

THE ULTIMATE HISTORY OF VIDEO GAMES

From a tennis game on an oscilloscope in 1958 to handheld PCs and hybrid consoles: the systems, the games and the companies that made them.

74 systems · 326 games · 19 milestones · 58 companies · every one illustrated

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Systems at a glance all 74 systems, side by side
Companies all 58 companies, with the systems they made
About the pictures where each image comes from

HOW TO READ THE PICTURES

Games show the real box, cartridge or cabinet art wherever a public archive has it. Games without public box art (mostly releases from the last 15 years) get an illustrated cover card in a genre colour, with the title, year and platforms.

Systems show a colour-coded plate by type (home console, handheld, hybrid, computer, arcade, mobile) with a drawn silhouette and the system's logo.

Companies show the company logo where an open icon set has one, and a monogram badge for the rest.

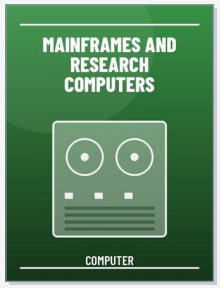
Milestones are text entries; they have no picture.

PIONEERS

1958 TO 1971

Games are lab experiments: Tennis for Two, Spacewar!, text adventures on mainframes. Ralph Baer sketches the idea of playing games on a TV set.

2 systems · 5 games · 1 milestones · 4 companies founded



Mainframes and research computers

1958 · System · Computer

University and laboratory machines where the first video games were invented, from Tennis for Two to Spacewar! and early text adventures.



Company founded: Midway Games

1958 · Company · United States

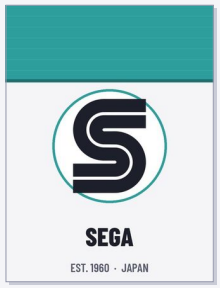
Chicago arcade maker (Bally Midway): Ms. Pac-Man in the US, Mortal Kombat, NBA Jam. Closed in 2010.



Tennis for Two

1958 · Game · Mainframes and research computers · Sports

Built from an analog computer and an oscilloscope for a lab open house. Often cited as one of the first video games.



Company founded: Sega

1960 · Company · Japan

Arcade and console maker behind the Master System, Genesis/Mega Drive, Saturn and Dreamcast, and mascot Sonic. Left the hardware business in 2001 to focus on software.



Spacewar!

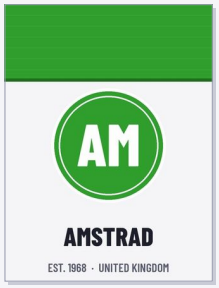
1962 · Game · Mainframes and research computers · Shooter

A two-player space duel on the PDP-1. It spread among universities and inspired the first arcade games.

Ralph Baer sketches TV games

1966 · Event · Magnavox

At the defense contractor Sanders Associates, Baer begins work on playing games on a television. His prototypes led to the Magnavox Odyssey.



Company founded: Amstrad

1968 · Company · United Kingdom

British electronics firm. Made the CPC computers and bought Sinclair's computer line in 1986.



Company founded: Konami

1969 · Company · Japan

Arcade and console developer: Gradius, Castlevania, Contra, Metal Gear, Silent Hill and Dance Dance Revolution.



Arcade machines

1971 · System · Arcade

Coin-operated cabinets, from Computer Space (1971) to modern rhythm and fighting machines. Arcades drove the early industry and its design ideas.



Computer Space

1971 · Game · Arcade machines · Shooter

The first commercially sold coin-operated video game. Its complicated controls limited its success.



Galaxy Game

1971 · Game · Mainframes and research computers · Shooter

A Spacewar!-inspired coin-operated game installed at Stanford, among the very first arcade video games.



The Oregon Trail

1971 · Game · Mainframes and research computers · Simulation

An educational pioneer-journey game created for a school classroom; it became a staple of school computer labs.

FIRST CONSOLES

1972 TO 1977

Pong and the Magnavox Odyssey bring video games to arcades and living rooms. Dedicated Pong clones flood the market until programmable cartridges arrive.

6 systems · 7 games · 1 milestones · 7 companies founded



Company founded: Atari

1972 · Company · United States

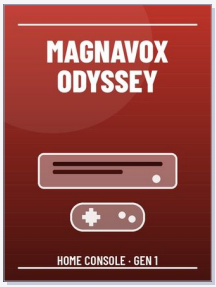
Founded by Nolan Bushnell and Ted Dabney. Created Pong, the Atari 2600 and many arcade classics; its collapse in 1983 helped trigger the video game crash.



Company founded: Sinclair Research

1973 · Company · United Kingdom

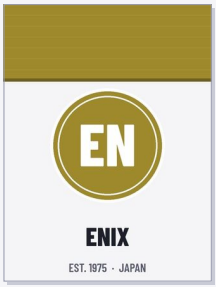
Sir Clive Sinclair's company: the ZX81 and ZX Spectrum started the UK bedroom-coding scene. Its computer business was sold to Amstrad in 1986.



Magnavox Odyssey

1972 to 1975 · System · Magnavox · Home console · Generation 1

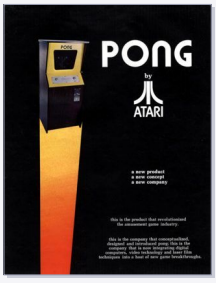
The first commercial home video game console. Analog circuitry, no sound, and plastic overlays placed on the TV screen. Based on Ralph Baer's designs.



Company founded: Enix

1975 · Company · Japan

Publisher of the Dragon Quest series. Merged with Square in 2003.



Pong

Nov 1972 · Game · Arcade machines, Home Pong · Sports

Allan Alcorn's simple table-tennis game launched Atari and the arcade video game industry.



Home Pong

1975 · System · Atari · Home console · Generation 1

Atari's home version of Pong, sold through Sears at Christmas 1975. Set off a wave of dedicated Pong clones.



Company founded: Hudson Soft

1973 · Company · Japan

Developer of Bomberman and Bonk, and co-creator of the PC Engine. Absorbed by Konami in 2012.



Company founded: Microsoft

1975 · Company · United States

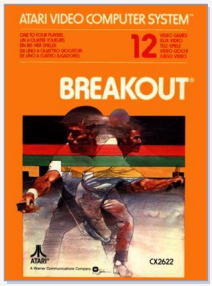
Software company that entered consoles with Xbox (2001) and Xbox Live, and owns studios including Bethesda and Activision Blizzard.



Company founded: Apple

1976 · Company · United States

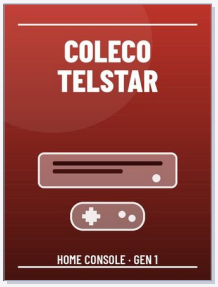
Computer maker (Apple II, Macintosh) whose iPhone and App Store later made it one of the largest game distributors.



Breakout

1976 · Game · Arcade machines · Action

A paddle-and-ball brick game; Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak both worked on it, and it influenced the Apple II.



Coleco Telstar

1976 · System · Coleco · Home console · Generation 1

Coleco's first Pong-style dedicated console, the start of a long line of Telstar systems.



Colossal Cave Adventure

1976 · Game · Mainframes and research computers · Adventure

A text adventure that created the adventure genre and inspired Zork.



Death Race

1976 · Game · Arcade machines · Action

A controversial driving game where players ran down stick-figure 'gremlins,' sparking early debate over video game violence.



Fairchild Channel F

1976 to 1983 · System · Fairchild Camera and Instrument · Home console · Generation 2

The first console to use ROM cartridges, a year before the Atari 2600.



Night Driver

1976 · Game · Arcade machines · Racing

An early first-person racing game using simple white pylons to suggest a road at night.

Warner buys Atari

1976 · Event · Atari

Warner Communications buys Atari for about 28 million dollars, funding the launch of the Atari VCS (2600).



Company founded: ASCII Corporation

1977 · Company · Japan

Japanese publisher that created the MSX standard together with Microsoft.



Zork

1977 · Game · Mainframes and research computers · Adventure

A text adventure created at MIT that was later commercialized by Infocom.



Apple II

Jun 1977 to 1993 · System · Apple · Computer

Wozniak's color home computer, one of the 1977 trinity with the PET and TRS-80. Home of early classics such as Lode Runner, Karateka and Prince of Persia.



Atari 2600

Sep 1977 to 1992 · System · Atari · Home console · Generation 2

Originally the Atari Video Computer System. Cartridges, joysticks and arcade ports made it the first mass-market console, and its library and third-party boom shaped the industry.



Combat

Sep 1977 · Game · Atari 2600 · Shooter

A tank-and-biplane dueling game bundled with the Atari 2600 at launch, introducing millions to home video games.

GOLDEN AGE OF ARCADES

1978 TO 1982

Space Invaders, Pac-Man and Donkey Kong turn arcades into a mass medium. The Atari 2600 and cheap home computers bring games home, and third-party developers appear.

13 systems · 30 games · 0 milestones · 8 companies founded



Company founded: Acorn Computers

1978 · Company · United Kingdom

Cambridge computer company, maker of the BBC Micro. Its ARM processor design lives on as Arm.



Company founded: Activision

1979 · Company · United States

The first independent third-party console game developer, founded by former Atari programmers. Acquired by Microsoft in 2023.



Magnavox Odyssey²

1978 to 1984 · System · Magnavox · Home console · Generation 2

A cartridge console with a built-in membrane keyboard; sold in Europe as the Philips Videopac.



Asteroids

1979 · Game · Arcade machines · Shooter

A vector-graphics shooter and Atari's best-selling arcade game.



Company founded: SNK

1978 · Company · Japan

Osaka arcade company known for the Neo Geo and for fighting and run-and-gun games such as The King of Fighters and Metal Slug.



Company founded: Capcom

1979 · Company · Japan

Osaka developer of Street Fighter, Mega Man, Resident Evil and Monster Hunter.



Space Invaders

1978 · Game · Arcade machines, Atari 2600 · Shooter

Tomohiro Nishikado's alien shooter was a worldwide phenomenon; its 2600 port made the console a mainstream success.



Galaxian

1979 · Game · Arcade machines · Shooter

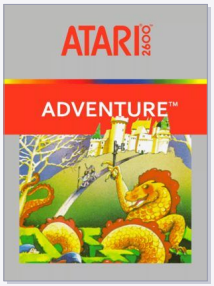
Namco's answer to Space Invaders, with color graphics and swooping enemies.



Intellivision

1979 to 1990 · System · Mattel · Home console · Generation 2

Mattel's rival to the 2600, known for sports games and a controller with a keypad and disc.



Adventure

1980 · Game · Atari 2600 · Action-adventure

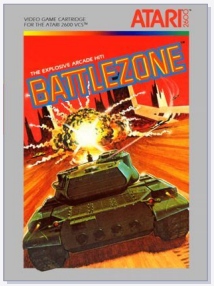
Warren Robinett's graphic adventure for the 2600, which contains the first widely known Easter egg.



Lunar Lander

1979 · Game · Arcade machines · Simulation

A vector-graphics game of carefully throttling a lander's descent onto the Moon, based on earlier mainframe versions.



Battlezone

1980 · Game · Arcade machines · Shooter

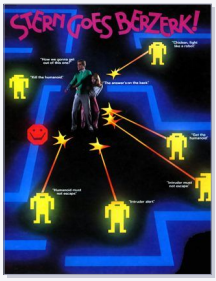
A vector-graphics tank combat game with a first-person periscope view, later adapted for military training.



Microvision

1979 to 1981 · System · Milton Bradley · Handheld

Milton Bradley's tiny LCD handheld, the first with interchangeable cartridges. Fragile screens limited its life.



Berzerk

1980 · Game · Arcade machines · Shooter

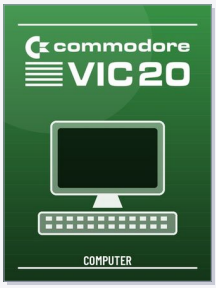
A maze shooter against robots with early synthesized speech, infamous for a fatal heart attack linked to the game.



Company founded: Sierra On-Line

1979 · Company · United States

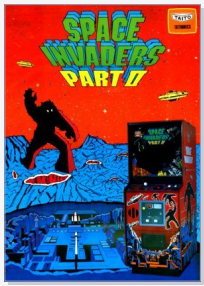
Founded as On-Line Systems by Ken and Roberta Williams. King's Quest and a publisher of Half-Life.



Commodore VIC-20

1980 to 1985 · System · Commodore · Computer

The first computer to sell a million units, a low-cost color home computer that put Commodore in millions of homes.



Space Invaders Part II

1979 · Game · Arcade machines · Shooter

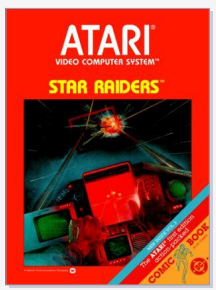
A direct sequel adding attract-mode intermissions and a two-player simultaneous mode to the original formula.



Missile Command

1980 · Game · Arcade machines, Atari 2600 · Shooter

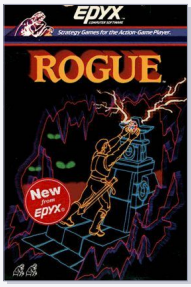
Dave Theurer's Cold War-themed game of defending cities from incoming missiles with a trackball-controlled crosshair.



Star Raiders

1979 · Game · Atari 2600 · Shooter

A pioneering space-combat simulation for the Atari 8-bit line and 2600 that combined action with strategic navigation.



Rogue

1980 · Game · Mainframes and research computers · Roguelike

A dungeon crawler with randomly generated levels that gave the roguelike genre its name.



Game & Watch

Apr 1980 to 1991 · System · Nintendo · Handheld

Gunpei Yokoi's single-game LCD handhelds with a clock. Its Donkey Kong model (1982) introduced the D-pad.



Donkey Kong

Jul 1981 · Game · Arcade machines, ColecoVision, Famicom · Platformer

Shigeru Miyamoto's first hit introduced Jumpman, later Mario, and helped define the platform game.



Pac-Man

May 1980 · Game · Arcade machines, Atari 2600 · Maze

Toru Iwatani's maze game created gaming's first mascot and became one of the highest-grossing games ever.



IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows)

Aug 1981 · System · IBM · Computer

The open IBM PC design and its clones became the dominant personal computer and the long-lived platform of PC gaming, from DOS to Windows and Steam.



BBC Micro

1981 to 1994 · System · Acorn Computers · Computer

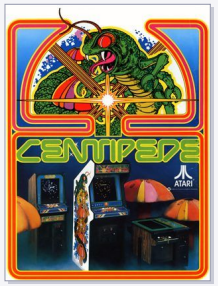
Acorn's computer, built for the BBC Computer Literacy Project and used in UK schools. Home of Elite.



Atari 5200

1982 to 1984 · System · Atari · Home console · Generation 2

Atari's successor to the 2600 with analog controllers that proved unreliable.



Centipede

1981 · Game · Arcade machines · Shooter

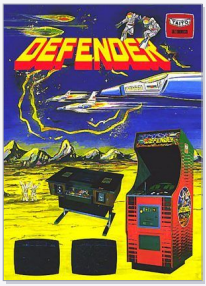
A trackball-controlled shooter against a segmented centipede, designed by Dona Bailey and Ed Logg for a broader audience.



Burgertime

1982 · Game · Arcade machines · Action

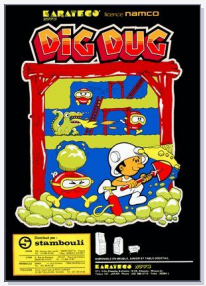
A platformer where a chef builds giant burgers by walking over ingredients while dodging food-themed enemies.



Defender

1981 · Game · Arcade machines · Shooter

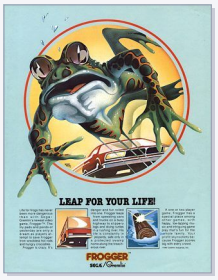
A fast, brutally difficult side-scrolling shooter.



