAME

Stardew Valley is memorable because it captures the essence of a comforting and relaxing escape, blending wholesome simplicity with rich, rewarding gameplay. Its charming pixel-art visuals and soothing music create an inviting atmosphere, while the open-ended gameplay encourages players to cultivate their dream farm, build relationships with endearing townsfolk, and explore the natural world at their own pace.

The lack of rigid deadlines and the freedom to focus on what brings the most joy; be it tending to crops, fishing by a serene river, or discovering secrets in the mines—make it a haven for relaxation. Its blend of meaningful progression and tranquil exploration provides a sense of fulfillment, leaving players with a lasting impression of warmth and serenity and leaves players with a great sense of community, comfort, and relaxing world building.



Best Stardew Valley Bachelor, Harvey, the Town Doctor

FARMING

The central element of Stardew Valley is farming. Players plant crops, water them, and harvest them, taking into account the changing seasons. Different crops grow better in specific seasons, and players can earn money by selling their produce.

MINING

Beneath the town lies a large mine filled with valuable resources, ores, and dangerous creatures. Players can venture into the mine to collect resources and battle monsters for treasure. The deeper players go, the more challenges they face.

FISHING

Players can also engage in fishing, which adds another layer of gameplay. There are various bodies of water on the map, including rivers, ponds, and the ocean, each with different types of fish. Some fish are rarer or available only at certain times of day and in specific seasons.

CRAFTING

As players progress, they can craft various tools, machines, and buildings to improve their farm. Upgrades include better farming tools, barns, and greenhouses, allowing for expanded gameplay and more efficient operations.



RELATIONSHIPS

One of the standout features of Stardew Valley is the ability to interact with the townspeople. Players can befriend the residents, give them gifts, and even marry one of the eligible bachelors or bachelorettes in town. Building relationships unlocks new features, quests, and personal stories for each character.



ANIMAL CARE

Players can raise animals such as cows, chickens, and goats. They must build barns and coops for the animals, feed them, and collect resources like milk, eggs, and wool.



Player Farm (Center), Highlights of Mining (Top Left), Fishing (Bottom Left) and the Spring Flower Dance (Top Right)

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

Throughout the year, there are seasonal festivals and community events that allow players to participate in fun activities, win prizes, and build relationships with the townspeople.

In spring, the Egg Festival offers an Egg Hunt, while the Flower Dance lets players boost friendships through dancing in Cindersap Forest. Summer brings the Luau a communal potluck at the beach, and the Dance of the Moonlight Jellies, where villagers watch glowing jellyfish migrate. In fall, the Stardew Valley Fair features games, contests, and prizes, and Spirit's Eve includes a spooky maze with rare items. Winter begins with the Festival of Ice, an ice fishing contest, followed by the Night Market, offering unique shops and deep-sea fishing. The year concludes with the Feast of the Winter Star, a festive gift exchange.



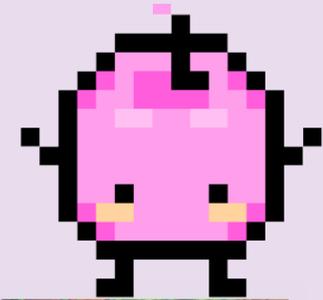


Junimos Help the Player Repair the Community Center as a Part of the Main Story



junimos

LITTLE FRIENDS, BIG IMPACT



PHOTOS BY PLAYER NAVEAH

In-Game Junimos Assist the Player with Farming and Vibe with You on Your Farm

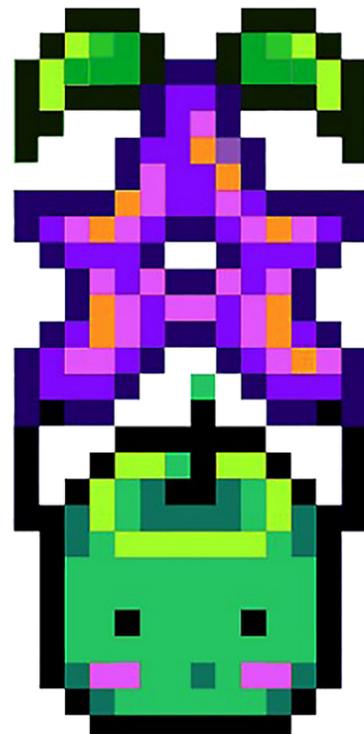


THE SWEETEST SPIRITS

Junimos from Stardew Valley are whimsical, endearing forest spirits that look like little floating bundles of joy and magic. These creatures are small, round, and vibrant, with bodies that come in various colors, each hue representing their cheerful connection to nature. They have tiny, adorable arms and legs and expressive little eyes that exude innocence and curiosity. Their overall appearance is soft and glowing, as if they're imbued with the essence of the forest itself.

Junimos are not just delightful to look at—they're also incredibly helpful. When you find them in the old, abandoned Community Center, they're eager to assist in restoring it to its former glory. With boundless energy, they reward you for gathering bundles of items like crops, foraged goods, and fish, which they then use to magically repair sections of the Community Center. Through their help, you'll rebuild various aspects of the town, revitalizing it for everyone. They work silently and diligently, embodying the spirit of giving without expecting anything in return.

Their presence brings a sense of magic and mystery to Stardew Valley, as though they're quietly watching over the town and lending a hand when the community needs them most.



MOST HELPFUL LITTLE GUYS

In Stardew Valley, after the Community Center is restored, Junimos become helpful allies in managing the farm by harvesting mature crops. To unlock their assistance, the farmer must purchase and construct a Junimo Hut, available from the Wizard's Tower for gold, stone, and starfruit. Once built, Junimos will gather crops automatically within a specific radius around their hut, reducing the farmer's workload during the busy growing seasons. Their presence adds a magical element to the farm,

as they emerge from their hut each morning to collect produce.

Junimos only work during spring, summer, and fall, as they do not harvest crops during winter. Strategic placement of Junimo Huts is crucial to maximize coverage, especially on large farms with extensive fields. However, their help is limited to harvesting—they do not plant, water, or maintain crops, leaving those tasks to the farmer. Despite these limitations, their efficiency in harvesting makes them invaluable for farms with a high crop yield.

This feature is especially useful for players with expansive operations who want to save time and focus on other activities like mining, fishing, or tending to animals. Beyond their practical utility, Junimos add a whimsical touch to the farming experience, reinforcing the magical elements of the game while helping players more easily manage their tasks and workload.



EMBRACE COMMUNITY AND ISLAND LIVING

BY RIKA SOWERS

Animal Crossing: New Horizons is a life simulation game developed and published by Nintendo for the Nintendo Switch. Released on March 20, 2020, it is the fifth main installment in the Animal Crossing series and quickly became a global sensation, offering a cozy, relaxing escape during the pandemic. The game transports players to a deserted island, where they build and design their dream island community, interact with charming animal villagers, and participate in activities.

This game celebrated for its relaxing, open-ended gameplay. The freedom to design, decorate, and interact with the world provides a comforting sense of control, while the ever-changing seasons and events keep the gameplay engaging. Whether players are working on building the perfect island or simply enjoying the serene atmosphere with friends, New Horizons provides an experience that is both personal and nostalgic, making it a standout title.

