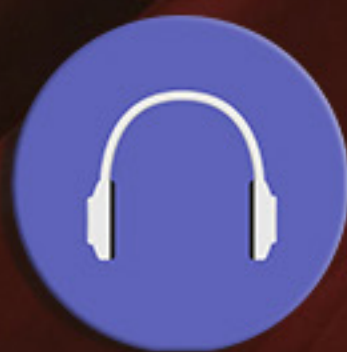
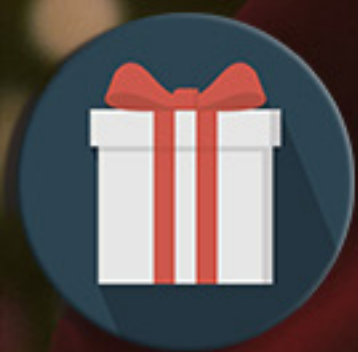


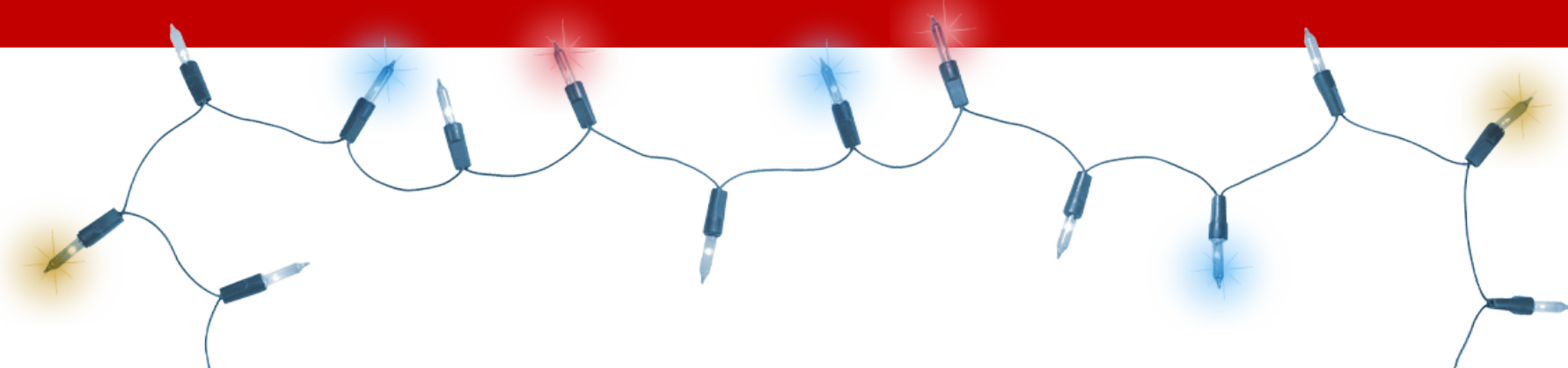
GameOn

GAMEONMAG.COM - 2017

CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE







Welcome to The GameOn Christmas Gift Guide! We hope you'll find something to enjoy, whether it's for yourself, a friend, a co-worker, a special someone or a Secret Santa, there is plenty of options.

Having curated some of the hottest peripherals that have crossed our desks over the past 12 months, from mice to monitors and beyond, these were rigorously tested and reviewed. Hopefully our reviews will let you get a feel for how these things work in a real-world setting, rather than some kind of lab.

We've put in the recommended retail price (RRP) next to each item to give you a guide on

their pricing. Be sure to shop around to get the best deal for you, as with any purchase, especially with the "sale season" upon us.

Ultimately, we hope this magazine goes a little way towards making that hectic festive time of year somewhat more manageable. Whatever you might be celebrating - Happy Holidays!

If you want to make sure you have the latest issue (updated regularly!) you can check at the following address:

<http://www.gameonmag.com/url/g2017v2>

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HYPERX CLOUD STINGER GAMING HEADSET

I've had a HyperX headset for a while now, and it has never let me down. Kingston really know how to assemble a robust bit of equipment -- and that shows with the Cloud Stinger. Despite being priced for the mid-tier user, they haven't skimped on the build quality.

The Stinger comes in a simple box with plenty of foam padding, and it's a one-piece unit with attached microphone and two-part cable. It ends in a standard (unless your phone is an iPhone 7) 3.5mm headphone jack, to attach to the second part of the cable or compatible devices. The end of the second part has two 3.5mm jacks -- one for plugging into the speaker port on your computer, the other for the microphone port.

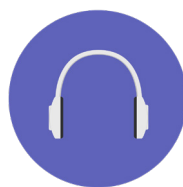
The headset is solidly constructed from plastic, with memory foam earcups. When not in use, the earcups turn 90 degrees so that it can be

easily stored away. The attached microphone is bendable, though I found that it usually went straight after I had moved it up to either mute it, or to take the headset off. There is a volume slider on the underneath of the right earcup - so if your volume is too low, adjust it! Also if it's too high...

The sound quality is excellent for either games or music, though I would refrain from buying these if you're primarily looking to listen to music on them. It lacks the features you probably need to enjoy music at its best.

The microphone is pretty clear, though obviously it isn't as good as a separate dedicated microphone. The box says that it is Discord certified, and it certainly does work well on Discord. I spend most of my the day with it open, so I have some experience with the program.





When I first went to put the Stinger on, I thought it would be tight even after adjusting it. I was happy to find this wasn't the case, and it was pretty comfortable even for extended periods. The padding on the earcups was comfortable, and they blocked out most of the noise from the house around me.

The quick start guide says that it is fully compatible with PlayStation 4 and Xbox One controllers, so I also tested it out on my PS4. It detects the microphone instantly, and enables communication with other players. However, it makes it hard to hear the in-game audio, because you've got a headset on... So you can go into the settings and switch the audio coming through the headphones to be all audio!

**RRP: £49.00
/ \$49.00**

Suitable for:



Handhelds



Smartphones



Tablets



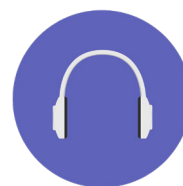
PC



PlayStation 4



Xbox One





ROCCAT KHAN PRO HEADSET

Hearing high quality audio is never the same once you experience it with a good headset. It's one of those things that you don't understand how much of a difference it makes until you try it and think "How have I managed without this until now?". It was with the Roccat Khan Pro headset that I experienced one of these moments and knew I could never go back.

The Roccat Khan Pro headset is designed for 'epic moments' and aimed at the esports market with the tagline of 'Raise Your Level'. The notion of wearing them should make you feel in the zone and ready for whatever challenge you might face next and though I didn't see my win rate go up, my enjoyment skyrocketed. From the moment I unboxed them to many hours later I still find myself amazed at how good the headset holds up while its audio output and noise cancellation continues to astound.

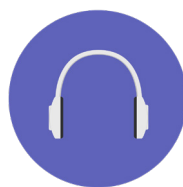
The first thing you will notice with the Roccat Khan Pro headset is just how solid and light the headset feels. Coming in at only 230g in weight you might think it is lacking in build quality but thankfully the headset is solid and flexible, complete with hardened hinges and feels as though it can handle a beating or two. I can also confirm that it will survive a number of drops without taking even a dent or scratch which ensures it will withstand even the most heated of rage quits.

This is accompanied by leatherette memory foam earpads ensuring you not only have a solid and light headset but also one that is super comfortable even after hours of use. One benefit to this - though only to those with glasses - is that the design and lightweight nature of the Roccat Khan Pro means you don't feel much pressure on your glasses. Other headsets can put pressure on the wearer's glasses resulting in a need for regular breaks. The Roccat Khan Pro does not suffer from this issue and even after a long period of use is still comfortable to wear and enjoy.

Even right out of the box the sound quality is impressive and a noticeable difference over other headsets and in-ear headphones, include Apple's own earbuds. After testing them with a number of games, films and different genres of music, across multiple devices, it is easy to acknowledge how good the sound quality of this headset is. With dynamic, high resolution audio that allows you to hear even the most subtle of noises, there is a rich range of sounds to enjoy. When playing a game such as Destiny 2 for example, you are able to notice the sounds of the ground under your feet, the tap of metal when reloading and even the rain pattering against the ground and your helmet.

Once more the headset comes complete with an adjustable microphone that features an auto mute function when raised to an upright position.





This small but reliable microphone means that you are able to communicate with your team with crystal clear audio that ensures a natural sound is delivered. Even when used outside of gaming the microphone is a robust stand-in when recording audio for other uses such as podcasts. Not only that but it is compatible with consoles, computers and mobile and is equipped with two 3.5mm jacks (Input and output) with an included adapter to allow for both input and output through one connector.

Whether you are sitting down to play a few hours of your favorite game or listen to some 80's jams as you work, the Roccat Khan Pro is a headset

that is suitable for the job and will deliver above your expectations. With a robust build quality and rich, high resolution audio like you have never heard before, this is a headset definitely worth checking out. The only real downside is that the microphone is not detachable which means it won't replace many out-and-about headphones. Regardless, that is a tiny negative in an otherwise flawless and impressive product. The Roccat Khan Pro is a highly recommend headset.

**RRP: £89.99
/ \$99.99**



Suitable for:



Handhelds



Smartphones



Tablets



PC



PlayStation 4



Xbox One





HYPERX CLOUD REVOLVER S HEADSET

Having recently become more involved in the competitive side of gaming, I have found myself investing in higher quality peripherals, ranging from mechanical keyboards to mice with macro buttons. Transitioning to games like Paladins and Counter Strike: Global Offensive, however, has required that I step up my sound when it comes to gaming, too.

With my usual pair of headphones, I found I couldn't recognise footsteps in CS:GO, or the clatter of hooves in Paladins. These small blunders would often lead to the downfall of my team and would frequently cost us the match. I knew I needed to change, and that's where the HyperX Cloud Revolver S came to my aid.

Upon opening, I was instantly impressed; the design of the headphones is sleek and it was easy to see where everything was within the packaging. The headphones themselves were very easy to set up, even the control box which currently sits comfortably on my desk within easy reach. The control box itself is compact, lightweight and easy to use, plus the instructions leaflet the headphones come with are simple and easy to understand. Other headphones I have reviewed were complicated to set up, requiring several reboots, switching of extension leads and shuffling of ports for some unknown reason. The HyperX

Cloud Revolver S offers multiple ways to plug in, such as dual phono cables or straight USB and all of them worked successfully with little hassle.

I'll be honest, based on my past experiences, the microphone scared me. Before I set it up, I'd had vivid nightmares of the microphone not working and having to dig around the in the control panel and Google to get it to actually function. Much to my relief, there was nothing of the sorts. In fact, the main issue I encountered was in the form of 'you're an idiot and didn't plug the microphone all the way in Luke Jesus Christ'. Upon playing with friends, who were not aware of my new equipment, I received several comments upon the clearness of my voice, and how it was significantly better than it ever had been before. On top of this, my father, who works on the opposite side of my desk, has a tendency to try and alienate me in front of friends when online. With my new secret weapon, however, his voice was never even picked up by the microphone; it would hear me and only me. The only extent of outside noise that was ever heard was the tapping of my mouse and keyboard.

Being a man-child that dedicates much time at his PC, whether it's gaming, or working, I easily spend 8+ hours a day with my headphones on, sometimes consecutively. Thus, comfort when wearing headphones is very important to me. I've





had headphones before where I couldn't wear them for long periods of time, whether it was because the headband was uncomfortable or the earcups were an odd size, but the Revolver S were a perfect fit, with the earcups not being too hard or too soft, and the headband being comfortable and adjustable enough that they sat snugly on my big head without breaking (I wish this was a joke but this has happened to my headphones multiple times before).

Not only were the earcups comfortable, but they blocked almost all outside noise, allowing me to immerse myself entirely in my game, work, or whatever else I happened to be doing. It blocks noise so much so, that I have been able to compile a list of both good and bad repercussions this had.

- I was able to block out my dad's questionable music taste in car journeys, and actually managed to get to sleep despite him blasting it out.





HEADSETS

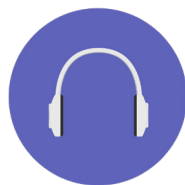
- On a recent educational trip I took to Paris, two of my roommates in the hostel had a full blown argument, which I managed to remain blissfully unaware of, and one stormed out of the room and it was the vibration of door slamming (not the noise) that made me pull the headphones off and question what had happened.
- My parents do not like these headphones for the simple fact of I can never hear them whenever they are calling me now. I'm not complaining about that.
- I've missed parcels on numerous occasions since using these due to not hearing the doorbell.
- I did not notice the smoke alarm going off. For 15 minutes.



The headphones offer various equalizer modes for listening, which emphasise certain aspects of sound depending on which you have selected. You have Vocals, Flat and Bass to select from. Vocals, as you imagine, makes vocals more prominent (this also works and can be useful in games, I used this mode in CS when a teammate had a microphone that didn't pick up his voice much, making him hard to hear). Flat attempts to level all aspects of sound, and is often the favoured mode for users (besides disabling the EQ's entirely) due to it evening out all aspects of sound. The third, and my personal favourite, was the bass boost, which does what it says on the tin. Being a big lover of bass in songs (a lot of my favourite songs feature a prominent bass line), I instantly fell in love with this mode and could tell it's difference massively. My personal favourite for this EQ is listening to Sober by Childish Gambino and going to the 2:46 mark, you won't regret it.

On the whole, the Revolver S is a remarkable piece of technology. It has everything that you would want and need from a good headset, and whether you're using it for gaming, or just casual use, it's a fantastic kit that rivals and even surpasses many of its -significantly more expensive- competitors. A must have for videogame aficionados, whilst having the versatility and reasonable pricing to be used outside of the gaming world.





**RRP: £139.99
/ \$149.99**

Suitable for:



Handhelds



Smartphones



Tablets



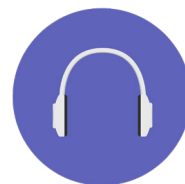
PC



PlayStation 4



Xbox One





STEELSERIES SIBERIA 800 WIRELESS HEADSET

When my wife got her SteelSeries headset, I'll admit that it looked very comfortable. The fact that she can sit wearing it for 16 hours straight is testament to that. So when I got the opportunity to review the SteelSeries Siberia 800, I jumped at the chance. It doesn't look anything like her Siberia 350, but that's because it's wireless so there's more to house in the headset itself.

Inside the box are a surprising number of things including the headset which has a battery inside as well as a spare one inside the cable box. There's the transmitter unit, guide book, three SteelSeries stickers and a plug with adaptors for UK, Europe, America and Australia. The cable box has the following cables: Analog, Mobile (if your phone has a headphone jack), Optical, USB and Power. It also comes with separate chat cables for Xbox One and Xbox 360, due to the differences in their controllers.

The Siberia 800 itself is fairly hefty, with a plastic construction. It feels nicely built, unless you pull out both earcups fully, then it feels a little shaky -- although you're probably never going to need to do that. There is a strip of rubber along the top of the headband, foam cushions along the underside,

and of course the earcups have memory foam covered in stitched faux-leather material.

The right earcup has a port on the underside that allows you to connect to a pair of regular earphones to share the sound with someone or connect the mobile cable to your phone, and another port for the Xbox chat cables. It also has the power/mute button on the underside and volume slider on the top. The left earcup is where the microphone slides in and out of.

The outside of both earcups twists to allow you to open them. Inside the left one is the battery compartment and you just pull it out to swap it. The other one has a mini-USB port that allows you to change the voice levels if you plug the headset directly into the transmitter. I didn't find any reason to mess with the levels, as I was told that the audio sounded perfectly clear, but the option is there.

The battery is pretty beastly - it can last an entire day and then some before it starts to run out. When the battery gets low there is a double beep and warning on the transmitter screen every two minutes, but I literally had it on and listening to games or music for about 20 hours across two days before that happened.





