8 great Apple Arcade games for your new 2020 iPhone or iPad

This time last year, Apple Arcade was still a fledgling service, but one with a lot of potential. For $5 a month, you could get unlimited access to a big library of interesting games, the kind that no one really sells in the App Store anymore. It’s still not a place to find the latest blockbusters, but Arcade has steadily evolved into one of the best deals in gaming. Its lineup of games is varied and consistently surprising, with everything from family-friendly multiplayer games to engrossing puzzlers to weird story-driven adventures.

If you just picked up a new Apple device and have signed up for Arcade (a new device gets you three months free) the sheer number of games available can be overwhelming. Here are a few great places to start.

We’ve rounded up our favorite and most-used games, apps, and entertainment. Check out our app picks for iPhones, Android phones, Windows PCs, and M1-equipped Macs; our favorite mobile games from Apple Arcade and Google Play Pass; and our top choices for gaming PCs, the PS5, Xbox One and Series X / S, Nintendo Switch, and VR. We’ve also listed our favorite streaming shows on Disney Plus, Hulu, ESPN Plus, and Netflix; some great sci-fi books; and exciting new podcasts. (Note: pricing was accurate at the time of publishing but may change.)

Butter Royale

Butter Royale
Image: Mighty Bear Games
With *Fortnite* no longer a viable iOS experience, *Butter Royale* might just be your next best option. Like Epic's massive hit, *Butter Royale* is a colorful shooter where the goal is to be the last player standing. But there are a few key differences. Battles play out from a top-down perspective, like a classic arcade game, and the game is decidedly nonviolent, with weapons that shoot ketchup and popcorn instead of bullets. Perhaps the best part is that, because it's part of Arcade, there are no in-app purchases, so you don't have to worry about dropping real cash on a cute giraffe costume for your character.

Creaks

Creaks
Image: Amanita Design
Czech studio Amanita Design is known for dark, atmospheric point-and-click adventure games, but it's also a developer that isn't afraid to experiment. *Creaks* keeps the unsettling vibe, but transposes it onto a sort of puzzle / platformer hybrid. You explore a sprawling mansion, one that never seems to end, while finding ways to manipulate machines and monsters to help you get through to the end. As with Amanita's past work, it takes place in an absolutely gorgeous hand-drawn world, but the action is a bit more cerebral this time around.

Games of Thrones: Tale of Crows

Games of Thrones: Tale of Crows
Image: Devolver Digital
Game of Thrones: Tale of Crows is a game where you don't actually do very much. It fits snugly into the idle genre, where the idea is to set plans in motion and then see how they play out. Here, you're put in charge of the infamous Night's Watch from *Game of Thrones*. It's sort of a management game. People come to you with problems, you'll have to send rangers out on scouting trips, and kingdoms from around Westeros will ask for your help. All of these things take time; you might have to wait a few hours before a group of rangers sends back a raven detailing their battle with some wildlings. *Tale of Crows* is a game full of death and danger, but it's also surprisingly soothing. And it fits neatly into your life: all you have to do is play a few minutes every so often to see the story unfold.

Grindstone

[embedded content]

Grindstone was one of Apple Arcade's best launch titles, a game that takes the addictive nature of match-three puzzle games and blends it with absolutely brutal fantasy action. Imagine *Candy Crush* by way of Frank Frazetta. Since then, *Grindstone* has received a steady stream of updates that have only improved the experience, with plenty of more levels, weapons, and enemies to keep things interesting.

Reigns: Beyond

Reigns: Beyond

Image: Devolver Digital

Across its first few entries, the *Reigns* series has been all about exploring stories in a fantasy realm. It plays out sort of like an interactive version of Tinder: as you push through the story, you're constantly confronted with options, and you either swipe left or right to decide what to do. *Reigns: Beyond* takes this same formula and blasts it into space, while also adding a musical element. You're the captain of a sentient ship, guiding a crew through the cosmos while also booking gigs for your intergalactic rock band. It's silly and strange, and almost impossible to put down.

Roundguard

Roundguard
Image: Wonderbelly Games

The classic puzzle game *Peggle* is one that feels timeless, and yet *Roundguard* has managed to put a fascinating new spin on the formula. Essentially, the game takes the peg-breaking action and melds it with a fantasy roleplaying game, where you'll fight monsters and use spells, while still firing little balls to clear out the level. The two elements fit so well together it's a wonder no one has tried this before.

Skate City

Skate City
Image: Snowman

Skateboarding games were thrust back into the spotlight this year thanks to the remastered collection of *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* games. But *Skate City* remains the best approximation of the sport on mobile. It simplifies things, with a side-

scrolling perspective and swipe-based controls, but it manages to capture the feeling of exploring a neighborhood in search of new ways to pull off tricks. It has also grown since launch, with the addition of new cities like Miami.

World’s End Club

[embedded content]

Famed Japanese writers Kotaro Uchikoshi and Kazutaka Kodaka are known for some incredibly dark games, including the *Zero Escape* and *Danganronpa* series, and *World’s End Club* on Apple Arcade fits into that mold very nicely. At the outset of the game, a small group of students awakens in an underwater amusement park and they all have to fight — or work together — to find a key to escape. The twist is that they only have an hour, and only one person can actually get the key. Imagine *The Hunger Games* as a psychological thriller, and you’re partway there.

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