UPDATES AND DLC

New Horizons continues to receive updates and content. The Happy Home Paradise DLC (released in November 2021), introduced new features like designing vacation homes for villagers. The game also regularly adds events and items to keep the experience fresh. Nintendo has supported the game ensuring that players always have fresh activities and content.

NOOK MILES AND PROGRESSION

Players can earn Nook Miles, a form of in-game currency, by completing various tasks and challenges or reaching milestones. Nook Miles can be used to purchase items, tools, and even island expansions. Additionally, the game features a "Resident Services" center led by Tom Nook, where players can upgrade their island, purchase items, and participate in special seasonal events.

CRAFTING AND CUSTOMIZATION

At the start of New Horizons, players are given the opportunity to design their own island, complete with custom layouts, terrain, and even the placement of buildings and natural features. The island is a blank canvas, allowing for complete creative freedom in how it is shaped, landscaped, and decorated. Players can terraform rivers, cliffs, and paths, which was a major feature that expanded the customization options.

Players can gather materials such as wood, stone, and iron to craft a wide range of furniture, tools, and other items. With DIY recipes scattered throughout the game, customization is at the forefront, from creating personalized furniture and decorations to designing clothing and custom patterns for the island. Crafting, combined with a robust catalog of items to collect, gives players an incredible sense of accomplishment as they build and decorate their perfect island.



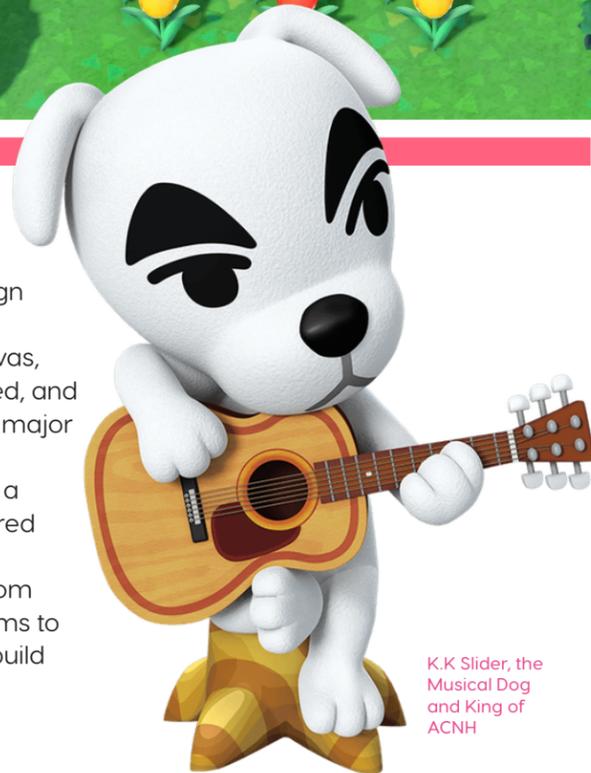
Bookkeeping Icon Isabelle



Cute Pink Home Design (Above), Player Watering Tulips in Animal Crossing New Horizons (Left)



PHOTO BY NINTENDO



K.K. Slider, the Musical Dog and King of ACNH



gameplay

REAL-TIME GAMEPLAY

New Horizons follows real-time gameplay, where the in-game time and seasons match those in real life. This means players experience different events, holidays, and festivals depending on the real-world time of year. The weather and island environment also change dynamically, offering new opportunities for exploration and activities. This keeps the game feeling fresh.

VILLAGERS AND SOCIALIZING

One of the main attractions of New Horizons is the interaction with the island's animal villagers. The game includes over 400 different villagers, each with unique personalities and backstories. Players can befriend their villagers, help them with tasks, visit their homes, and invite new villagers to move in. Events also bring familiar characters like K.K. Slider enhancing the sense of a living, evolving world.

Shop Keepers Timmy (Left) and Tommy (Right)





villager spotlight

Building relationships with villagers like Bob is a key part of the Animal Crossing experience. You can deepen bonds by regularly talking to them, completing their requests, and giving thoughtful gifts. Paying attention to their personality type helps; for instance, lazy villagers like Bob appreciate food-related or casual gifts. Celebrating their

birthdays, attending events together, and writing letters further strengthen friendships. Over time, close connections with villagers result in heartfelt conversations, exclusive rewards, and memorable moments that make the game world feel more alive, personal, and immersive.

WHO IS BOB?

Bob from Animal Crossing is a laid-back, lazy villager with a love for food and relaxation. He has a quirky and carefree personality, often discussing hobbies like napping, eating, and joking around. His house usually features vibrant, playful decor, reflecting his fun and easygoing nature. Bob is one of the series' first villagers and a fan favorite due to his cheerful attitude and iconic purple fur.



DOME KEEPER



A TENSE AND VISUALLY STUNNING ROGUE-LIKE INDIE GAME

BY GREGORY P. TREVOR

Indie games are the best thing to happen to video games. As technology improves, and gaming becomes a bigger business, there's more pressure on companies to make AAA games as safe and bland as possible. They're just too expensive to take risks. But indie games, driven by small teams with huge passion, can take all the wild, experimental, artistic risks they want. Considering how often these modest games see great success, people want games that take more chances display originality.

Indie games have a way of innovating with simpler mechanics, creating experiences that feel fresh even if they don't boast massive budgets or intricate narratives.

Dome Keeper, developed by Bippinbits and released in 2022, is an example of a game that perfectly blends strategy, survival, and resource management.

PHOTO BY BIPPINBITS

GAMEPLAY AND ART STYLE

At its core, Dome Keeper is about balancing two main activities: mining for resources and defending your base. The player operates under a protective dome located on a foreign planet, where the goal is to extract valuable resources to upgrade your dome's defenses. While you're mining, alien enemies attack your dome, and your success depends on how well you manage both tasks.

The real challenge comes in choosing when to stop mining and prioritize upgrading your defenses. As you progress through the game, enemy waves become more frequent and intense, which creates a balancing act between gathering enough resources for upgrades and fortifying your dome. The constant back-and-forth between offense and defense is a key element that keeps the gameplay tense and engaging.