You recharge the battery by slotting it into the side of the transmitter, after removing the charged one. The screen shows your current volume, the charge of the battery currently inside and (if the headset is on) the charge left in the headset. I found that it wasn't very sensitive, as the battery lasts for hours when the transmitter says it has no bars of power left. The transmitter has two buttons, a back button and the everything else button which also twists to control the volume. If you press the volume button on the Siberia 800, it allows you to change the equaliser profile-- for instance Music when you're listening to tunes, Voice when you're in a podcast/VOIP call, etc. Pressing the volume button on the transmitter lets you into the various menus, such as changing which source you're currently using, switching the equaliser profile or changing a few options. As mentioned, you can plug the Siberia 800 into your phone. Doing it while the headset is turned on allows you to still hear audio through the transmitter (so, your computer or console), although your phone audio sounds quite muffled.



Once you turn off the headset, the sound is as clear as any earphones I've used with my phone.

I did note a slight crackle in the left earcup while the headset is turned on, but I quickly got used to it enough to ignore it, as it disappears when there is actual audio coming through. I tried both the Analog and USB cables for audio, and honestly heard no difference between the two. I preferred using USB as otherwise I couldn't get Dolby Surround Sound.

The voice quality on the other end is nice and clear, according to people on Mumble and Discord. I had to adjust the microphone so that it is away from my nose and up away from my mouth to avoid the harsher letter pronunciations, but it was still fine.

Although I didn't try it while talking to someone, you can go a huge distance away from the transmitter before it starts breaking





HEADSETS

up. From where my PC is, I can go to the opposite corner of my three-bedroom house (upstairs toilet room in case you're curious) before the signal gets too weak. When you move back into range it reconnects instantly, so you won't miss anything important if you lean backwards the second you lose signal.

I really like the SteelSeries Siberia 800, and as I'd hoped when I agreed to review it, it's comfortable. My head is on the big side, so if yours is bigger than mine it might affect how comfortable you find it, but if it's smaller than mine you'll be laughing. The cushion along the bottom of the headband helps it avoid pressing too tightly, and the memory foam on the earcups is quite comfortable even for extended periods. I would definitely recommend the 800 if you're after wireless.



RRP: £299.99 / \$299.99



Suitable for:



Handhelds



Smartphones



Tablets



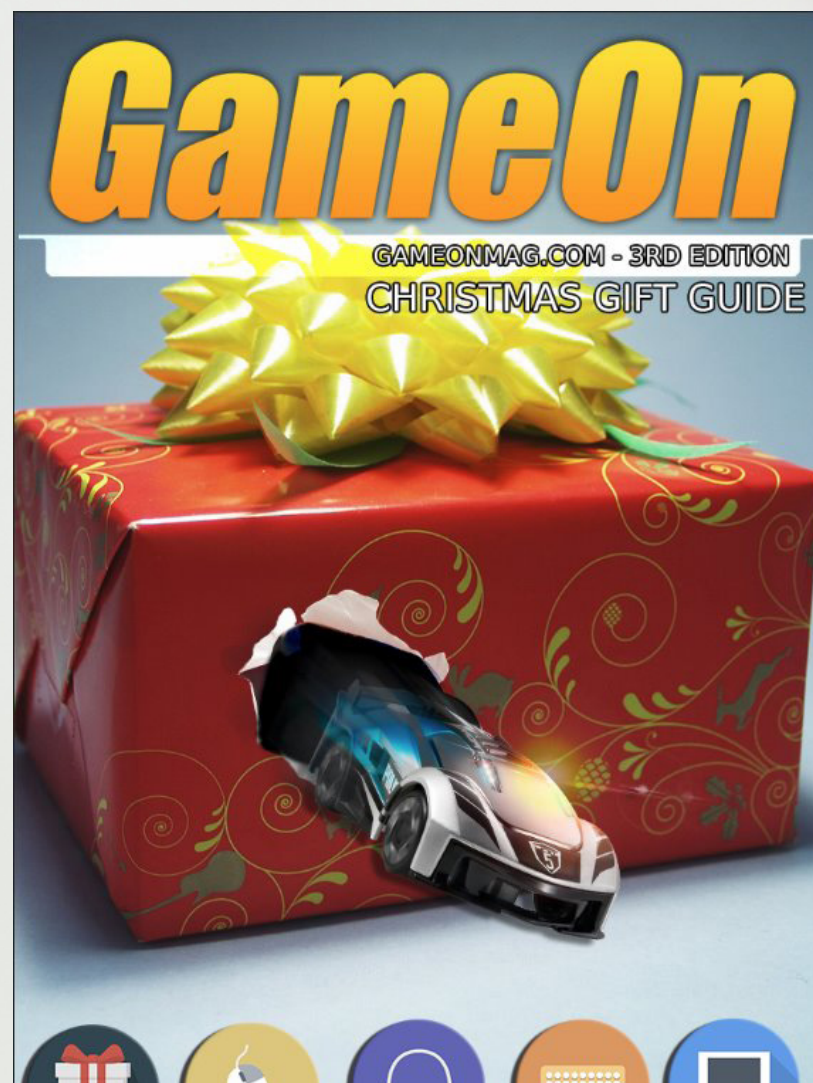
PC



PlayStation 4



Xbox One



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SPEEDLINK ULTOR MECHANICAL KEYBOARD

Speedlink have been around for sometime: they're big on making console and PC peripherals from headsets, controllers and keyboards. So it comes to no surprise that they would continue their foray into the market and create something much more premium for all the PC gamers out there. That's why Speedlink have developed not one but two mechanical keyboards, and I've had the pleasure of using their top-model: the Ultor.

As you do with the arrival of any keyboard I took it out of the box. The Ultor's packaging isn't anything special, It isn't sleek or minimalistic coming in a black box with red lining across covered in logos showing its features as well as a very handy logo signifying it being a British layout keyboard. Once the Ultor was out of the box all that was left were quickstart and info papers. But we're not here to talk about the included booklets, it's all about the keyboard.

Popular among other manufacturers and of course gamers, the Ultor uses Red mechanical switches. The ones used here are not Cherry MX but instead are Kaihua Kailh, which aren't as favoured as the Cherry's, but are still of a high quality and offer excellent feedback.

Now for the keyboard itself. The Ultor is a compact keyboard, that's not to say it's got smaller keys absolutely not, it means it lacks a numpad. I'm personally not a fan of this as I prefer a numpad, but as I will explain, there is good intention for why Speedlink decided not to have one. For you see the Ultor's body is designed for portability with very little compromise. It's a keyboard for the gamer and many other manufacturers do the same as a player would rarely use the numpad in normal gaming. As for the design, the Ultor is very nice, with a frameless design and an entirely red aluminium top. When I first saw the press images I was rather put off by the entirely red frame, but as soon as I plugged it in and the glow the blue backlight of the keys came on I was surprised how pleasing it looked. And while it may not feature of any fancy RGB colours as seen on other keyboards, the blue glow was pleasant enough.

Using the keyboard took some getting used to, I love mechanical keyboards, but I'm used to a





fully sized keyboard including a numpad. So this certainly took some time for my hands to adjust, but surprisingly after a short while and getting my hands positioned the typing experiencing was very comfortable and the feedback from mechanical keys was very responsive and smooth - this backed by the anti-ghosting and up to 1,000hz poll rate.

All the keys glow blue, except for W,A,S,D, the arrow keys and the dedicated Game (Print Screen) key, which glow white. Beside these, there are a number of function keys included. With the right Windows key replaced, you can use this to access a number of media controllers including: volume, next/previous track and mute. One real nice feature is the inclusion of macros - although you'll first need to install the Speedlink drivers to use. Once installed, you'll be able to create up to six macros as well

as five profiles (switchable using the F keys) for said macros. It wasn't something I took an advantage of, but certainly for someone who enjoy their MMO's will be able to make full use.

I was very surprised how much I've enjoyed using this keyboard and I will continue to do so. Although during my time, it didn't make me want to ditch my other mechanical keyboard, which is full-sized and has dedicated media controls. What I will say is the Speedlink Ultor is a perfect travel / LAN gaming keyboard. Due to it's compact size, macro support and durable build it will make an excellent complement to anyone's portable rig. Even if that's not your thing and you're someone looking for a unique keyboard for their gaming rig at home and your favourite colour is red, then definitely check this one out.



**RRP: £62.00
/ \$99.00**

Suitable for:



PC





LOGITECH G610 KEYBOARD

By now I'm becoming a dab hand at all of this mechanical keyboard stuff, having this as my third one. I've only just realised, however, that the colour of the switches is probably one of the most important things I should have spoken about. Incidentally, the G610 has red ones.

Red switches are the hair-trigger ones -- which explains why I've made so many typos recently. However, I've quickly gotten used to the red switches, and enjoy the keyboard much more than going back to my wireless Logitech keyboard.

Getting the G610 out of the box, it was accompanied by a manual and nothing else. That was pretty surprising, as I don't think I've opened a box recently without a couple of books, a warranty and a quick start guide popping out.

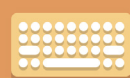
The keyboard is quite hefty with a great solid design, none of the keys feeling loose and no gaps in the panels. As well as the full QWERTY keyboard, it has buttons for Gaming Mode, Brightness, Mute, Media (play, stop, fast forward, rewind), and a volume wheel. The wheel is quite long and very sensitive, and due to the position of my mouse I can easily reach it without letting go if needs be. My mouse actually has volume controls on it, but that's neither here nor there.

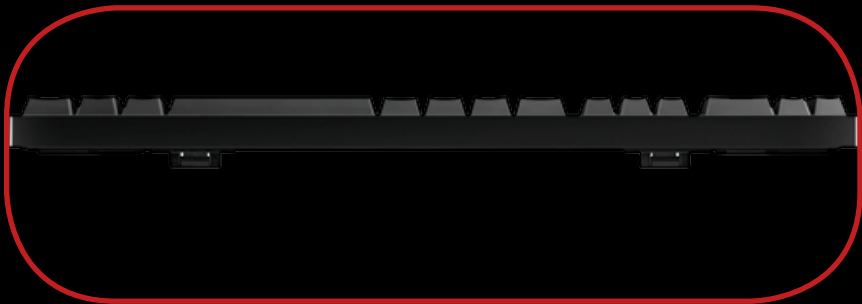
Due to the black colour of the keyboard, the literal worst colour you could choose to print under the Caps Lock light et al, would be black. So although you can see the keys very well in a dark room, due to the white backlight which pulses across the keys, you can't actually see what each of the three Lock lights is indicating unless you shine a light directly on the keyboard.

Apart from that, and the very light key switches, I've enjoyed the Logitech G610. It remains firmly in place due to its weight, and the rubber feet underneath. The keys are responsive and don't feel spongy whilst typing, and none of the extra buttons are in the way whilst typing. The media keys are a bonus, though I've always liked having them on keyboards -- if you don't like them, you don't have to use them.

If you're looking for a mechanical keyboard, the G610 is a good one. It doesn't have some of the issues I've come across with other makes, such as the keys feeling too tall. You can adjust the brightness of the backlight easily, so even if you don't like it there's an option for you. A few more colours wouldn't have gone amiss, but the white is fine. In all a good, responsive keyboard.

**RRP: £104.99
/ \$99.99**





Suitable for:



PC





HYPERX ALLOY ELITE MECHANICAL KEYBOARD

Having tried out HyperX RAM and headsets, I thought it was about time to try one of their keyboards. With the Alloy Elite being their latest model, how could I say no? Surely it would beat the snot out of my wireless Logitech keyboard which was older than at least one of my children.

The keyboard comes with a quick start guide and warranty, silver 1234 & WASD keys as well as a wrist rest in the box, so not much to talk about there. It is pretty weighty, thanks to the entire key base being metal. The underneath is plastic, as is the wrist rest, and the section along the top of the keyboard where there are some quick keys, and all of the keys themselves.

An attached cable measures about a meter and a half long, and ends in two USB plugs, both of which require being inserted. The reason is that there is a USB 2.0 port in the rear of the keyboard. Personally, I plugged my mouse into it.

The quick keys I mentioned before are as follows, on the left an LED brightness control, LED mode and game mode buttons. On the right are media control buttons and a volume wheel. Since my old keyboard had media controls, they were a welcome addition, though on the opposite side to where I'm used to them being.





With my wife owning the HyperX Alloy FPS, I was prepared for the Elite to make a huge racket as I typed. You can practically hear her typing clear across the house, after all. I was delighted to find that the volume of the keys engaging is actually quite subdued.

The speed of typing, and feel of the keys is better than the non-mechanical keyboard I was using, and the weight of it means that it doesn't move when I'm playing games a bit too roughly. The wrist rest is textured along two thirds of it, but I haven't noticed it too much which probably means it's doing it's job.

Honestly though, I've found myself making typos now and then, because it takes less pressure to activate each key than I'm used to. The Alloy Elite is a very good mechanical keyboard. I switched out the black 1234 & WASD keys for the silver ones mainly because I wanted to try out the textured WASD than for how it looked. I did try out the other LED modes, but stuck with the solid glow on the medium brightness. The others are breathing, trigger, explosion and wave, and though I did like explosion (the keyboard lights with each key

press, centred on that key), it meant that they keyboard was dark for the majority of the time.

Easy to set up, quiet to use and the media keys do exactly what they should do. I don't think I can get any more succinct than that, the HyperX Alloy Elite is a great keyboard.



**RRP: £119.99
/ \$109.99**

Suitable for:



PC



STEELSERIES RIVAL 700

Imagine innovation in the mouse space to be rather difficult these days. Apart from sticking more buttons on it, what more can you do with your pointing devices? SteelSeries have answered that question by adding two rather unique features to the Rival 700: an OLED screen that can display images and in game statistics, as well as tactile feedback.

Out of the box, you get the mouse and two different cables with which to connect it to your computer, one standard cable at 1m in length and another braided cable which is 2m in length. Opting for the braided one, the connection to the mouse was a cinch and didn't take any particular jiggery-pokery to get fitted. With SteelSeries' Engine 3 installed, the mouse connected via USB and it's good to go. What's nice about the dual cable set-up, is you can leave the other one with your laptop, for instance, and take the mouse with you to use elsewhere. Helpful if you have your desktop cables routed in specific ways...

From here, let's break down the features into their individual components.

RGB Lighting

A mainstay of gaming culture these days -

bright RGB LEDs within the Rival 700 housing allow you to light up the mouse-wheel and base with independent colours through the Engine 3 software. It looks the part and shows off the SteelSeries logo; when your hand isn't on the device that is. You can make the illumination reactive to in-game events too, though most of the time they're hidden by your hand.

OLED Screen

One of the key talking points of the Rival 700 is the OLED screen on its side. 128 by 36 pixels of monochrome display space is yours for the taking. You can have this display logos of your gaming allegiances (see below image) or have it display statistics from your game, such as the number of head-shots you've managed to pull off. Whilst it's an interesting innovation for the mouse space, I can't help but feel that the angle it's at hinders its effectiveness somewhat, meaning having to position the mouse in such a way to specifically look at the screen.

Tactile Feedback

The other major selling point of the Rival 700 is the inclusion of a tactile feedback motor within the mouse itself, allowing you to get feedback from in game events directly in your hand in much the





same way as your phone does when you get a new message. The feedback from the mouse is enough to let you know something is happening, but not too much that it throws the mouse out of place on the mat. Of the unique features on display here, this is the winner. Alerts via a small vibration from the mouse when a cool-down has finished allows you to place more concentration on the game itself, rather than the timer on your hot-bar.

Laser

By default, the Rival 700 comes equipped with the PixArt PMW3360 sensor, offering silky smooth tracking, regardless of the task at hand. Moving across your desktop is as beautiful a move as sweeping across the playing field to pinpoint the enemy's head in your iron sights. If you're a real laser connoisseur, you can upgrade the sensor to the PixArt 9800 for some extra money.