Dig Dug

1982 · Game · Arcade machines · Action

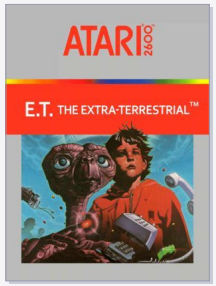
A tunneling game where players inflate or spear underground monsters to clear each level.



Frogger

1981 · Game · Arcade machines · Action

Guide a frog across a busy road and a river.



E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial

1982 · Game · Atari 2600 · Action-adventure

Rushed out in about five weeks, it was a commercial and critical failure and a symbol of the crash. The legend that Atari buried copies in the New Mexico desert was confirmed in 2014.

Company founded: Electronic Arts

1982 · Company · United States

Founded by Trip Hawkins. Sports franchises, The Sims, Battlefield and many acquired studios.



Joust

1982 · Game · Arcade machines · Action

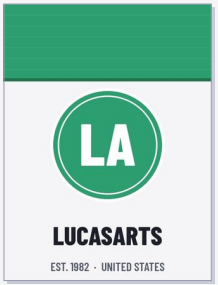
A flap-to-fly combat game pitting knights on ostriches and buzzards against each other.



Company founded: LucasArts

1982 · Company · United States

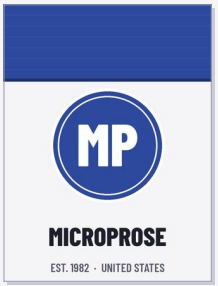
Lucasfilm's game division: Maniac Mansion, Monkey Island and Star Wars games. Closed in 2013.



Company founded: MicroProse

1982 · Company · United States

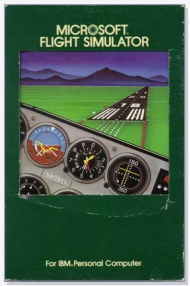
Founded by Sid Meier and Bill Stealey: flight simulators and Civilization.



Microsoft Flight Simulator

1982 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Simulation

The first Microsoft version of a long-running flight simulator series, released for the IBM PC.



Mine Storm

1982 · Game · Vectrex · Shooter

The Asteroids-style game built into every Vectrex.



Ms. Pac-Man

1982 · Game · Arcade machines · Maze

Began as an add-on hack and became an official sequel and one of the most successful arcade games in the US.



NEC PC-98

1982 to 2003 · System · NEC · Computer

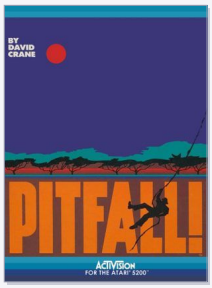
Japan's dominant personal computer, home to many visual novels and RPGs never released in the West.



Pitfall!

1982 · Game · Atari 2600 · Platformer

David Crane's jungle runner, Activision's biggest hit and a landmark of the platform genre.



Pole Position

1982 · Game · Arcade machines · Racing

Pioneering behind-the-car racing with a qualifying lap; the top-earning arcade game of 1983 in the US.



Q*bert

1982 · Game · Arcade machines · Platformer

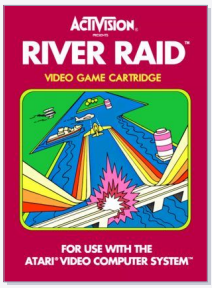
An isometric puzzle-platformer starring an orange creature hopping across a pyramid of cubes.

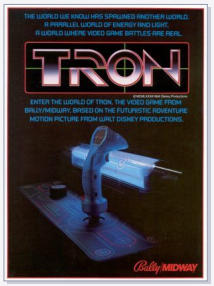


River Raid

1982 · Game · Atari 2600 · Shooter

Carol Shaw's top-down shooter, a major hit on the 2600.





Tron

1982 · Game · Arcade machines · Action

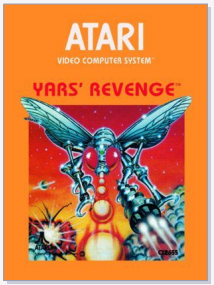
A tie-in arcade game for the Disney film, with five distinct mini-games drawn from the movie's digital world.



Vectrex

1982 to 1984 · System · General Consumer Electronics · Home console · Generation 2

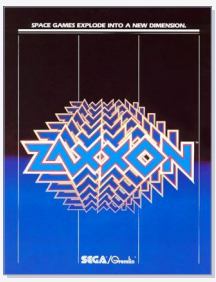
A console with its own built-in vector-graphics screen, giving crisp line graphics like arcade vector games.



Yars' Revenge

1982 · Game · Atari 2600 · Shooter

Atari's best-selling original 2600 game.



Zaxxon

1982 · Game · Arcade machines · Shooter

An isometric scrolling shooter that simulated three-dimensional depth years before true 3D hardware was common.



ZX Spectrum

Apr 1982 to 1992 · System · Sinclair Research · Computer

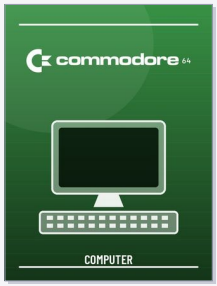
Cheap British color computer with rubber keys that launched a generation of bedroom programmers and the UK games industry.



ColecoVision

Aug 1982 to 1985 · System · Coleco · Home console · Generation 2

Near-arcade hardware, bundled with Donkey Kong, with an adapter that played Atari 2600 cartridges.



Commodore 64

Aug 1982 to 1994 · System · Commodore · Computer

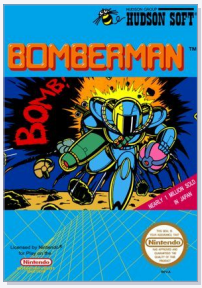
Often cited as the best-selling single computer model ever. A huge game library, the SID sound chip and the birth of the demoscene.

THE CRASH

1983 TO 1984

A glut of consoles and low-quality games collapses the North American market. In Japan the Famicom launches and thrives.

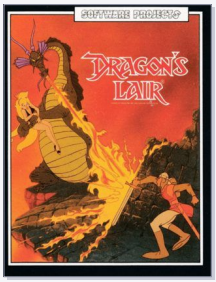
4 systems · 14 games · 2 milestones · 1 companies founded



Bomberman

1983 · Game · Famicom · Puzzle

A grid-based puzzle-action game of laying bombs to clear blocks and enemies that spawned a long-running series.



Dragon's Lair

1983 · Game · Arcade machines · Interactive movie

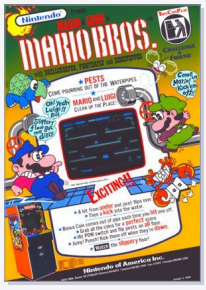
Laserdisc animation by Don Bluth with spectacular visuals and minimal gameplay.



Manic Miner

1983 · Game · ZX Spectrum · Platformer

A twenty-cavern platformer, a landmark of British bedroom coding.



Mario Bros.

1983 · Game · Arcade machines · Platformer

Introduced Mario's brother Luigi and two-player cooperative play.



MSX

1983 · System · ASCII Corporation · Computer

A home computer standard from ASCII and Microsoft, popular in Japan, Europe and South America. The original Metal Gear appeared here.

The North American video game crash

1983 · Event · Atari · Mattel · Coleco

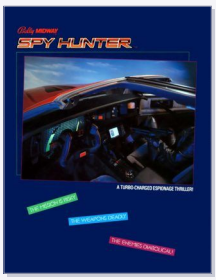
A glut of consoles and low-quality games collapsed the US market. Revenue fell by roughly 90 percent between 1983 and 1985.



Sinistar

1983 · Game · Arcade machines · Shooter

A space shooter famous for its menacing digitized voice taunting 'I am Sinistar' as players mine asteroids for resources.



Spy Hunter

1983 · Game · Arcade machines · Racing

A gadget-laden driving game where players battle enemy vehicles on the road, inspired by the James Bond films.



Famicom

Jul 1983 to 2003 · System · Nintendo · Home console · Generation 3

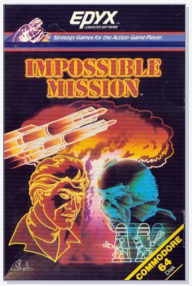
Nintendo's 8-bit Family Computer in Japan, the basis of the NES. It launched with ports of Donkey Kong games.



Elite

1984 · Game · BBC Micro · Simulation

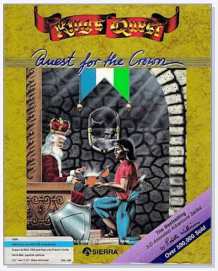
Open-ended space trading and combat with 3D wireframe graphics, a forerunner of open-world games.



Impossible Mission

1984 · Game · Commodore 64 · Platformer

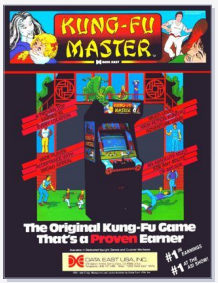
A cinematic platformer about infiltrating a mad scientist's base, praised for its animation and sampled speech.



King's Quest

1984 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Adventure

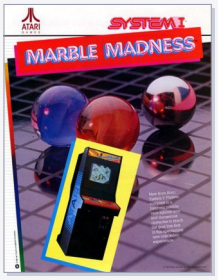
Roberta Williams's animated graphic adventure, released for the IBM PCjr.



Kung-Fu Master

1984 · Game · Arcade machines, Nintendo Entertainment System · Action

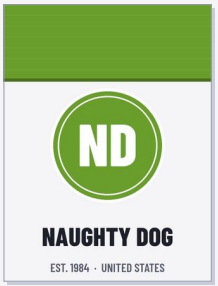
An early side-scrolling beat-'em-up loosely based on martial arts films, influential on the genre's structure.



Marble Madness

1984 · Game · Arcade machines · Puzzle

An isometric game of rolling a marble through hazard-filled courses against the clock, notable for its physics and music.



Company founded: Naughty Dog

1984 · Company · United States

Santa Monica studio: Crash Bandicoot, Uncharted and The Last of Us. Part of Sony since 2001.



Paperboy

1984 · Game · Arcade machines · Action

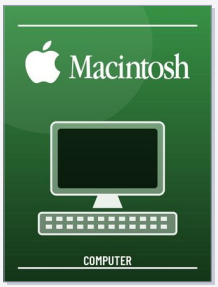
A quirky arcade game of delivering newspapers on a bicycle while dodging suburban obstacles.



Tetris

1984 · Game · Mainframes and research computers, Game Boy · Puzzle

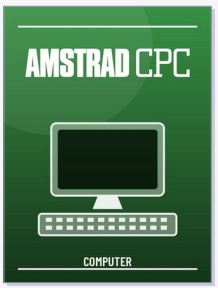
Created in Moscow in 1984, it spread worldwide after being bundled with the Game Boy in 1989.



Apple Macintosh

Jan 1984 · System · Apple · Computer

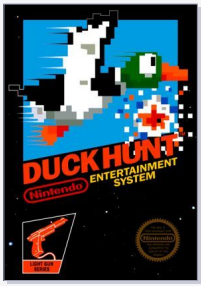
The first mass-market computer with a mouse and graphical interface. Not a games leader, but the first home of Myst.



Amstrad CPC

Apr 1984 to 1990 · System · Amstrad · Computer

Home computer with a built-in monitor and tape deck, very popular in the UK, France and Spain.



Duck Hunt

Apr 1984 · Game · Nintendo Entertainment System · Shooter

A light-gun shooting game bundled with many NES consoles, infamous for its taunting laughing dog.

Jack Tramiel buys Atari's consumer division

Jul 1984 · Event · Atari · Commodore

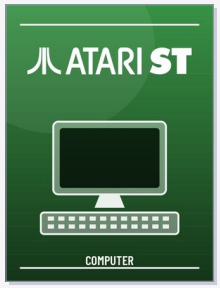
Warner sells off Atari's consumer business to former Commodore chief Jack Tramiel.

THE 8-BIT REVIVAL

1985 TO 1989

Nintendo's NES, with strict licensing and Super Mario Bros., rebuilds the market. Game Boy arrives in 1989 while home computers boom across Europe.

9 systems · 37 games · 0 milestones · 7 companies founded



Atari ST

1985 to 1993 · System · Atari · Computer

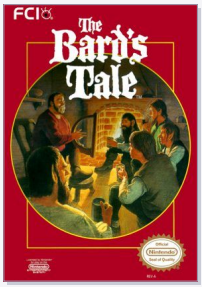
A 16-bit computer with built-in MIDI ports; rival to the Amiga for games and music.



Gradius

1985 · Game · Arcade machines · Shooter

A horizontal shooter with a selectable power-up bar.



The Bard's Tale

1985 · Game · Apple II, Commodore 64, Nintendo Entertainment System · RPG

An early first-person dungeon-crawling RPG for home computers that helped popularize the genre.



Company founded: Rare

1985 · Company · United Kingdom

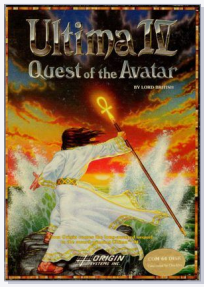
British studio behind Donkey Kong Country, GoldenEye 007 and Banjo-Kazooie. Acquired by Microsoft in 2002.



Gauntlet

1985 · Game · Arcade machines · Action

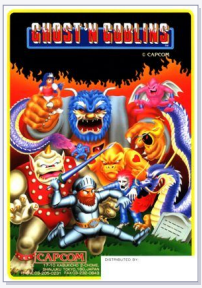
A four-player cooperative dungeon crawler with a famous narrator warning that a player's 'life force is running out.'



Ultima IV: Quest of the Avatar

1985 · Game · Apple II, Commodore 64, Nintendo Entertainment System · RPG

A landmark RPG that replaced simple monster-killing with a quest to embody eight virtues.



Ghosts 'n Goblins

1985 · Game · Arcade machines, Nintendo Entertainment System · Platformer

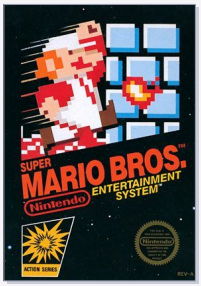
A punishing knight-versus-undead platformer known for its difficulty and memorable armor-stripping hit system.



Commodore Amiga

Jul 1985 to 1996 · System · Commodore · Computer

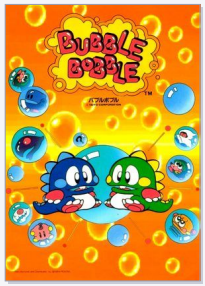
A multimedia computer with advanced graphics and sound; a golden age of European games and the demoscene.



Super Mario Bros.

Sep 1985 · Game · Famicom, Nintendo Entertainment System · Platformer

Defined the side-scrolling platform game and sold tens of millions of copies, helping to revive the industry.



Bubble Bobble

1986 · Game · Arcade machines · Platformer

A cooperative platformer starring bubble-blowing dragons Bub and Bob, beloved for its catchy music and co-op play.



Nintendo Entertainment System

Oct 1985 to 1995 · System · Nintendo · Home console · Generation 3

The Western version of the Famicom, launched in New York in 1985. Strict licensing, Super Mario Bros. and Zelda rebuilt the US market after the crash.



Fantasy Zone

1986 · Game · Arcade machines, Sega Master System · Shooter

A colorful, cartoonish horizontal shooter where players buy weapon upgrades from in-game shops.



Sega Master System

Oct 1985 · System · Sega · Home console · Generation 3

Sega's 8-bit console (the Mark III in Japan). A minor player in Japan and the US, but successful in Europe and Brazil.



Company founded: FromSoftware

1986 · Company · Japan

Tokyo developer of Armored Core, Demon's Souls, Dark Souls, Bloodborne and Elden Ring.