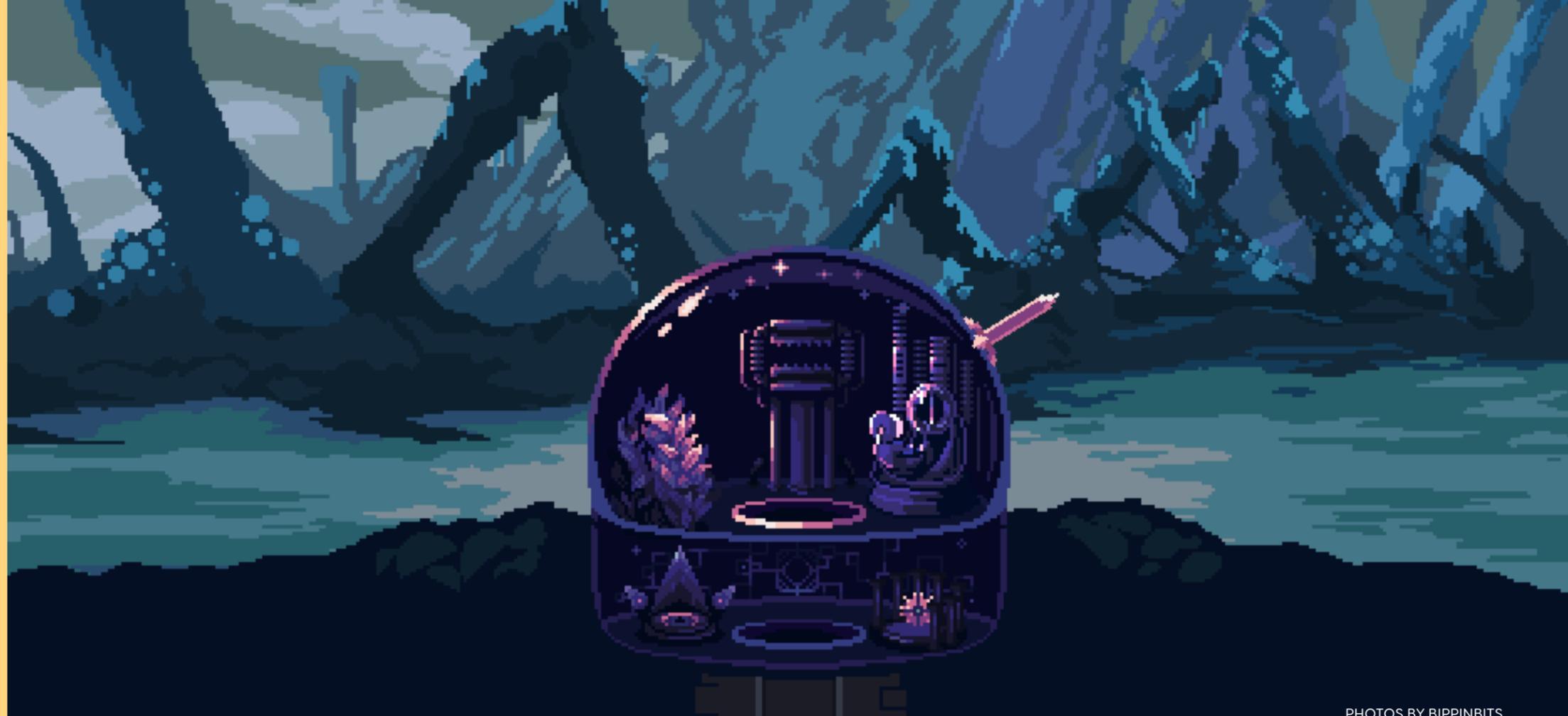
One of Dome Keeper's most striking features is its unique pixel art style. While the game feels retro, thanks to its pixelated graphics, it never looks dated. The enemies, environment, and overall design are visually appealing, mixing nostalgic elements with modern polish. This art style enhances the experience, giving the game a distinct look that stands out among other indie titles.

Furthermore, the minimalist design of the game contributes to its cozy yet intense atmosphere. The limited use of colors and the focus on pixel art creates a sense of warmth while also building tension as the alien threats close in. It's a delicate balance that the developers have nailed perfectly.

GAME PROGRESSION

Despite its seemingly simple premise, Dome Keeper offers significant depth through its upgrade system. As you collect resources, you can unlock new upgrades and equipment for your dome. This opens up multiple strategies for how you can approach each wave of enemies and how you balance the time spent mining versus fortifying your base.

The variety in upgrades, including defensive towers, faster mining tools, and resource storage enhancements, ensures that each playthrough feels different. The game's design encourages replayability by providing new strategies and challenges with each run, giving players a reason to return and refine their approach with new thinking.



PHOTOS BY BIPPINBITS



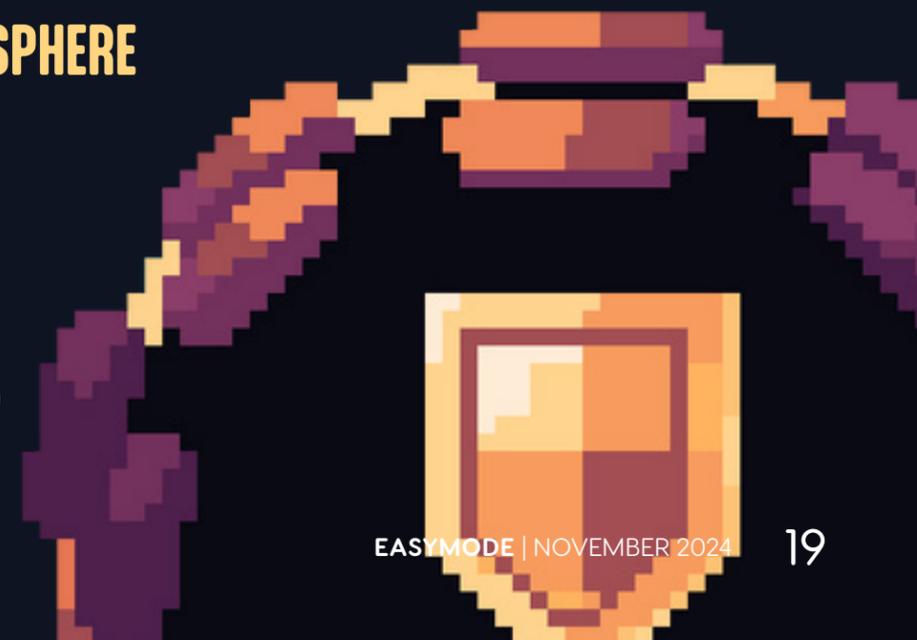
Dome Keeper Gameplay of The Dome, Mining, Returning to Dome, and Attacking Enemies (Left to Right)



SOUND DESIGN AND ATMOSPHERE

The audio in Dome Keeper plays a vital role in the game's atmosphere. The sound effects are well-crafted, with mining sounds, the rumble of the dome's defenses, and the roar of approaching enemies all creating an immersive environment.

As you mine and defend, the sounds around you make the experience feel both peaceful and fraught with danger—perfect for a game that combines resource collection with survival mechanics.



GATHER INSPIRATION FOR YOUR
NEXT SPACE

gaming setups

BY GREGORY P. TREVOR

A gaming setup is more than just a collection of hardware and peripherals; it's a space that can significantly impact a gamer's performance, comfort, and overall experience. The right setup can enhance immersion in the game world, reduce physical strain, and even boost mood and creativity. Factors like ergonomic furniture, optimized monitor placement, and responsive accessories contribute to better focus and physical well-being, enabling longer and more enjoyable gaming sessions. For instance, a high-refresh-rate monitor can improve reaction times in fast-paced games, while a comfortable chair with lumbar support prevents back pain during extended play. Additionally, a clutter-free and organized space minimizes distractions, allowing gamers to fully concentrate on their goals.