Comfort

It fits well with my "clam" grip (a cross between claw and palm), and the clicks feel

solid to the touch, the 'forward' button on the side of the mouse is a little far forward for the thumb - and the button labeled as 'B6' is difficult to get to, putting it out of reach for anything other than occasional use. Your mileage may vary here, as that may be down to my specific grip style more than anything.

Others

There's a trick up the Rival 700's sleeve, if you're into customisation and own a 3D printer. The base of the mouse (where your palm rests) is swappable with a 3D printed part - one which you can customise to your hearts content. Put your gaming handle in there or your clan name, for example. That's up to you as the designer of the new part to choose. Lastly, you can also get a different shell for the mouse, in a black glossy plastic, if that's your thing.

**RRP: £89.99
/ \$84.99**



ROCCAT KONE AIMO

I've been using the same mouse for almost two years, so I decided it was time to get something new. The point where my clicker game addiction random clicking has been wearing away, the pads on the underside are scuffed, and to be honest the glare from the RGB had been bugging me for a while. So when we were offered the Kone Aimo from Roccat, I snapped it up.

It came in a well-designed box, with a few stickers, and a quick start guide. The mouse itself is a bit on the large size, but well constructed. It doesn't feel too big to me, but my wife did reckon it would give her a cramp.

As well as the left and right buttons, and the chunky scroll wheel, there are two additional buttons on the top which control the speed which the mouse moves. Off to the left side of the mouse, and controlled with the right side of your thumb, are the T1 & T2 buttons, which by default go forwards and backwards in the web browser history. Beneath those, controlled with the left side of your thumb is the T3, which is called the Easy-Shift key, because it makes all of the other buttons do something else when held.

By default the alternative modes are basically media keys. The scroll wheel does the volume and track change, etc. However, if

you download ROCCAT's Swarm app (either to your phone or computer), you can set them to do other things like open programs, websites, press a button combination, or even shut down the computer. Since I don't fiddle with the DPI once it's at a speed I like, I just recalibrated the default mode of buttons.

The box - and app - boast that the Aimo has an "intelligent lighting system" designed to "react organically with your gaming behavior". I've had it set to that since I installed Swarm, and it literally just seems to cycle through the colours. I tried several games, but maybe it does something during multiplayer games that I've not seen? For instance, maybe it stays yellow during Counter-Strike, or red for Team Fortress 2 - I've no idea. It could just be something that coordinates when you have a Roccat keyboard and headset, unfortunately I only have the mouse and a Roccat Kanga mousemat.

While I'm talking about it, the Kanga compliments the Aimo well. It's nice and smooth to glide the mouse across, and it's not as thick as my old one, and takes up a little less space on the desk.

I can't think of any negative things to say about the Kone Aimo. It's a good mouse, with a lot of customisation options. The "Titan" scroll



wheel is nice and chunky, and unlike other mice I've used it doesn't have those tiny ridges which can cause discomfort if you use the scroll wheel a lot. Instead, it's got well spaced dips around the wheel, and it's lit up with the same RGB as the body of the mouse.

Roccat's Kone Aimo is celebrating the 10th anniversary of the original Kone, and it's certainly a worthy successor. It's worth a look if you want a new mouse.



**RRP: £69.95
/ \$79.99**





LOGITECH G900 CHAOS SPECTRUM MOUSE

Truth be told, aside from a controller, I could never see myself using a wireless keyboard or more to the point, a wireless mouse for PC. Wired devices have always been my choice for PC gaming. The reason had always been that I've never trusted them. The battery could die out, the signal could get interfered or drop out, or something similar to that effect.

They are concerns that I need not be left with a headache about. Now, though times have changed. I am now, a believer. Enter the Logitech G900 Chaos Spectrum. Logitech's flagship wireless gaming mouse and man, what a world of difference it has been.

Arriving in Logitech's fanciest packaging, upon removing the outer box and lifting the lid, staring back at me was the G900 mouse itself. Below contained a micro-USB cable, USB extender adaptor and the all important wireless dongle. Also included is additional plates for mouse buttons and covers, but we'll talk more about those shortly.

The G900 is an ambidextrous mouse, so it is incredibly comfortable in its symmetrical design, which is a surprised me being so

used to predominantly right-handed mice. It's also lightweight, weighing 107 grams. It doesn't support or include additional weights -- which I know, is a deal breaker for some. Fortunately, its lightness doesn't make it feel cheap. It has a premium finish, with a smooth top body and subtle grip indentations for your thumb and fingers on either side.

Besides your left and right click, you've got a scroll wheel which can be unlocked for that infinite scroll wheel action and is your middle mouse click, two DPI buttons allowing you toggle back and forth on the fly, and four additional buttons on either side of the mouse.

With the latter, what's interesting about this design is the customisation. Choosing to either utilise the four buttons either side or keep to two. You can then, using the included covers you can keep your device sleek by covering the unused buttons. Not only that, but everything from the buttons, battery life, DPI, and RGB lighting can be customised, monitored, and adjusted within Logitech's gaming software.

The quality really does show through the use. Both the main left and right buttons





have a crisp clean click to them, and every click was precise without any delay or lack of responsiveness. I soon discovered that these two buttons contain mechanical pivots, similarly to mechanical switches on keyboards. Which is not only crazy but impressive. Goes to show, they're not just keyboards anymore.

As for performance, this is what impressed me the most and elevated all my concerns over wireless. With a 2.4Ghz connection, the connection was perfect, with no interference from any of my devices, there is some technical wizardry here from Logitech and it shows. Within the belly of the beast contains the PMW3366 sensor and a built-in and a non-removable 720 mAh battery. The battery life Logitech promises 32-hours of continuous use without the RGB light, or 24-hours with it enabled.

The numbers aren't always exact, but after continuous use, I need not worry about keeping the mouse charged. Even when plugged in, the included micro-USB cable is moulded to fit perfectly to the mouse further streamlining the mouse when wired.

The sensor is state-of-art and is regarded as being one of the best on the market, whether it be a wireless or wired mouse, and its reputation holds true. Supporting from 200-12,000 DPI, you'll be getting an incredibly smooth and accurate experience. And during my time using the mouse encountered no lag, loss of connection and perfect response, regardless if I played wirelessly or wired.

Now for the price: I got lucky on this find, happening to find a seller online offering it for £55. For those interested may not be as lucky, but at a full price of £100, it is pretty steep for a mouse, but personally, you can't go wrong. Choosing the right gaming mouse is tough, but in my honest opinion, the Logitech G900 Chaos Spectrum stands above all others and can be not only considered the best wireless gaming mouse on the market but also the best-wired mouse too.



**RRP: £134.99
/ \$112.99**





GAME MICRO-REVIEWS

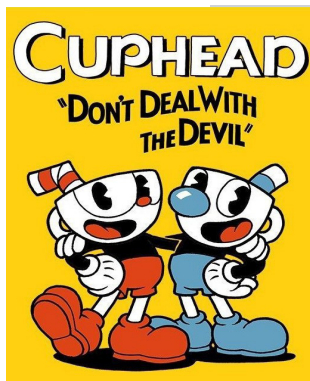
You might be looking for something to go with your new hardware - well
here's what GameOn think about the latest AAA titles



XB PS PC

Assassin's Creed Origins
8/10

I would have loved to have given this game a higher score, but I found a lot of issues with it from bugs to the things with the map and other small bits, although I did enjoy playing it because it's really big and fun, but the changes they made aren't all great ones.



XB PC

Cuphead
9.5/10

Although I speak very highly of Cuphead, I do think the game can be a little too unforgiving in enemy attack patterns and their ability to hit from offscreen without much warning. Regardless, the game's tight controls, fun boss fights, and pleasing aesthetic make it a must have.



XB PS PC

Destiny 2
9/10

The visuals are gorgeous and the environments are so expansive that there is hours worth of exploring to be done. There is a huge amount of content to keep players entertained and almost all of it can be replayed with worthwhile rewards to be gained. This title lives up to its predecessor and has surpassed it in almost every way.



XB PS PC

F1 2017
9/10

Bigger and better is every way, F1 2017 gives the franchise the shake-up fans have wanted for several years.





PS PC

Nier: Automata is an absolute masterclass in game design. It surpasses expectations time and time again resulting in an experience not to be missed by fans of action titles.

Nier Automata 10/10



XB PS PC

Prey is a deep, challenging sci-fi adventure that is more than the sum of its various influences

Prey 9/10



XB PS PC

Middle-earth Shadow of War adds a lot to the already great formula, with the addition of sieges and the great additions to the nemesis system this is a game of the year contender for sure.

Middle-earth: Shadow Of War 9/10



XB PS PC SW

Finally, we have the return to form that Sonic fans have been waiting for all these years. This isn't just one of the best Sonic games of recent years, but one of the best Sonic games full stop.

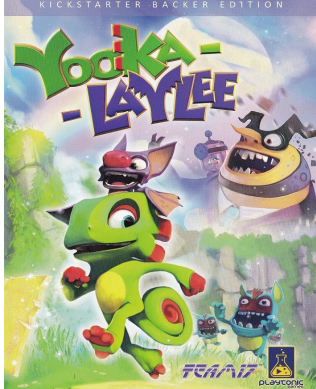
Sonic Mania 10/10



XB PS PC

Wolfenstein II does a brilliant job of mixing social commentary with unnecessary violence and a tongue-in-cheek attitude. There's a few optimisation issues and the level design could be a touch better, but this is an overall outstanding game that deserves a look.

Wolfenstein II 9/10



XB PS PC SW

At its best, it's a love letter to childhood nostalgia. At its worst, it reminds me why we moved away from platforming games: odd design choices and occasional bugs sour the experience.

Yooka-Laylee 9/10





BENQ BL2706HT

It's hard to get excited over something labelled as a "business monitor", more so when you consider the specifications of this particular unit, in a time when we're faced with more and more 4K content, HDR and OLED technologies. Though, there may still be some aspects of this particular unit worth considering if you're not interested in any of those features - or you're looking to upgrade your home office.

From a specification standpoint, the monitor is a 27 inch IPS panel, with a full HD resolution of 1920 by 1080, with an average response time of 14ms. Sporting input connections for HDMI, DVI and VGA, it should connect to most any device that you need it to. There's also an audio line in and a headphone connection, so that you can connect your device to it and maintain audio linkage throughout. It also features VESA mounting points, of the 100mm variety.

The BL2706HT touts a "frameless" design which aims to keep the bezel of the monitor to as small as possible - and, with the monitor off, this is how it would appear. It's a feature that's marred by the fact that no LCD monitor can actually pull off this task, instead, you get about a one centimeter black border around the edge of the visible

display. That said, monitors with this frameless or bezel-less design are ideal when used in a multi monitor setup, because there aren't physical bezels which get in the way between the monitors.

It's nice to see that this BenQ monitor reverts to the best stands that BenQ offer with their monitors - looking through the history of the monitors that we've had through from BenQ recently, they've all come with a static stand which allows for the adjustment of tilt only. The BL2706HT comes with the stand that can be raised or lowered, angled, tilted - and a big bonus for office work - rotated into portrait - a godsend for reading and editing documents and code.

BenQ's usual range of technology is also available on this unit, with their Flicker Free technology and Low Blue Light running the charge. These technologies serve to protect your eyesight and save you from headaches linked to staring at a display for too long.

In terms of gaming though, there's really nothing to write home about. It's certainly capable enough - and the response time never served to cause any noticeable problems when gaming. The colour representation is vibrant and the contrast





on display was enough to get by. Again though, in the days of variable refresh sync, 4K and HDR - it may be worth looking for something more future proof or holding out for the time being.

RRP: £258.00
/ \$N/A





BENQ GL2706PQ

The GL2706PQ is a 27 inch monitor from the BenQ range, aimed at professional use in an office environment. It's fitted with an LED backlight panel supporting a resolution of 2560 x 1440 (QHD), along with BenQ's "Flicker-free" technology and their eye saving "Low Blue Light" modes.

At 27 inches, the monitor has quite a substantial footprint on your desk, though this is negated by the higher resolution the monitor offers - you'll be glad of the extra elbow room to see all of those pixels. There's the standard array of connections on the back of the monitor, comprising of Displayport, HDMI and DVI inputs, a 3.5mm jack audio input and output, as well as power. Being more of an office based unit, the monitor doesn't support technologies like Freesync or Gsync but it does have a wide refresh rate support range of 30 - 78 kHz.

In terms of display, it has a vivid and rich tone that makes images feel warm and colourful, and the QHD resolution adds to the image fidelity by way of the increased pixel density over a Full HD monitor at the same size. Sadly though, it has quite large bezels on the edges of the monitor, which would make it unwieldy for

use in multiple monitor setups, as there'd be quite the border between the screens. It feels more suited to office desks in this regard.

I played a range of games whilst having the monitor on the test-bench, including Left 4 Dead 2 and some Rocket League. The games looked colourful and played well - I didn't notice any ghosting as can sometimes be found on cheaper panels — but there was a certain "depth" missing from some of the more expensive screens I've used; but this isn't a problem with the GL2706PQ, moreso the fact that I've personally experienced some great screens.

The stand that comes with this unit is of BenQ's usual high-quality, allowing for a wide range of movement allowing you to get the monitor in the exact location you need it for use. You can also rotate the monitor around 90 degrees to use it in portrait mode, which came in handy when using it for long-form reading and when coding.

RRP: £319.99
/ \$N/A







BENQ W2000

The W2000 from BenQ is a neat, compact projector finished in a gloss white with a champagne front bezel. All the usual controls are available on the top of the unit, for those times when you've accidentally misplaced the remote down the side of the couch. This projector comes with a few tricks up its sleeve over the other projectors we've seen from BenQ. Most notable, however, is its dedication to supporting the Rec. 709 HDTV standard, that should allow this to deliver a much better colour spectrum than other projectors.

Inputs comprise of two HDMI, composite and component video, a standard VGA in along with RCA and 3.5mm jacks for audio (with a pass through output). Lastly, there's an RS-232 port to allow for control.

There's a pair of USB ports on the back, which is for powering additional accessories for the W2000 or servicing. Sadly, they can't be used for media playback. But if you're looking for a projector that's just under a grand, then I'm sure you'll be able to find a relevant media player to go with.

The W2000 stylistically different from the previous BenQ projectors we've looked at, sporting a

similar white gloss body, but this time with a swanky champagne coloured front panel. Not a colour I'd go for myself admittedly, but since the projector is usually behind you out of the way, it's an easy one to overlook given how well the rest of the projectors specifications stand up. Function over fashion and all that.

The key feature here is the Rec. 709 HDTV standard support via the 6 segment (RGBRGB) colour wheel, that according to BenQ has "precision-tuned coating and color segments to replicate stunningly true colors and a superb viewing experience". And it shows: there's a real richness to the colours on display via the W2000, more so than other projectors we've had on the test bench before. Black levels can be somewhat amiss though, leaving darker scenes in particular feeling a little too 'grey'. I also didn't suffer from the "rainbow" effect as badly as I have with other units, only really noticing it when there was a large contrast between a light and dark area. There's support for 3D with the W2000 (glasses are available separately) which means you can enjoy all of your 3D content with it too. There's also some built in speakers, giving you 20W of audio, and utilising 'MaxxAudio' processing, to boost the perceived bass and treble range. It's not





going to win any awards in this department, but if you're in a pinch and need them, they're always at hand. Otherwise - you should really be hooking into an AV system for a better audio experience.

price point. Those that are at a similar price point aren't going to have anywhere near the features of the W2000 which makes this an excellent contender for your home-theatre experience.

In closing, you're going to be very hard pushed to find quite such a capable projector at a similar



**RRP: £958.54
/ \$N/A**





INTEL DESKTOP CPU GUIDE

So Intel's desktop lineup can be a bit of a minefield, I thought I would pop together a quick run through their range detailing the different features and hopefully give a good indication of a use case for each chip.