Arkanoid

1986 · Game · Arcade machines · Puzzle

A breakout-style brick-breaker that added power-ups and boss fights to the paddle-and-ball formula.



Out Run

1986 · Game · Arcade machines · Racing

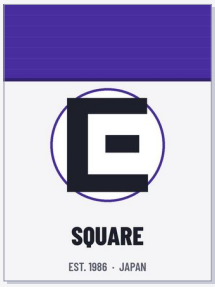
Yu Suzuki's sit-down racer with branching routes and a Ferrari.



Atari 7800

1986 to 1992 · System · Atari · Home console · Generation 3

Backward-compatible with 2600 games. A corporate sale delayed it until it reached stores widely in 1986.



Company founded: Square

1986 · Company · Japan

Founded in 1986. Final Fantasy rescued the company, which also made Chrono Trigger. Merged with Enix in 2003 to form Square Enix.



Company founded: Bethesda Softworks

1986 · Company · United States

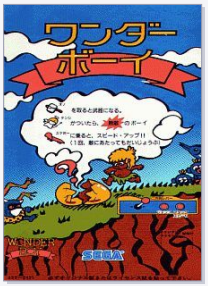
Maryland studio behind The Elder Scrolls and Fallout. Acquired by Microsoft in 2021.



Company founded: Ubisoft

1986 · Company · France

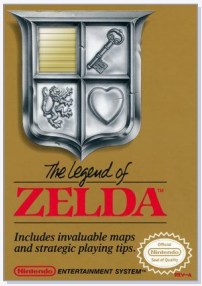
French publisher of Assassin's Creed, Far Cry and Rayman.



Wonder Boy

1986 · Game · Arcade machines, Sega Master System · Platformer

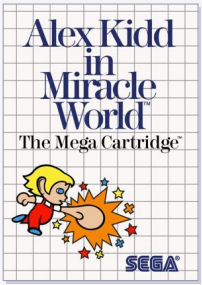
A side-scrolling platformer that spawned a long-running, genre-shifting Sega franchise.



The Legend of Zelda

Feb 1986 · Game · Famicom, Nintendo Entertainment System · Action-adventure

Open-ended exploration with a battery-backed save file.



Alex Kidd in Miracle World

Apr 1986 · Game · Sega Master System · Platformer

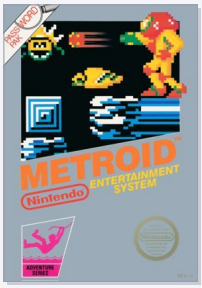
Sega's answer to Mario, starring a monkey-faced boy, bundled with early Master System consoles.



Dragon Quest

May 1986 · Game · Famicom, Nintendo Entertainment System · RPG

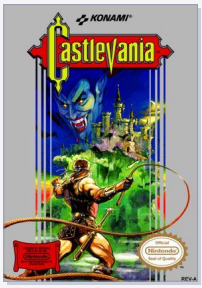
Established the conventions of the console RPG and became a national institution in Japan.



Metroid

Aug 1986 · Game · Famicom, Nintendo Entertainment System · Action-adventure

Non-linear exploration and the late reveal that heroine Samus Aran is a woman.



Castlevania

Sep 1986 · Game · Famicom, Nintendo Entertainment System · Action-adventure

A whip-wielding vampire hunter in a gothic castle.



After Burner

1987 · Game · Arcade machines · Shooter

A high-speed jet combat arcade game famous for its hydraulic 'taikan' moving cabinet.



Double Dragon

1987 · Game · Arcade machines, Nintendo Entertainment System · Action

A side-scrolling beat-'em-up starring twin brothers that helped define the genre on home consoles.



Maniac Mansion

1987 · Game · Commodore 64 · Adventure

A point-and-click comedy adventure built on the SCUMM engine.



Company founded: Maxis

1987 · Company · United States

Founded by Will Wright and Jeff Braun: SimCity and The Sims. Acquired by EA in 1997.



R-Type

1987 · Game · Arcade machines · Shooter

A demanding side-scrolling shoot-'em-up known for its charge-shot weapon and biomechanical enemy design.



Rad Racer

1987 · Game · Nintendo Entertainment System · Racing

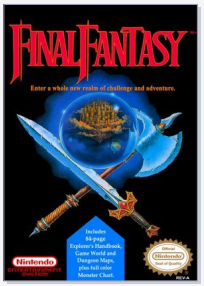
A pseudo-3D racing game for the NES notable for its early use of stereoscopic 3D glasses support.



Shinobi

1987 · Game · Arcade machines, Sega Master System · Action

A ninja-themed action-platformer notable for its shuriken-throwing combat and hostage-rescue objectives.



Final Fantasy

Dec 1987 · Game · Famicom, Nintendo Entertainment System · RPG

Created by Hironobu Sakaguchi when Square was in financial trouble, and it saved the company.



Street Fighter

1987 · Game · Arcade machines · Fighting

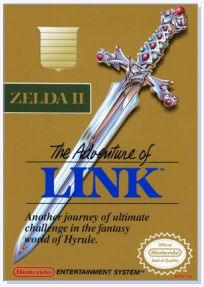
Capcom's original coin-operated fighting game that introduced Ryu and Ken ahead of its hit 1991 sequel.



Mega Man

Dec 1987 · Game · Famicom, Nintendo Entertainment System · Platformer

Choose the stage order and take each boss's weapon.



Zelda II: The Adventure of Link

Jan 1987 · Game · Famicom, Nintendo Entertainment System · Action-adventure

A side-scrolling, RPG-influenced sequel that departed sharply from the original Zelda's top-down format.



Phantasy Star

Dec 1987 · Game · Sega Master System · RPG

An early console RPG notable for its 3D dungeon corridors and a female lead character, Alis.



Metal Gear

Jul 1987 · Game · MSX · Stealth

Hideo Kojima's first game made hiding more important than shooting.



Contra

1988 · Game · Nintendo Entertainment System · Run and gun

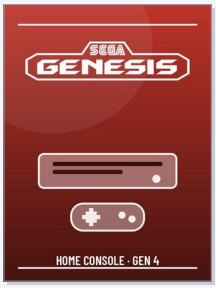
Cooperative run-and-gun, famous for the Konami code.



PC Engine / TurboGrafx-16

Oct 1987 to 1994 · System · NEC · Home console · Generation 4

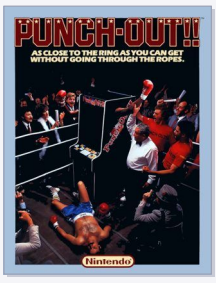
A compact console from NEC and Hudson with an 8-bit CPU and 16-bit graphics. First console with a CD-ROM add-on; huge in Japan, modest in the US.



Sega Genesis / Mega Drive

Oct 1988 · System · Sega · Home console · Generation 4

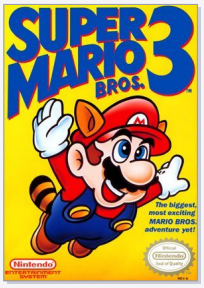
Sega's 16-bit console. Edgy advertising and Sonic the Hedgehog made Sega a true rival to Nintendo.



Punch-Out!!

Oct 1987 · Game · Arcade machines, Nintendo Entertainment System · Sports

A boxing game starring Little Mac, famous for reading enemy patterns against colorful larger-than-life opponents.



Super Mario Bros. 3

Oct 1988 · Game · Famicom, Nintendo Entertainment System · Platformer

Power-up suits, world maps and enormous design variety.



Atari Lynx

1989 to 1995 · System · Atari · Handheld

The first color LCD handheld, with a backlight. Poor battery life and a small library kept it a niche rival to the Game Boy.



Company founded: Game Freak

1989 · Company · Japan

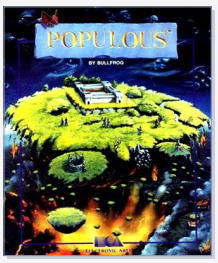
Tokyo studio founded by Satoshi Tajiri; developer of Pokémon.



Golden Axe

1989 · Game · Arcade machines, Sega Genesis / Mega Drive · Action

A fantasy hack-and-slash beat-'em-up with cooperative play and rideable beasts.



Populous

1989 · Game · Commodore Amiga, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Strategy

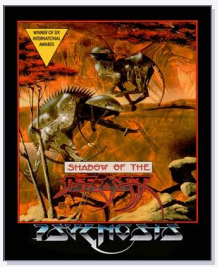
Peter Molyneux's foundational 'god game' where players terraform land and guide followers to victory.



Prince of Persia

1989 · Game · Apple II · Platformer

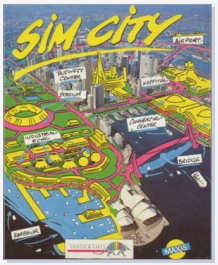
Rotoscoped animation gave it uniquely fluid movement.



Shadow of the Beast

1989 · Game · Commodore Amiga · Platformer

An atmospheric side-scroller renowned for its multi-layer parallax scrolling and dark fantasy art.



SimCity

1989 · Game · Commodore Amiga, Apple Macintosh, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Simulation

Will Wright's city-building simulation, a pioneer of games with no winning condition.



Game Boy

Apr 1989 to 2003 · System · Nintendo · Handheld

A monochrome handheld with long battery life, bundled with Tetris in the West. The Game Boy family (with Color) sold over 118 million.



Super Mario Land

Apr 1989 · Game · Game Boy · Platformer

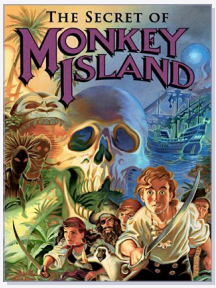
A launch-window platformer for the Game Boy.

THE 16-BIT WARS

1990 TO 1993

Sega and Nintendo fight over the living room with Sonic and Mario. CD-ROM arrives, Street Fighter II launches the fighting game boom, and Congress holds hearings on violent games.

8 systems · 32 games · 1 milestones · 6 companies founded



The Secret of Monkey Island

1990 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Adventure

Ron Gilbert's pirate comedy adventure.



TurboExpress

1990 to 1994 · System · NEC · Handheld

A portable PC Engine that played TurboGrafx HuCards. Expensive but ahead of its time.



Final Fantasy III

Apr 1990 · Game · Famicom · RPG

A Famicom RPG that introduced the job-change system later reused across the series, released in the West decades later.



Neo Geo (MVS / AES)

Apr 1990 · System · SNK · Home console · Generation 4

SNK's arcade platform (MVS) and its extremely expensive matching home console (AES). Home of Metal Slug and The King of Fighters.



Sega Game Gear

Oct 1990 to 1997 · System · Sega · Handheld

Sega's color handheld, based on Master System technology. A bright screen but heavy battery use.



F-Zero

Nov 1990 · Game · Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) · Racing

A high-speed futuristic racer and launch title that showcased the Super NES's Mode 7 scaling and rotation.



Super Mario World

Nov 1990 · Game · Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) · Platformer

The SNES launch title that introduced Yoshi.



Super Nintendo (Super Famicom)

Nov 1990 to 2003 · System · Nintendo · Home console · Generation 4

Nintendo's 16-bit console, known for Mode 7 graphics, a strong sound chip and an acclaimed library. Sold about 49 million.



Pilotwings

Dec 1990 · Game · Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) · Simulation

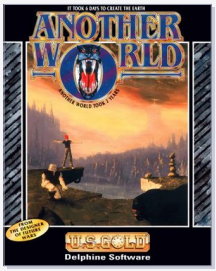
A flight-simulation launch title for the Super NES built around skydiving, hang gliding and light-plane missions.



Company founded: The 3DO Company

1991 · Company · United States

Founded by Trip Hawkins. Licensed its 3DO hardware to several makers. Bankrupt in 2003.



Another World

1991 · Game · Commodore Amiga, Atari ST · Action-adventure

A cinematic polygon-graphics adventure with no on-screen interface.

Company founded: Blizzard Entertainment

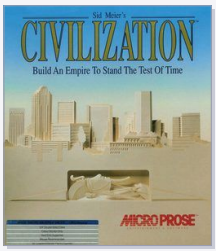
1991 · Company · United States

Founded as Silicon and Synapse. Warcraft, StarCraft, Diablo, World of Warcraft and Overwatch.

Company founded: Bungie

1991 · Company · United States

Creators of Halo and Destiny. Owned by Microsoft until 2007 and acquired by Sony in 2022.



Civilization

1991 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Strategy

Sid Meier's turn-based game of building an empire from the Stone Age.

Company founded: Epic Games

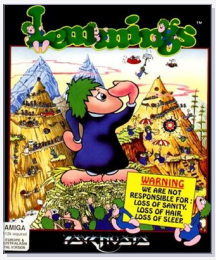
1991 · Company · United States

Founded by Tim Sweeney as Epic MegaGames. Unreal Engine, Gears of War, Fortnite and the Epic Games Store.

Company founded: id Software

1991 · Company · United States

Texas studio founded by John Carmack, John Romero, Adrian Carmack and Tom Hall: Wolfenstein 3D, Doom and Quake.



Lemmings

1991 · Game · Commodore Amiga · Puzzle

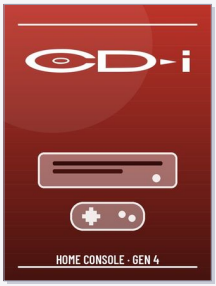
Guide marching lemmings to safety. DMA Design later became Rockstar North.



Metal Storm

1991 · Game · Nintendo Entertainment System · Action

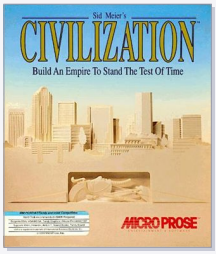
A side-scrolling shooter known for its gravity-flipping mechanic, considered technically ambitious for the NES.



Philips CD-i

1991 to 1998 · System · Philips · Home console · Generation 4

Philips's multimedia CD player. Remembered for poor games, including infamous Nintendo-licensed spin-offs.



Sid Meier's Civilization

1991 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Strategy

A turn-based strategy game of building an empire from antiquity to the space age, founding the 4X genre's mainstream appeal.



Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Turtles in Time

1991 · Game · Arcade machines, Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) · Action

A cooperative beat-'em-up starring the Turtles, widely regarded as one of the best licensed arcade games.



Street Fighter II

Feb 1991 · Game · Arcade machines, Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) · Fighting

Popularized one-on-one fighting games and combos, and was a huge arcade and home hit.



Sonic the Hedgehog

Jun 1991 · Game · Sega Genesis / Mega Drive · Platformer

Sega's speedy mascot, built to compete with Mario.



Final Fantasy IV

Jul 1991 · Game · Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) · RPG

Introduced the Active Time Battle system and a stronger story focus.



Super Castlevania IV

Oct 1991 · Game · Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) · Platformer

A reimagining of the original Castlevania for Super NES, praised for its whip-swinging controls and visuals.



The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past

Nov 1991 · Game · Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) · Action-adventure

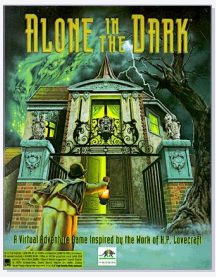
Set the template for the series with the Light and Dark Worlds.



Sega CD / Mega-CD

Dec 1991 to 1996 · System · Sega · Home console · Generation 4

A CD-ROM add-on for the Genesis that brought full-motion video and CD audio.



Alone in the Dark

1992 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Survival horror

An early 3D survival-horror game widely credited with establishing conventions the genre would later refine.



Virtua Racing

1992 · Game · Arcade machines · Racing

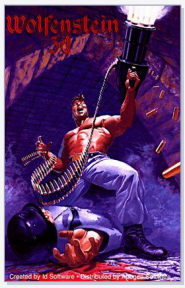
An early fully 3D polygonal racing game that showcased Sega's Model 1 arcade hardware.



