The 8 best Apple Arcade games for your new iPhone or iPad



The world of iPhone and iPad games changed dramatically in September with the launch of Apple Arcade. The subscription is an incredible deal: for $4.99 a month, or $49.99 per year, you get unlimited access to more than 100 titles from some of the biggest mobile game developers around. That includes the creators behind hits like *Threes*, *Monument Valley*, and *Alto's Adventure*. And the great thing about a subscription is that you can try anything, including games you might not otherwise play, without worrying about wasting your money.

The problem? There are so many games on the service that it can be hard to know where to start. If you just picked up a new iPhone or iPad over the holidays, you can't go wrong with these eight excellent games.

We've rounded up our favorite and most-used games, apps, and entertainment. Check out our app picks for iPhones, Android phones, PCs, Macs and TVs; our favorite mobile games from Apple Arcade and Google Play Pass; and our top choices for gaming PCs, the PS4, Xbox One, and Nintendo Switch. We've also

listed our favorite streaming shows on Disney+, Hulu and Netflix, some great sci-fi books, and exciting new podcasts. (Note: pricing was accurate at the time of publishing, but may change.)

Guildlings

[embedded content]

Guildlings isn't exactly what you'd expect from a game helmed by the creator of *Threes*. Instead of an engrossing puzzle game, it's an inventive RPG that combines elements of YA drama with a fantastical world full of magic. There's even a supernatural smartphone. *Guildlings* is lightweight and approachable in a way RPGs typically aren't, and, most importantly, it's incredibly funny and charming.

Pilgrims

[embedded content]

Czech studio Amanita Design is well-known for its quirky adventure games and hand-drawn aesthetics, thanks to games like *Machinarium* and the *Samorost* series. *Pilgrims* on Apple Arcade is very much in keeping with this history, though it changes things up with some intriguing gameplay twists. It's still a point-and-click-style adventure where you use seemingly random objects to solve puzzles, but this time, the items – as well as all of the characters – are represented by playing cards. It seems strange at first, but it streamlines the experience and makes it a perfect fit for your phone.

Assemble With Care

[embedded content]

It might only last around two hours, but *Assemble With Care* –

from the same studio behind the *Monument Valley* series – is a remarkable example of seamlessly mixing gameplay with storytelling. It stars a young repairwoman who settles into a new town, and learns about its inhabitants by fixing their prized possessions. There's a lot of exposition and dialogue, but each chapter is punctuated by a puzzle where you have to actually fix something, using your fingers to take apart cameras and Game Boys in a wonderfully tactile way.

Card of Darkness

[embedded content]

There are plenty of card games already, but *Card of Darkness* does something completely different. This isn't yet another take on *Magic: The Gathering*. Instead, players make their way through a grid of cards as if they were traversing a dungeon, with cards representing everything from magical spells to diabolical monsters. It's confusing at first, but eventually you won't be able to stop playing.

Grindstone

[embedded content]

Grindstone just might be the most gruesome match-3 puzzle game you'll ever play. Developed by the same team behind *Sword & Sworcery* and *Critter Crunch*, *Grindstone* seems familiar at first, tasking players with matching colorful gems. The twist is that the gems are monsters, and you're linking them up so that a burly adventurer can slice his way through them. It's extremely satisfying racking up huge combos, and the game steadily introduces new enemy types and gear to keep things interesting.

Sayonara Wild Hearts

[embedded content]

Sayonara Wild Hearts is a lot of things. It's a classic arcade game, as you race through dangerous levels collecting coins along the way. It's a rhythm game, as you attack and dodge in time to music. And it's an interactive album, with a structure that has you playing through individual songs as you explore a story of love and loss. Each of those elements would be cool on their own, but fuse them together and you have one of the best games of the year.

Skate City

[embedded content]

It's been a long time since we've had a proper *Tony Hawk* or *Skate* game, but *Skate City* fills that niche nicely. It's purposefully simplified, relegating all of your moves to basic swipes of the touchscreen, but the controls work surprisingly well. Couple that with a presentation that has the right blend of gritty and sun-drenched, and you have the most authentic skateboarding experience available on a smartphone.

Bleak Sword

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With their demanding difficulty and precise controls, *Dark Souls*-style games seem like a bad fit for mobile. But *Bleak Sword* tweaks the formula just enough to make it fit on your phone. The brutal combat and dark fantasy setting remain, but the game adds a streamlined control scheme and bite-sized levels that are perfect for killing werewolves on the go.

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