I'll start off with the standard desktop line, these are the bulk of Intel's desktop sales. Across the range of desktop chip's we have features such as integrated GPU's, 16x on chip PCI-E lanes which can either be used as a single 16x lane for a single card or as two 8x lanes for Crossfire / SLI support, there are boards out there that offer more than two card support via the use of a PLX chip.

Pentium and Celeron

These are Intel's entry level, basic dual core chips, I wouldn't really recommend these for anything more than light gaming, they are aimed more at the basic Facebook / web browsing machine.

There isn't a huge difference between the Pentium and Celeron lines, on the latest Skylake chips the Pentiums have slightly more cache than the Celeron chips, 3mb vs 2mb.

The Pentium chips also have a higher clock speed and some models have a better spec integrated GPU.

One interesting thing that some of these chips support and the i5's / i7's don't support is ECC memory, why would you have this on lower end chips and not high end chips? Well the main reason is NAS devices, they don't need 4 cores or a high clock speed but ECC memory is essential in my opinion, I actually run FreeNas on a Pentium chip with ECC memory, bear in mind you will also need a motherboard that supports ECC memory as well.

Example of a standard Intel Desktop CPU, the i3 / i5 / i7 chips share the same package.

Core i3

The Core i3 is the entry level "Core" chip, these are dual core like the Celerons / Pentiums but have hyperthreading which will give you 4 threads, better for gaming, and there are models with higher clock speeds than the Celerons / Pentiums, some models also have an extra 1mb of cache. These also support ECC memory so another good pick if you want a more powerful NAS system.





Core i5

This is the chip most gamers will likely have, these are true quad core chips but don't have hyperthreading.

For today's gaming at least for now 4 cores generally seems to be enough (DX12 / Vulkan may change that).

The cache on the i5's is bumped up as well, Intel's latest Skylake chips have 6mb compared to the 4 / 3mb on the Core i3 chips.

Grab the K variant i5 and with a little tweaking in the EFI / Bios you can get some good overlocks.

Core i7

These are the highest end chips Intel offer, a lot of debate amongst the enthusiasts as to if there is any real world benefit over the i5's for gaming, I guess it comes down to each individual's use case, Someone who streams their gaming may benefit from the extra threads for example. So from a tech point of view this is the chip with all the goodies enables, it has four cores, the full complement of cache and hyperthreading, also if you're not interested in overclocking but want the best performance then they have higher clock speeds as well, though you will need to decide if a couple of hundred extra MHz is worth the premium.

Core i7 HEDT (High-End Desktop)

Next up we have the second part of Intel's Core i7 line, given that these chips are effectively unlocked Xeons I would have preferred Intel called them something different like Core i9 for example to differentiate and avoid confusion but it is what it is.

Benefits here are more cores, Intel's Broadwell line of HEDT chips start at 6 cores and top out at 10 for example.

More on chip PCI-E lanes, there are two versions of these chips with 28 lanes and chips with 40, the 40 lane chips are great for anyone looking to do CrossFire / SLI as you can run two cards at full 16x or 3 cards at 8x8x8x.

This is also great for PCI-E storage, you can run M.2 / U.2 drives straight off the CPU's lanes (motherboard supporting), why is this any better than running from a chipsets lanes?, Well for most users you won't notice a difference but for content creators / anyone requiring high throughput you might see a benefit, on the standard desktop range the drives connect to lanes on the chipset, the chipset then communicates to the CPU via DMI, which is effectively a 4x PCI-E link. So imagine you are doing I/O intensive work, have a number couple of drives hooked up and a number of USB devices and you might see the link bottleneck. Again though for most of us this won't be an issue.





Other variants

So, not wanting to make it too easy Intel makes it a little more confusing with a number of variants within the core lineup which I will briefly cover.

K Series

These are the chips that I expect most people to have or are looking at, these are the only chips in the range that support overclocking, along with the chip you will also need a Z series motherboard, for example with Skylake you would be looking at a Z170 based board.

T Series

These are the low power chips, the Skylake T series chips are 35w, great for a media PC for example that needs to be low noise, or a office machine that does not need a lot of horsepower.

P Series

Odd one these, they come in a number of TDP (Thermal design power) variants the only common feature along the line is the use of Intel's lowest end integrated GPU, the price isn't that much lower than the standard chips with the higher end GPU so I am not sure who these are aimed at, they might be chips with failed GPU cores that are being cut down and sold at a lower price.

Lowest end graphics, HD510 on the Skylake range for example

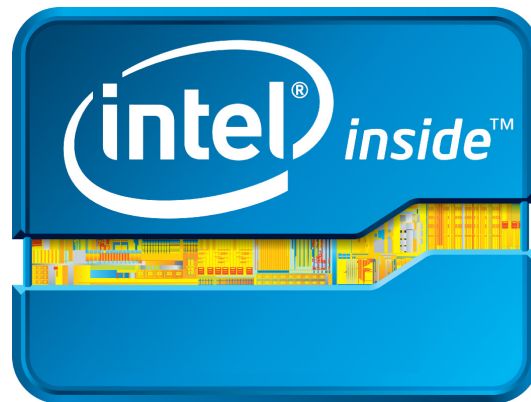
R / C Series

The first R Series chip I saw was the 4770R which was a chip that debuted in Intel's NUC lineup, it wasn't a socketed chip and was only available soldered to the board.

What made this unique is it came with Intel's highest end integrated graphics, and eDRAM, these made for powerful very small form factor machines, great for office use and media machines.

The C series were essentially the same but came in a socketed form factor, Intel released two of these with the Broadwell refresh a Core i5 and a Core i7.

Gamers were finding these to perform really well even compared to the newer Skylake chips, it's speculated the eDRAM helped a lot here, that said they are older chips now, use an older chipset and only support DDR3 and are quite expensive.



Conclusion

So that's a lot of CPU's to choose from, to summarize I would recommend the following use cases :

Pentium / Celeron = Web / Office work and basic gaming

Core i3 = Entry level gaming / Office work

Core i5 = Great for gaming at most levels

Core i7 = Enthusiast's

Core i7 HEDT = Enthusiast's / SLI and Crossfire / Content creators

Hopefully this guide helps anyone looking to pick up a new CPU.



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SPEEDLINK PHANTOM HAWK FLIGHTSTICK

It wasn't until I began playing Elite: Dangerous that I truly considered getting a flightstick.

Never one for simulator games, it didn't make sense to have one before. Whereas Speedlink's Phantom Hawk is my first airstick, I have used joysticks in the past, but it was literally years ago back before analog sticks were a thing.

I was really excited to try it out, especially given the improvement I figured it would give my game in the aforementioned Elite: Dangerous. Flightsticks are the one reason I think that Frontier Developments doesn't allow the console and computer universes to coexist.

The box comes with a quick install guide and a mini-CD with the drivers on. There's no additional software supplied nor required, as you can configure everything inside Windows if needs be.

The Phantom Hawk itself has a plastic base, an integrated throttle and a total of nine physical buttons. It also has a hat switch and a directional pad within easy reach of your thumb. Those are joined by one of the buttons, with two triggers on the front of the stick -- one for the forefinger, the other for the little finger.

The throttle on the base is smooth, but a little stiffer than I'd like. The six buttons also on the

base all click nicely, but one of them is pretty useless if you have a little finger. See, it doubles as the second trigger, meaning you only actually have eight useable buttons. There are also four suction cups on the underside of the base.

As a unit the Phantom Hawk feels quite solid with decent quality plastic and is well put together. The stick has a smooth, full range of motion and even when not secured to the table it remains stable during use. All of the buttons are useable with a single hand. but the ones on the base and the





throttle of course are too far for the one hand. I loaded up Elite: Dangerous and tried it out for a good several hours. It took some time to get used to, but that's on me not the Phantom Hawk. I've played using gamepads as well as mouse & keyboard, and can honestly say that my piloting has improved. The throttle is a lot more sensitive than holding a button ever was and my landings could still use some work, but dogfights and flying around asteroid belts is much more accurate.

The limited amount of buttons is disappointing, but it's meant that I have to be imaginative with my use of them. Using one as a 'shift' key allowed me to map the buttons for extra uses, for instance.

As an entry into flightsticks the Phantom Hawk is great. It's easy to use, setup was painless and really my only issue is that the throttle seems to be a little out of alignment. Fully forwards doesn't put my engines to full speed, and full reverse is a smidge too far forwards. There doesn't appear to

be a way to reset it either, which is a shame. It may be a one-off, or just a software issue, so as long as you're not looking to do any racing, Phantom Hawk is a great stick for Elite: Dangerous.

**RRP: £32.50
/ \$N/A**



Suitable for:



PC





SPEEDLINK BLACK WIDOW XE FLIGHT STICK

Joysticks have fallen out of fashion with the mainstream gaming crowd these days, with most having moved to controllers that offer more convenient inputs for a large range of games that don't make as much sense to use a fully-fledged joystick with. However, given the somewhat recent upturn in popularity of games like *Elite: Dangerous* and *War Thunder*, there's something of an uprising for the joystick market to behold as the controller paradigm shifts back to joysticks as the best control method available.

Unless you're part of the hardcore elite when it comes to control surfaces for these games (at which point, I'm going to say this joystick probably isn't for you) there's not a huge selection available, and of those, the price point leaps up quite dramatically early on in the range.

In steps Speedlink with their BlackWidow XE stick - a visual update to their previous non-XE model - that aims to satiate that desire for the most fitting input type for your games against a sensible price point that won't destroy the bank.

Out of the box, the Black Widow XE comes with no extra fluff alongside the joystick itself, a driver CD and a quick-start guide, which in this day of plug and

play compatibility should come as no surprise. Popping it out of the box and plugging it in, it was ready to rock in absolutely no time at all.

I fired up *Flight Simulator X* as pretty much the defacto choice to test out the BlackWidow - and it outperformed my expectations. I'd spent time flying around doing all of the usual "non-sim" things that people do in FSX such as loops and barrel rolls - the works. In fact, possibly the only thing that took time to get used to was having the rudder control on the thrust lever - I've come from using a Logitech Extreme 3D Pro many moons ago and had simply become accustomed to twisting the stick left and right





to control rudder input. After a short while playing though, it became second nature to use the new (in my mind) rudder control.

The stick itself feels solid and well connected to the base. The buttons on the stick feel much like most games controllers do, with a sizable amount of travel, but satisfying to press, the trigger and hat buttons have a satisfying click to them. The buttons on the base have a bit of a squishy feeling to them, though there's a good chance that with more use that will become much less apparent. It's not enough of a squish to make it a bad experience - again, it's mostly my experience with the Extreme 3D Pro's almost flat buttons that I'm comparing it against.

Throttle control - like the stick is also very solid, with an excellent connection to the base. Moving through the range is very smooth and easy to get it just at the level you need it at, again much like the rudder control.

However, though suction pads are included with the base of the stick, I can't use those with the full-width mat that I use on my desk. In that light, I would have liked the base of the stick to be a bit heavier in order to counteract the likelihood of the base moving during gameplay, which becomes more apparent when you're moving to the ends of the joystick's back and forward movements. It is slightly counteracted by having your hand on the throttle, but that's not always going to be the case when you're "going Mach 2 with your hair on fire".

**RRP: £32.50
/ \$N/A**

Suitable for:



PC





STEAM LINK

The ability to play PC games from the comfort of my bed has long been a dream. I once had the PC at the foot of my bed, but the monitor was too small for me to read anything on it. My wifi connection in the bedroom isn't reliable, so I needed an alternative.

The box contains Steam Link, flat ethernet cable, HDMI cable, power cable with four adaptors: USA, UK, Europe and Australia. Having never seen an Australian outlet before, I was so confused for several Google-free moments...

The Link and plug are both well designed, and even though you can swap the end of the plug it doesn't feel flimsy like some (RIM Blackberry chargers for example). All of the cables are about 1.5m long, and the only one I'm not using is the ethernet one. It's far too short to go out of the bedroom and down the stairs...

The first thing I did after plugging it in was check for a system update, which I'm very glad I did. It completely changed the layout and how everything looked -- so I didn't have to get used to two firmwares, just the one.

When connecting to the relevant computer, you need to input a security code. Not easy when your memory sucks and you have

to remember four digits between the bedroom and living room... That done, I loaded up Marvel Heroes to both get my daily login bonus, and to give it the first test. It performed horribly.

Everything was so laggy that I could only assume my internet was being throttled to 56kbps. Annoyed, I gave up messing with it, and went to bed.

The next day I decided to change the settings on the Link, and make sure that my PC was running nothing but Steam. It's eight years old, so perhaps the 6GB of DDR2 RAM and Intel Core 2 processor weren't up to scratch.

I attempted to load some really low memory programs, such as Visual Boy Advance and gens, but neither showed up correctly. So I went for Star Trek 25th Anniversary, though as I have that DRM-free from GOG, it didn't load





up through Steam's Big Picture Mode, nor did Simon The Sorcerer. With a sigh, and a desire to finally play it, I loaded up The Novelist.

As it's a simple first-person perspective, I was happy to find it running perfectly. No lag, inputs were obeyed instantly, and the graphics were perfect. I played it for a good few hours, before coming off to try using some desktop apps, as I'd been told it was capable of doing.

Unfortunately the best I could get was that it showed the desktop, then crashed. Not my PC, but the Steam Link. I checked the PC, and it was still running perfectly, and Elite Dangerous: Horizons looking pretty fantastic. When either game got busy, there was a drop in framerate and the odd artifact on the screen for a moment, but it was

pretty great playing from the comfort of my bed.

Now that it's up and running, I've been finding excuses to take my game playing upstairs, if you know what I mean. Of course, I mean my Steam Link. It's a great bit of kit, and it'll be even better when I've done my planned PC upgrades.

**RRP: £39.99
/ \$39.99**





NINTENDO CLASSIC MINI: SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

After the success of the Nintendo Classic Mini last year it was only a matter of time before Nintendo moved their sights towards its 16-bit cousin. The Super Nintendo has arguably the strongest, most diverse and importantly, most fondly remembered game library of all their systems so how does the hardware and the included game lineup hold up after twenty-plus years?

The first thing that strikes you about the Nintendo Classic Mini: Super Nintendo Entertainment System (the SNES Classic Mini from now on for all our sanities!) is how small and adorable it is, it's around a quarter of the size of the original system, it fits easily in one hand and looks exactly like its elder. It houses both a HDMI and a USB port on the rear for video and power respectively and features a functional power switch and reset button on the top of the unit that mimic the feel of the original, the power switch having a similarly tactile click to it.

The rest of the moulding is purely cosmetic, the cartridge slot and eject button are sadly static and the controller ports are a facade which pulls forward to reveal the real ports for the

SNES controllers. The controllers themselves are exactly the same as the originals with only the different plug connector revealing their true nature and feel great in the hand having a slightly textured surface to aid your grip.

All in all it looks exactly as you expect it to although the small size will probably surprise you even knowing that it's... mini. The included HDMI and USB power cable are of a decent length and the controller's leads this time around are around 4.5 feet which is a couple of feet longer than the infamously short NES Classic Mini cords but still feel too short. Something that isn't included in the box is a USB to AC Adapter plug, luckily any USB charging plug should fit the bill but it's still frustrating that one isn't included.

Onto the system itself then, once powered up you are presented with a menu not unlike the one from the NES Classic Mini last year. A strip of game box art runs across the middle with tiny thumbnails beneath and a row of option icons along the top sandwiched between art that looks like the front and back of the system, with the Japanese Super Famicom iconography in the background. It's an appealing looking layout and





it has a catchy little musical ditty to go with it. Useful information is presented in a fairly intuitive manner with pips beneath the box art indicating whether you have any suspend points saved along with an icon indicating whether the game supports standard saving and finally the number of players supported, handy to know considering the SNES Classic Mini actually comes with two controllers in the box.