Choosing a gaming setup that aligns with personal interests and

aesthetic preferences can further elevate the experience. A visually appealing and personalized space creates a sense of ownership and pride, inspiring creativity and fostering a positive mindset. For example, a setup inspired by a favorite game or color scheme can enhance emotional connection and motivation. Lighting, desk accessories, and themed peripherals can transform a generic setup into a sanctuary that reflects the gamer's personality. This alignment between environment and interests not only enhances the enjoyment of gaming but also makes the space inviting for relaxation or creativity beyond gaming. By investing in a setup tailored to their tastes and needs, gamers can craft an environment that enriches their overall well-being and supports their passions. So tap into your internal interior decorator and be creative with your space!



the minimalist

A minimalist gaming setup combines functionality, comfort, and style to create a clean, calming space that enhances both focus and enjoyment. The desk is simple with modern designs offering clean lines, neutral-colored wood or white finishes, and plenty of surface space. This ensures your monitor, keyboard, and accessories fit comfortably without creating clutter. Pair the desk with an ergonomic chair like the Herman Miller Aeron or Secretlab Titan, designed for extended gaming sessions. Opt for muted or pastel tones—soft greys, blush pinks, or light greens—for a cozy and stylish touch. These chairs often feature breathable materials and excellent lumbar support to keep you comfortable during marathon gaming or work sessions.

Lighting sets the mood, and soft LED strip lights or adjustable desk lamps like light bars provide ambient lighting that's easy on the eyes. A curved monitor, such as the Samsung Odyssey G7, enhances immersion with its high refresh rate and natural viewing angles, perfect for gaming and multitasking. For accessories, the Razer Huntsman Mini keyboard delivers tactile feedback and customizable RGB lighting that can be dimmed for a more subdued atmosphere. Pair it with the wireless and ergonomic Logitech G Pro X mouse for seamless, comfortable control.

To elevate the aesthetic, integrate natural elements like potted plants (a Snake Plant or Succulent works well) for a touch of greenery. Add texture and warmth with a cozy throw blanket or plush pillows on your chair. A small piece of calming artwork on the wall ties the entire setup together, transforming your gaming station into a minimalist retreat that balances productivity and relaxation.

A minimalist gaming setup is perfect for individuals who value simplicity, organization, and a peaceful environment. It appeals to those with calm, focused personalities who find clutter distracting and prefer clean, intentional spaces that inspire creativity and relaxation. This setup suits gamers who enjoy a mix of

productivity and leisure, as well as professionals or students seeking a dual-purpose workspace that transitions seamlessly between work and play. It's ideal for people who appreciate thoughtful design, understated elegance, and a cozy, welcoming atmosphere.

The vibe of this setup is modern, creating a balanced environment that feels both functional and serene. This is an excellent choice for introverts or anyone who thrives in a less stimulating, more curated space. The design encourages focus and mindfulness, with carefully chosen elements that eliminate visual noise while still offering comfort and style. The result is a soothing, inviting area that feels like a personal sanctuary where gaming or unwinding is a pleasurable experience.





earthy

An earthy gaming setup combines artistic flair, natural materials, and cozy, plant-inspired textures to create a tranquil and inviting space.

Rustic wooden desks bring a warm, grounded charm. Desks made from reclaimed wood or with a slightly worn appearance complement the earthy aesthetic while providing functionality for gaming or work. Pair this with a unique chair, such as a Papasan chair, a rattan armchair with soft cushions, or a Wishbone Chair, all of which add an organic and relaxed vibe to the setup. Lighting is key to setting the mood, with soft fairy lights, woven rattan pendant lamps, or string lights offering a warm, nature-inspired glow. Options from Anthropologie or Urban Outfitters create a serene atmosphere. A sleek monitor like the LG UltraGear 27GL850 ensures a crisp, immersive gaming experience, softened by a backdrop of lush greenery or botanical-inspired tapestries. These elements help blend the modern look of tech with the grounded essence of earthy decor. Accessories such as a keyboard with muted, nature-inspired tones and a vintage-style mouse pad with intricate leaf patterns tie the setup together.

Decor in an earthy gaming setup emphasizes layering textures and personal touches. Hanging planters with trailing greenery, small pots of succulents, textured rugs, and plush throws enhance the cozy, plant-like ambiance, while candles in decorative holders add a warm, flickering glow. Eclectic decorations and handcrafted items bring personality to the space. The

overall vibe is natural, relaxed, and welcoming, perfect for individuals who love blending technology with the calming influence of nature. This setup is ideal for those who enjoy expressing their personality through their space and value creativity, individuality, and comfort, often drawn to styles that mix modern and natural elements. The vibe is relaxed, cozy, and inspirational, fostering a sense of calm while encouraging creativity. This type of setup feels like a sanctuary, offering a unique balance of functionality and plant-inspired chic for gaming, working, or simply unwinding.

The earthy style is a design aesthetic rooted in individuality, creativity, and a deep connection to nature. Emerging from a reverence for natural materials and organic designs, this style celebrates personal expression. An earthy space is warm and welcoming. It feels like a creative sanctuary where every corner tells a story. The layered textures, soothing green tones, and natural decor combine to create an environment that is both relaxing and inspiring, encouraging a harmonious, nature-centered lifestyle and way of living.



soft pastel

A soft pastel gaming setup is a dreamy, calming space that blends functionality with an aesthetic designed to soothe and inspire. The desk acts as the foundation of this setup, with options like the IKEA Micke or Flexispot, featuring clean lines in white or light wood finishes. Adding pastel-colored drawers or shelving enhances the light and airy vibe, offering both storage and visual appeal. These desks are designed for gamers who want a balance of practicality and charm, ensuring there's ample space for monitors, keyboards, and accessories while maintaining a serene and organized look.

Chairs in soft hues such as pink, lavender, or mint green from brands like Autonomous or Secretlab provide excellent lumbar support for long gaming sessions. These chairs not only prioritize functionality but also add to the unique atmosphere of the space. The pastel tones create a harmonious match with the desk, tying together the overall theme while ensuring that long hours spent gaming remain comfortable and stylish.

Lighting plays a key role in enhancing the pastel aesthetic. Subtle and customizable options like Govee LED strip lights or Philips Hue white ambiance lamps allow you to bathe the room in soft pastel shades. These lights can shift between delicate tones, from peachy pinks to lavender blues, perfectly complementing the calming vibe. This type of lighting creates a cozy ambiance, ideal for unwinding after a long day or setting the mood for peaceful gaming in titles the A sleek monitor such as the Dell S2721DGF

fits seamlessly into this aesthetic. With its excellent color accuracy, it's perfect for games that prioritize vibrant and gentle visuals, further immersing users in their gaming worlds. Accessories like the Razer BlackWidow V3 or Keychron K3 mechanical keyboard in pastel tones add a touch of personality and style. Pair these with the wireless Logitech G305 mouse and a pastel-colored mouse pad from brands like Groove Gear for a cohesive and polished setup that prioritizes both form and function.

Decor is the finishing touch that transforms a pastel gaming setup into a cozy haven. Incorporate soft cushions in matching pastel colors, plush rugs, and small potted succulents to add texture and life to the room. Fairy lights draped around the monitor or shelving and

accessories like a soft-touch alarm clock enhance the warm, peaceful atmosphere. The decor creates a space that feels welcoming and personal, encouraging relaxation whether you're gaming, working, or simply enjoying the ambiance.

