9 great games from 2020 for your new PlayStation 5

If you're one of the lucky few who has snagged a PlayStation 5 since it launched in early November — congratulations. Securing a next-gen console, especially Sony's, has been no easy feat, and there's no telling when buying one won't involve a mad online rush that's basically no different than a chaotic lottery.

If you did secure a PS5, you're probably wondering what exactly you can play on it. After all, next-gen consoles rarely launch with rich libraries of new games. Instead, game console makers tend to reserve a handful of launch titles to hold over the early adopters until at least a year or so into the device's life cycle, when the development of new titles really starts to pick up.

The good news is that the new consoles from both Microsoft and Sony are backward compatible with the last generation of hardware. That means you have a bunch of older games and cross-gen titles available to you, some of which have been optimized for the new hardware's speedier solid-state drive and more powerful processor. And it's worth mentioning that Sony does have some console exclusives, all of which are must-play games if you're a new PS5 owner.

Here's a breakdown of the nine best games to play on your new console over the holiday season.

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.)

Marvel’s Spider-Man: Miles Morales Ultimate Edition

Marvel’s Spider-Man: Miles Morales Ultimate Edition
Image: Sony / Insomniac Games
A standalone follow-up to Insomniac Games’ excellent 2018 *Spider-Man* reboot, *Miles Morales* has a lot going for it. It was developed natively for the PS5, meaning its visuals are breathtaking, and it takes full advantage of the new hardware’s benefits. So it has almost nonexistent load times and a full range of performance and visual modes that you can use to tailor your experience, with a newly introduced “Performance RT” mode that achieves ray tracing at 60 frames per second.

It’s also the first major studio game to feature the Black superhero in the role of Spider-Man, and its stellar writing and cinematic cutscenes make it a worthy narrative follow-up to the original in addition to just being a blast to play. Plus, the ultimate edition includes a fully remastered version of the 2018 release, now with the option to carry over your PS4 save file.

Demon’s Souls

Demon’s Souls

Image: Sony

FromSoftware's *Demon's Souls* holds a special place in the hearts of FromSoftware fans everywhere. It was the first of many *Souls* games, establishing the Japanese studio as a maker of some of the most punishing and captivating action RPGs ever made. The remake, from studio Bluepoint Games, holds the honor of being one of the only next-gen exclusives at launch, and its stunning visual makeover helps bring the 2009 classic's unique and brutal combat to a modern canvas.

Astro's Playroom

Astro's Playroom
Image: Sony

Astro's Playroom joins *Demon's Souls* in being one of the very few next-gen-only releases to arrive with the PS5 this fall. It's preloaded on the console for every user, so you don't have to pay for it or even download it. It's ready to go as soon as you boot up your device. And fittingly, it's pretty much a love letter to both the PlayStation platform and the PS5 itself in cute video game form.

The game takes place inside the innards of the new console, with different areas dedicated to various PS5 components and various portions of the game acting as a tech demo for the impressive new DualSense controller. But that doesn't mean *Astro's Playroom* isn't fun to play. It is, in fact, a blast, and you should treat it as much more than a simple preloaded demo.

Bugsnax

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Bugsnax

Bugsnax is the latest enigmatic oddity from indie developer Young Horses, best known for creating *Octodad: Dadliest Catch*. It's best described as somewhere between *Pokémon* and a standard adventure game, with an island full of snack-like creatures like strawberries with eyes and caterpillars made of waffles.

The game is a weird one, but it's also got an unusually engrossing narrative given its subject matter. It's also got plenty of activities to keep you busy, the most quintessential of which involves capturing up to 100 species of the edible bug creatures. Similar to *Astro's Playroom*, *Bugsnax* was a free launch-day PS5 release, thanks to a deal between Sony and Young Horses that made it part of the PlayStation Plus subscription plan. It's still available as part of the subscription (or $25 without PS Plus) until January 4th, 2021, so act fast to claim it if you're interested in taking a visit to Snaktooth Island.

