

Some Key Moments in the History of Video Games

Except for the first item, all artifacts illustrated in the timeline reside in the collections of the International Center for the History of Electronic Games® at The Strong®.



1961

MIT student Steve Russell invents *Spacewar!*, the first computer-based video game. Unfortunately, only a few people with access to a mainframe computer can play it.



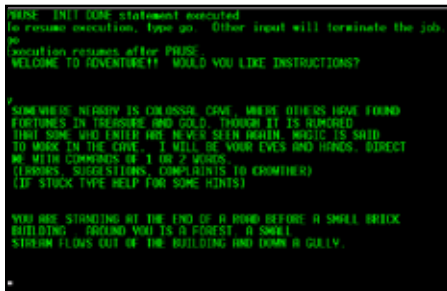
1968

Ralph H. Baer patents an interactive television game. His famous brown box lets players play tennis and other games. Four years later, in 1972, Magnavox releases Odyssey, the first home video game system, based on his designs.



1975

Atari introduces its home electronic table tennis game, *Pong*. Atari's founder, Nolan Bushnell, cannot find any partners in the toy business, so he sells the first units through the Sears Roebuck sporting goods department.



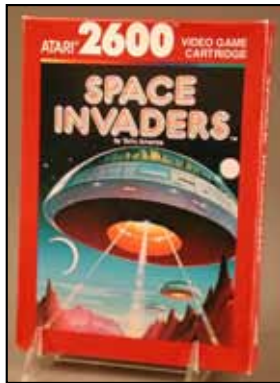
1976

Don Woods's version of the pioneering text-based adventure game, *Adventure* (first created by William Crowther in 1975), plunges players into an imaginary world of caves with treasures. Inspired by *Dungeons and Dragons*, it paves the way for *Zork* and thousands of other computer role-playing games.



1977

Atari releases the Video Computer System, more commonly known as Atari 2600. Featuring a joystick, interchangeable cartridges, games in color, and switches for selecting games and setting difficulty levels, it makes millions of Americans home video-game players.



1978

Taito's *Space Invaders* descends on Japan, causing a shortage of 100-yen coins. Within a year, 60,000 *Space Invaders* machines in the United States tempt Americans to spend millions of quarters driving back the seemingly unstoppable ranks of attacking aliens.



1979

Recognizing the impact of electronic games on children's play, toy maker Mattel enters the video game business with Intellivision. Intellivision has better graphics and more sophisticated controls than Atari 2600, and players love its sports games. However, after five years and three million units sold, Mattel stops making the machine.



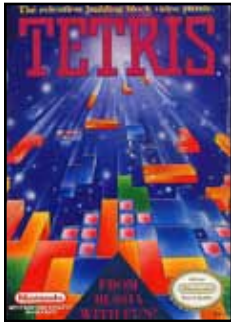
1980

A missing slice of pizza inspires Namco's Toru Iwatani to create *Pac-Man*, which goes on sale in July, 1980. That year a version of *Pac-Man* for Atari 2600 becomes the first arcade hit to appear on a home console. Two years later, *Ms. Pac-Man* strikes a blow for gender equality by becoming the best-selling arcade game of all time.



1981

Video-game fans go ape over Nintendo's *Donkey Kong*, featuring a character that would become world-famous: Jumpman. Never heard of him? That's because he's better known as Mario, the name he took when his creator Shigeru Miyamoto makes him the star of a later game by Nintendo.



1984

Russian mathematician Alexey Pajitnov creates *Tetris*, a simple but addictive puzzle game. The game leaks out from behind the Iron Curtain, and four years later, Nintendo bundles it with every new Game Boy.



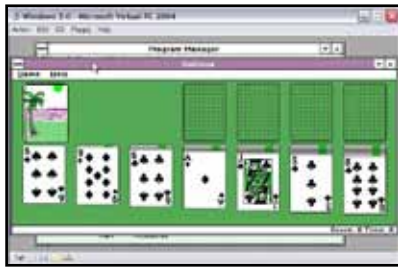
1985

Nintendo Entertainment System revives an ailing United States video game industry, two years after its release in Japan as Famicom.



1989

Nintendo's Game Boy popularizes handheld gaming. Game Boy is not the first handheld system with interchangeable cartridges—Milton Bradley introduced Microvision 10 years earlier—but it charms users with its good game play, ease of use, and long battery life.



1990

Microsoft bundles a video game version of the classic card game solitaire with Windows 3.0. Millions of users who would not normally pick up a game console find they enjoy playing computer games. *Solitaire* becomes one of the most popular electronic games ever and provides a gaming model for quick, easy-to-play, casual games like *Bejeweled*.



1991

Sega needed an iconic hero for its Mega Drive/Genesis system, and found it in *Sonic the Hedgehog*. Gamers, especially in the United States, snapped up Sega systems to experience the little blue guy's speed and edgy attitude.



1993

Concern about bloodshed in games such as *Mortal Kombat* prompts United States Senate hearings on video game violence. The controversy riles the industry and prompts the creation of a video-game rating system. Ironically, that same year the game *Doom* popularizes "first person shooters."



1994

Sony releases PlayStation in Japan. In the United States, it sells for \$100 less than Sega Saturn. The lower price point, along with the arrival of Nintendo 64 in 1996, weakens Sega's home console business. When Sony PlayStation 2 debuts in 2000, it becomes the dominant home console and Sega exits the home console business.



2000

Will Wright's *The Sims* models real life. It is not the first simulation game—*Utopia* on Intellivision (1982), Peter Molyneux's *Populous* (1989), *Sid Meier's Civilization* (1991), and Wright's own *Sim City* (1989) preceded it—but it becomes the best-selling computer game ever and the most popular game with female players.



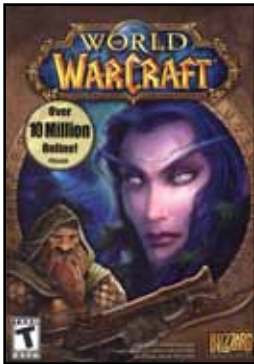
2001

Microsoft enters the video game market with Xbox. Four years later, Xbox 360 gains millions of fans with its advanced graphics and seamless online play.



2006

Nintendo Wii gets gamers off the couch and moving around with innovative, motion-sensitive remotes. Not only does Nintendo make gaming more active, it also appeals to millions of people who never before liked video games.



2008

More than 10 million worldwide subscribers make *World of Warcraft* the most popular massively multiplayer online (MMO) game. MMOs create entire virtual universes for players and redefine how we play, learn, and relate to each other.