You can create a suspend point during play at any point simply by hitting the reset button, this takes you back to the menu where you can opt to “deposit” the current state of the game into one of the four slots available. New to the SNES Classic Mini is the ability to rewind time from a suspend point, the time you can “rollback” from the suspend point is variable depending

on the game being played but is typically around a minute or so. This is a welcome addition and can definitely help in those games that have a reputation for being difficult, like Super Ghouls and Ghosts or those without frequent save points.

The SNES Classic Mini also allows you to customise how the games will look, giving you a variety of frames to surround the gameplay ranging from colour-changing 80s neon grids to the rather sophisticated wooden surround with speakers. These act to keep the game screen at the correct aspect ratio whilst also adding a bit of personality.

Alongside these frames you can also decide whether to utilise a CRT filter which is an attempt to simulate era-appropriate TVs, blurring the





image and adding a subtle scanline effect. It softens the image a bit too much and the scanlines are too subtle to bring out the detail which is a shame and this is nowhere near as good as the CRT filter options we've seen in Sonic Mania for example. You can also choose between a more natural 4:3 ratio presentation (which is free of the crawling visible on the NES Classic Mini) or a pixel perfect option which uses square pixels giving a sharper looking image but can lead to some odd-looking results, like a more oval Kirby instead of his more natural rotund self.

The system itself only outputs at 720p60 but all the games included are their North American releases so all run at 60Hz unlike the European eShop versions of most of the titles. Whilst only supporting 720p is disappointing, it does allow for the system to provide a nicely scaled image, the SNES originally output at 256x224 which allows for a three times bump with room to spare for the frames.

The twenty one game lineup is exemplary, every one of the games is from the top-tier of the system's library but like any curated list there will always be something missing you'd like to see included. Having Earthbound, Super Mario RPG and Final Fantasy III (actually Final Fantasy VI, it was the third title to see a North American release) in an official physical capacity in Europe is a nice bonus as these were never originally released here and the big selling point of having the final mastered release version of the shelved Star Fox 2 included is almost worth the asking price alone for fans of that series.

Curious omissions that stick out are Pilotwings and Chrono Trigger both significant "classic" titles for the system. There are entire genres that aren't represented too, no brawlers like Final Fight and no SHMUPs like Super Aleste do feel like obvious glaring exclusions. Their absence doesn't detract from the quality of the titles that are here however. Especially if you enjoy RPGs or Platformers, the likes of Super Castlevania IV, Secret of Mana and Super Mario World are genuine classics and still hold up well today.

The emulation itself is of a high standard, featuring many games that used extra hardware including three SuperFX chip titles that have never appeared on Nintendo's Virtual Console before, Star Fox, its sequel and Yoshi's Island. It's not perfect however, with the latter having the most obvious visual discrepancy, touching a Fuzzy (first seen in the stage "Touch Fuzzy, Get Dizzy!") should cause a visual effect distorting the background but here it causes the background to disappear briefly whilst performing the effect which looks a bit odd, not game-breaking but worthy of note.

So is the SNES Classic Mini worth it? It has a few things that go in its favour as while most of the titles are available on Nintendo's Virtual Console platform, as stated earlier the SNES Classic Mini versions are all the original North American 60Hz releases unlike the slower un-optimised European 50Hz releases of many titles. Purely as a value proposition, buying those releases via the Virtual Console service (not counting the four that aren't available) comes to just shy of £90 making the SNES Classic Mini a great value





way of legally owning copies of these games.

There is also something to be said about the nostalgia value of the package, the adorably cute hardware immediately puts a smile on your face, the click of the power button and the feel of the actual controllers adds a huge amount of authenticity and charm to the whole thing. The user interface is clean and functional while the Super Game Boy-like frames and little Nintendo touches, like how Star Fox 2 gets unwrapped after you play the original and how Mario and Luigi fiddle with the settings as they activate the system's demo mode if left awhile on the menu add a lot to the experience.



As an officially sanctioned way of travelling down memory lane it's a well put together piece of hardware that works exactly as you expect. The included selection of titles is excellent and there is very little to complain about outside of some niggly emulation issues and the lack of an AC adapter. They've improved on elements that were slightly lacking on the NES Classic Mini which should be acknowledged, bundling in two controllers with longer cables along with improving the 4:3 mode is especially welcome.

**RRP: £79.99
/ \$79.99**





ROXIO GAMECAP HD PRO

The Roxio Gamecap HD Pro is an external video capture device intended for recording gameplay from games consoles in an easy to use combination of hardware and software as well as provide an easy way to stream to Twitch and YouTube. So how does it fare?

First of all, the Roxio Gamecap HD Pro can capture multiple resolutions from 480i up to 1080p, this means you can capture from last generation consoles (Wii, PS3, Xbox 360, WiiU) easily as well as from both Xbox One and PlayStation 4. It can record at up to 60fps except at 1080p where it is limited to 30fps.

The Gamecap HD Pro fits in between your TV and your console and has both HDMI and Component inputs and outputs. You simply connect your console to the inputs then connect the preferred output to your TV (most likely using the HDMI option), finally you connect the box to your PC via the included USB cable.

It should be noted that you cannot connect a PS3 using HDMI as Sony enforce HDCP (High-bandwidth Digital Content Protection) sadly and the Gamecap HD Pro doesn't act as a HDCP stripper so you'll need to use a Component connection for PS3.

In the box you get the device itself, which is extremely light, a USB cable for connecting to your PC and supplying power, an installation DVD and a Quick Start Guide that explains how to set up a PS3/Xbox 360. No HDMI or Component cables are included however so that's something to factor in.

After installation of the newest software from Roxio's site (rather than the outdated DVD), it's simply a case of launching the included software where you'll then see your console's output in the preview window and some settings related to capturing.

From here you can configure whether you are using the HDMI or Component input source, the location to save files to and length of videos (if required). You can also choose from one of two video containers, M2TS or the more widely used MP4. Capturing video is then as hitting the green Capture button.

Jumping into the options lets you customise the bitrate for your videos as well as link your Twitch and Youtube accounts. Once you've done that, streaming to those services is as simple as hitting the Live Stream button. This all works really well and is great for a beginner but it's very barebones, there is no support for adding an overlay of any sort (camera or image) or any sort





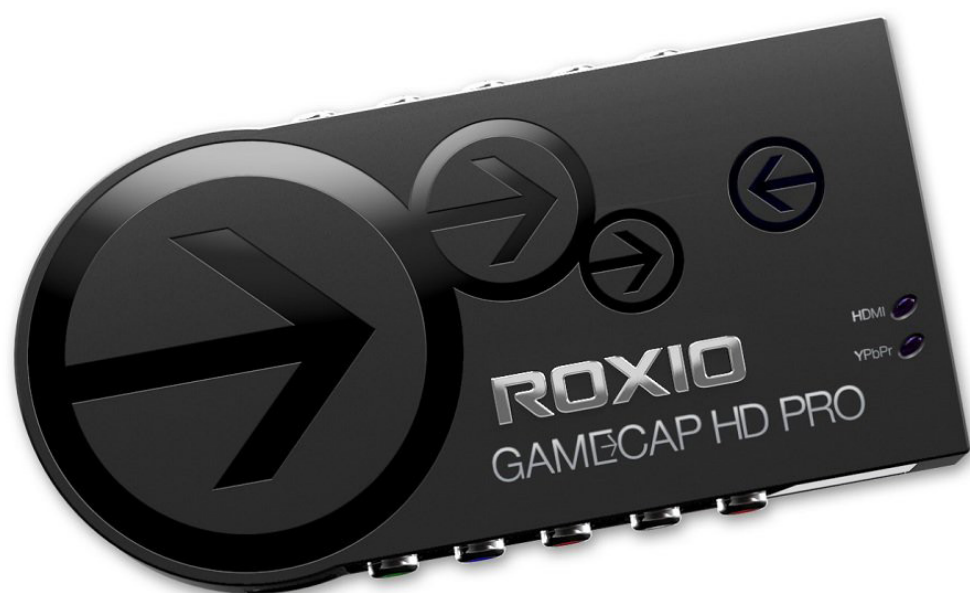
of scene transitions. As long as you only want your game image with voice over the top the included software does the job with a minimum of fuss.

If you want to go the extra mile all is not lost however as you can use the Gamecap HD Pro in both OBS Studio (Open Broadcaster Software) and XSplit streaming programs. Using these more advanced programs you can create overlays, show video from webcams, as well as other more advanced features. Support in other programs however is a little hit and miss, even though the Gamecap HD Pro shows up as a video device in other programs, it often won't work as you'd expect.

This isn't generally a problem as you'll most likely be using OBS or XSplit (or indeed its own software) to stream/record video but it does bear mentioning. The software also includes a surprisingly competent video editing package called Roxio Videowave, it's no replacement for Sony Vegas Pro or Adobe Premiere Pro but for the budding YouTuber it's an exceptionally fully-featured piece of software allowing

you to trim and piece together a video with a wide variety of transitions and effects. The product does have some negatives though, it's really light and the plastic casing doesn't feel sturdy at all, the lack of an HDMI cable in the box is a shame as that's something extra you need and the hit and miss compatibility with other software could be something that requires more investigation if you have specific needs.

The Gamecap HD Pro does what it says it will and in combination with its own software is straightforward to get setup and working quickly. If you solely intend to record videos from newer consoles for use on YouTube or to stream to Twitch in a plug and play manner then it performs those tasks admirably.



**RRP: £129.99
/ \$149.99**

Suitable for:



PC



Switch



PlayStation 4



Xbox One





HANNSPREE POSEIDON 11.6" HANNSPAD TABLET

I've been in the market for a new tablet for quite some time, since my old one has been running incredibly slowly, due to use and age. It's five years old, so is literally older than one of my children who can make up her own jokes. So when I was offered to review the Poseidon HANNSpad from Hannspree, I snapped it up. The last new tablet I even touched was an 18 month old generic Android tab -- it literally didn't have a name or model number -- so I was hopeful.

A mid-tier tablet, the Poseidon includes a plug with UK and European adaptors, a micro-USB cable, and a USB-to-micro USB adaptor. There is also a warranty, Quick Start Guide and list of ways to find help if you have trouble, all printed in 24 languages.

The tablet has the usual power and volume buttons, but also a reset button and a microphone on the right side. On the rear are stereo speakers and a micro-SD card slot, and the 2 megapixel rear camera. There's a 2MP camera on the front, too, above the 11.62 IPS display, which has a resolution of 1366 x 768 HD. The CPU inside is MT 8163 ARM A53 Quad Core 1.3 GHZ, it has 2GB RAM and there is 16GB internal storage. The one I received had a screen protector on it, but I don't know if that is standard.

The build quality of the Poseidon is decent, fully constructed in plastic composites. So long as you don't try to bend it, then it is nice and solid. The screen is clear but does pick up reflections -- as you'd expect with it being a touch screen -- if the brightness is turned down. However, even in daylight I found the lowest brightness was enough to play and read by.

There is a 6000mAh capacity battery inside the tablet, and after four hours of playing The Simpsons Tapped Out the battery had gone down 50%. That's with the screen and wifi on, brightness turned down, and I actually played Family Guy: The Quest For Stuff for a little bit, too. The recharging time is quite reasonable, at about 1% per minute, unless you're playing games while it's plugged into your computer -- then it will gain 1% about every half hour.

There were occasions where I found the Poseidon not quite doing what I wanted it to do whilst swiping the screen, but I put that down to me not pressing firmly enough. It wasn't until I had been playing Spider-Man Unlimited, an endless runner-style game which requires lots of quick swipes, that I realised that the sensitivity isn't set high enough. I was having to do broad strokes to make the tablet realise that I had indeed done something to avoid that obstacle. It can detect





exactly where I am tapping, but for whatever reason swipes aren't always registered. Since it has 16GB internal storage, it's plenty for some music, movies and apps. You can stick a micro-SD card (up to 32GB) in it -- yes, it's not the highest, but it's plenty to get on with. However, if that's still not enough you can easily connect a USB pen drive using the USB-to-micro USB adaptor. Of course, you can't charge it while that's connected, but how much do you want attached to your tablet at one time?

The reset button I mentioned at the start was something I hadn't seen before. It turns off the tablet instantly, like whipping the battery out, so useful on any occasion the tablet locks up. I never had to use it for that, the only times I used it were the first time to test it, and the second because I was being particularly

lazy and couldn't be bothered to hold the power button down. Incidentally, powering up the tablet takes exactly one minute. The speakers are powerful enough for what they are, but suffer from both being on the right hand side. Most people will be holding the Poseidon horizontally while streaming Netflix, for instance, so the sound will only be coming from one side of the tablet. Games that are played with the tablet held vertically are fine, however.

The cameras admittedly aren't great at 2 megapixels. You need decent lighting and the subject to not be moving for the images to come out well. They do what they're supposed to, but it's hard to imagine they are on there for any reason other than the fact that cameras are what you're supposed to put on an Android tablet.





MISC

Despite the older CPU, the Poseidon reacts as quickly as I would expect. Apps load nice and quickly, games don't stutter in odd places, and streaming video is great. For the price, I'll admit that I got more than I expected. Sure, the cameras are a little disappointing, but judging by the number of photos I took on my five year old tablet, I won't notice it very often. It's perfect to read, watch and play on, so long as you're not playing an endless runner -- which I rarely do. I've been using it to watch video and read comics, while playing a few games, and for those things, it is ideal.

**RRP: £139.00
/ \$N/A**



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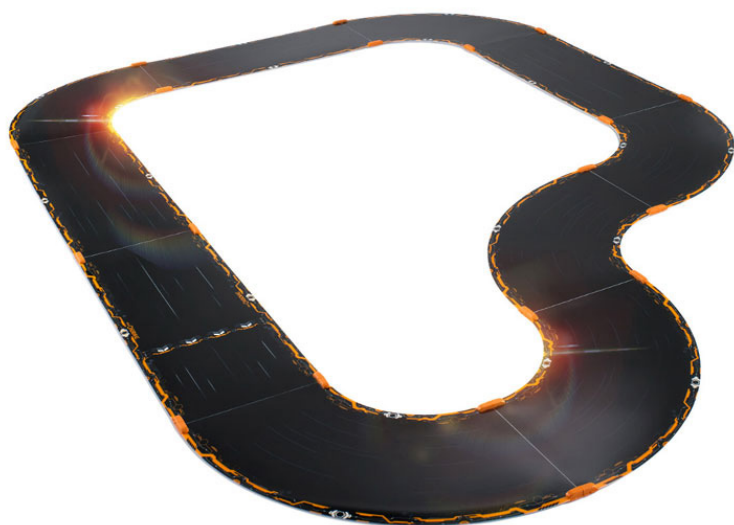
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ANKI OVERDRIVE REVIEW

If you remember the old days of Scalextric racing car sets, where your cars would have to be manually slotted into the track and prone to coming off at every available corner, this is nothing like that.



We took a look at the Anki Overdrive Starter Kit, which comes with a wide selection of track for you to use, as well as two cars and a charging station which can simultaneously charge up to four cars.

Explained in the simplest terms I can conjure up, just so you can rush out and buy the damn thing as soon as you possibly can once you're through reading this. This is a track racing game, that you play with up to four players (or play with with AI-controlled cars), You race around the track with different mode and objectives, from trying to stay in the lead to how many time you can destroy your opponents.

I have to admit, at first we were expecting just a run of the mill normal racing game, which would get a bit tedious after a while of playing. Oh boy, we couldn't have been more wrong and we were thoroughly surprised.