Kirby's Dream Land

Apr 1992 · Game · Game Boy · Platformer

The debut of Nintendo's pink, inhaling hero, built as an accessible platformer for the original Game Boy.



Wolfenstein 3D

May 1992 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Shooter

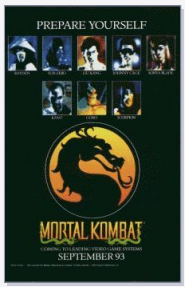
The first-person shooter that popularized the genre and shareware distribution.



Super Mario Kart

Aug 1992 · Game · Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) · Racing

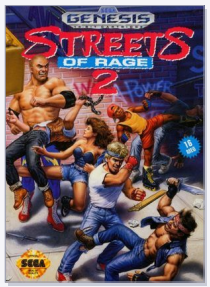
Created the kart racing genre.



Mortal Kombat

Oct 1992 · Game · Arcade machines · Fighting

Digitized actors and graphic violence led to the 1993 Congressional hearings and the ESRB.



Streets of Rage 2

Dec 1992 · Game · Sega Genesis / Mega Drive · Action

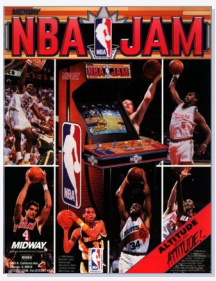
A beat-'em-up sequel known for its tight combat and one of the Genesis's most acclaimed soundtracks.



Jurassic Park

1993 · Game · Super Nintendo (Super Famicom), Sega Genesis / Mega Drive · Action-adventure

A licensed tie-in game to the film, adapted differently across platforms, including an isometric SNES version.



NBA Jam

1993 · Game · Arcade machines · Sports

An over-the-top two-on-two basketball arcade game famous for its exaggerated dunks and 'he's on fire' commentary.



Company founded: Sony Interactive Entertainment

1993 · Company · Japan

Sony's game division, founded as Sony Computer Entertainment. Created PlayStation in 1994 and built one of the industry's largest studio networks.



Virtua Fighter

1993 · Game · Arcade machines, Sega Saturn · Fighting

The first 3D polygon fighting game.



Star Fox

Feb 1993 · Game · Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) · Shooter

A rail shooter notable for its Super FX chip, enabling 3D polygonal graphics on the Super NES.



Link's Awakening

Jun 1993 · Game · Game Boy · Action-adventure

The first handheld Zelda, set on Koholint Island.



Secret of Mana

Aug 1993 · Game · Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) · RPG

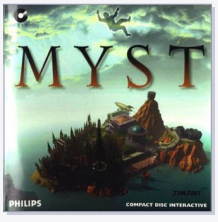
An action RPG notable for real-time combat and cooperative multiplayer via the Super NES's multitap.



Gunstar Heroes

Sep 1993 · Game · Sega Genesis / Mega Drive · Shooter

A run-and-gun action game from Treasure celebrated for its frenetic pace and weapon-combination system.



Myst

Sep 1993 · Game · Apple Macintosh, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Adventure

A puzzle adventure that popularized CD-ROM and was a top-selling PC game for years.



3DO Interactive Multiplayer

Oct 1993 to 1996 · System · The 3DO Company · Home console · Generation 5

Hardware licensed to several manufacturers. Its 699-dollar launch price held it back.



Atari Jaguar

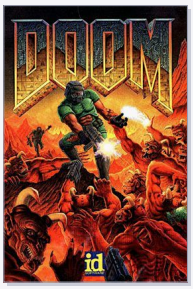
Nov 1993 to 1996 · System · Atari · Home console · Generation 5

Atari's last console, marketed as 64-bit. Hard to program and a poor seller.

Congress holds hearings on game violence

Dec 1993 · Event · Midway Games · Sega · Nintendo

After controversy over Mortal Kombat and Night Trap, senators push the industry to create a rating system.



Doom

Dec 1993 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Shooter

A shareware first-person shooter with network deathmatch and mod support that defined PC gaming for a generation.

3D AND THE CD ERA

1994 TO 1998

PlayStation, Saturn and Nintendo 64 make 3D the standard. Final Fantasy VII, Resident Evil, Pokémon and Half-Life redefine what games can be.

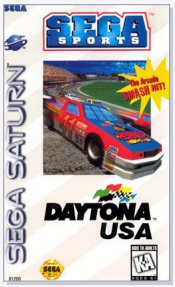
7 systems · 48 games · 3 milestones · 5 companies founded



Company founded: CD Projekt

1994 · Company · Poland

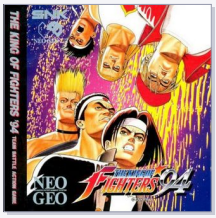
Polish developer and publisher of The Witcher series and Cyberpunk 2077, and owner of the GOG store.



Daytona USA

1994 · Game · Arcade machines, Sega Saturn · Racing

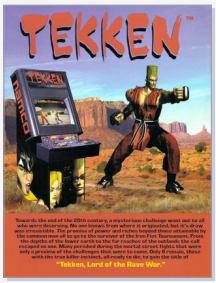
A fast arcade racer with an earworm vocal soundtrack, among the most successful arcade cabinets of its era.



The King of Fighters '94

1994 · Game · Neo Geo (MVS / AES) · Fighting

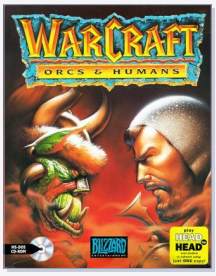
A three-on-three team fighter bringing together SNK characters.



Tekken

1994 · Game · Arcade machines, PlayStation · Fighting

Namco's 3D fighter, an early showcase for the PlayStation.



Warcraft: Orcs & Humans

1994 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Strategy

Blizzard's first Warcraft game, an early real-time strategy hit.



Super Metroid

Mar 1994 · Game · Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) · Action-adventure

A landmark of exploration design that helped define the Metroidvania style.



Final Fantasy VI

Apr 1994 · Game · Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) · RPG

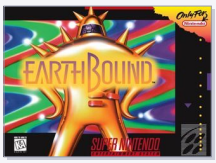
An ensemble-cast epic with a celebrated villain and an opera scene.



Breath of Fire

Aug 1994 · Game · Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) · RPG

Capcom's first fantasy RPG series entry, following a dragon clan descendant on a journey to save the world.



EarthBound

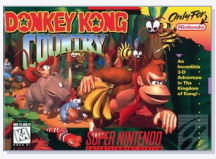
Aug 1994 · Game · Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) · RPG

A quirky modern-day RPG with a cult following.

The ESRB is founded

Sep 1994 · Event

The Entertainment Software Rating Board starts rating games, an industry response to the hearings.



Donkey Kong Country

Nov 1994 · Game · Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) · Platformer

Pre-rendered 3D graphics gave the SNES a second wind.



Sega 32X

Nov 1994 to 1996 · System · Sega · Home console · Generation 4

A Genesis add-on for 32-bit-class power. Overlapped with the Saturn and was quickly abandoned.



Sega Saturn

Nov 1994 to 2000 · System · Sega · Home console · Generation 5

Sega's 32-bit console with twin CPUs. Hard to program and overshadowed by PlayStation in the West, but strong in Japan, especially for 2D games.



King's Field

Dec 1994 · Game · PlayStation · RPG

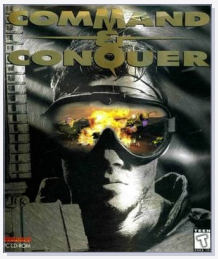
FromSoftware's early first-person action RPG, a spiritual forerunner to the studio's later Souls games.



PlayStation

Dec 1994 to 2006 · System · Sony Interactive Entertainment · Home console · Generation 5

Sony's first console, born from a failed collaboration with Nintendo. It embraced 3D, CDs and older audiences, and sold over 100 million.



Command & Conquer

1995 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Strategy

A real-time strategy game that, alongside Warcraft, helped define and popularize the RTS genre.



Rayman

1995 · Game · PlayStation, Sega Saturn, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Platformer

A hand-animated 2D platformer starring a limbless hero, among Ubisoft's first major original franchises.



Twisted Metal

1995 · Game · PlayStation · Action

A vehicular combat game that became one of the original PlayStation's signature early franchises.



Front Mission

Feb 1995 · Game · Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) · Strategy

A tactical mecha RPG set in a near-future world of corporate conflict, long popular in Japan.



Chrono Trigger

Mar 1995 · Game · Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) · RPG

Made by a team including Sakaguchi, Horii and Toriyama, famed for its time-travel story and multiple endings.

The first E3

May 1995 · Event · Sega · Sony Interactive Entertainment · Nintendo

The Electronic Entertainment Expo debuts in Los Angeles, where Sega surprises the industry by announcing the Saturn's immediate launch.



Virtual Boy

Jul 1995 to 1996 · System · Nintendo · Home console · Generation 5

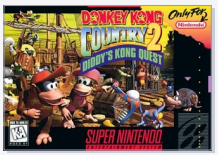
A tabletop stereoscopic red-and-black console. A commercial failure within months.



Yoshi's Island

Aug 1995 · Game · Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) · Platformer

A hand-drawn crayon look and floating-egg mechanics.



Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest

Nov 1995 · Game · Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) · Platformer

A pirate-themed platformer sequel praised for its level design and pre-rendered 3D character graphics.

3dfx Voodoo brings 3D acceleration to PCs

1996 · Event · id Software

Dedicated 3D graphics cards make accelerated games such as Quake mainstream on PC.



Company founded: Larian Studios

1996 · Company · Belgium

Ghent studio of the Divinity series and Baldur's Gate 3.



Metal Slug

1996 · Game · Neo Geo (MVS / AES) · Run and gun

Hand-drawn pixel animation and run-and-gun action.



Company founded: Valve

1996 · Company · United States

Founded by Gabe Newell and Mike Harrington. Half-Life, Portal, Counter-Strike, Dota 2, the Steam store and the Steam Deck.



Pokémon Red and Green

Feb 1996 · Game · Game Boy · RPG

Launched the Pokémon franchise in Japan; the West got Red and Blue in 1998.



Resident Evil

Mar 1996 · Game · PlayStation · Survival horror

Gave survival horror its name and defined the genre.



Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars

Mar 1996 · Game · Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) · RPG

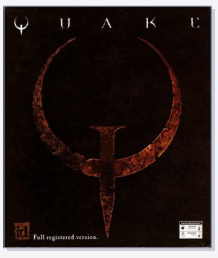
A collaboration between Square and Nintendo blending Mario's world with Square's turn-based RPG mechanics.



Nintendo 64

Jun 1996 to 2002 · System · Nintendo · Home console · Generation 5

A cartridge console with an analog stick and four controller ports. Super Mario 64 and GoldenEye shaped 3D design and console multiplayer.



Quake

Jun 1996 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Shooter

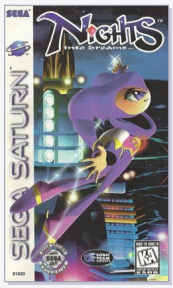
True 3D polygons, online play and an enormous mod scene.



Super Mario 64

Jun 1996 · Game · Nintendo 64 · Platformer

Defined 3D platforming, with a movable camera and analog control.



NiGHTS into Dreams

Jul 1996 · Game · Sega Saturn · Action

A flying dream adventure by Sonic Team.



Crash Bandicoot

Sep 1996 · Game · PlayStation · Platformer

PlayStation's early mascot platformer.



Tomb Raider

Oct 1996 · Game · PlayStation, Sega Saturn, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Action-adventure

Introduced Lara Croft and 3D action exploration.



Diablo

Dec 1996 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Action RPG

A dungeon-crawling action RPG with online play through Battle.net.



Parappa the Rapper

Dec 1996 · Game · PlayStation · Rhythm

A pioneering rhythm game starring a rapping paper-thin dog, widely credited with founding the music-game genre.



Fallout

1997 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · RPG

A post-apocalyptic RPG with turn-based tactical combat that established the franchise's dark, satirical tone.



Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee

1997 · Game · PlayStation · Platformer

A cinematic puzzle-platformer with a strong environmental message, starring the enslaved Mudokon Abe.



Final Fantasy VII

Jan 1997 · Game · PlayStation · RPG

Pre-rendered backgrounds and CGI scenes brought Japanese RPGs to a mass Western audience.



Castlevania: Symphony of the Night

Mar 1997 · Game · PlayStation · Action-adventure

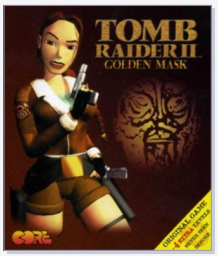
Exploration and RPG elements that, with Super Metroid, defined the Metroidvania.



GoldenEye 007

Aug 1997 · Game · Nintendo 64 · Shooter

A landmark console shooter with four-player split-screen.



Tomb Raider II

Oct 1997 · Game · PlayStation, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Action-adventure

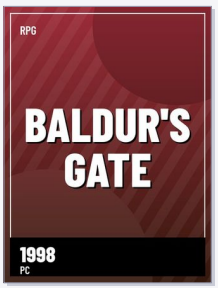
A sequel that refined Lara Croft's acrobatic exploration and introduced vehicles and new weapons.



Gran Turismo

Dec 1997 · Game · PlayStation · Racing

The Real Driving Simulator, with hundreds of licensed cars.



Baldur's Gate

1998 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · RPG

A Dungeons & Dragons-licensed RPG that revived the isometric party-based computer RPG format.



Company founded: Google

1998 · Company · United States

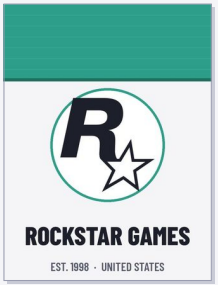
Maker of Android and Google Play, and of the Stadia cloud gaming service (2019 to 2023).



Grim Fandango

1998 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Adventure

A film-noir adventure game set in a stylized Mexican Land of the Dead, acclaimed for its writing and art direction.



Company founded: Rockstar Games

1998 · Company · United States

Publisher of Grand Theft Auto and Red Dead Redemption; its Rockstar North studio descends from DMA Design.



Thief: The Dark Project

1998 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Action

A stealth game that emphasized avoiding combat, shaping the modern stealth genre alongside Metal Gear Solid.



Unreal

1998 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Shooter

A first-person shooter notable for its graphics engine, the Unreal Engine, which became a widely licensed industry tool.



Xenogears

Feb 1998 · Game · PlayStation · RPG

An ambitious RPG blending mecha combat with a philosophically dense story, later influencing the Xenosaga series.



StarCraft

Mar 1998 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Strategy

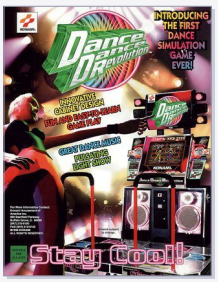
A real-time strategy game that became a national sport in South Korea.



Banjo-Kazooie

Jun 1998 · Game · Nintendo 64 · Platformer

A collect-a-thon 3D platformer from Rare starring a bear and bird duo, closely compared to Super Mario 64.



Dance Dance Revolution

Sep 1998 · Game · Arcade machines · Rhythm

A rhythm game played with your feet on a dance pad.



Metal Gear Solid

Sep 1998 · Game · PlayStation · Stealth

Cinematic stealth action by Hideo Kojima.



Game Boy Color

Oct 1998 to 2003 · System · Nintendo · Handheld

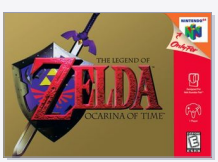
A color Game Boy that stayed compatible with the original's library.



