

Valve says the Steam Deck's 'stick drift' was a bug and it's already shipped a fix



The first batch of Steam Decks is starting to arrive to the lucky few who could order them on Friday, and a handful of owners have reported stick drift on their devices. But Valve now tells us that what's going on is a "deadzone calibration issue" – which indicates this is a software problem, not a hardware one – and that the team has already shipped a fix for it.

Joystick drift is an issue that causes your character or cursor in a game to continue moving even when you aren't actually pushing the joystick in a direction. It's a problem many have experienced with the Nintendo Switch's Joy-Con controllers. While Nintendo itself has suggested the issue will never be fully addressed because Joy-Cons will wear down over time, it does repair drifting Joy-Con controllers for free. Drift doesn't just appear on Joy-Cons, though; some have reported drift issues with the PS5's DualSense controllers,

too.

In three different videos from the Steam Deck subreddit, you can see times when one of the thumbsticks continues to register an input while the user isn't touching the stick. Two of the users even showed the issue registering in the Steam Deck's calibration checker.

But according to Steam Deck team member Lawrence Yang, "the team has looked into these reports and has determined there was a deadzone calibration issue introduced in a recent firmware update. We have just shipped a fix to address the problem, and the team will continue to watch for reports related to this issue."

Given that the fix update has just shipped, we'll have to wait and see if it actually addresses the thumbstick drift issue. One of the Reddit users who had experienced drift has already posted a video with the update installed, and in it, things appear to be improved.

[embedded content]

Any drift issues are potentially worrying, especially since they are appearing on brand-new Steam Decks, though it's unclear how widespread the problem might be.

In an interview with *The Washington Post*, Valve's Pierre-Loup Griffais estimated that "tens of thousands" of people are getting their Decks, but there are still only a few videos documenting the problem. And my colleague Sean Hollister told me Tuesday that the joysticks on his review unit, which he has been actively testing for three weeks, haven't shown any drift issues so far – they stayed perfectly zeroed even when he tried the same calibration checker shown in two of the videos on Reddit.

Valve has already committed to offering replacement parts for the Steam Deck at some point – including thumbsticks – so if

you see stick drift on your Deck and this new fix update doesn't address it, you'll eventually be able to swap out parts on your own. iFixit will be one of the authorized sellers of Steam Deck parts, though it's still unclear when you'll actually be able to buy them or for how much.

Unfortunately, if you're experiencing Steam Deck thumbstick drift right now, you can't buy a replacement part for yourself. But one of the people affected on Reddit put together a guide on how you can calibrate a thumbstick's dead zone in the device's settings, which could be a short-term solution.

Update March 1st, 9:06PM ET: Added a video of a Steam Deck with the update installed.

Update March 1st, 8:36PM ET: Valve says it has shipped a fix for the stick drift, so we have updated the article and headline.

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