First off, the cars just sit on the track instead of slot on. The track pieces magnetise together, making them extremely easy to construct and dismantle. The computers that are built into the cars stop it from shooting off the side of the track; the only way your car can leave the track is if you are knocked off by an opponent, and even then when this happened several times the cars were able to find their own way back onto the track and carry on as normal. You then race the using a mobile device (Android/iOS or Kindle Fire) to control the cars. Tilting your phone to the left or right veers you onto the four available lanes, and you can control your speed via the





anki OVERDRIVE™



on-screen throttle, which you slide up and down to vary your speed. On top of all of this, you also get weaponry attached to the car, which you can upgrade or swap out as you earn XP. Located on the right hand side, you have two buttons to operate these weapons; one for primary attack the other is for a special attack. Each car has it's own personal arsenal, really giving each player a unique experience and mixing up the gameplay.

After using our phones for a while, we decided to switch to tablets and both played using an iPad. Having the larger screen was really nice, but personally I preferred the phone as it was smaller and easier for the steering. My friend preferred the iPad though, due to the larger screen allowing for easier selection and control of speed and weaponry. Each player is required to have a phone or tablet (even an iPod Touch would work) but in this day and age, there aren't many households without a couple of smartphones in the house.

The charging of the cars from drained only takes 10 minutes, and we found the battery life lasted between 30 and 45 minutes each time. With the charge time so short, it was easy to do things like make a cup of tea (we are British) or nip to the loo.

There is quite a list of devices that have been tested to make sure they are compatible with the Anki Overdrive racing system, but if you are not sure, you can find out by just downloading the app on the appropriate app store for your device, it will tell you if it's supported or not.

Once again, we have been very surprised about a lot of the features found in Anki Overdrive. With multiple game modes, this should keep you occupied for quite some time, there are ways just two of you can play and again will support up to four players at a time. But for those moments when you find yourself in the house on your own, have no fear, Anki have you covered on



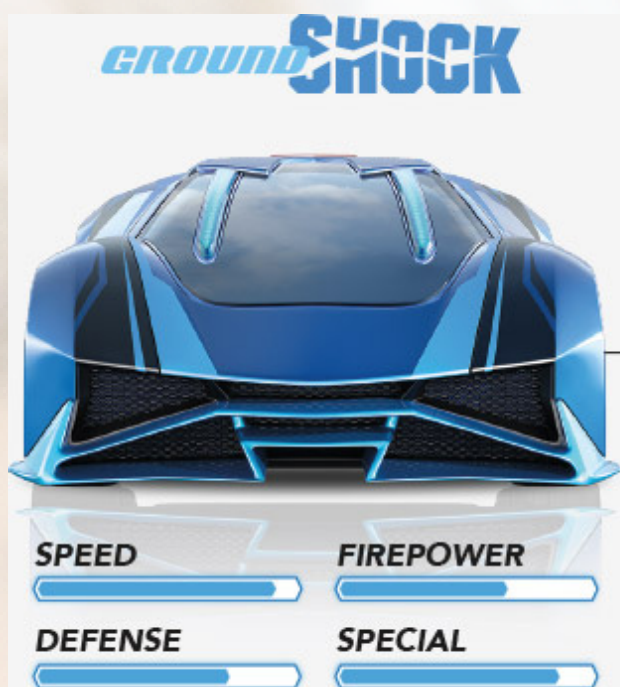


that as well, as there is an AI built in so you can compete against it. This mode comes with a story mode, which is split into six episodes to keep you entertained. However, if you do have friends and still want to progress through the story mode, you can do co-op against the AI with a friend.

Unlike conventional Scalextric, it is extremely easy to keep track of the game. Before starting matches you can adjust the score limit, whether it's laps or amount of opponents destroyed. Not only this, but the game tracks these automatically and tells you what position you are in, making it

much easier to determine the rankings of players. Overall the Anki Overdrive Starter Kit is a great present for kids or adults and enough comes with the game to keep you occupied for quite some time. Plus we can only hope that they implement new game modes later on.

**RRP: £149.99
/ \$149.99**



ANKI OVERDRIVE ACCESSORIES



Thinking of getting someone an Anki Overdrive for Christmas? Here are some great add ons which friends or family could buy for them.

Speed Kit

[Consists of two straight pieces]

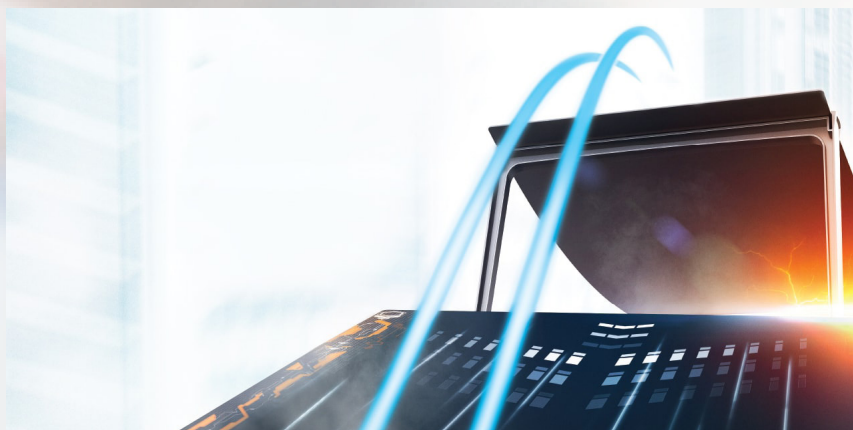
If speed is what you need, then look no further. Build long straightaways where there's nowhere to hide! Put the hammer down and outrun your opponent or take aim and do battle.



Corner Kit

[Consists of two curve pieces]

Add more twists and turns to test your precision racing skills. Take tight corners at top speed, but watch out — slow down and you'll become a target! Or blast your opponent before they disappear around the bend!



Launch Kit

[Consists of two straight pieces and the raiser pieces]
Add jumps to your battlefield with the Launch Kit!

Collison Kit

[Consists of one Crossroad piece]
Pick off your opponents as they speed past, but watch out for devastating collisions and don't get caught in the crossfire!

Supercars

With a great selection of cars which all have their own unique primary and secondary power up for battling one another.



SuperTrucks

Supertrucks are nearly three times the size of Supercars, and use their heft, weapons and new control system to dominate the track. But Supertrucks are more than just oversized vehicles, they come with access to a new game mode and Commanders.

ANKI OVERDRIVE™





COUCHMASTER CYCON

For quite some time, the main gripe I've had when playing games from the comfort of my sofa is that, for FPS games at least, I haven't been afforded the accuracy that comes with using a mouse and keyboard for input. Nerdytec have, however, come up with an elegant solution to that problem.

Enter the Couchmaster. The model we have here is the Cycon, which is their all-singing, all-dancing version that comes with all of the gadgetry you'll need for comfortable couch

based gaming. Out of the box, you'll get the two armrest pieces, the support case (which houses the USB3 hub), a 5 meter active USB3 extension cable, mousemat and a pocket for your mouse to go in when not in use.

The two armrest pieces are fairly simple, comprising of a foam inner and faux leather outer (other fabrics are available) that are fairly sturdy, but still allow your arms to rest on them without causing discomfort. Before use, I had worried that the armrests may have ended up





pushing my shoulders up, however, in use it became apparent that this wasn't the case.

The real meat of the Cycon is in the support case. In order to set this up, you need to remove two panels from the back of the case, and wire in your mouse and keyboard to the internal USB3 hub. Take note, that you'll also need to connect the USB3 hub extension wire that allows it to be connected to the longer 5m extension at this point. Something I'd forgotten to do and had to re-open the back of the support case to solve...

Once the keyboard and mouse is in place, you can hook up the Cycon's USB3 hub to your PC using the supplied 5m cable, and then get yourself comfortable for some gaming. Sitting at the Couchmaster feels a little weird at first, as you adapt to the more outward placement of your arms and hands. Initially, it's a little difficult moving your hands to the keyboard to type, but this is likely caused by years worth of muscle conditioning from sitting at a desk. It becomes second nature quickly enough, and

you'll be using your mouse and keyboard as naturally as if you were at a more standard setting of a desk. Getting in and out of a seated position is relatively easy too, as you can slide the support case over one of the arm rests to facilitate movement. Since the pieces are separate, you could also use the support case on it's own over a chair that has armrests already. Nerdytec do sell the support case solo - should you already have a single-seater chair that means the armrest pieces would go unused.

A major plus point is that the unit can be used for more than just a keyboard and mouse combo, with the addition of a USB port on the top of the support case, you could quite easily connect a joystick or gamepad to your PC such that you could control games like Elite: Dangerous whilst retaining the full command set afforded to you by having a keyboard at hand. Alternatively, you can pop your laptop on top of the support case and use it from the comfort of your sofa too. Though, if you've wired in a keyboard and mouse, you'll need to find somewhere to "hang" them whilst

using a laptop - or unwire them from the base completely.

I've since spent a couple of our Theme Nights here at GameOn using the Couchmaster Cycon, playing games such as Counter-Strike: Global Offensive





and Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare, interspersed with time spent playing single player outings. Sitting in front of a home-theatre system and large screen had me wanting to relive some of the experiences of games gone by, to see them in a new light. So with that, I fired up Half-Life 2 and got to work saving City 17 (again). Sat on the sofa, with the Couchmaster in place, watching

constant mouse shifting and keyboard presses meant nothing to the Cycon, which sat there and ate them up like it was a fully fledged desk. To wind down from all that, I moved onto some Factorio and well, 5 hours later I was still sat as comfy as ever laying waste to hordes of biters and placing transport belts, which speaks volumes for the comfort and usability of the Cycon.



Gordon Freeman get ported to the other side of the office on a large TV with full surround sound brought new life to the game, instead of being hunched over a small 22 inch screen with only a stereo headset for audio, and that's part of what makes the Couchmaster Cycon such a great addition to the gamers set piece. I also figured that a good test of the stability of the Cycon would be to play some strategy games, like an old favourite Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2,

Lastly, there's some additional gadgets available for the Couchmaster; an ash-tray, phone holder and a tablet holder round out the selection of what's available as optional extras. I quite like the idea of mounting a tablet to the Cycon, for those times you need to look up crafting recipes in Minecraft or where that last damn flag is in Assassin's Creed.





RRP: £159.99
/ \$N/A



Suitable for:



Handhelds



PC



PlayStation 4



Xbox One





E-WIN FLASH NORMAL SERIES FLC GAMING CHAIR

It has been said in the past that I'm a little tight with money. Hardware, peripherals, the 2DS - if there was a cheap version of something, it was good enough for me. My last chair was from Costco, and cost about £150. I forget what brand it was, or if it even had a brand. As I say, I needed a chair, and it was good enough.

When E-Win got in touch about their gaming chair, I'll admit my curiosity was piqued. There are no shortage of gaming chairs, but being extremely frugal I've of course never tried one of those: I was happy to try E-Win as my first one. They sent over one from the Flash range, and given my measurements they decided the Normal size would be best. 183cm and 91 kg, in case you wondered.

Being a chair, it arrived in an absolutely huge box. I could have comfortably shipped two of my kids off in it - the non-tween ones. It was packaged neatly, and there was just enough padding to keep it in one piece.

You get gloves, the back, the seat, feet, middle pole and five wheels, as well as three screws and two end caps. Oh, and two hex keys, because two of the screws are slightly smaller than literally every other screw... Yes, I said gloves, they're to stop you

getting your new chair sticky while you assemble it. And probably in case a part nips your skin...

Assembly is pretty easy, and since most of the screws are already in place, you just have to unfasten them and put things in their correct position. It took me about half an hour with following the clear instructions. I had a little trouble with getting the angle right with one of the screws, which ate into my time.

Once constructed, the Flash is very stable. I mean really - I pulled the handle and leaned back in one smooth motion, and my wife burst out laughing because she thought I was about to topple over backwards. Yeah, and you judged me for talking about putting my kids in a box, didn't you? Anyway, whilst in full recline I felt totally safe. Ironically, if you lean forwards on the chair and sit on the edge of the seat, it does tip forwards, so don't pick things up off of the floor in front of you.

However, due to the range of movement in the arms and all of the buttons attached to them, they do feel pretty wobbly. I suppose if they were too stiff they would be more difficult to move, but it doesn't feel great.

What surprised me most was how high the Flash is. On it's lowest setting, it's only just





below what my old chair was on the highest. At it's highest, my toes don't even touch the floor, and I pretty much have to tiptoe to get up onto it. Having completed a Health & Safety course years ago, I remember that your eye line should be with the top of your monitor. Well, thanks to this chair's lowest setting, my eyes are there.

I think the only thing I haven't mentioned yet are the two cushions which came with the Flash. There's one near the top for your head, and a larger, firmer one for your back. Unfortunately, because it's adjustable, I don't really know where to put it. Where is your "lumbar", anyway? It has aided my posture, though, so I'm not too upset.

For the week that I've had it, E-Win's Flash has been firm and comfortable, no matter if I'm sitting, lounging or lying in it. The fabric covering it is like a soft faux leather, which is better than real faux leather (is that a thing?) in

that I don't have to peel my skin off of it when wearing shorts and sat with my leg beneath me.

I was prepared to complain loudly about anything I found wrong with this chair, and I honestly have. It spins smoothly, the wheels are nice and chunky to allow it to glide across the carpet, and it's comfortable when sat in for extended periods of time. I really like the Flash E-Win Racing gaming chair, and feel good in recommending it.



RRP: from £279.00
/ from \$379.00





LOOT CRATE

If you've been around the internet, you've at least seen an advert for Loot Crate. If not, then you're one of the few people left who hasn't been tempted by stuff! That's the draw of Loot Crate - you get stuff sent to your house every single month, and you don't know what it will be. A pen in the shape of Ratchet & Clank's omniwrench? A statuette of The Flash? Metal chopsticks with a rubber Freddy Kruger hand attached? Who knows?!

subscribe to multiple crates if you wanted to. Loot Crate gives you multiple tiers.

Maybe the Gaming Crate isn't for you, and you're after something more niche than the regular Loot Crate. There's a ton of themed crates to choose from: anime, pets, Star Trek - heck, there's even the Apparel Crate if you're just after a t-shirt or pair of socks once a month. If you're interested in checking out the swag, or



Take the October Gaming Crate, for instance. Demon themed, it came with a DOOM Space Marine Funko Pop, a Lords of the Daedra Skyrim book, two DOOM-themed shotgun shell shot glasses, a pack of Dungeons & Dragons playing cards, a Diablo-themed t-shirt and a badge.

You'll get a t-shirt in every crate, but if you subscribe to one crate, you will get stuff like that every four weeks. Heck, you could

setting up a subscription, head over to LootCrate.com. You can pick a crate, choose a one, three, six or 12 month subscription, and set it up, with delivery starting from the next crate available.

RRP: from £24.00
/ from \$15.99



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SAMSUNG GALAXY S8+

I've always been a bit of a size queen when it comes to phones. My last one was the Samsung Galaxy Note 4, because it had the biggest screen available. I've no doubt that my staunch anti-iPhone stance might even sway, should Apple ever bring out a decently sized device around my upgrade time. But thankfully, Samsung appear to have done just that with the Galaxy S8+.

First off, the technical specs which you can skip over if you already know them: Octa-core (2.35GHz Quad + 1.9GHz Quad) processor, 4GB RAM and 64GB internal storage, with the ability to upgrade the storage via micro-SD by up to 256GB.

The screen weighs in at 6.2 inches, thanks to the bezel-less design. In case you're unfamiliar with that term, look at the majority of phones - you'll see that there is a border around the edges of the screen. Well, the S8 and S8+ don't have that, due to the screen sloping over the sides of the handset. There aren't even any physical buttons on the face of the device, giving plenty more space for the screen.

One thing that looks great, but is in actuality awful, is the glass back. I honestly do love how it looks, but it's so slippery if you put it down on anything that isn't perfectly flat. I had to buy a case so that there was something stopping it from falling off of everything I placed it on.

Also on the rear is a 12 megapixel camera, the flash, pulse reader and fingerprint scanner. I

have it set up so that my fingerprints unlock the phone, and the only problem I ever have is when the case prevents me from covering the sensor with a finger properly. When the case is off, it reads perfectly, despite what I've seen online.