Half-Life

Nov 1998 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Shooter

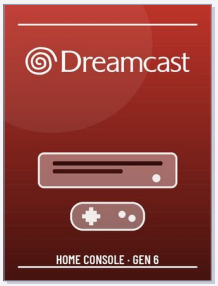
A narrative-driven shooter told without cutscenes.



The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time

Nov 1998 · Game · Nintendo 64 · Action-adventure

Introduced Z-targeting and set the standard for 3D action adventure.



Sega Dreamcast

Nov 1998 to 2001 · System · Sega · Home console · Generation 6

The first sixth-generation console, with a built-in modem and online play. Short-lived but influential; Sega's last hardware.



Sonic Adventure

Dec 1998 · Game · Sega Dreamcast · Platformer

Sonic's first fully 3D adventure.



Suikoden II

Dec 1998 · Game · PlayStation · RPG

An RPG celebrated for its sprawling cast of 108 recruitable characters and a morally complex war story.

GOING ONLINE

1999 TO 2004

Dreamcast, PlayStation 2, Xbox and GameCube. Broadband, Xbox Live and massively multiplayer games change how people play together.

10 systems · 48 games · 3 milestones · 1 companies founded



Counter-Strike

1999 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Shooter

A tactical team shooter that began as a Half-Life mod and became an esports staple.



Homeworld

1999 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Strategy

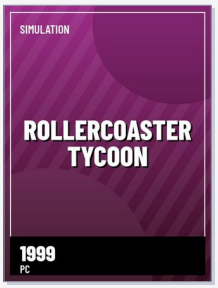
A real-time strategy game set in full 3D space, praised for its persistent fleet and sweeping orchestral score.



Neo Geo Pocket Color

1999 to 2001 · System · SNK · Handheld

A color handheld with a clicky joystick. Loved by fans, but SNK's financial collapse ended it.



RollerCoaster Tycoon

1999 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Simulation

A theme-park management simulation written largely in assembly by one developer, beloved for its depth.



Silent Hill

Jan 1999 · Game · PlayStation · Survival horror

Psychological horror in a fog-covered town.



Super Smash Bros.

Jan 1999 · Game · Nintendo 64 · Fighting

Created the platform fighter with Nintendo characters.



Final Fantasy VIII

Feb 1999 · Game · PlayStation · RPG

A romance-focused entry in the Final Fantasy series featuring the Junction system and realistic character designs.



WonderSwan

Mar 1999 to 2003 · System · Bandai · Handheld

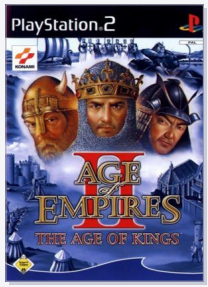
A Bandai handheld designed with input from Gunpei Yokoi; a Game Boy rival in Japan.



Ape Escape

Jun 1999 · Game · PlayStation · Platformer

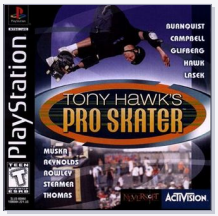
A 3D platformer notable for being designed around the PlayStation's then-new DualShock analog controller.



Age of Empires II: The Age of Kings

Sep 1999 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Strategy

A historical real-time strategy game widely regarded as one of the genre's best-balanced and most enduring.



Tony Hawk's Pro Skater

Sep 1999 · Game · PlayStation · Sports

A skateboarding game that popularized trick-chaining combos and licensed punk and hip-hop soundtracks.



Chrono Cross

Nov 1999 · Game · PlayStation · RPG

A spiritual successor to Chrono Trigger with a large rotating cast and a parallel-worlds story.



Gran Turismo 2

Dec 1999 · Game · PlayStation · Racing

A racing simulator sequel massively expanding its car roster and tracks over the original.



Shenmue

Dec 1999 · Game · Sega Dreamcast · Action-adventure

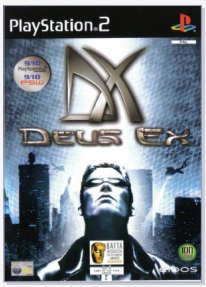
Yu Suzuki's open-ended game with a day-night cycle and quick-time events.



Vib-Ribbon

Dec 1999 · Game · PlayStation · Rhythm

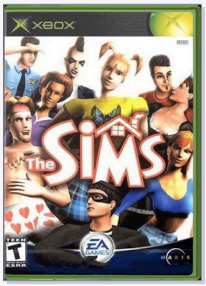
A wireframe rhythm game that procedurally generated levels from any music CD the player inserted.



Deus Ex

2000 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Shooter

An immersive-sim blending shooting, stealth and RPG choice, widely cited as a landmark of player-driven design.



The Sims

Feb 2000 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Simulation

A life simulator that became one of the best-selling PC franchises.



PlayStation 2

Mar 2000 to 2013 · System · Sony Interactive Entertainment · Home console · Generation 6

The best-selling console ever, with more than 155 million sold. DVD playback and a vast library.



Vagrant Story

May 2000 · Game · PlayStation · RPG

A dark, weapon-crafting-focused RPG from Square praised for its atmosphere and risk-reward combat system.



Diablo II

Jun 2000 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · RPG

An action RPG sequel whose loot-driven combat and online play defined the genre for a generation.



Jet Set Radio

Jun 2000 · Game · Sega Dreamcast · Action

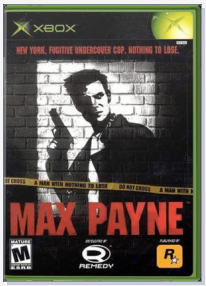
Cel-shaded graffiti skating with a vivid soundtrack.



Phantasy Star Online

Dec 2000 · Game · Sega Dreamcast · Action RPG

One of the first online RPGs on a console.



Max Payne

2001 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Shooter

A noir-styled shooter that popularized 'bullet time' slow-motion gunplay in a comic-panel narrative framework.

Sega leaves hardware

Jan 2001 · Event · Sega

Sega announces it will stop making consoles after the Dreamcast and become a software publisher.



Game Boy Advance

Mar 2001 to 2008 · System · Nintendo · Handheld

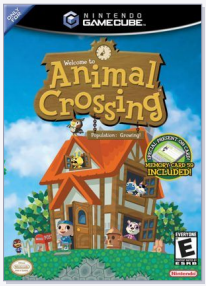
A 32-bit handheld with graphics at about Super Nintendo level.



Ico

Sep 2001 · Game · PlayStation 2 · Action-adventure

A minimalist adventure game about a horned boy leading a girl by the hand through a crumbling castle.



Animal Crossing

Apr 2001 · Game · Nintendo 64, Nintendo GameCube · Simulation

Real-time-clock village life that you visit every day.



Nintendo GameCube

Sep 2001 to 2007 · System · Nintendo · Home console · Generation 6

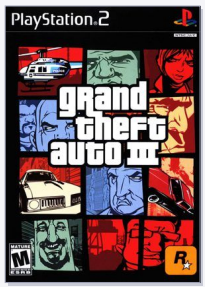
A compact Nintendo console that used small optical discs.



Final Fantasy X

Jul 2001 · Game · PlayStation 2 · RPG

The first mainline Final Fantasy with full voice acting and 3D environments, introducing the Sphere Grid system.



Grand Theft Auto III

Oct 2001 · Game · PlayStation 2 · Action-adventure

Open-world 3D crime that changed game design and became a cultural lightning rod.



Devil May Cry

Aug 2001 · Game · PlayStation 2 · Action

A stylish demon-hunting action game whose combo-scoring combat defined the 'character action' genre.



Pikmin

Oct 2001 · Game · Nintendo GameCube · Strategy

A real-time strategy-puzzle game of commanding plant-like creatures to solve environmental challenges under a time limit.



Golden Sun

Aug 2001 · Game · Game Boy Advance · RPG

A Game Boy Advance RPG built around elemental 'Djinn' and puzzle-laden dungeon design.



Halo: Combat Evolved

Nov 2001 · Game · Xbox · Shooter

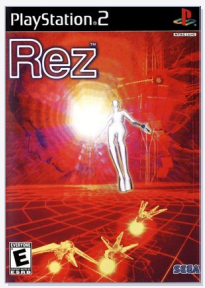
The Xbox's defining launch game, with refined console shooter controls.



Advance Wars

Sep 2001 · Game · Game Boy Advance · Strategy

A turn-based military strategy game on handheld, praised for its accessible, colorful take on the genre.



Rez

Nov 2001 · Game · PlayStation 2, Sega Dreamcast · Shooter

A synesthetic rail shooter where music and visuals respond directly to the player's shots.



Super Smash Bros. Melee

Nov 2001 · Game · Nintendo GameCube · Fighting

Fast and deep enough to build a lasting competitive scene.



Xbox

Nov 2001 to 2009 · System · Microsoft · Home console · Generation 6

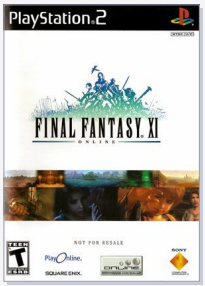
Microsoft's first console, with a built-in hard drive and Ethernet, and Xbox Live from 2002.



Kingdom Hearts

Mar 2002 · Game · PlayStation 2 · RPG

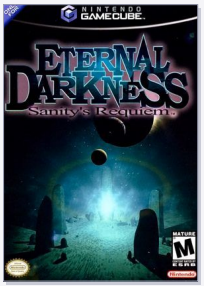
A crossover action RPG blending Final Fantasy and Disney characters in a story of light and darkness.



Final Fantasy XI

May 2002 · Game · PlayStation 2, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · RPG

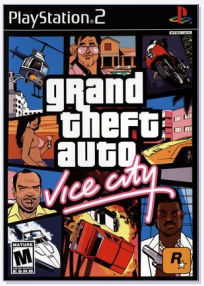
Square's first massively multiplayer online entry in the Final Fantasy series, launched on console and PC alike.



Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem

Jun 2002 · Game · Nintendo GameCube · Survival horror

A horror game across multiple centuries whose 'sanity effects' broke the fourth wall to unsettle players.



Grand Theft Auto: Vice City

Oct 2002 · Game · PlayStation 2 · Action

An open-world crime game set in a fictionalized 1980s Miami, known for its soundtrack and satire.



Metroid Prime

Nov 2002 · Game · Nintendo GameCube · Shooter

Brought Metroid to first-person 3D while keeping its exploration.

Xbox Live launches

Nov 2002 · Event · Microsoft

Microsoft's subscription online service sets the standard for console online play.



The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker

Dec 2002 · Game · Nintendo GameCube · Action-adventure

A cel-shaded Zelda set on a vast sea.



Company founded: Rovio

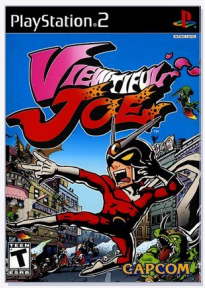
2003 · Company · Finland

Finnish studio that made Angry Birds. Acquired by Sega in 2019.

Square and Enix merge

Apr 2003 · Event · Square · Enix

The Final Fantasy and Dragon Quest publishers combine as Square Enix.



Viewtiful Joe

Jun 2003 · Game · PlayStation 2 · Action

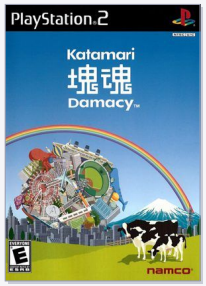
A side-scrolling action game with comic-book visuals and time-manipulation powers central to its combat.



Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic

Jul 2003 · Game · Xbox, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · RPG

A widely acclaimed Star Wars RPG set millennia before the films, praised for its branching story and twist.



Katamari Damacy

Mar 2004 · Game · PlayStation 2 · Puzzle

A surreal puzzle game about rolling a sticky ball to collect ever-larger objects, praised for its charm and music.



Steam

Sep 2003 · System · Valve · Mobile & online

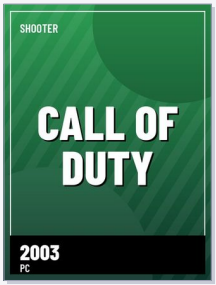
Valve's digital store and platform. It became the dominant way of buying PC games.



Ninja Gaiden

Mar 2004 · Game · Xbox · Action

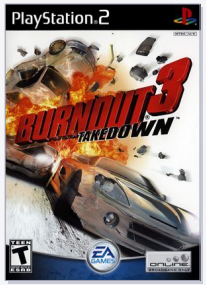
A fast, punishing action game revival known for its precise combat and high difficulty.



Call of Duty

Oct 2003 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Shooter

A World War II first-person shooter that launched one of the industry's best-selling franchises.



Burnout 3: Takedown

Sep 2004 · Game · PlayStation 2, Xbox · Racing

An arcade racer built around aggressive takedowns and crash sequences, considered a high point of the series.



Nokia N-Gage

Oct 2003 to 2005 · System · Nokia · Handheld

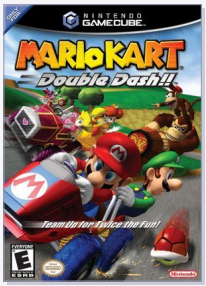
A phone and handheld hybrid, an early attempt at smartphone gaming, remembered for its awkward design.



Half-Life 2

Nov 2004 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Shooter

Physics-driven gameplay and the Gravity Gun. It required the Steam client, which helped establish Steam.



Mario Kart: Double Dash!!

Nov 2003 · Game · Nintendo GameCube · Racing

A Mario Kart entry notable for two-character karts, each able to swap seats and fire items simultaneously.



Halo 2

Nov 2004 · Game · Xbox · Shooter

Its Xbox Live multiplayer made online console play mainstream.



Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time

Nov 2003 · Game · PlayStation 2, Xbox, Nintendo GameCube · Action-adventure

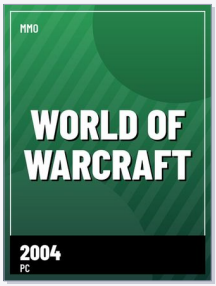
A time-rewinding platformer-adventure that revived the dormant Prince of Persia franchise to wide acclaim.



Nintendo DS

Nov 2004 to 2014 · System · Nintendo · Handheld

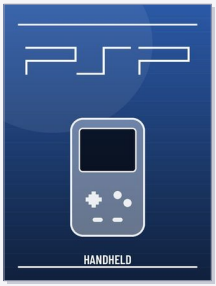
A dual-screen touch handheld that brought games to millions of non-gamers. About 154 million sold.



World of Warcraft

Nov 2004 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · MMO

The most successful subscription MMO, peaking at about 12 million subscribers.



PlayStation Portable

Dec 2004 to 2014 · System · Sony Interactive Entertainment · Handheld

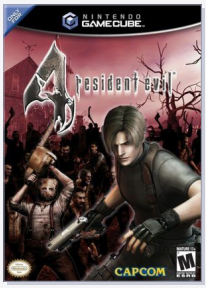
Sony's first handheld, with near-PS2 graphics and UMD discs.

HD AND MOTION

2005 TO 2011

Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 and Wii. Digital stores such as Steam grow, Nintendo's DS and Wii reach non-gamers, and the smartphone arrives.

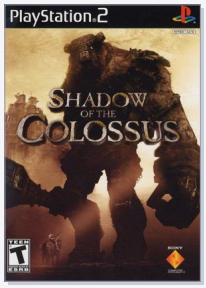
7 systems · 34 games · 2 milestones · 4 companies founded



Resident Evil 4

Jan 2005 · Game · Nintendo GameCube · Survival horror

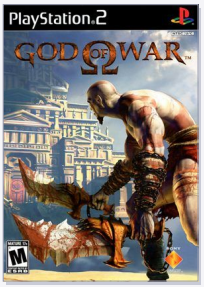
An over-the-shoulder camera that influenced countless action games.