Assassin's Creed Valhalla

Assassin's Creed Valhalla
Image: Ubisoft
Assassin's Creed Valhalla is the latest game in Ubisoft's massive historical fiction series pitting secret orders against one another in a bid for world domination… or something. Okay, so the series isn't really about assassins versus Templars anymore, and that's just fine. The last two games in the series, *Origins* and *Odyssey*, tackled ancient Egypt and Greece with impressive results; critics hailed Ubisoft's new open-world RPG approach that makes these games much more massive and engaging than they used to be.

Now, *Valhalla* is here with a Nordic tale of revenge set during the age of the Vikings, and it’s similarly incredible and immersive. It’s also one of the few major studio cross-gen games to arrive in time for the PS5’s launch. Like many of the other titles for the new consoles, Ubisoft has released some much-needed patches to improve its performance and help it feel more next-gen.

Persona 5

Persona 5
Image: Atlus
The latest entry in everyone’s favorite “anime the video game” series, *Persona 5* is not exactly a new entry in the iconic life sim-RPG crossover series. But in keeping with tradition, developer Atlus has managed to keep it alive and fresh since its 2017 release. The developer has done that by releasing an expanded version of the game called *Persona 5: Royal* earlier this year. The new version added new characters, gameplay additions, and quality-of-life improvements to the original’s design.

Now you have a choice to make. *Persona 5* is included for free with the PlayStation Plus Collection series, a new library of older games Sony is giving away as part of its annual subscription to owners of the PS5. But the collection includes just the standard version of the game, not the *Royal* one. Diehard *Persona* fans will tell you to play *Royal*, so perhaps it’s a good idea to use your PS Plus Collection to try the game out and purchase the expanded *Royal* version if it seems like something you’ll want to dedicate dozens (or even hundreds) of hours to.

Fortnite

Fortnite
Image: Epic Games
Epic’s massively successful battle royale hit *Fortnite* is still going strong more than three years after release, and it’s only gotten better with the release of next-gen consoles. On Sony’s PS5, *Fortnite* is rendered in 4K and 60fps, with a new 120Hz mode that will up that frame rate even higher if you have the TV to support it. The game is free to play, making it a no-brainer if you’re looking for an online multiplayer game for your new console. Epic and Microsoft also just added *Halo*’s Master Chief in addition to some *Star Wars* characters with its newest season.

Ghost of Tsushima

Ghost of Tsushima
Image: Sucker Punch Productions
Sucker Punch Productions’ *Ghost of Tsushima* is the rare game that manages to feel both familiar and fresh at the same time. It’s a standard open-world game with many of the trappings of the genre: a lonely, empty world occasionally peppered by side quests and collectibles and traversable mainly by horse. But where *Ghost of Tsushima* shines is in its visual beauty, deep sword combat, and the quiet moments it gives the player as they pilot samurai Jin Sakai on his quest for revenge — like composing haikus by the cliffside or following birds to mystical fox shrines.

It’s not a groundbreaking game, but it’s a lovely one to play.

It’s helped along greatly by player-friendly gestures like instant fast travel, no microtransactions to speak of, and fantastic character customization. On the PS5, *Ghost of Tsushima* runs at 60fps, which, when added to its already top-tier performance and quality, makes it effectively a launch game for anyone who skipped it or held off this past summer.

Final Fantasy VII Remake

Final Fantasy VII Remake
Image: Square Enix
The remake of roleplaying classic *Final Fantasy VII* could have gone wrong in so many ways, and yet, remarkably, it arrived this past April as a complete and fully formed experience that succeeds wildly at what it sets out to do. Sure, it’s just a tiny sliver of the original’s overall story, but it delivers in every way imaginable, straddling the line between nostalgia for the source material and genuine advances in evolving turn-based RPGs for the modern day. Plus, it has some out-of-left-field narrative additions that turn the whole plot on its head.

While it’s not fully optimized for the PS5, *FFVII Remake* does get a slight performance boost through backwards compatibility, mostly to help keep its frame rate stable. It’s otherwise a must-play for any *Final Fantasy* fan that didn’t pick this up for the PS4.

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