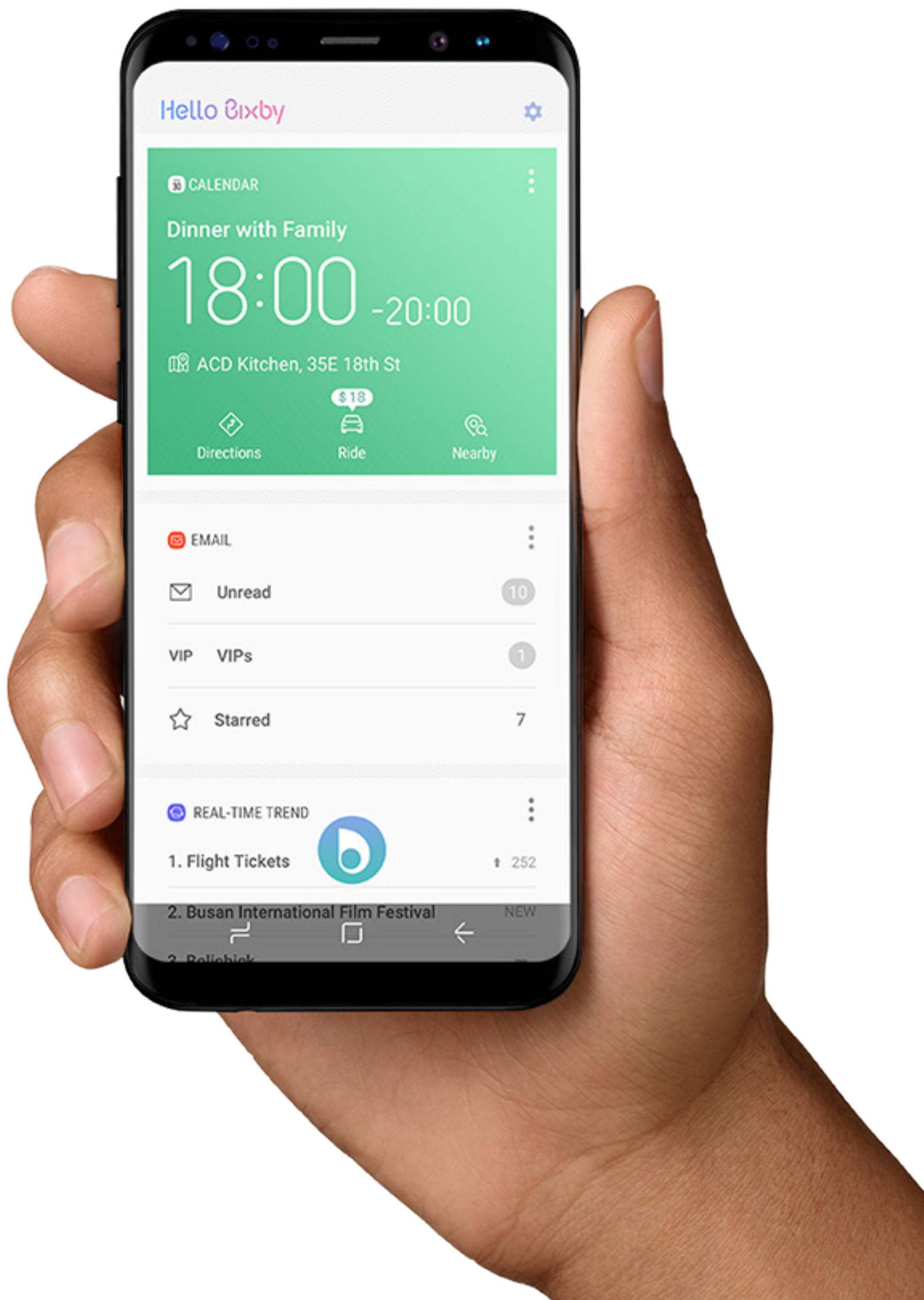
The top of the handset has a microphone and the SIM and Micro SD slot, which pops out by using the supplied pokey tool. The bottom has the USB-C and headphone ports, as well as another microphone and the loudspeaker.

On the right side of the handset is the power button, with the left side housing the volume buttons as well as the Bixby button. The display is nice and crisp looking, and topped with an 8MP camera, speaker, plus the usual sensors.

Bixby is Samsung's version of Google Assistant, Amazon's Alexa and Apple's Siri. If you're on the home screen and hit the button (or swipe right), it will show you various cards. Your calendar entries, latest from Twitter -- it's customisable. It didn't launch with voice support, which is a shame as I might actually use it if it had that.

You may be wondering how you get to the home screen without a dedicated button. Well, hidden beneath the glass screen is a sensor that, when pressed a little harder than you'd take the screen, acts as a home button. It's quite ingenious. When the screen is on, the button is visibly where it should be, unless in a full-screen application such as a game.







The phone is quick to boot up, and apps load nice and fast. Even switching from the camera to the gallery - which on the Note 4 took a good 20 seconds thanks to the huge number of photos I had on my memory card - takes less than two seconds on the S8+.

Of course, the main reason one would buy this phone is the display. It has a maximum resolution of 2960x1440 (WQHD+), and can be changed down to 2220x1080 (FHD+) or 1480x720 (HD+). Presumably the difference is more noticeable when plugged into a

bigger screen, because honestly I have an eye for tiny details and even I couldn't see much difference apart from colour depth.

You can also change the screen mode, which alters how colours appear; Basic, AMOLED photo, AMOLED cinema and Adaptive display. Both this and the resolution play into the battery life. Speaking of which...

The battery life is very impressive. I get an average of 45 hours worth of moderate usage before I'm desperate for a recharge. If I turned on power saving, it would go closer to 60 hours -- maximum power saving boasts that it would increase it three fold to over 150 hours! This does things such as decreasing your screen brightness, lowering the resolution, turning off all background network usage (such as email retrieval), and putting a limiter on the CPU speed. I decided to deactivate the Always On Display to increase battery life, otherwise it just shows the clock on the screen whenever you're not using it.

Some of the features I'm unfamiliar with (and so assuming are new), are the Edge Panels and the call display. If you swipe from the 3-4 pixels on the right edge of the phone, it brings up the panels. There are a huge selection available, including contacts, the clipboard, quick tools... It's quite useful, and makes it quicker to navigate to things. The call display is another awesome addition, since it checks numbers against some kind of database to warn you when you're receiving a suspected spam or fraudulent call.

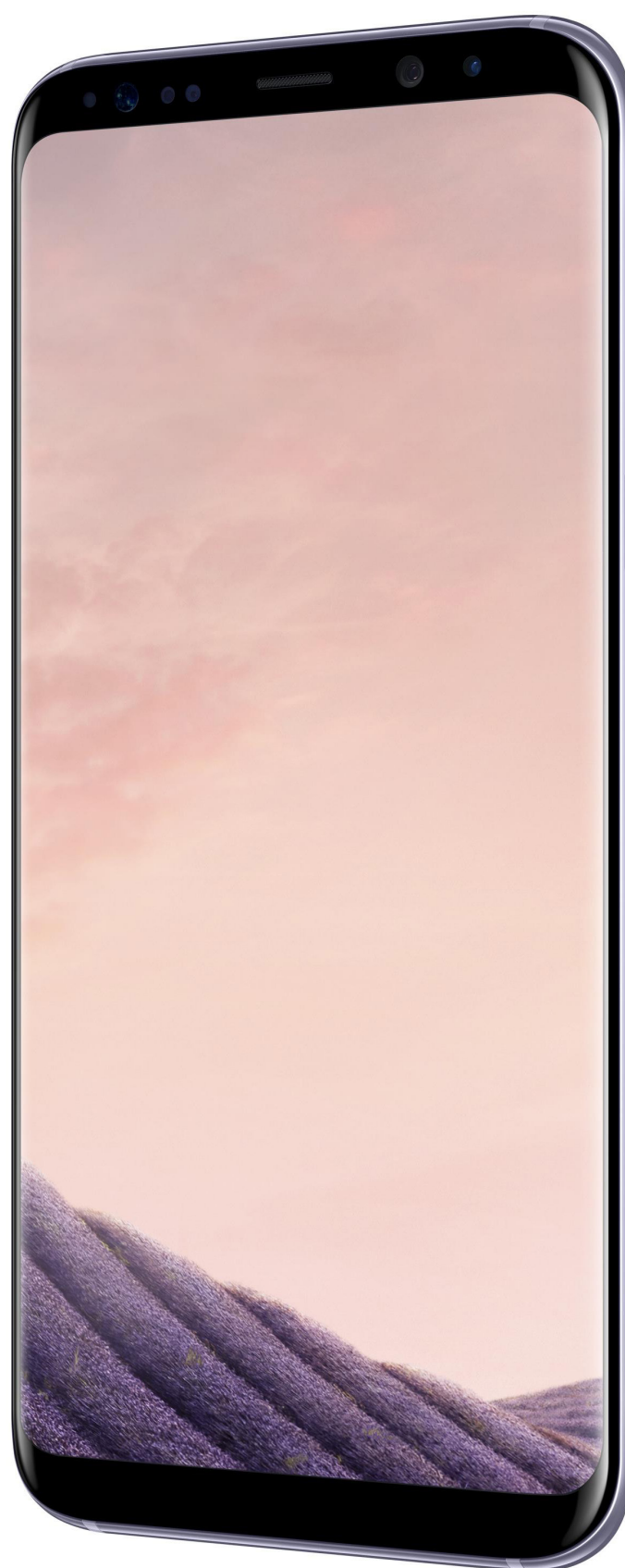
In all, the Galaxy S8+ is a solid device, with some great updates for anyone who has waited





two years. It has a very solid build, with only a few parts that might scratch easily, with the rest encased in nice, thick glass which makes it splash resistant. If you don't mind it sliding off of things, and need the very slight speed and screen boost over the normal S8, then it's definitely one to consider.

**RRP: £779.00
/ \$759.00**





THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CONSOLES

Trying to decide which console to buy isn't being made any easier, with the recent releases of some upgraded versions of the latest consoles. Hopefully this will help you pick out which one you're looking for.

Xbox One

Standard model, which has gone down in price since the introduction of the newer "S" and "X" models.

Xbox One S

4K blu-ray player, 40% smaller and slightly more powerful than original Xbox One. Offers HDR content, can be positioned vertically and internal power supply (avoids the blocky object attached to the cable, allowing better fitting into more confined areas). Built-in storage available is up to 1TB. HDMI 2.0 allows 4K and 60FPS. IR (InfraRed), TV controller compatibility, more updated controller. (Available separately)



Xbox One X

Whereas the S allows 4K media playback, the X is much more powerful. It is more than twice as powerful as its predecessors, and still packs in a 1TB hard drive.

This allows you to play games in 4K, with more games being enhanced to give you much better graphics in higher resolutions.





Buyer beware:

Prices will vary depending on a variety of factors such as location, stock availability and the amount of items bundled with the console. Bundled items may include games and controllers.

The PlayStation Pro and Xbox One X are the only console which will cost over £300 / \$300 *without* games.

PlayStation 4

The “slim” is now the standard PS4 model and is 30% smaller, 16% lighter and 28% better at power consumption, with fewer USB ports. If you understood what all that means, you’ll also be glad to know it houses the exact same innards as the original PS4 so your games won’t look any different. Unlike the original, the Slim comes with both a 500GB and 1TB options with prices starting from around £230. In a nutshell, it’s more of the same, in a better looking and smaller body.



PlayStation Pro

The PlayStation 4 with more power, perfect for those obsessed with crisper graphics, better frame rates and a 1080p resolution. With a price of around £400 and coming with a 1TB hard-drive, it is on the more expensive side of other consoles you can currently buy, but there is a reason. The PS Pro has a more powerful and faster GPU & CPU at its core, as well as harnessing the latest in HDR and 4K technology. Though there is no 4K Blu-Ray player for films (Sony are working with Netflix and YouTube on 4K streaming apps), the games you play will be the best looking ever seen on a PlayStation console, appearing all the better if you have a 4K television. Having the new console won’t hinder the games you can play either, all PS4 games will be compatible with the Pro, some even receiving patches to optimise the Pro’s technology. If you’re obsessed with the latest tech, it’s certainly for you, but if you just want to jump into the console space, the Slim will be just fine.





STORAGE BASICS

In this guide I aim to give a brief rundown of what's currently available on the market, good use cases for each technology, and help make things a little clearer for potential buyers. I'll be looking at internal drives in this article specifically in the consumer space.

Mechanical / Magnetic Drives

When talking about hard drives, most people think of the traditional drive that's been around since 1956. Offering the highest capacities in the consumer space at a reasonably low cost, this type of drive stores data on rotating platters (also known in the industry as "spinning rust").

Solid State Drives

Solid State Drives or SSD's have been around for awhile now but have really caught in in recent times due to the increases in capacities.

Where as a traditional hard drive uses metal platters with magnetic coatings to store the information, SSD's use non-volatile flash memory instead which can offer a number of benefits. performance is the main gain but also they can use less power, put out less heat and are silent. SSD's are available in a wider variety of form factors which I will detail further later in this article.

Hybrid Drives

Hybrid drives are a hybrid of the standard tried and tested hard drive with the relatively newer SSD.

The integrated Solid State Drive is generally of a small capacity around 16—32GB and

is used as a cache. Frequently read data is kept on the SSD portion of the disk for faster access, while the rest of the disk stores the brunt of the information. Whilst you won't get the performance of a full SSD with a hybrid drive, you will generally notice performance gain over a standard hard drive. These drives are commonly known as Hybrid or SSHD.

You can purchase a hybrid drive which combines the SSD and hard drive in one package, which is the most straightforward way, or you can also add a separate small SSD to your system in combination with an existing hard drive. The SSD will then work as a cache for your existing drive though this is a little more complicated as it requires a specific combination of hardware and software.

Form Factors

2.5"

This is the standard model that most of you will be familiar with. It looks like a standard hard drive and connects to your motherboard via SATA, Delivering good performance and generally offering the best capacity for an SSD.

M.2

The M.2 form factor replaces the old mSATA standard and comes in varying lengths of 30, 42, 60, 80 and 110 mm. mSATA plugged into mini-PCIexpress slots on older Laptops.





Supported busses for M.2 are PCI-E, SATA and USB 3.0. Check your motherboard when purchasing whilst most will take all three standards some boards will only accept one of them (PCI-E M.2 drives, for example).

I am a big fan of M.2 due to the form factor, these drives are very small and fit into a socket on the motherboard, which means no data / power cables and an overall tidier look inside the computer.

On the PCI-E side of things, the legacy Advanced Host Controller Interface (AHCI) is supported for older SATA drives, as well as the newer NVMe Express (NVMe) for newer PCI-E drives.

U.2

This is a bit of an odd one, as currently only a single SSD vendor supports the standard, Intel. However, I can see it catching on — the drives are your standard 2.5" form factor and will fit nicely in many current cases out there, the differences being the interface and the cabling. Essentially, the drives use the same PCI-E 3.0 4x interface that the M.2 drives use, but with a more familiar cable and socket on the motherboard for connectivity. Performance-wise, the drives are on par with the M.2 variants.

In theory, with the right setup you should be able to have more of these hooked up to a single system, but as with the M.2, there is only so much space on the motherboard to put the connectors.



**PCI-E**

I have already mentioned PCI-E in both the M.2 section and the U.2 section, but this is a third type which installs directly into a PCI-E slot just like your GPU does. This is the more familiar PCI-E device. Again expect performance in the same ball park as the M.2 drive and the U.2 drives.

SATA Vs PCI-E

So you're looking for a new drive which one do you choose: SATA or PCI-E? Well, the main benefit of PCI-E over SATA is its performance. Both drives can be a lot faster but will you really notice it in the real world? That depends on the workloads. Windows will load faster and feel snappier on a PCI-E drive, however, with gaming you probably won't notice a huge difference.

