Sony confirms it will stop letting GameStop and other retailers sell PS4 download codes



Sony has confirmed that it will indeed prevent retailers like GameStop from selling digital download codes for PlayStation 4 games starting April 1st, 2019. The news, first circulated late last week via a leaked memo obtained by popular game deals watcher Wario64, means that players who do not want to input credit card information into Sony's PSN platform will no longer be able to buy digital versions of games from physical brick-and-mortar stores. Sony confirmed that it isn't just GameStop being cut out of the download code business, but all retailers.

"We can confirm that as of April 1, 2019, Sony Interactive Entertainment will no longer offer full games through SIE's Global Digital at Retail program," a PlayStation spokesperson tells *The Verge*. "This decision was made in order to continue to align key businesses globally. To support full games and

premium editions, SIE will introduce increased denominations at select retailers. DLC, add-ons, virtual currency, and season passes will still be available."

In other words, if you want to keep buying digital versions of PS4 games offline, you can technically still do so by way of virtual currency. It sounds like Sony will be offering increased PSN credit options through some retailers, to support players that want to buy digital deluxe editions and so on and to cover the full cost of a game plus tax when you go to checkout. You'll just now have to make that final purchase on PSN, instead of doing so in a store like GameStop and receiving a code you then input when you're home and online.

There are still some uncertainties here. It's not clear how large those new denominations will be, as Amazon and other stores already sell PSN gift cards worth as much as $100. (In this case, Sony could be referencing the digital wallet limit, which right now is $200.) It's also not clear what this means for the online components of companies like Best Buy and GameStop, for instance if those websites will still be allowed to sell full game codes online instead of in-store. Additionally, we don't know if Amazon or other online-only retailers that sell digital versions of PS4 games will be affected by the policy change. We've reached out to Sony for additional comment and will update this article when we hear back.

There's a lot of uncertainties here around online stores
As Sony spells out, you'll still be able to purchase in-store codes for downloadable content and other digital add-ons, like season passes for games that offer those. According to the leaked GameStop memo, there will also be a one-week period post-release for upcoming titles *Days Gone* and *Mortal Kombat 11* in which you'll be able to buy physical download code at GameStop. It's unclear if that will be the same for other retailers. For new titles going forward and even for existing

preorders, Sony is suggesting customers switch the preorder to a physical copy if they don’t want to buy it directly on PSN. It looks like GameStop will be responsible for helping preorder customers of digital versions of games manage that transition process.

The announcement is a bit of bad news for GameStop, which earlier this month announced a new CEO after failing to find a buyer for the business. Since then, and following a dismal earnings report in January, the company’s stock has been declining sharply, as its business relies on ongoing cozy relationships with game publishers and console makers like Sony.

The relevance of brick-and-mortar retail for the game industry has largely rested on the marketing perks stores like GameStop can offer, and because game publishers see appeasing customers that like to sell back new games and buy used ones as important enough to continue letting companies like GameStop eat into their sales and take a cut of all physical game purchases. That’s starting to change. Now, with Sony moving to cut GameStop and others out of the digital business, it’s likely retailers will feel even more pressure from customers that are increasingly moving game purchasing online and away from physical discs.

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