Shadow of the Colossus

Oct 2005 · Game · PlayStation 2 · Action-adventure

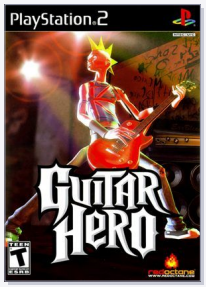
Sixteen giant bosses and almost nothing else, a celebrated example of games as art.



God of War

Mar 2005 · Game · PlayStation 2 · Action-adventure

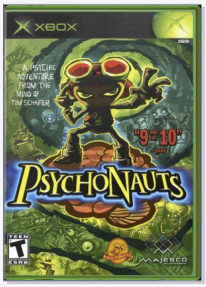
Kratos's brutal Greek-mythology action.



Guitar Hero

Nov 2005 · Game · PlayStation 2 · Rhythm

Plastic guitar controllers sparked the rhythm-game boom.



Psychonauts

Apr 2005 · Game · Xbox, PlayStation 2, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Platformer

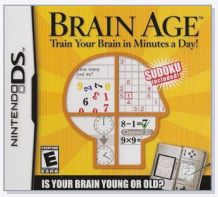
A platformer set inside characters' minds, praised for its imaginative level design and writing by Tim Schafer.



Xbox 360

Nov 2005 to 2016 · System · Microsoft · Home console · Generation 7

An HD console with Xbox Live Arcade, achievements and a strong online community.



Brain Age

May 2005 · Game · Nintendo DS · Puzzle

Dr. Kawashima's quick mental exercises showed that DS could reach non-gamers.



Company founded: Riot Games

2006 · Company · United States

Developer of League of Legends and Valorant, majority owned by Tencent.

Bandai and Namco merge

Sep 2005 · Event · Bandai · Namco

The toy giant and arcade pioneer form Bandai Namco Holdings.



Final Fantasy XII

Mar 2006 · Game · PlayStation 2 · RPG

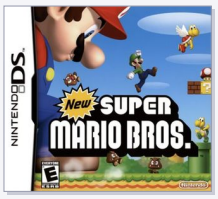
A Final Fantasy entry with a gambit-based real-time battle system and a political, Ivalice-set story.



Okami

Apr 2006 · Game · PlayStation 2 · Action-adventure

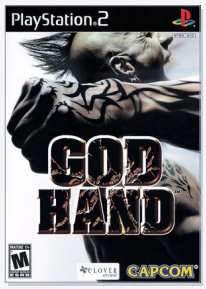
An action-adventure painted in a sumi-e ink style, starring a wolf goddess who restores nature with a celestial brush.



New Super Mario Bros.

May 2006 · Game · Nintendo DS · Platformer

Revived 2D Mario and sold tens of millions.



God Hand

Sep 2006 · Game · PlayStation 2 · Action

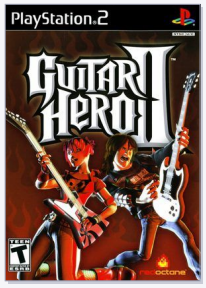
A tongue-in-cheek brawler from Clover Studio known for its punishing difficulty and deep combo customization.



Gears of War

Nov 2006 · Game · Xbox 360 · Shooter

Popularized cover-based third-person shooting.



Guitar Hero II

Nov 2006 · Game · PlayStation 2, Xbox 360 · Rhythm

A rhythm game sequel that expanded the original's guitar-shaped controller formula and song list to mainstream success.



PlayStation 3

Nov 2006 to 2017 · System · Sony Interactive Entertainment · Home console · Generation 7

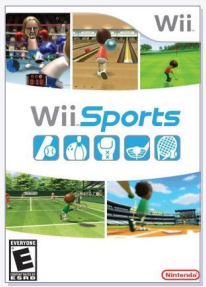
Cell processor, Blu-ray and a high launch price. It recovered to become a strong competitor.



Wii

Nov 2006 · System · Nintendo · Home console · Generation 7

Motion controls and a casual-friendly library made the Wii a mass-market hit, with about 101 million sold.



Wii Sports

Nov 2006 · Game · Wii · Sports

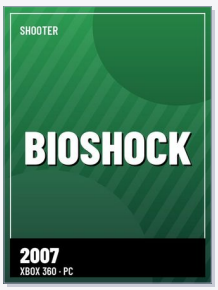
Bundled with the Wii, it taught motion controls to families and became one of the best-selling games ever.



Crackdown

Feb 2007 · Game · Xbox 360 · Action

An open-world superhero-style action game whose orb-collecting traversal influenced later open-world design.



BioShock

Aug 2007 · Game · Xbox 360, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Shooter

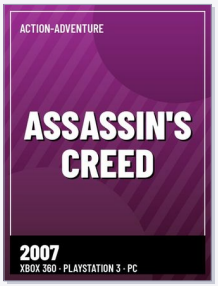
A narrative shooter set in the underwater city of Rapture.



Portal

Oct 2007 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 · Puzzle

Solve puzzles with a portal gun. Short, witty and widely quoted.



Assassin's Creed

Nov 2007 · Game · Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Action-adventure

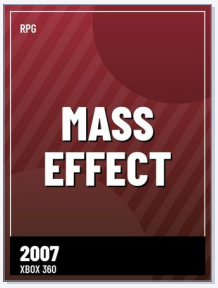
Parkour and stealth in historical open worlds.



Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

Nov 2007 · Game · Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Shooter

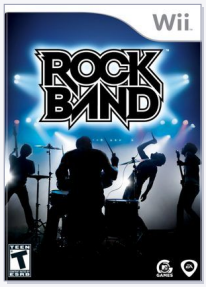
Modern setting, perks and progression that reshaped online shooters.



Mass Effect

Nov 2007 · Game · Xbox 360 · RPG

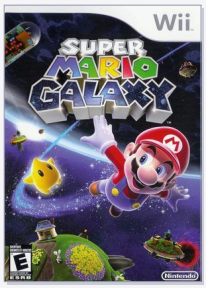
A choice-driven space opera.



Rock Band

Nov 2007 · Game · PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, Wii · Rhythm

A rhythm game expanding on Guitar Hero with full-band instruments, drums, vocals and guitar together.



Super Mario Galaxy

Nov 2007 · Game · Wii · Platformer

Spherical planets and gravity-bending 3D platforming.



Burnout Paradise

Jan 2008 · Game · PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 · Racing

An open-world entry in the Burnout series set in the fictional Paradise City, blending racing and stunts freely.



iPhone App Store

Jul 2008 · System · Apple · Mobile & online

The App Store opened mass-market mobile gaming, with cheap downloads and touch controls.



Android (Google Play)

Oct 2008 · System · Google · Mobile & online

Android's store (first called Android Market) put games on billions of low-cost phones.



Company founded: Mojang

2009 · Company · Sweden

Swedish studio behind Minecraft. Bought by Microsoft for 2.5 billion dollars in 2014.



Demon's Souls

Feb 2009 · Game · PlayStation 3 · RPG

The game that introduced the demanding, atmospheric Souls style.



Minecraft

May 2009 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), Xbox 360, PlayStation 4, Xbox One, Nintendo Switch, iPhone App Store, Android (Google Play) · Sandbox

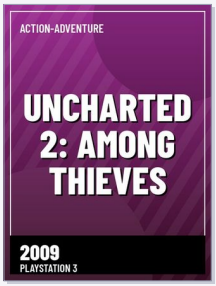
A block-building sandbox, the best-selling game ever with more than 300 million copies.



League of Legends

Oct 2009 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · MOBA

A free-to-play team strategy game that became one of the biggest esports.



Uncharted 2: Among Thieves

Oct 2009 · Game · PlayStation 3 · Action-adventure

Set the standard for cinematic action adventures.



Angry Birds

Dec 2009 · Game · iPhone App Store, Android (Google Play) · Puzzle

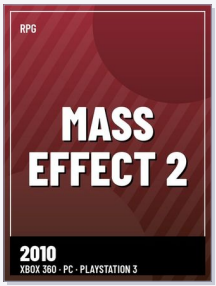
Slingshot physics that defined early mobile gaming.



Company founded: Niantic

2010 · Company · United States

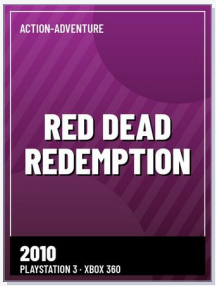
Started inside Google; Ingress and Pokémon GO. Sold its games business to Scopely in 2025.



Mass Effect 2

Jan 2010 · Game · Xbox 360, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), PlayStation 3 · RPG

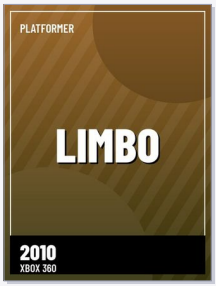
A sequel praised for its character-driven suicide-mission story structure and refined cover-based combat.



Red Dead Redemption

May 2010 · Game · PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 · Action-adventure

An open-world Western that followed outlaw John Marston, widely praised for its atmosphere and story.



Limbo

Jul 2010 · Game · Xbox 360 · Platformer

A monochrome puzzle-platformer about a boy searching a nightmarish forest, noted for its atmosphere and minimal storytelling.



Company founded: miHoYo

2011 · Company · China

Shanghai developer of Honkai and Genshin Impact.



Nintendo 3DS

Feb 2011 to 2020 · System · Nintendo · Handheld

A handheld with glasses-free stereoscopic 3D. About 76 million sold.



Portal 2

Apr 2011 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 · Puzzle

A critically acclaimed puzzle-platformer sequel adding cooperative play and expanding the original's dark comedy.

Twitch launches

Jun 2011 · Event

Spun out of Justin.tv, Twitch turns watching other people play into a mass medium.



Dark Souls

Sep 2011 · Game · PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 · RPG

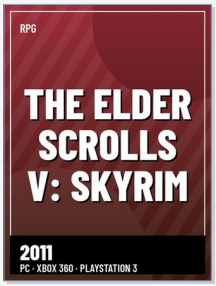
Demanding combat and interconnected world design that spawned a subgenre.



Battlefield 3

Oct 2011 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 · Shooter

A military shooter known for large-scale multiplayer battles and the Frostbite engine's destructible environments.



The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim

Nov 2011 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 · RPG

An enormous open-world fantasy RPG with a huge modding community.



PlayStation Vita

Dec 2011 to 2019 · System · Sony Interactive Entertainment · Handheld

A powerful handheld with an OLED screen and rear touchpad. Modest sales but a devoted indie following.

MOBILE, INDIE AND STREAMING

2012 TO 2019

Free-to-play and app stores, the indie boom, Twitch, battle royale, consumer VR, and the PS4, Xbox One and Switch.

4 systems · 46 games · 3 milestones · 0 companies founded



Journey

Mar 2012 · Game · PlayStation 3 · Adventure

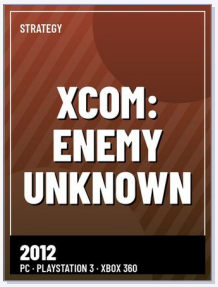
A wordless multiplayer adventure across a desert toward a distant mountain, acclaimed for its emotional, musical design.



Fire Emblem Awakening

Apr 2012 · Game · Nintendo 3DS · Strategy

A tactical RPG credited with reviving the Fire Emblem series in the West through accessible, permadeath-optional combat.



XCOM: Enemy Unknown

Oct 2012 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 · Strategy

A tactical strategy reboot of the classic XCOM series, balancing squad combat with base management.



Animal Crossing: New Leaf

Nov 2012 · Game · Nintendo 3DS · Simulation

A life-simulation entry where the player becomes mayor of their own animal-populated town.



Wii U

Nov 2012 to 2017 · System · Nintendo · Home console · Generation 8

Its tablet-style GamePad confused buyers. About 13.5 million sold, but a strong Nintendo library.



Flappy Bird

May 2013 · Game · iPhone App Store, Android (Google Play) · Platformer

A deceptively hard tapping game that went viral in early 2014 and was withdrawn by its creator.



The Last of Us

Jun 2013 · Game · PlayStation 3 · Action-adventure

A character-driven survival story praised as a high point of game storytelling.



The Last of Us Part I

Jun 2013 · Game · PlayStation 3 · Action-adventure

A post-apocalyptic survival-action game acclaimed for its storytelling and the bond between its two leads.



Grand Theft Auto V

Sep 2013 · Game · PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 · Action-adventure

One of the best-selling games of all time, released on three console generations.



PlayStation 4

Nov 2013 · System · Sony Interactive Entertainment · Home console · Generation 8

A gamer-focused console that sold over 117 million units.



Destiny

Sep 2014 · Game · PlayStation 4, Xbox One, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 · Shooter

An online shooter-RPG hybrid blending traditional first-person combat with persistent loot and world-building.



Super Mario 3D World

Nov 2013 · Game · Wii U · Platformer

A four-player cooperative 3D Mario platformer for Wii U, blending open stages with classic linear level design.



Bloodborne

Mar 2015 · Game · PlayStation 4 · RPG

Fast, aggressive combat in a gothic horror city.



Xbox One

Nov 2013 to 2020 · System · Microsoft · Home console · Generation 8

Launched with a Kinect and TV focus, then refocused on games.



Splatoon

May 2015 · Game · Wii U · Shooter

A colorful team shooter about covering the map in ink.



Titanfall

Mar 2014 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), Xbox 360, Xbox One · Shooter

A multiplayer shooter combining fast parkour movement with giant pilotable mechs called Titans.



The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt

May 2015 · Game · PlayStation 4, Xbox One, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · RPG

A vast open-world RPG praised for its writing and side quests.



Mario Kart 8

May 2014 · Game · Wii U · Racing

Anti-gravity racing in HD; later re-released as Deluxe on Switch.



Rocket League

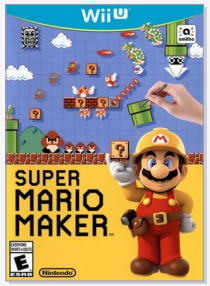
Jul 2015 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), PlayStation 4 · Sports

A physics-based sports game combining soccer with rocket-powered cars, growing into a major esport.

Amazon buys Twitch

Aug 2014 · Event

Amazon announces its purchase of Twitch for about 970 million dollars.



Super Mario Maker

Sep 2015 · Game · Wii U · Platformer

A level-creation game letting players build and share their own Mario courses using classic series assets.



Undertale

Sep 2015 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · RPG

An indie RPG where you can finish the game without killing anyone.

Consumer VR arrives

2016 · Event · Sony Interactive Entertainment

Oculus Rift, HTC Vive and PlayStation VR all launch within a year.



Stardew Valley

Feb 2016 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Simulation

A farming simulator made almost entirely by one person.



Overwatch

May 2016 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), PlayStation 4, Xbox One · Shooter

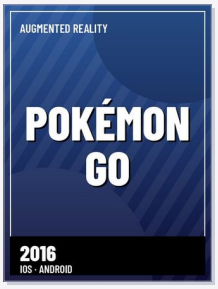
A team-based hero shooter whose distinct characters and abilities drew comparisons to MOBA design.



Inside

Jun 2016 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), PlayStation 4, Xbox One · Platformer

A monochrome puzzle-platformer from the makers of Limbo, following a boy through an unsettling dystopia.



Pokémon GO

Jul 2016 · Game · iPhone App Store, Android (Google Play) · Augmented reality

An augmented-reality phenomenon that got millions of people walking outdoors.



Dishonored 2

Nov 2016 · Game · PlayStation 4, Xbox One, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Action

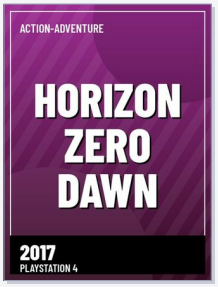
A stealth-action sequel offering two playable protagonists and famously intricate, puzzle-like level design.



Hollow Knight

Feb 2017 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), Nintendo Switch · Platformer

A hand-drawn metroidvania set in a ruined insect kingdom, acclaimed for its atmosphere and exploration.



