

The Switch 2 gives Splatoon 3 a fantastically fresh coat of paint

Splatoon 3 already looked phenomenal on the original Switch, in a way that seemed to defy the console's hardware limitations. The game's paint-slicked visuals were gorgeous, and its chaotic battles were a testament to how well the Switch could run software that was fine-tuned to make the best of its specs. What was most impressive, though, was the way *Splatoon 3* kept refreshing itself for years after its initial 2022 release with a steady stream of new clothes, weapons, stages, and a nifty DLC expansion.

Splatoon 3 felt like it had reached its zenith on the original Switch – so much so that a full-on sequel seemed like the franchise's logical next step as Nintendo prepared to release the Switch 2. But thanks to an unexpected update, *Splatoon 3* plays like a slicker, sleeker, and more modern shooter on the new console. And while the improvements aren't quite as dramatic as what we saw with *Fortnite*, they're big enough to make *Splatoon 3* feel like it's more than capable of holding down the fort while Nintendo focuses on developing whatever's next.

While battles within *Splatoon 3* have always maxed out at 60fps, the first thing that jumps out about the game post-update is how that high framerate can now also be seen basically everywhere you guide your Inkling character. In the past, nonmatch locations like Splatville, Inkopolis, and the Grand Festival Grounds never looked bad, per se. But there was a roughness to characters' animations as they walked around and a stiffness to the way the environment moved that made those places feel like they were trying hard to not push the original Switch past its limits.

Image: Nintendo

After the new Switch 2 update, which also bumps the game's resolution up, everything in Inkopolis flows with a delightful slickness that makes the place feel alive. Inklings' steps and idling poses are still measured and slow, but there is a gracefulness to them now that made me pay closer attention to people's avatars. And while the update doesn't bring any drastic changes to *Splatoon 3*'s character models, you can clearly see the fine details of their stylish hypebeast fits and the way light interacts with the glossy, reflective surfaces of their skin.

Better-looking NPCs hanging out in lobbies might not seem like a big deal, but it's an important part of the *Splatoon* experience because of the way most of the characters you see in places like Inkopolis are actually other players' avatars. The added visual polish works to remind you that *Splatoon 3* is very much a community-focused game that still has a dedicated playerbase, and as I walked around, it was great seeing so many higher-resolution characters sharing messages about how they were enjoying the update.

You can also feel how much more horsepower the Switch 2 is working with in how quickly *Splatoon 3* now breezes through its loading screens as you're getting ready to dive into a match. Once you're actually in a battle, you can really start to get a sense of how the update impacts *Splatoon 3*'s core gameplay on the Switch 2 and why, for people still playing on the original Switch, Nintendo decided to strip out some of the background visual elements in certain competitive modes.

On the whole, regular PvP matches ran every bit as well at 60fps as they did on the first Switch, but you can see that background elements in the far off distance, like the

jellyfish spectators, now move much more smoothly. It stands to reason that Nintendo chose not to drastically change how *Splatoon 3* battles run on the Switch 2 so as not to put players on the original Switch at an unfair disadvantage. That's also probably why, after the update, some of the background elements in the Splat Zones / Tower Control / Rainmaker / Clam Blitz modes have been removed on the first Switch. In my experience, this didn't really change all that much because you're meant to be focused on painting the ground and splatting your enemies. But those changes likely help the Switch dedicate more of its energy to displaying the important things well.

Even when there's a horde of enemies swarming in Salmon Run mode, their animations are much, much smoother, which actually makes it easier to keep track of what's going on as matches become more hectic. It was still almost impossible to get my teammates to pull it together when a Horrorboros showed up and started hurling paint bombs at us, but that felt like the sort of issue that might be more easily addressed in a follow-up game that makes use of the *Switch 2*'s voice chat feature.

For both consoles, the update also introduces a slew of remixed weapons. Giving standard weapons, like the Aerospray, different sub-weapons has always been a core part of *Splatoon*, and the new kits are essentially an invitation to try out your old favorites with a couple of new tricks attached that encourage unique play styles. For longtime *Splatoon 3* players, everything about the update really serves as a reminder of how much fun the game has always been. But it also feels like Nintendo is making an effort to bring more players into the fold ahead of *Splatoon Raiders*' launch. And, as nice as it would have been to have a new *Splatoon* title for the Switch 2's launch, it's fantastic to see Nintendo making moves that benefit the entire Switch family as a whole.

<https://www.theverge.com/nintendo/686128/splatoon-3-switch-2-update-overview>