This type of setup is perfect for gamers who love soft, soothing aesthetics and find joy in creating a personalized, calming environment. It's especially well-suited for individuals who are drawn to creative and peaceful pursuits, from laid-back gaming to journaling or streaming. The overall vibe is gentle, cozy, and inviting, making it an ideal choice for those who want a space that feels like a sanctuary. It offers an escape from the chaos of daily life while serving as a functional and stylish workstation.



MONSTER HUNTER WILDS

BY GREGORY P. TREVOR

OVERVIEW

The Monster Hunter games are an action role-playing game series developed by Capcom, where players take on the role of a hunter tasked with tracking, capturing, or defeating large, fantastical monsters in diverse environments. The gameplay focuses on epic battles that require strategic planning, precise execution, and mastery of various weapons and tools. Players embark on quests to hunt creatures with unique behaviors, weaknesses, and attack patterns. Defeating these monsters provides materials to craft better armor and weapons, which are essential for tackling increasingly challenging foes.

The game offers a wide array of weapons, each with its own distinct playstyle, allowing players to find what suits them best, from powerful greatswords to agile dual blades. Expansive maps encourage exploration, featuring rich ecosystems with wildlife, environmental hazards, and dynamic weather. A hallmark of the series is its multiplayer co-op mode, where players team up online to take on the toughest monsters together. The series is beloved for its challenging yet rewarding gameplay, deep customization, and immersive worlds. With entries like *Monster Hunter: World* and *Monster Hunter Rise*, the franchise has grown more accessible while still delivering the depth that long-time fans love.



Sneak Peaks of the Monster Hunter: Wilds Gameplay



MONSTER HUNTER: WILDS

The *Monster Hunter Wilds* demo and trailer have been generating a lot of buzz among fans of the franchise. Revealed during a recent Sony State of Play event, the game introduces new gameplay mechanics and an exciting new setting. Set in dynamic, ever-changing environments, players will face off against a variety of new and returning monsters. One of the highlights is the Seikret mount, a raptor-like creature that helps players navigate the map and even assists in combat by allowing for weapon switching on the fly, making it easier to adapt mid-hunt.

The trailer showcases several new monster species, including the peaceful Ceratnoth, which uses lightning rods for protection, and the Doshaguma, a massive Fanged

Beast that travels in packs. The game introduces a fresh tactical element where monsters can be lured into "turf wars" to fight each other, adding another layer of strategy to the hunts. For example, the Chatacabra, a toad-like brawler, is shown in a fight with smaller Bird Wyverns, offering new possibilities for player strategy.

The game will also feature all fourteen iconic weapon types from the *Monster Hunter* series, each with new movesets and combat mechanics, including a new "Focus Mode" that lets players hone in on weak points for devastating attacks. Whether you're using the Great Sword or the Bow, you'll have more control over your strikes and defenses against these beasts.



comfort creatures

BY RIKA SOWERS





pachirisu

Pachirisu is an adorable, electric-type Pokémon who's beloved and undeniably one of the most adorable Pokémon in the Pokémon universe! This tiny, Electric-type creature resembles a playful, bushy-tailed squirrel with an irresistible combination of charm and spunk. Standing at just over a foot tall, Pachirisu has a rounded white body accented by a sky-blue stripe running from the top of his head down to the tip of his signature fluffy tail. His tail, nearly twice as big as his body, has a delightfully jagged shape, adding a bit of quirky personality to his look—it almost seems like he's carrying a bolt of lightning with him!

Pachirisu's bright, wide eyes sparkle with curiosity, giving him a perpetually cheerful and innocent expression. Two tiny, rounded cheek patches, characteristic of Electric-types, light up when he's ready to spark up his energy. His petite paws and tiny ears complete his lovable appearance, making him look as though he's constantly ready to bounce around in delight.

When Pachirisu is excited, he twitches his fluffy tail and squeaks happily, displaying a level of cuteness that's hard to resist. His playful nature and expressive movements make him an instant favorite, whether he's scurrying about or showing off his cheeky grin. Pachirisu's charm lies not only in his small size and adorable features but also in his enthusiastic spirit—he's a Pokémon who radiates pure joy and energy, leaving everyone that comes across him completely smitten!



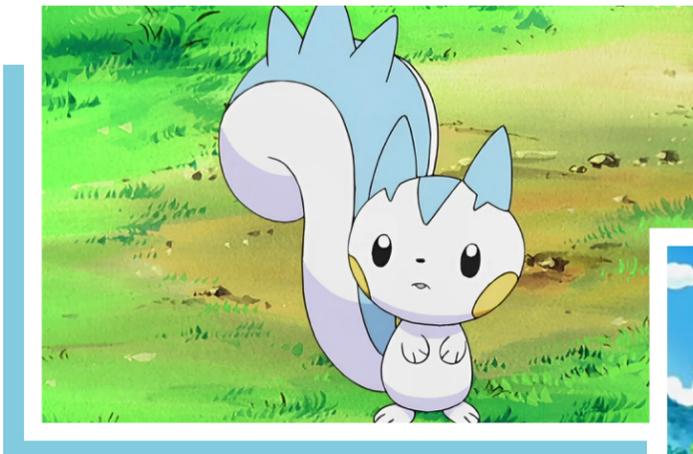
CUTEST PIP

Pachirisu is a cheerful and energetic Pokémon known for its playful and mischievous behavior. It thrives on social interactions, often seen scampering through forests or grassy areas in groups. With pouches in its cheeks that store electricity, Pachirisu has a knack for using its electrical abilities to protect itself or playfully interact with others. It is also resourceful, using its bushy tail to store berries, which it sometimes shares with its companions.

Its abilities—Run Away and Pickup—reflect agility and scavenging skills, while its Hidden Ability, Volt Absorb, grants durability by healing from Electric moves.



