# Nintendo’s first US commercial might be this 1980 ad

Nintendo is a gaming juggernaut today, but it wasn’t really on anyone’s radar in the United States in 1980. And what was possibly the first US commercial for hardware produced by the company — a handheld called *Toss-Up*, from its “Game & Watch” series — certainly didn’t help, as a newly-restored copy shows. That’s because there’s no mention of Nintendo at all, or even Game & Watch.

Game & Watch games were simplistic standalone handheld LCD games not unlike the cheap licensed Tiger Electronics games seemingly every kid had in the 1990s. And in the US, those games were initially licensed to a company called Mego (pronounced “mee-go”), and sold as a series called “Time-Out” instead, according to The Video Game History Foundation in a blog post *Time Extension* spotted.

The ad was dated June 25th, 1980 — only “a couple of months after Nintendo of America was incorporated,” Gaming historian Chris Kohler, who found the 16mm reel containing the ad on eBay, told the foundation. The hardware was still apparently embossed with a Nintendo logo on the back.

The commercial entreats mostly older, trendy youths (except for the goofy nerdy one because ha, ha, *nerds*) to enjoy an “electronic sport” when they can’t do real ones. You know, like when you’ve got fallen arches or tennis elbow, or you’re entirely wrapped in a full-body cast. That’s pretty different from Nintendo’s own commercials a few years later! Those tended to focus on kids and families and certainly didn’t have

close-ups of butts in skin-tight shorts. Like this one:

The Game & Watch games also came in other form factors besides the one Nintendo resurrected for its standalone collectible versions of the NES *Super Mario Bros.* and *Legend of Zelda* games a few years ago. Like this dual-screen one:

https://www.theverge.com/2024/6/15/24179080/nintendo-first-us-commercial-game-and-watch-toss-up-mego