

Picross S3 is the brain-soothing puzzle game you should play on the Switch

The *Picross* series is for anyone who has ever asked themselves, “What if sudoku was slightly more pretentious? And available on my Nintendo Switch?”

If you’re looking for an unassuming, mildly addictive distraction for your favorite handheld, *Picross S3* might be a good fit, especially if you like Nintendo’s habit of applying a little extra charm and polish. The series is based on a type of Japanese puzzle called nonograms – and then later, in horrifying instances, griddlers. Like its predecessors, *Picross S3* features a boatload of puzzles (300) and a few varieties that up the difficulty (adding another 180), none dramatically different than the core experience. But at a price point that’s less than a salad (I *assume*, having never personally eaten one of those), *Picross S3* is a lot of stuff for the money.

Consider ‘Picross’ as the antidote to gameplay anxiety

For those who’ve never done a picross puzzle before, I promise it’s not as boring as it looks. Despite the abundant presence of rows, columns, and numbers (yuck!), fear not: there is no math to be done. Like sudoku, *Picross* puzzles are logic based. There’s a bit of strategy, but largely, completing one involves methodically teasing out the answers row by row, at your own speed. Each one takes about five minutes to complete, maybe even less if you’re good. Eventually you get the hang of it, and you fall into a pleasant mental rhythm with each puzzle. I know it’s lazy to call a game “perfect for the Switch,” but I am lazy, and *Picross* is a brain-soothing thing to do in bed right before you sleep, especially if you want to dream about adorable little grids.

Maybe the funniest thing about *Picross*, though, is its semblance of a conceit. After you solve a puzzle, the grid turns to color, revealing the image you've inadvertently drawn. It always looks like a horrible 8-bit sprite. Some examples:

Apparently, this is "cheese." It's unclear what kind of cheese, since this rendering is confusing enough to the body that it would make anyone lactose intolerant.

If you saw this and immediately said, "Oh yeah, that's a fava bean," then you would be correct, and obviously lying.

This is "milk," the official soft drink of white supremacists. Also, I'm not sure why there's so much dairy in this game.

You'll be stunned to learn that this isn't a handsome pair of turds, but what someone calls "boots."

So... the rewards of *Picross* are purely in the satisfaction of completing puzzles, and less in what each one reveals, unless you enjoy choking on your seltzer when you see what passes as a "food" to Nintendo, this being an experience that absolutely did not happen to me several times as I was reviewing this game.

For anyone already familiar with the *Picross* titles on the Switch, this third entry doesn't add much in the way of

innovation. There are new color picross puzzles, which add the dimension of – you guessed it – color, tweaking the rules just enough to feel like a fresh challenge. I just wish there were more than 30 of them included. Really, there's so little difference that you could just as easily start with the first *Picross S* instead of the new one. (Or if you're really cheap, you can find a number of free picross games for iOS. Brian Gilbert at *Polygon* recommends *Picross Luna II*.)

I'm no genius, but even I wish the game was a little more difficult

A few other small complaints: I'm no genius, but even I wish the game was a little more difficult. I spend most of my time doing the mega picross puzzles, which are honestly only harder because the rules are more confusing, and even those don't put up much of a fight against my mediocre brain. Also, it would be nice to see some real mutations in the *Picross* formula. There are a pair of incredible *Picross 3D* titles for the 3DS that give the puzzles a new dimension – *literally* – and I wish they would make a return for the Switch. Or even simpler: I wonder why Nintendo doesn't let developer Jupiter take advantage of some of its IP. I'd be slightly less angry about nonogram boots if they turned out to be Link's boots. (In the past, Nintendo has lent the *Pokémon* franchise to Jupiter for a free 3DS game you can still pick up.)

In general, I feel like video games are loud, and getting increasingly louder. And if you want to play something that isn't constantly yelling at you about how many dang side quests you have left to do, consider *Picross* as the antidote to gameplay anxiety – the puzzle equivalent of one of those lofi chill beats for depression YouTube compilations.

But don't rush out to get *Picross S3*. First, it's a download only, and the only thing sadder than running to a GameStop is leaving a GameStop sweaty and empty-handed. But more to the point, this is a video game for people who walk at a leisurely pace, stopping to smell the roses. Or at least, whatever

passes as an 8-bit rose in the *Picross* universe.

<https://www.theverge.com/2019/4/29/18522564/picross-s3-review-puzzle-games-nintendo-switch>