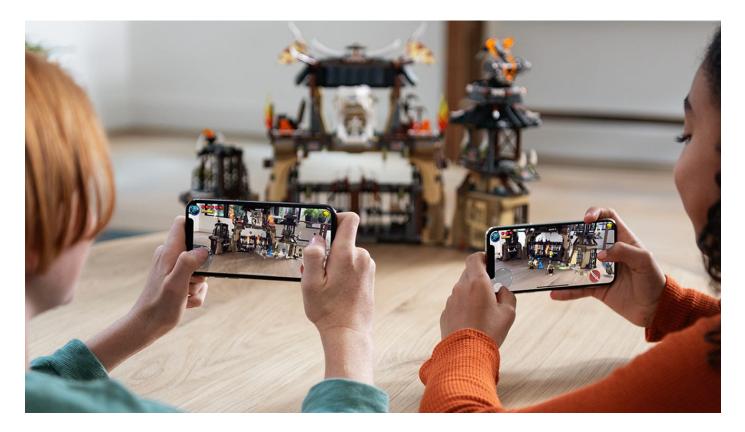
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By the numbers, Apple's iPhone tops PlayStation, Xbox as most popular video game device



When it comes to gaming systems, you might think the most popular is the Sony PlayStation 4, Microsoft's Xbox One, or perhaps the Nintendo Switch. Nope.

Maybe Windows 10 PCs? Wrong.

With more than 1 billion iPhones sold over the past decade, the indisputable fact is this pocket-sized device – based on Apple's iOS operating system – enjoys the largest installed base of gamers. And this doesn't include iPads, which also run on the iOS platform.

"There are 900 million iPhones out there, only around 300 million consoles, so it is clearly the biggest base of gamers," confirms Michael Pachter, research analyst at Wedbush Securities. "No individual console has ever had an installed base of 200 million."

There are several reasons for the iPhone's popularity among gamers, maintains Pachter, including accessibility, convenience, a huge variety of free-to-play games, and short duration game sessions. "It has all of the obvious advantages," he adds.

Gaming on your PC?: Check out these 6 accessories you need to score

'The Division 2': Tom Clancy video game brings a battered Washington, D.C., to life

You might argue comparing an iPhone to a home console is apples to oranges (pardon the pun), as a smartphone isn't a dedicated gaming system – it's also used for calls, messaging, photos, GPS, web browsing, productivity apps, and so on – but according to Statista, more than 50 percent of smartphone users game on their device.

Plus, while the Android operating system has a bigger overall install base than iOS worldwide, there isn't just one manufacturer of Android devices, therefore Apple's iPhone claim is valid.

Also trailing the iPhone: the 700 million or so shipped personal computers that run Microsoft's Windows 10 operating system, according to estimates from <u>tech site Neowin</u>.

A closer look at iPhone's handle on video games

There are three devices on the market today: iPhone XR (from \$749), iPhone

XS (from \$999) and iPhone XS Max (from \$1099). While the specs vary somewhat, they benefit from Apple's A12 Bionic chip that can handle intensive games, thanks in part to its 6-core CPU (central processing unit) and 4-core GPU (graphics processing unit).

As big as 6.5 inches on the iPhone XS Max, the larger, very immersive displays on these devices can produce vibrant color, deliver vibrations as feedback, and loud stereo audio, too.

The iPhone's cameras also unlock magical augmented reality experiences, which fuse the physical world with a digital one (see below).

There are several accessories available to enhance your gaming experience including wireless controllers, Bluetooth speakers and headphones, battery packs, special cases and stands. Some are certified as "Made for iPhone" ("MFi"), such as the <u>Gamevice Controller for iPhone</u> (\$79), which fits the device in between the controller's buttons, joysticks, d-pad, and more.

Video games? There's plenty of apps for that

A gaming platform is only as good as its software. Fortunately for iPhone owners, there's quality *and* quantity.

Apple's App Store houses well more than 2 million downloads, with a good number of them games, covering all genres, and catering to varying skill levels. Many are officially compatible with the iPad, too, for larger screen entertainment.

The most popular iOS gaming apps of all time? King's "Candy Crush Saga," followed by Kiloo's "Subway Surfers," Halfbrick's "Fruit Ninja," Supercell's "Clash of Clans," and Tencent's "Honour of Kings" (in that order).

According to Apple, app developers have earned more than \$120 billion since the App Store opened its virtual doors on July 10, 2008, and with more than a quarter of that impressive number earned in 2018 alone.

'Pokémon Go' is only start for augmented reality

Apple is doubling down on augmented reality (AR), which superimposes digital information on top of the real world seen through the lens of the iPhone camera.

From visualizing what a new sofa may look like in your family room and measuring real-world objects to finding your way to an airport gate with virtual arrows on the ground, there are endless applications for augmented reality – and gaming is no exception.

Breakthrough games like Nintendo's "Pokémon Go" is a well-known example of AR, as it challenges players to go outside and catch virtual critters. The game makes it appear as if characters like Pikachu and other Pokémon are right in front of you.

Apple says its hardware and software have been designed to work together – the tech giant has its own ARKit augmented reality tools for iOS developers to create engaging experiences.

Upcoming 'Elder Scrolls: Blades' video game cuts stylish path

Fans of The Elder Scrolls role-playing games, like "Skyrim," can soon take the action to go with "The Elder Scrolls: Blades," a new adventure crafted by Bethesda Softworks.

In 'The Elder Scrolls: Blades," you return to your hometown after being forced

into exile, only to find it reduced to rubble. You must find the source of this devastation, rebuild your surroundings, and unravel a much larger mystery.

Played from a first-person perspective – I had some hands-on time with the upcoming game at a recent media preview – you'll enter dungeons, and use might and magic to defeat enemies with well-timed screen swipes. As with many other role-playing games, you'll upgrade your skills over time, find a ton of gear, and take on quests.

Along with the main story campaign is an online Arena mode for one-on-one real-time battles against other players and an infinitely replayable Abyss mode, a dungeon that dishes up an increasingly difficult waves of enemies.

Between its high-resolution characters and rich environments, impressive lighting and special effects (including lightning bolt attacks), the graphics of 'Blades' will no doubt wow even the most finicky of gamers.

The game can be played in portrait (vertical) mode or, at any time, turned sideways for a wider landscape (horizontal) view.

No word on when the game will be available, but Bethesda says it will be sometime in 2019.

Do you have a favorite iPhone game? Tell us in the Comments below or <u>on</u> <u>Twitter</u>.

Follow Marc on Twitter: <u>@marc_saltzman</u>. Email him or subscribe to his Tech It Out podcast at <u>www.marcsaltzman.com</u>.