The Nintendo Switch’s Joy-Con drift problem, explained

Nintendo Switch owners have been experiencing problems with the console’s removable Joy-Con controllers for months, with users reporting weird joystick drifting problems that cause false inputs and have been steadily growing over time as original Switch machines grow older. A recent report by *Kotaku* shined a light on the Joy-Con drift issue, but if you’re looking for more information on the problem, here’s the current situation.

What is “Joy-Con drift”?

Joy-Con drift is an issue that Switch owners have been encountering over the last few months that causes the analog sticks on the controllers to randomly move around and input commands to the console, even when they’re not being physically moved.

Phantom inputs
Anecdotally, the issue seems to affect left Joy-Con controllers (which tend to be used for movement in most games) more than the right half of the controller set. Although, there are reports of users experiencing it on both joysticks. A quick (and extremely unscientific) poll of *Verge* staffers revealed that some Switch owners have reported multiple controllers encountering the issue, while others have never experienced it, which seems to be mirrored by reports around the internet.

What causes it?

There are two potential causes for drift: some users blame the issue on either dust or debris making their way into the controller underneath a rubber cap that’s designed to keep the interior clean.

Others have completely disassembled the controller and found worn-down contacts, which might be causing the issue due to repetitive use. It’s also possible that neither of those theories is correct or that it’s a combination of factors that causes stick drift over time. Without Nintendo clarifying the situation, it’s tough to tell exactly what’s wrong.

What can I do to fix it?

As mentioned above, it’s not fully clear what’s causing the issue, which makes fixing it tricky. A possible solution is to make sure you’re running the latest Switch software or to recalibrate your analog sticks to make sure it’s not a software issue.

Some users have also tried using compressed air or isopropyl alcohol to fix the problem, although success seems to vary greatly. Others have taken the more drastic step of fully replacing the joystick entirely – a far more difficult fix that will void your warranty, if it works at all.

What is Nintendo doing about it?

Nintendo does offer a standard warranty of 90 days (for accessories, which seems to include separately purchased Joy-Con controllers) and 12 months (for consoles, which seems to include Joy-Con controllers that are included with a Switch).

Nintendo offers repairs, but they’re not cheap
If you’re outside the warranty, Nintendo will offer repairs, but Reddit users have reported costs of $40 for a repair, which is nearly the cost of a replacement single Joy-Con

controller. (They run for $50 individually or $80 as a pair.) As of now, there haven't been any announcements of an extended warranty for controllers or any cheaper repair programs for affected users.

The company released the following statement to *The Verge* about the issue:

> *At Nintendo, we take great pride in creating quality products and we are continuously making improvements to them. We are aware of recent reports that some Joy-Con controllers are not responding correctly. We want our consumers to have fun with Nintendo Switch, and if anything falls short of this goal we always encourage them to visit http://support.nintendo.com so we can help.*

Is anyone suing?

Last Friday, law firm Chimicles Schwartz Kriner & Donaldson-Smith filed a class action lawsuit against Nintendo, alleging that the Joy-Con controllers are defective due to the drift issues, and the firm is actively seeking more Switch owners to join the suit.

Will this be a problem on the Switch Lite?

It's unclear if the Switch Lite, announced earlier this month and coming out this September, is affected. But the Switch Lite doesn't have removable controllers, so if it does suffer from similar issues with stick drifting, the situation could be far worse. In that scenario, users won't be able to swap out a controller to fix it. Hopefully, Nintendo has seen the complaints regarding the issue on the full-sized Switch and is working to make sure the Lite's joysticks are more robust.

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