The Cutest Pokémon of all Time, and Ultimate Comfort Creature



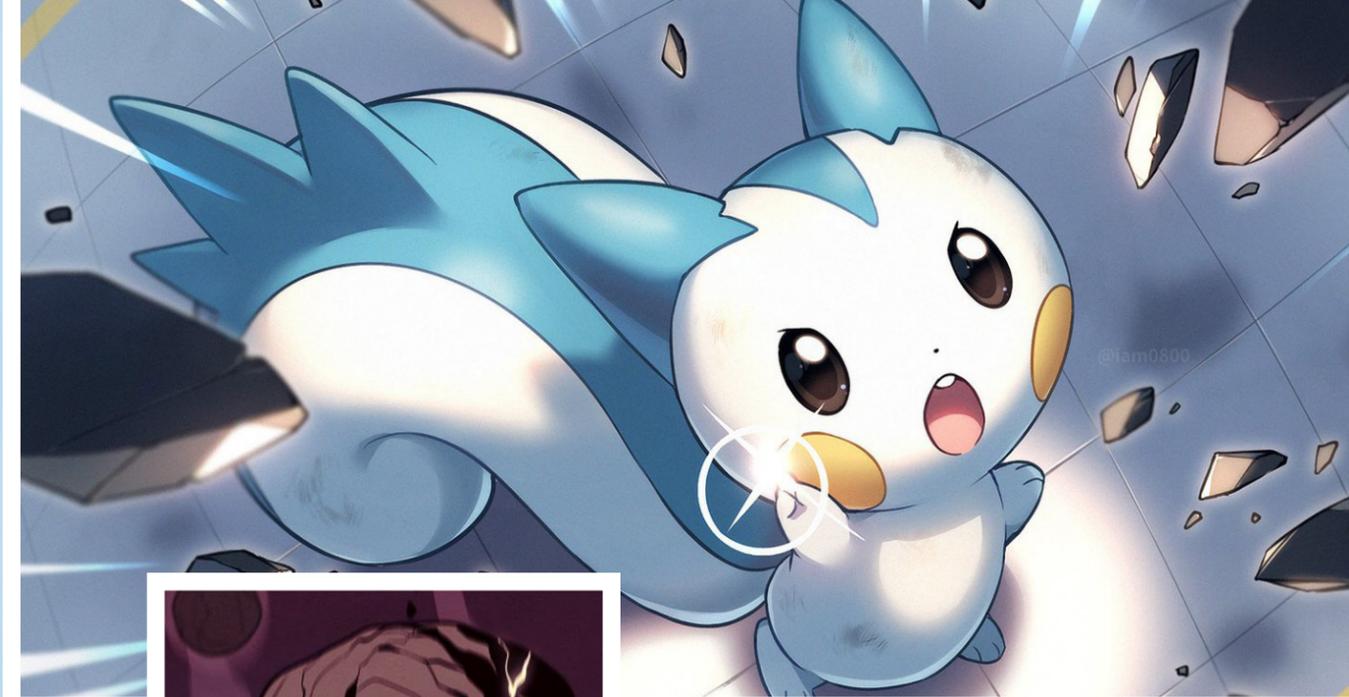
WORLD CHAMPION

At the 2014 Pokémon World Championships, Pachirisu became a legend. Trainer Se Jun Park used Pachirisu masterfully in a doubles format, showcasing its surprising versatility and strategic value. Pachirisu's signature role was to protect its team with the move Follow Me, a crucial support move that redirected all single-target attacks toward itself. This allowed Park's other Pokémon, like his Garchomp, to attack freely without fear of being targeted. Pachirisu's durability, enhanced by its bulk investment and the held item Sitrus Berry, enabled it to survive hits that would have otherwise knocked it out, ensuring it could keep disrupting opponents' moves.

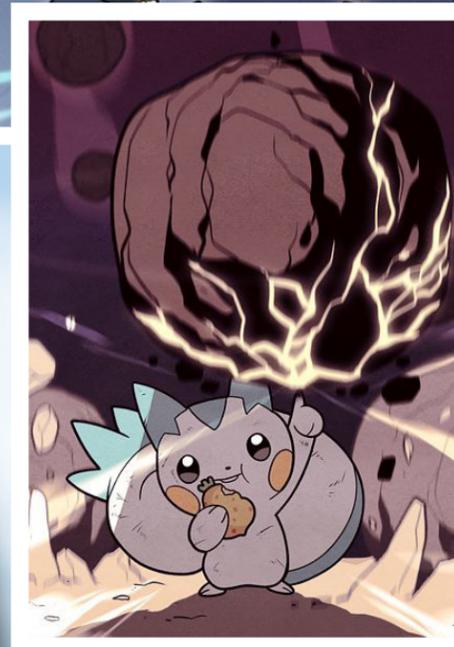
One of Pachirisu's standout moments was its use of Super Fang, which halves an opponent's current HP regardless of their stats, making it a devastating equalizer against bulky Pokémon such as Mega Kangaskhan. Combined with its ability to paralyze foes using Nuzzle, which is a move that dealt chip damage while crippling opponents with paralysis, Pachirisu not only supported its teammates but hindered the opposing player's strategy.

In a highlight of the championship, Pachirisu famously absorbed a powerful Draco Meteor from a Salamence—an attack that would have annihilated Park's main offensive Pokémon. This moment epitomized Pachirisu's role as a stalwart protector, drawing gasps from the crowd and cementing its place in Pokémon history.

By combining its cuteness, durability, and clever moveset, Pachirisu proved that underappreciated Pokémon could shine on the biggest stage. Park's victory showed that ingenuity and strategy could outwit sheer power, inspiring players to reconsider their approach to battling.



Artist Bobby Jumbo's Creative Depiction of the 2014 World Champion Events



SO SHINY!

A Shiny Pokémon is a rare variant of a Pokémon with a unique coloration, making it visually distinct from its standard form. While Shiny Pokémon do not have enhanced stats or abilities, they are highly coveted by players due to their rarity and aesthetic appeal. The odds of encountering a Shiny in modern Pokémon games are typically 1 in 4,096, though certain methods, such as the Masuda Method (breeding Pokémon from different language games), the Shiny Charm (an item that increases

Shiny odds), or participating in specific activities like Dynamax Adventures, can significantly improve these chances.

Pachirisu normally has white fur with blue stripes and accents. However, its Shiny form replaces the blue with a soft, pastel pink, giving it an adorable and distinct look that stands out in any collection. The rarity and striking appearance of Shiny Pachirisu make it a favorite among Shiny hunters, who often dedicate significant time and effort to find this delightful variant.

POKEMON LEGENDS Z-A

Pokémon Legends: Z-A is one of the most highly anticipated games within the Pokémon franchise, building on the Legends formula established with Pokémon Legends: Arceus. Slated for a 2025 release exclusively on Nintendo Switch, this game will take fans back to the Kalos region—but not as they know it. Instead of the open landscapes seen in Pokémon X and Y, Legends: Z-A centers on Lumiose City, a sprawling metropolis in the heart of Kalos, but set in an ancient period. In this historical version, the city is still in its early phases of development,

showcasing a dynamic and evolving relationship between people and Pokémon who are working together to transform the urban landscape into a shared, thriving space.

The storyline hints at a mix of ancient Kalos legends and the origins of Mega Evolution, a powerful transformation that altered the battle capabilities of certain Pokémon. The game promises a deeper exploration of urban coexistence and the environmental impact of city expansion, adding themes of societal progress and collaboration. Pokémon Legends: Z-A is positioned

to be a fresh experience, combining nostalgia with new gameplay possibilities. This game promises to introduce more intricate storytelling than typical Pokémon games. The return of Mega Evolutions and the urban, historical setting hopefully reflects Game Freak's commitment to evolving the franchise in meaningful ways.

Legends: Z-A already promises to offer a unique, lore-rich journey that combines exploration, strategy, and the excitement of discovering Kalos's in a way Pokémon fans haven't seen.

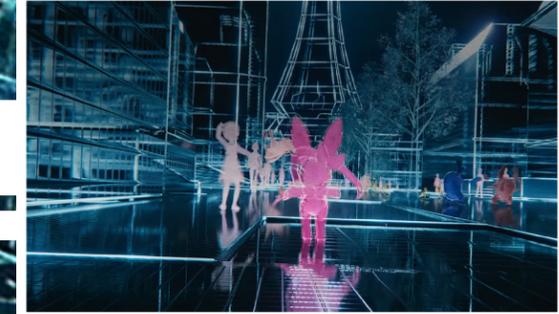
RELEASE, AND COMPATIBILITY

Pokémon Legends: Z-A is confirmed to release worldwide in 2025 for the Nintendo Switch family of systems. While the game's debut trailer and marketing have emphasized compatibility with the current Nintendo Switch models, there is ongoing speculation that it could feature enhancements or additional functionality for the rumored successor, often referred to as "Switch 2" or "Nintendo Switch Pro." This speculation arises from The Pokémon Company's phrasing about "Nintendo Switch systems," which some interpret as an indication of cross-generational video game compatibility.