Horizon Zero Dawn

Feb 2017 · Game · PlayStation 4 · Action-adventure

An open-world action game starring Aloy, a hunter navigating a world ruled by robotic creatures.



The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild

Mar 2017 · Game · Nintendo Switch, Wii U · Action-adventure

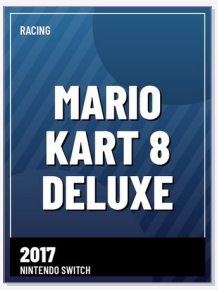
An open-world reinvention built on physics and freedom to explore.



Nintendo Switch

Mar 2017 · System · Nintendo · Hybrid · Generation 8

A hybrid console that docks to a TV or is played as a handheld. More than 150 million sold.



Mario Kart 8 Deluxe

Apr 2017 · Game · Nintendo Switch · Racing

The best-selling Switch game.



Persona 5

Apr 2017 · Game · PlayStation 4 · RPG

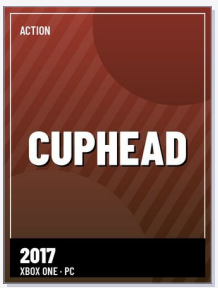
A stylish RPG following high-school students who form an alter-ego vigilante group, praised for its visual design.



Fortnite

Jul 2017 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), PlayStation 4, Xbox One, Nintendo Switch, iPhone App Store, Android (Google Play) · Battle royale

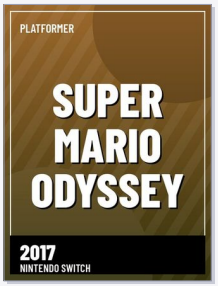
Free-to-play battle royale with building and large live events.



Cuphead

Sep 2017 · Game · Xbox One, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Action

A run-and-gun game hand-drawn and animated in a 1930s rubber-hose cartoon style, known for its tough boss fights.



Super Mario Odyssey

Oct 2017 · Game · Nintendo Switch · Platformer

Mario with a sentient hat in huge sandbox worlds.



PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds

Dec 2017 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), Xbox One · Shooter

A last-player-standing shooter widely credited with popularizing the battle royale genre on a massive scale.



Celeste

Jan 2018 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, Xbox One · Platformer

A precision platformer about climbing a mountain, acclaimed for its tight controls and story about mental health.



Monster Hunter: World

Jan 2018 · Game · PlayStation 4, Xbox One, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Action

An action RPG of hunting giant monsters that brought the long-running Japanese series to global mainstream success.



God of War (2018)

Apr 2018 · Game · PlayStation 4 · Action-adventure

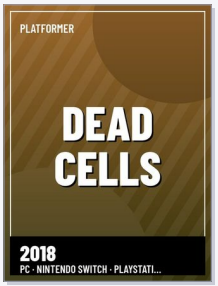
A reboot that moved Kratos to Norse mythology with a close over-the-shoulder camera.



Among Us

Jun 2018 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), iPhone App Store, Android (Google Play), Nintendo Switch · Party

A social-deduction party game of crewmates and hidden impostors that exploded in popularity in 2020.



Dead Cells

Aug 2018 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4 · Platformer

A roguelike metroidvania blending permadeath runs with persistent progression and fluid melee combat.



Spider-Man

Sep 2018 · Game · PlayStation 4 · Action-adventure

An open-world superhero game praised for its fluid web-swinging traversal and acrobatic combat.



Red Dead Redemption 2

Oct 2018 · Game · PlayStation 4, Xbox One, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Action-adventure

A sprawling open-world Western prequel praised for its detail, pacing and portrayal of a dying outlaw era.



Super Smash Bros. Ultimate

Dec 2018 · Game · Nintendo Switch · Fighting

Every fighter from the series' history in one game.



Slay the Spire

Jan 2019 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Strategy

A deck-building roguelike that fused card games with dungeon-crawling, influencing a wave of similar titles.



Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice

Mar 2019 · Game · PlayStation 4, Xbox One, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Action

A demanding sword-combat action game from FromSoftware built around a posture-breaking parry system.



Outer Wilds

May 2019 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), PlayStation 4, Xbox One · Adventure

An exploration game set in a 22-minute time loop, built around piecing together a solar system's mysteries.



Control

Aug 2019 · Game · PlayStation 4, Xbox One, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Action

A supernatural action game set in a shapeshifting federal building, praised for its destructible, mind-bending environments.



Disco Elysium

Oct 2019 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · RPG

A dialogue-driven detective RPG with no combat, celebrated for its writing and unconventional skill-check system.



Death Stranding

Nov 2019 · Game · PlayStation 4, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Action-adventure

Hideo Kojima's post-apocalyptic delivery game about reconnecting a fractured America, divisive for its slow pacing.

Google Stadia launches

Nov 2019 · Event · Google

Google's cloud gaming service launches. It would shut down in January 2023.

THE MODERN ERA

2020 ONWARD

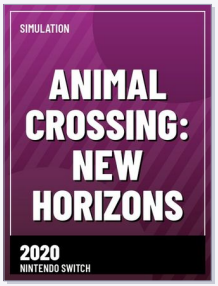
PS5, Xbox Series X|S, Switch 2 and handheld PCs. Live-service games dominate and the industry consolidates through huge acquisitions.

4 systems · 25 games · 3 milestones · 0 companies founded

Pandemic gaming boom

2020 · Event

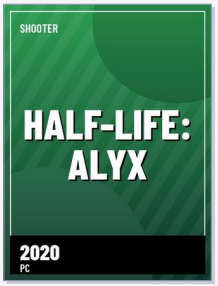
Lockdowns drive record engagement, with Animal Crossing and other social games among the biggest winners.



Animal Crossing: New Horizons

Mar 2020 · Game · Nintendo Switch · Simulation

A pandemic-era phenomenon with more than 45 million sold.



Half-Life: Alyx

Mar 2020 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Shooter

A VR-exclusive return to the Half-Life series, widely praised for demonstrating what dedicated VR design could achieve.



Final Fantasy VII Remake

Apr 2020 · Game · PlayStation 4 · RPG

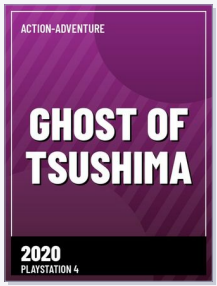
A reimagining of the 1997 classic's Midgar section with real-time action combat and an expanded story.



The Last of Us Part II

Jun 2020 · Game · PlayStation 4 · Action-adventure

A divisive but acclaimed sequel.



Ghost of Tsushima

Jul 2020 · Game · PlayStation 4 · Action-adventure

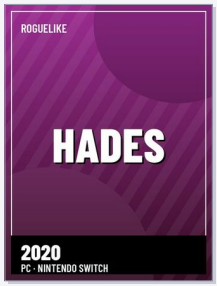
An open-world samurai game set during the 13th-century Mongol invasion of Japan, praised for its visual design.



Genshin Impact

Sep 2020 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), PlayStation 4, iPhone App Store, Android (Google Play) · Action RPG

A free-to-play open-world action RPG released on many platforms at once.



Hades

Sep 2020 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), Nintendo Switch · Roguelike

A roguelike with a story that moves forward on every death.



PlayStation 5

Nov 2020 · System · Sony Interactive Entertainment · Home console · Generation 9

A fast SSD and the haptic DualSense controller.



Xbox Series X|S

Nov 2020 · System · Microsoft · Home console · Generation 9

Microsoft's ninth-generation consoles, a powerful X and a smaller, cheaper S, tied to Game Pass.



Steam Deck

Feb 2022 · System · Valve · Handheld

Valve's handheld gaming PC running SteamOS; it sparked a wave of PC handhelds.



It Takes Two

Mar 2021 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), PlayStation 4, Xbox One, PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X|S · Action-adventure

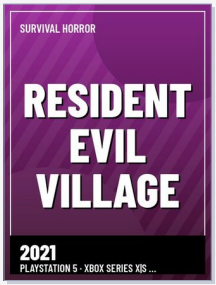
A cooperative-only adventure built around constantly shifting mechanics, requiring two players throughout.



Vampire Survivors

Oct 2022 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), Nintendo Switch, iPhone App Store, Android (Google Play) · Action

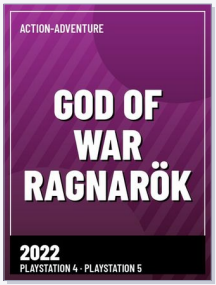
A minimalist survival-action game of auto-attacking hordes of enemies that popularized the 'bullet heaven' genre.



Resident Evil Village

May 2021 · Game · PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X|S, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Survival horror

A first-person survival-horror entry set around a gothic village, blending classic Resident Evil horror with action.



God of War Ragnarök

Nov 2022 · Game · PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5 · Action-adventure

The conclusion of Kratos's Norse story.



Forza Horizon 5

Nov 2021 · Game · Xbox Series X|S, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Racing

An open-world racing game set in a vividly detailed Mexico, known for its scale and visual spectacle.



Hogwarts Legacy

Feb 2023 · Game · PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X|S, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · RPG

An open-world RPG set in the Harry Potter universe in the 1800s, letting players attend Hogwarts and learn spells.

Microsoft announces Activision Blizzard deal

Jan 2022 · Event · Microsoft · Activision · Blizzard Entertainment

Microsoft agrees to buy Activision Blizzard for 68.7 billion dollars, a record for the industry.



Elden Ring

Feb 2022 · Game · PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Xbox One, Xbox Series X|S, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Action RPG

An open-world Souls game, written with author George R. R. Martin.



The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom

May 2023 · Game · Nintendo Switch · Action-adventure

Building and flying added to Breath of the Wild's world.



Final Fantasy XVI

Jun 2023 · Game · PlayStation 5 · RPG

An action-focused Final Fantasy entry set in a political fantasy world, with large-scale summon battles.



Baldur's Gate 3

Aug 2023 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X|S · RPG

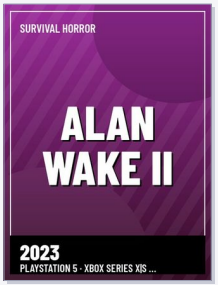
A deeply reactive RPG that won Game of the Year at The Game Awards 2023.



Starfield

Sep 2023 · Game · Xbox Series X|S, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · RPG

Bethesda's space-exploration RPG.



Alan Wake II

Oct 2023 · Game · PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X|S, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Survival horror

A survival-horror sequel blending live-action sequences with a dual narrative following two investigators.



Marvel's Spider-Man 2

Oct 2023 · Game · PlayStation 5 · Action-adventure

A sequel featuring both Peter Parker and Miles Morales as playable heroes battling Venom and other villains.

Microsoft completes Activision Blizzard purchase

Oct 2023 · Event · Microsoft · Activision · Blizzard Entertainment

After regulatory reviews in several countries, the deal closes.



Balatro

Feb 2024 · Game · IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows), Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X|S · Puzzle

A poker-based roguelike deck-builder whose scoring combos became a surprise breakout hit.



Helldivers 2

Feb 2024 · Game · PlayStation 5, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Shooter

A cooperative third-person shooter satirizing military propaganda, notable for its friendly-fire chaos and scale.



Black Myth: Wukong

Aug 2024 · Game · PlayStation 5, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · Action

An action RPG loosely based on Journey to the West, among the first major AAA titles developed in China.



Astro Bot

Sep 2024 · Game · PlayStation 5 · Platformer

A PlayStation-themed 3D platformer celebrating the console's history, broadly acclaimed as one of the best of its year.



Metaphor: ReFantazio

Oct 2024 · Game · PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X|S, IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows) · RPG

A fantasy RPG from the Persona team blending real-time exploration with turn-based tactical combat.



Nintendo Switch 2

Jun 2025 · System · Nintendo · Hybrid · Generation 9

Nintendo's successor to the Switch, launched June 5, 2025, with a larger screen and support for most Switch games.

SYSTEMS AT A GLANCE

All 74 systems in release order



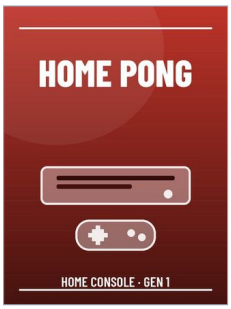
Mainframes and research computers
1958



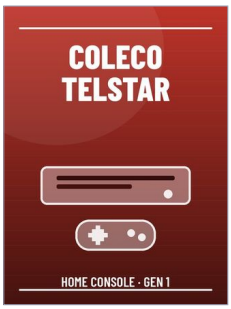
Arcade machines
1971



Magnavox Odyssey
Magnavox · 1972



Home Pong
Atari · 1975



Coleco Telstar
Coleco · 1976



Fairchild Channel F
Fairchild Camera and Instrument · 1976



Apple II
Apple · 1977



Atari 2600
Atari · 1977



Magnavox Odyssey²
Magnavox · 1978



Intellivision
Mattel · 1979



Microvision
Milton Bradley · 1979



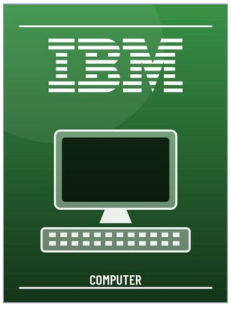
Commodore VIC-20
Commodore · 1980



Game & Watch
Nintendo · 1980



BBC Micro
Acorn Computers · 1981



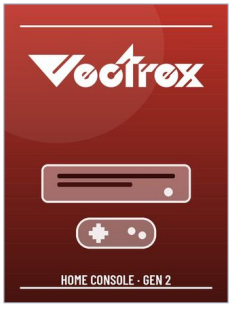
IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows)
IBM · 1981



Atari 5200
Atari · 1982



NEC PC-98
NEC · 1982



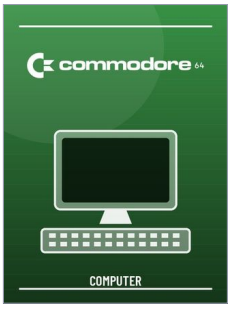
Vectrex
General Consumer Electronics · 1982