SATA also costs a lot less, which may also be a consideration — most people I know who have SATA-based SSD's are very happy with its performance.

Personally, I use both. I have a small PCI-E based M.2 SSD for Windows and a larger SATA based 2.5" drive for my ever growing Steam collection, and I find this a great balance.

Terms used in this article

Essentially, NVMe is a logical device interface specification that was designed from the ground up for PCI-E SSDs. The

specification improves over AHCI in a number of ways in order to make the most of the low latency and parallelisation of PCI-E SSD's.

PCI-E - 'Peripheral Component Interconnect Express'

A high-speed serial computer expansion bus standard, designed to replace older less performant standards.

SSD - 'Solid State Drive'

A hard drive that has no moving parts, allowing data to be accessed much faster than a standard hard drive.

NVMe - 'Non-Volatile Memory Express'

A logical device interface specification that was designed from the ground up for PCI-E SSDs. It utilises the low latency and parallelisation of PCI-E SSDs to perform better than AHCI





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RRP: £9.00
/ \$12.00





THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM SPECIAL EDITION STRATEGY GUIDE

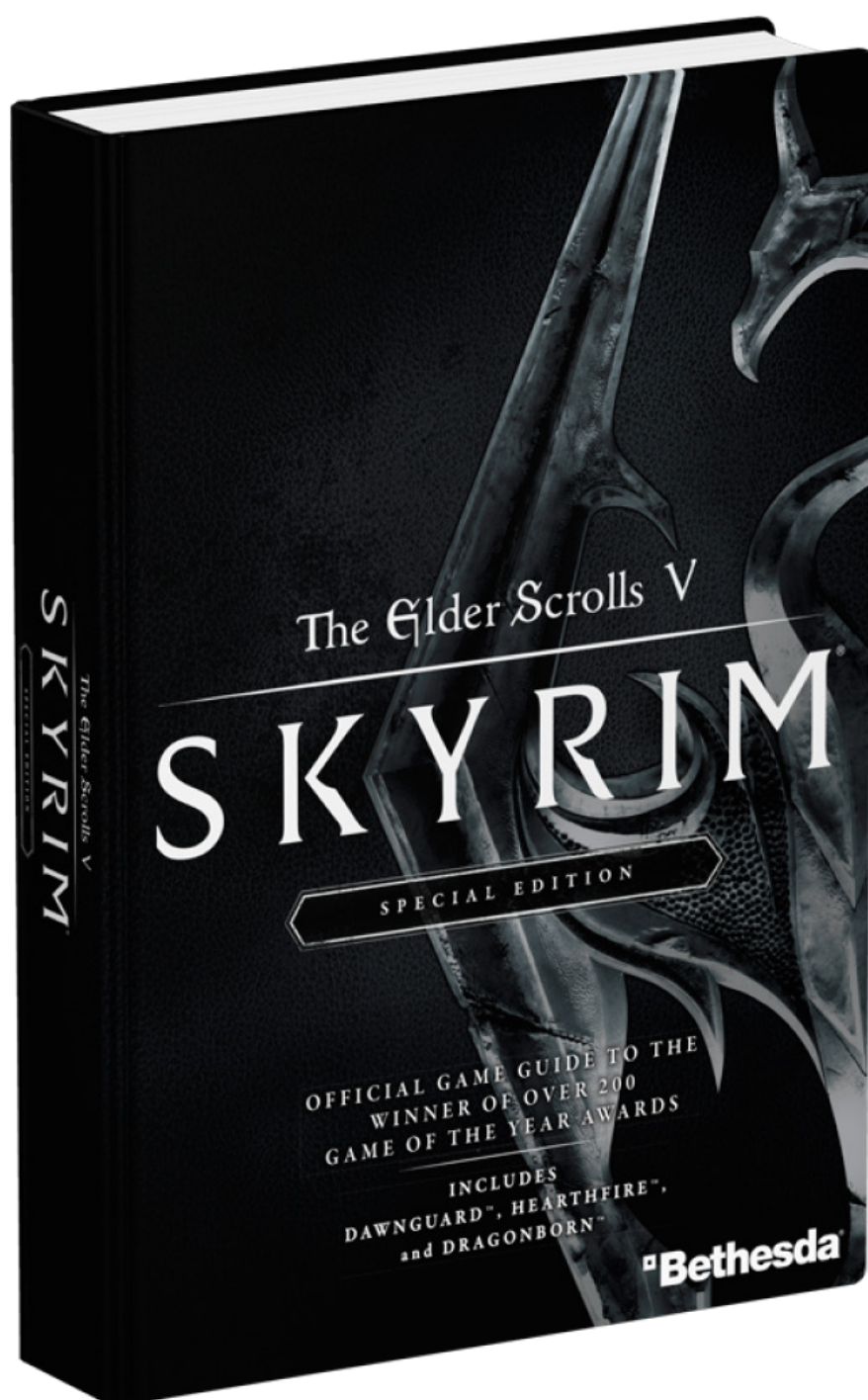
Following the release of Skyrim: Remastered Edition, Prima Games have brought out a full guidebook of the whole game, and they really haven't held back at all.

RRP: £24.99
/ \$49.99

The detail within the book is simply astronomical. On the first few pages you are given a list of clear strengths/weaknesses with every race, as well a backstory behind their lore. From there, it launches into a guide about everything the game has to offer. Absolutely everything.

Every single weapon is detailed in the book. Walkthroughs for each mission (with methods for the best outcome these missions can offer, if multiple choices are available). They also reveal all of the locations and players are given a full, detailed map of the whole Skyrim area.

All in all, this guide is absolutely perfect for a fan of The Elder Scrolls. The sheer amount of detail contained within its pages will appeal to both new players, and even old ones that already poured hundreds of hours into the game. A must-have gift for any players of the game.



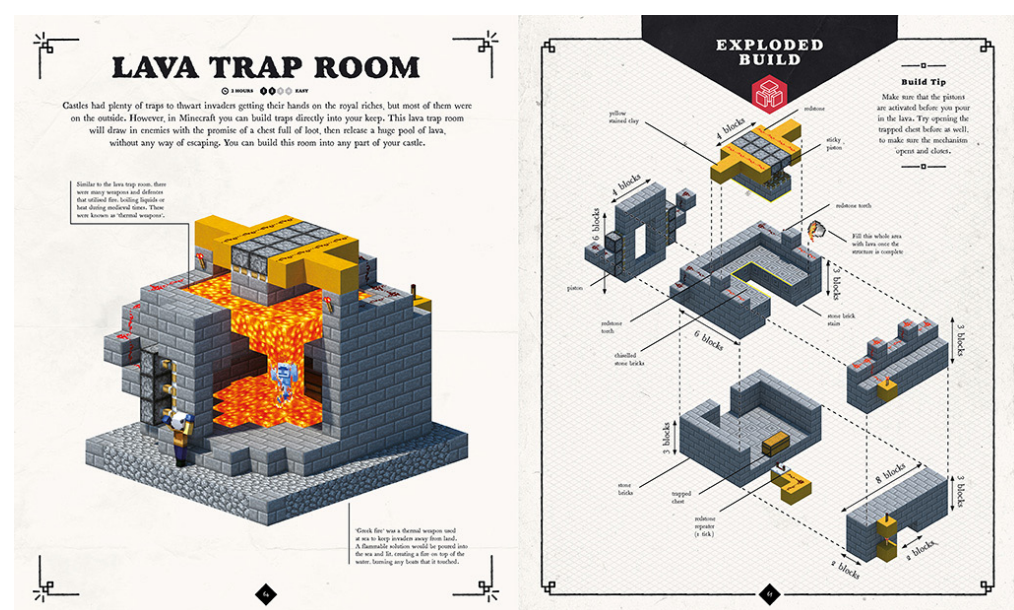


MINECRAFT: MEDIEVAL FORTRESS

Minecraft: Medieval Fortress is a building guidebook that can be appealing to both newcomers and experienced players. Being an avid player of the game for several years now, the booklet caught my attention as building had always been something that I had wanted to do, but lacked the creative flair in order to do so, instead dedicating my time to online PvP servers.

Within Medieval Fortress, you are given a step-by-step guide into building your own medieval town, complete with villages, castles and defence walls (with actual defensive measures, such as player outposts and traps within it). The illustrations within the book make the builds extremely easy to follow and splits & categorises it into many different sections, as to make sure the reader does not get lost or confused.

Overall, the Medieval Fortress guidebook is a fantastic gift for anyone who owns Minecraft. Even if they don't build very often, the detailed explanations behind each step make it very easy for new builders to follow, yet its complexity and sheer detail means that experienced builders can still find something new.



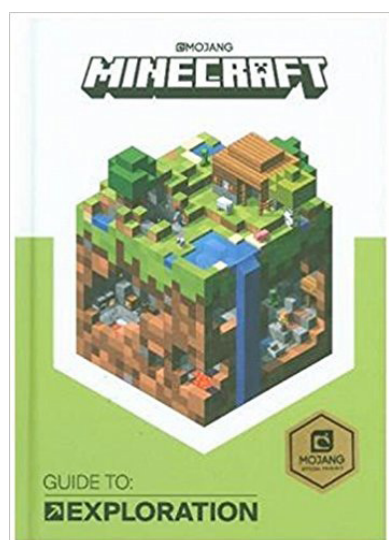
**RRP: £7.00
/ \$12.78**





MINECRAFT BOOKS

Minecraft: Guide to Exploration



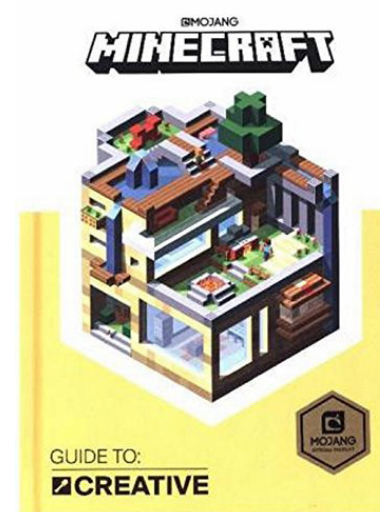
The official Minecraft Guide to Exploration from Mojang will help you to survive and thrive. You'll learn how to find resources, craft equipment and protect yourself from hostile mobs. Discover which biomes to avoid when starting out, how to build a mob-proof shelter and where to look for naturally-generated structures laden with loot.

**RRP: £5.00
/ \$10.00**

Minecraft: Guide to Creativity

Learn the finer points of architecture, art and other creative disciplines with Minecraft Guide to Creative, and put theory into practice to build incredible constructions in Minecraft. Find out how to combine colours and textures to create different themes, devise intricate plans for complex builds, and discover secret hacks to use blocks in clever ways.

**RRP: £5.00
/ \$10.00**





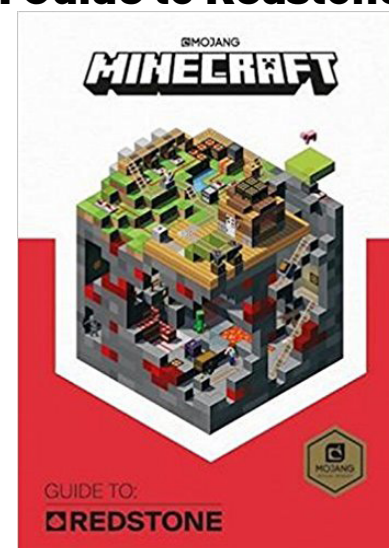
Minecraft: Guide to The Nether & The End



The official Minecraft Guide to the Nether and the end will help you survive as you navigate new terrain, discover new hostile mobs and attempt to collect unique materials. Learn how to kill fire-resistant mobs in the Nether and repurpose Nether fortresses, then master the art of defeating the ender dragon and explore the outer islands of the End dimension.

RRP: £5.00
/\$10.00

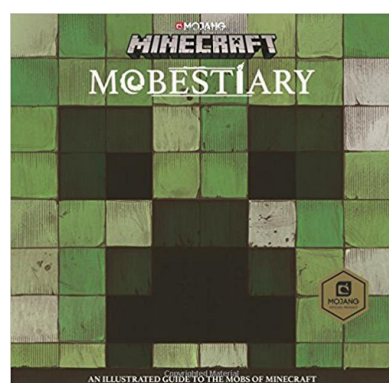
Minecraft: Guide to Redstone



Learn the art of redstone and become a master engineer with the Minecraft Guide to Redstone, and put theory into practice to construct intricate contraptions in Minecraft. Pick up the basics of the redstone components and their uses, discover how to make working circuits, and create incredibly complex builds using your new skills. With insider info and tips from the experts at Mojang, this is the definitive guide to engineering in Minecraft.

RRP: £5.00
/\$10.00

Minecraft Mobestiary

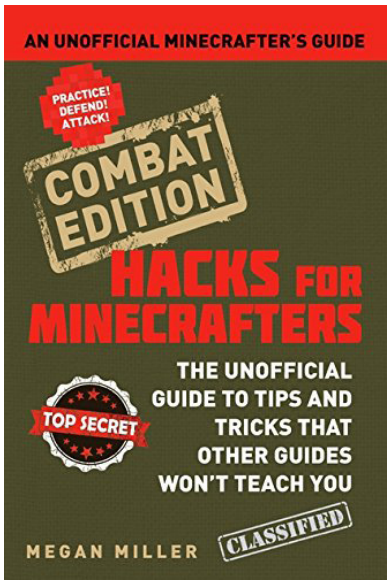


Written by a naturalist who has made it his life's work to study Minecraft's mobs, and illustrated with field sketches, Minecraft Mobestiary is the definitive guide to every mob in the game. You'll find little-known facts about passive, neutral, hostile, utility and boss mobs, as well as more general information about their location, behaviour, threat level and drops.

RRP: £5.00
/\$10.00



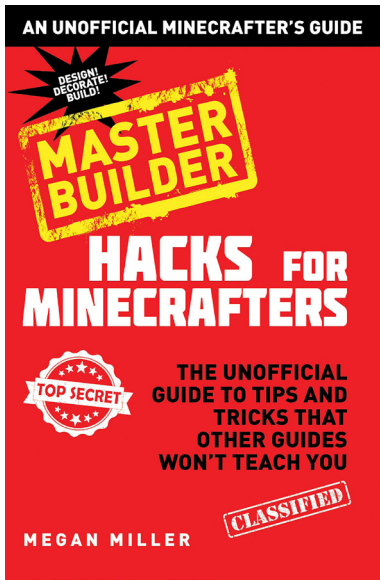
Hacks for Minecrafters: Combat Edition: An Unofficial Minecrafters Guide



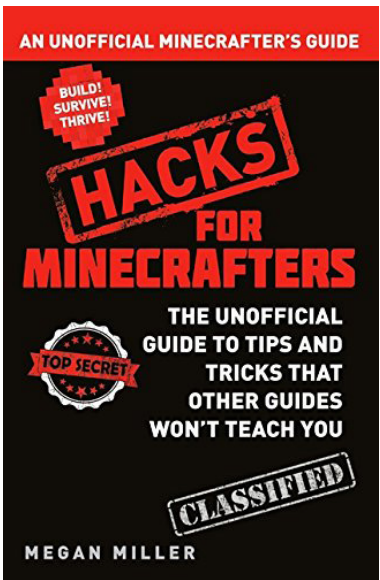
RRP: £6.99
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Hacks for Minecrafters: Master Builder: An Unofficial Minecrafters Guide

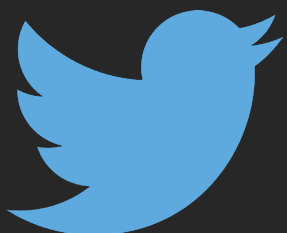
RRP: £6.99
/ \$8.19



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