STARTERS, EVOLUTIONS, AND NEW MECHANICS

Based on the Legends gameplay model, Legends: Z-A is expected to use open-world exploration mechanics that allow players to interact with Pokémon in their natural habitats. While official gameplay has not yet been released, fans anticipate a style similar to Legends: Arceus, emphasizing different Pokémon behavior, immersive exploration, and a departure from traditional turn-based encounters.

There is also considerable excitement around the rumored starter Pokémon, which, according to online leaks, may include a trio selected from Generations 3, 5, and 8—suggesting a mix of fan favorites across the Pokémon timeline. The return of Mega Evolutions, a gameplay feature unique to the Kalos region in Pokémon X and Y, has been teased in the debut trailer, with some speculation that the lore of Mega Evolution will play a central role in the storyline. This may include interactions with legendary Pokémon, particularly Zygarde, Xerneas, and Yveltal, whose lore ties into the natural and mythical aspects of Kalos.



FUTURE POTENTIAL

“

It feels and looks so cheap, I'm heavily disappointed. I question their art design and lack of creativity, but they've been going downhill a lot with that over the generations, but this feels like a new low. Game Freak needs to do better.

- Clyde Rocket ”

WILL THIS NEW ADDITION BE A GAME CHANGER?

Over the past few years, Nintendo and Game Freak have received significant criticism from fans over the quality of their Pokémon games, especially in relation to graphical fidelity, game mechanics, and lack of innovation.

The quality of recent Pokémon games, particularly Scarlet and Violet, has been heavily criticized by fans and reviewers alike, with issues pointing to a larger trend within Nintendo and Game Freak's recent handling of the franchise. While Pokémon's open-world features and new gameplay options were seen as ambitious, technical problems overshadowed these improvements. Performance issues—such as persistent lag, choppy frame rates, and slow load times—frequently disrupt gameplay, affecting both single-player and multiplayer experiences. The inconsistent graphics, especially when switching between handheld and docked

modes on the Switch, only add to the frustration. The results can be immersion-breaking, as environments suffer from low-quality textures, object “pop-ins,” and glitched animations during battles and cutscenes, sometimes revealing hidden geometry or crashing entirely.

Beyond Pokémon, Nintendo itself faces scrutiny for leaning heavily into nostalgia-driven releases rather than innovative gameplay. Some critics argue that the company relies on fan loyalty to justify premium pricing for games with minimal advancements. This perception has intensified as Nintendo continues to release updated versions of older titles, often with only slight enhancements but at high prices, furthering the impression that they prioritize profit over meaningful content additions.



A LOOK INTO THE WORLD OF ESPORTS

APEX LEGENDS GLOBAL SERIES

In Apex Legends, the ALGS Pro League is well underway, with top-tier teams competing for spots in the Championship. With big names like TSM and Luminosity showing strong performances, fans are closely watching the leaderboard shifts. The recent addition of new characters and balancing updates has impacted strategies across maps, making this season's meta especially dynamic.



ALGS Trophy, Arena Setting, and 2023 Champions, TSM (Left to Right)

ROSTER CHANGES AND ORGANIZATIONAL SHIFTS

This ALGS off-season has been one of the most intense in recent years, with teams restructuring and high-profile free agents making waves. Notable moves include Luminosity Gaming's decision to release their entire roster after a strong 5th place finish in the ALGS Championship. This move allowed them to acquire Christopher "sweetdreams" Sexton, formerly of NRG, who is renowned as one of the best in-game leaders in the Apex scene. His addition has sparked interest, positioning Luminosity as a major contender for the upcoming season.

Another significant change

involves XSET, which added Israel "Koyful" Lawrence, previously a standout on Sentinels, to their roster. Koyful's impressive controller skills and potential to shake up NA standings make XSET a team to watch as they aim for the next championship title.

A trend of high-profile departures from Apex esports continues as organizations like 100 Thieves and NRG have opted out of competitive Apex Legends, likely due to resource constraints and organizational focus on other titles. This exit has left prominent players like Frexas, Phony, and

Snip3down from FaZe Clan without organizations, adding pressure on the ALGS ecosystem to adapt to ongoing challenges in team sustainability. ALGS has introduced several new teams across regions, providing fresh talent a chance to make an impact. Among them, DSG has returned to the Apex scene as a partnered team, and several smaller orgs have assembled promising rosters to challenge established names. NORTHEPTION has also revamped its roster with players like Taida and ReyzyGG, signaling an infusion of new talent in the competitive scene.



TEAMS TO WATCH

AURORA

Aurora is a dominant force in the EMEA region of the Apex Legends Global Series (ALGS), showcasing exceptional gameplay and adaptability. The team's current roster includes Hardecki, 9impulse, and Ojrein, who excel in aggressive edge-zone strategies and team-fighting prowess.

OPTIC GAMING

Optic Gaming's Apex Legends roster for the 2024 ALGS includes Skittlecakes, Dropped, and Knoqd. This team represents the organization's debut in competitive Apex Legends, aiming to make a strong impression in the North America Pro League. Skittlecakes's impeccable skill carries the team.



TENSE SITUATIONS

Drama is a recurring theme, particularly concerning contractual issues and player team fit. Some players are outspoken on social media about their current situations with restricted free agency causing friction. For instance, after parting ways with FaZe, Frexas, Phony, and Snip3down voiced frustrations as they navigate a challenging free-agent market with limited organizational support, sparking debates on the sustainability of Apex esports.

NINTENDO DS (2004)

The Nintendo DS revolutionized gaming with dual screens (including a touchscreen) that introduced interactive gameplay and new mechanics. With Wi-Fi connectivity, it enabled local and online multiplayer, while backward compatibility allowed players to enjoy Game Boy Advance games. Its stylus, microphone, and buttons supported a range of diverse playstyles, making the DS a hit and a precursor to future innovations.



NINTENDO DS LITE (2006)

The DS Lite was 42% smaller, 21% lighter, and had a brighter screen compared to the original DS. With enhanced battery efficiency, it provided longer playtime—up to 19 hours on a low-light setting. Users could adjust the screen brightness, improving gameplay. It became widely popular due to its refined design and portability.



NINTENDO DSi (2008)

The DSi introduced two cameras for interactive and photo-based gameplay, a digital DSi Shop for downloading games and apps, and a built-in SD card slot for added storage. It removed the GBA slot for a sleeker design, reducing backward compatibility. These features expanded multimedia use and paved the way for digital content on handheld consoles.