ZX Spectrum
Sinclair Research · 1982



ColecoVision
Coleco · 1982



Commodore 64
Commodore · 1982



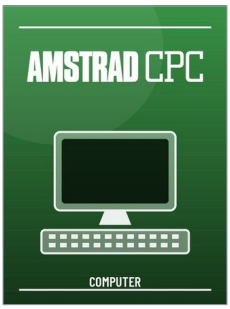
MSX
ASCII Corporation · 1983



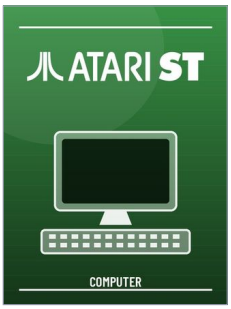
Famicom
Nintendo · 1983



Apple Macintosh
Apple · 1984



Amstrad CPC
Amstrad · 1984



Atari ST
Atari · 1985



Commodore Amiga
Commodore · 1985



Nintendo Entertainment System
Nintendo · 1985



Sega Master System
Sega · 1985



Atari 7800
Atari · 1986



PC Engine / TurboGrafx-16
NEC · 1987



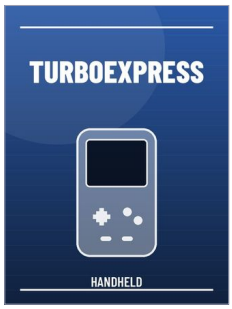
Sega Genesis / Mega Drive
Sega · 1988



Atari Lynx
Atari · 1989



Game Boy
Nintendo · 1989



TurboExpress
NEC · 1990



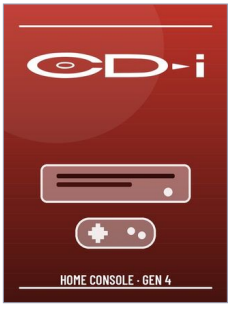
Neo Geo (MVS / AES)
SNK · 1990



Sega Game Gear
Sega · 1990



Super Nintendo (Super Famicom)
Nintendo · 1990



Philips CD-i
Philips · 1991



Sega CD / Mega-CD
Sega · 1991



3DO Interactive Multiplayer
The 3DO Company · 1993



Atari Jaguar
Atari · 1993



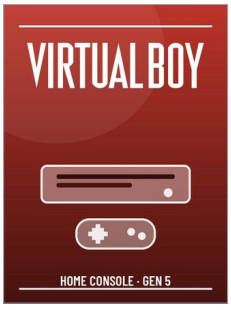
Sega 32X
Sega · 1994



Sega Saturn
Sega · 1994



PlayStation
Sony Interactive Entertainment · 1994



Virtual Boy
Nintendo · 1995



Nintendo 64
Nintendo · 1996



Game Boy Color
Nintendo · 1998



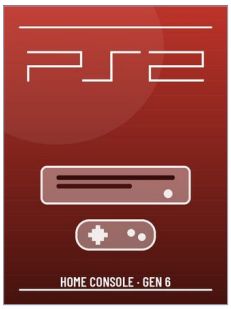
Sega Dreamcast
Sega · 1998



Neo Geo Pocket Color
SNK · 1999



WonderSwan
Bandai · 1999



PlayStation 2
Sony Interactive Entertainment · 2000



Game Boy Advance
Nintendo · 2001



Nintendo GameCube
Nintendo · 2001



Xbox
Microsoft · 2001



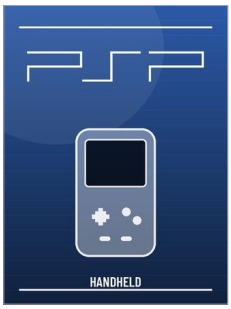
Steam
Valve · 2003



Nokia N-Gage
Nokia · 2003



Nintendo DS
Nintendo · 2004



PlayStation Portable
Sony Interactive Entertainment · 2004



Xbox 360
Microsoft · 2005



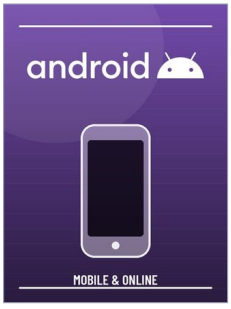
PlayStation 3
Sony Interactive Entertainment · 2006



Wii
Nintendo · 2006



iPhone App Store
Apple · 2008



Android (Google Play)
Google · 2008



Nintendo 3DS
Nintendo · 2011



PlayStation Vita
Sony Interactive Entertainment · 2011



Wii U
Nintendo · 2012



PlayStation 4
Sony Interactive Entertainment · 2013



Xbox One
Microsoft · 2013



Nintendo Switch
Nintendo · 2017



PlayStation 5
Sony Interactive Entertainment · 2020



Xbox Series X|S
Microsoft · 2020



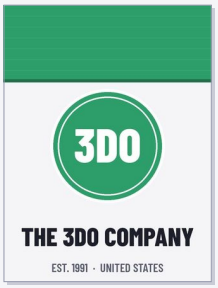
Steam Deck
Valve · 2022



Nintendo Switch 2
Nintendo · 2025

COMPANIES

All 58 companies, A to Z



The 3DO Company

1991 · Company · United States

Founded by Trip Hawkins. Licensed its 3DO hardware to several makers. Bankrupt in 2003. *Systems: 3DO Interactive Multiplayer.*



Acorn Computers

1978 · Company · United Kingdom

Cambridge computer company, maker of the BBC Micro. Its ARM processor design lives on as Arm. *Systems: BBC Micro.*



Activision

1979 · Company · United States

The first independent third-party console game developer, founded by former Atari programmers. Acquired by Microsoft in 2023.



Amstrad

1968 · Company · United Kingdom

British electronics firm. Made the CPC computers and bought Sinclair's computer line in 1986. *Systems: Amstrad CPC.*



Apple

1976 · Company · United States

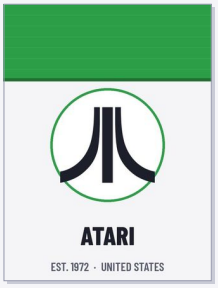
Computer maker (Apple II, Macintosh) whose iPhone and App Store later made it one of the largest game distributors. *Systems: Apple II, Apple Macintosh, iPhone App Store.*



ASCII Corporation

1977 · Company · Japan

Japanese publisher that created the MSX standard together with Microsoft. *Systems: MSX.*



Atari

1972 · Company · United States

Founded by Nolan Bushnell and Ted Dabney. Created Pong, the Atari 2600 and many arcade classics; its collapse in 1983 helped trigger the video game crash. *Systems: Home Pong, Atari 2600, Atari 5200, Atari ST, Atari 7800, Atari Lynx, Atari Jaguar.*



Bandai

1950 · Company · Japan

Toy maker (Gundam, Tamagotchi) that merged with Namco in 2005 to form Bandai Namco, which publishes many FromSoftware games outside Japan. *Systems: WonderSwan.*



Bethesda Softworks

1986 · Company · United States

Maryland studio behind The Elder Scrolls and Fallout. Acquired by Microsoft in 2021.



Blizzard Entertainment

1991 · Company · United States

Founded as Silicon and Synapse. Warcraft, StarCraft, Diablo, World of Warcraft and Overwatch.



Bungie

1991 · Company · United States

Creators of Halo and Destiny. Owned by Microsoft until 2007 and acquired by Sony in 2022.



Capcom

1979 · Company · Japan

Osaka developer of Street Fighter, Mega Man, Resident Evil and Monster Hunter.



Epic Games

1991 · Company · United States

Founded by Tim Sweeney as Epic MegaGames. Unreal Engine, Gears of War, Fortnite and the Epic Games Store.



CD Projekt

1994 · Company · Poland

Polish developer and publisher of The Witcher series and Cyberpunk 2077, and owner of the GOG store.



Fairchild Camera and Instrument

1927 · Company · United States

Camera and semiconductor company whose Channel F (1976) was the first console to use swappable ROM cartridges. *Systems: Fairchild Channel F.*



Coleco

1932 · Company · United States

Toy and electronics maker behind the Telstar consoles and ColecoVision. Later hit with Cabbage Patch Kids, then went bankrupt in 1988. *Systems: Coleco Telstar, ColecoVision.*



FromSoftware

1986 · Company · Japan

Tokyo developer of Armored Core, Demon's Souls, Dark Souls, Bloodborne and Elden Ring.



Commodore

1954 · Company · United States

Computer maker founded by Jack Tramiel: VIC-20, Commodore 64 and Amiga. Went bankrupt in 1994. *Systems: Commodore VIC-20, Commodore 64, Commodore Amiga.*



Game Freak

1989 · Company · Japan

Tokyo studio founded by Satoshi Tajiri; developer of Pokémon.



Electronic Arts

1982 · Company · United States

Founded by Trip Hawkins. Sports franchises, The Sims, Battlefield and many acquired studios.



General Consumer Electronics

unknown · Company · United States

Maker of the Vectrex, a console with its own vector-graphics display (1982). Acquired by Milton Bradley in 1983. *Systems: Vectrex.*



Enix

1975 · Company · Japan

Publisher of the Dragon Quest series. Merged with Square in 2003.



Google

1998 · Company · United States

Maker of Android and Google Play, and of the Stadia cloud gaming service (2019 to 2023). *Systems: Android (Google Play).*



Hudson Soft

1973 · Company · Japan

Developer of Bomberman and Bonk, and co-creator of the PC Engine. Absorbed by Konami in 2012.



Magnavox

1917 · Company · United States

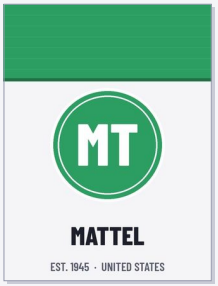
Electronics maker that licensed Ralph Baer's TV game design and sold it as the Magnavox Odyssey, the first home video game console. Later owned by Philips. *Systems: Magnavox Odyssey, Magnavox Odyssey²*.



IBM

1911 · Company · United States

Maker of the IBM PC (1981), whose open design produced the PC-compatible market and PC gaming. *Systems: IBM PC and compatibles (DOS, Windows).*



Mattel

1945 · Company · United States

Toy giant that entered video games with handheld sports games and the Intellivision console. *Systems: Intellivision.*



id Software

1991 · Company · United States

Texas studio founded by John Carmack, John Romero, Adrian Carmack and Tom Hall: Wolfenstein 3D, Doom and Quake.



Maxis

1987 · Company · United States

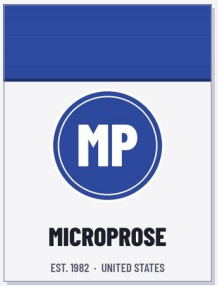
Founded by Will Wright and Jeff Braun: SimCity and The Sims. Acquired by EA in 1997.



Konami

1969 · Company · Japan

Arcade and console developer: Gradius, Castlevania, Contra, Metal Gear, Silent Hill and Dance Dance Revolution.



MicroProse

1982 · Company · United States

Founded by Sid Meier and Bill Stealey: flight simulators and Civilization.



Larian Studios

1996 · Company · Belgium

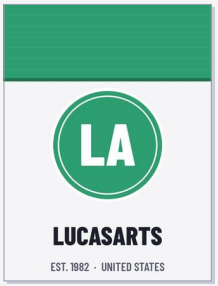
Ghent studio of the Divinity series and Baldur's Gate 3.



Microsoft

1975 · Company · United States

Software company that entered consoles with Xbox (2001) and Xbox Live, and owns studios including Bethesda and Activision Blizzard. *Systems: Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox One, Xbox Series X|S.*



LucasArts

1982 · Company · United States

Lucasfilm's game division: Maniac Mansion, Monkey Island and Star Wars games. Closed in 2013.



Midway Games

1958 · Company · United States

Chicago arcade maker (Bally Midway): Ms. Pac-Man in the US, Mortal Kombat, NBA Jam. Closed in 2010.



miHoYo

2011 · Company · China

Shanghai developer of Honkai and Genshin Impact.



Milton Bradley

1860 · Company · United States

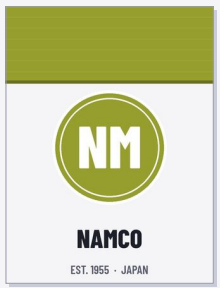
Board-game maker, acquired by Hasbro in 1984. Released the Microvision, the first handheld with interchangeable cartridges. *Systems: Microvision.*



Mojang

2009 · Company · Sweden

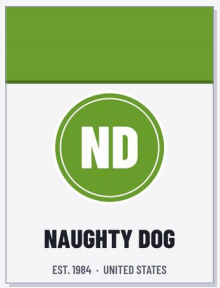
Swedish studio behind Minecraft. Bought by Microsoft for 2.5 billion dollars in 2014.



Namco

1955 · Company · Japan

Arcade pioneer founded by Masaya Nakamura: Pac-Man, Galaxian, Pole Position, Tekken. Merged with Bandai in 2005.



Naughty Dog

1984 · Company · United States

Santa Monica studio: Crash Bandicoot, Uncharted and The Last of Us. Part of Sony since 2001.



NEC

1899 · Company · Japan

Japanese electronics giant: PC-88 and PC-98 computers, and the PC Engine / TurboGrafx-16 with Hudson Soft. *Systems: NEC PC-98, PC Engine / TurboGrafx-16, TurboExpress.*



Niantic

2010 · Company · United States

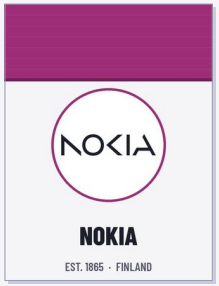
Started inside Google; Ingress and Pokémon GO. Sold its games business to Scopely in 2025.



Nintendo

1889 · Company · Japan

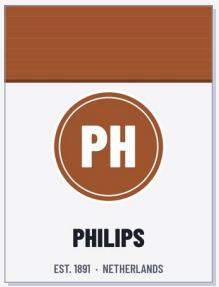
Founded in Kyoto as a playing-card company. Became the dominant force in games with the Famicom/NES, Game Boy and Switch, and with franchises such as Mario and Zelda. *Systems: Game & Watch, Famicom, Nintendo Entertainment System, Game Boy, Super Nintendo (Super Famicom), Virtual Boy, Nintendo 64, Game Boy Color, Game Boy Advance, Nintendo GameCube, Nintendo DS, Wii, Nintendo 3DS, Wii U, Nintendo Switch, Nintendo Switch 2.*



Nokia

1865 · Company · Finland

Finnish telecom company, maker of the N-Gage phone-console. *Systems: Nokia N-Gage.*



Philips

1891 · Company · Netherlands

Dutch electronics giant. Sold the Odyssey^2 as the Videopac in Europe and made the CD-i. *Systems: Philips CD-i.*



Rare

1985 · Company · United Kingdom

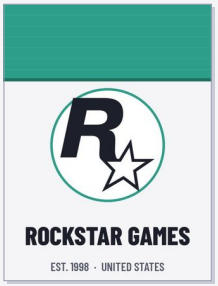
British studio behind Donkey Kong Country, GoldenEye 007 and Banjo-Kazooie. Acquired by Microsoft in 2002.



Riot Games

2006 · Company · United States

Developer of League of Legends and Valorant, majority owned by Tencent.



Rockstar Games

1998 · Company · United States

Publisher of Grand Theft Auto and Red Dead Redemption; its Rockstar North studio descends from DMA Design.



Rovio

2003 · Company · Finland

Finnish studio that made Angry Birds. Acquired by Sega in 2019.



Sega

1960 · Company · Japan

Arcade and console maker behind the Master System, Genesis/Mega Drive, Saturn and Dreamcast, and mascot Sonic. Left the hardware business in 2001 to focus on software. *Systems: Sega Master System, Sega Genesis / Mega Drive, Sega Game Gear, Sega CD / Mega-CD, Sega 32X, Sega Saturn, Sega Dreamcast.*



Sierra On-Line

1979 · Company · United States

Founded as On-Line Systems by Ken and Roberta Williams. King's Quest and a publisher of Half-Life.



Sinclair Research

1973 · Company · United Kingdom

Sir Clive Sinclair's company: the ZX81 and ZX Spectrum started the UK bedroom-coding scene. Its computer business was sold to Amstrad in 1986. *Systems: ZX Spectrum.*



SNK

1978 · Company · Japan

Osaka arcade company known for the Neo Geo and for fighting and run-and-gun games such as The King of Fighters and Metal Slug. *Systems: Neo Geo (MVS / AES), Neo Geo Pocket Color.*



Sony Interactive Entertainment

1993 · Company · Japan

Sony's game division, founded as Sony Computer Entertainment. Created PlayStation in 1994 and built one of the industry's largest studio networks. *Systems: PlayStation, PlayStation 2, PlayStation Portable, PlayStation 3, PlayStation Vita, PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5.*



Square

1986 · Company · Japan

Founded in 1986. Final Fantasy rescued the company, which also made Chrono Trigger. Merged with Enix in 2003 to form Square Enix.



Taito

1953 · Company · Japan

Arcade maker of Space Invaders, Bubble Bobble and Arkanoid. Acquired by Square Enix in 2005.



Ubisoft

1986 · Company · France

French publisher of Assassin's Creed, Far Cry and Rayman.



Valve

1996 · Company · United States

Founded by Gabe Newell and Mike Harrington. Half-Life, Portal, Counter-Strike, Dota 2, the Steam store and the Steam Deck. *Systems: Steam, Steam Deck.*

ABOUT THE PICTURES

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