NINTENDO DSi XL (2009)

The DSi XL boasted much larger screens (4.2 inches compared to the DSi's 3.25 inches), providing an enhanced visual experience. The larger size allowed for better multiplayer and social play. The DSi XL appealed to a more mature audience looking for a bigger, clearer display, making it popular for group play and those preferring more accessible handhelds.



nintendo ds

REVISITING THE DUAL-SCREEN CONSOLE

NINTENDO 3DS (2011)

The 3DS introduced 3D gaming through a parallax barrier display, allowing for more immersive gameplay. It included StreetPass for local data sharing and SpotPass for Wi-Fi downloads. AR games used the cameras for augmented reality experiences. The 3DS remained compatible with the entire DS game library. It represented a major technological leap and was praised for its features.



NINTENDO 3DS XL AND OTHERS

Nintendo 3DS XL (2012) was a larger version of the 3DS, it featured a larger screen and improved battery. The Nintendo 2DS (2013) was released as a more affordable, kid-friendly option with a flat, non-folding design. The New Nintendo 3DS/3DS XL (2014) offered improved CPU performance and compatibility with a handful of exclusive titles. Control options like the C-Stick and improved 3D effects with face-tracking technology were included with this final edition.



REMEMBERING THE BEST

The Nintendo DS, released in 2004, holds a special place in the hearts of early 2000s kids, evoking a sense of nostalgia with its groundbreaking design and beloved game library. The dual-screen setup—one of which was a touchscreen—redefined handheld gaming, allowing players to interact in fresh, tactile ways and sparking creativity in game development.

The DS was highly portable, perfect for trips, waiting rooms, and any spare moment, offering a kind of spontaneous fun that defined the handheld era for many young players. With its flip design, simple stylus, and library filled with unforgettable titles, the Nintendo DS brings back memories of simpler, more tactile times in gaming, making it a nostalgic gem for early 2000s kids.

iconic ds games



Sonic Rush (2005) Gameplay and Level Depictions



SONIC RUSH

Sonic Rush, developed by Dimps and Sonic Team, debuted on November 15, 2005, exclusively for the Nintendo DS. It revolutionized the classic Sonic formula by blending traditional 2D side-scrolling gameplay with 3D visuals during boss battles. Utilizing the DS's dual screens, the game introduced high-speed sequences that seamlessly transitioned between both screens, creating a dynamic sense of verticality and creative immersion.

The story follows Sonic the Hedgehog and Blaze the Cat, a newcomer from another dimension, as they team up to stop Dr. Eggman and his dimensional counterpart, Eggman Nega. Players can switch between Sonic and Blaze, each offering unique abilities and perspectives on the storyline. The gameplay is marked by its fast-paced platforming, vibrant graphics, and catchy soundtrack.

NINTENDOGS SERIES

Nintendogs Series (2005) was a pet simulator on the Nintendo DS that allowed players to adopt, train, and care for virtual puppies in a lifelike way. With the DS's touchscreen and microphone, players could pet, feed, and even teach commands to their puppies, creating an immersive and emotional connection to their digital pets.

The game included different versions, each featuring a unique selection of dog breeds. Nintendogs resonated deeply with young players who wanted the experience of having a pet, making it one of the most nostalgic titles of the DS era. Its interactive, tactile approach to pet care left a lasting impression, and its cute, realistic graphics still bring back fond memories.



CORE ACTIVITIES

Caring for your virtual dog in Nintendogs involves meeting their basic needs like feeding and hydrating them to keep them healthy. Walks allow your dog to exercise, explore, and discover items or new areas. Training sessions teach tricks using voice commands and gestures, building their skills and obedience. Grooming keeps your dog's coat clean and adds to their happiness, fostering a deeper bond with your pet.



Nintendogs Gameplay of Accessorizing Pups, Walks, and the Display Screen (Left to Right)

COMPETITIONS

Competitions are a fun way to showcase your dog's abilities and earn rewards. In disc competitions, your dog catches flying discs with accuracy, while agility trials test their speed and coordination on obstacle courses. Obedience trials evaluate how well they follow commands. Winning events also helps your dog shine as a champion.

SOCIAL INTERACTION

Social activities add a playful and interactive element to Nintendogs. Playtime with toys like balls and ropes keeps your dog entertained. Walks let you meet other virtual dogs, building connections, and receive gifts while wireless play allows your dog to interact with friends' pets, making the experience more communal and fun.

SHOPPING AND CARE

Personalizing your pet's life is an enjoyable aspect of the game. Shopping offers food, toys, and accessories to keep your dog happy and stylish. The bows are the cutest! You can also decorate your home to create a cozy space for your pet. These options let you tailor the experience while enhancing your bond with your dog.

TOMODACHI LIFE

Tomodachi Life (2014), is a unique life-simulation game that turns your customizable Mii characters into the stars of a vibrant, and oddly unique world.

Players populate an island with Miis, giving them unique personalities, voices, and traits that influence their interactions and relationships. The game's unpredictable charm lies in the Miis' daily activities—whether solving problems, performing wacky musical numbers, or forming friendships, rivalries, and even romantic bonds.

Highlights include dramatic proposals, dream sequences, and bizarre in-game events that create a mix of humor and heartfelt moments. With its endless personalization and oddball antics, Tomodachi Life offers a blend of creativity, randomness, and charm that captivated players worldwide.



Tomodachi Life Gameplay (2014), Families, Shopping, and DS Display (Left to Right)



letters to the editor

“COZY GAMES ARE THE BEST”

I just wanted to thank you for covering cozy games in your recent issue! Games like Stardew Valley and Animal Crossing: New Horizons are the types of games that make me feel peaceful and happy. In a world full of intense, action-packed titles, it's so nice to have a space where you can relax, unwind, and just enjoy the slower pace. These games are more than just relaxing—they tell meaningful stories that are filled with heart. It's refreshing to see them get the attention they deserve. I look forward to your future coverage of games that focus on well-being and heartwarming experiences.

— Jenna Lee, Portland, OR

“GAMING NOSTALGIA”

I was thrilled to see an entire feature dedicated to nostalgic games in your last issue. It made me reflect on the first gaming experiences I had as a kid. The days spent on my Game Boy and DS consoles were the best! I grew up playing classics like Pokémon and Mario Kart DS, and it's amazing how those games still hold a special place in my heart today. I've noticed that the gaming industry is constantly evolving, but there's something timeless about those early handheld consoles. I hope we continue to see more games that can capture that magic.

— Oliver King, Los Angeles, CA

“A SUGGESTION FOR BETTER BALANCE IN COVERAGE”

First off, I want to say how much I enjoy reading your magazine! Your coverage of different gaming genres, from indies to triple-A titles, is always insightful and enjoyable. However, I wanted to offer some constructive feedback regarding the balance of coverage across genres. Lately, I've noticed that there seems to be a bit of an emphasis on open-world and RPG titles in your features, and while I love those genres, I feel like other types of games—especially competitive multiplayer or real-time strategy (RTS) games—could use more attention. I'd love to see more in-depth analysis, reviews, or coverage of the esports scene for games outside of just FPS and battle royales. Games with active competitive scenes, like Rocket League or Dota 2, don't seem to get as much love in your issues, and I think they deserve more spotlight. I understand the appeal of broader coverage for a mainstream audience, but maybe a more diverse representation of gaming genres could help your magazine cater to a wider range of readers. I'd love to see a greater mix of genres in future issues!

— Liam Turner, Boston, MA

