Xbox Series S outed by next-gen controller leak—and it’s legit

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- A new controller for a system that hasn’t launched yet? That’s interesting enough, sure. But the news comes when you turn the box.
- Notice “Xbox Series X | S” as a descriptor? That is legitimate.
- The controller works with existing Xbox One consoles, and one owner we’ve gotten in touch with, who goes by Zak S on Twitter, has offered praise: “The d-pad is one of my favorite parts to it.”
- A second box was found in the wild.
- It, too, includes mention of the unannounced Xbox Series S.
- When contacted directly by Ars Technica, Zak S forwarded us images from the included manual. These include an apparent image of Xbox Series X, but not older consoles (or the still unseen Series S).
- The other side of the instruction manual.

The next version of the standard, cross-console Xbox controller has been spotted in the wild, ahead of its official retail announcement. But the two leaked controllers we’ve seen

thus far are even more intriguing because of something they have in common: an apparently official mention of “Xbox Series S” as an additional Microsoft next-gen console.

Ars Technica can confirm that this is indeed the name of an upcoming, unannounced Microsoft product, based on conversations with people familiar with Microsoft’s hardware plans. The Series S will apparently exist alongside the well-publicized Xbox Series X, which still doesn’t have a publicly known date or price.

S marks the spot—but questions remain

The controller itself was previously announced alongside Xbox Series X’s reveal during the December 2019 broadcast of The Game Awards. While it bears a strong resemblance to the existing Xbox One controller, its general mold has been shrunken to better support a wider range of hand sizes. Functionally, it’s identical, other than a new “share” button, while its d-pad has been updated to resemble one of the d-pad options found in the first-party Xbox Elite Controller line. One owner of the new controller, who goes by Zak S on Twitter, pointed specifically to the updated d-pad as “one of [his] favorite parts.”

Zak S was kind enough to directly send Ars Technica photos of the new controller’s instruction manual, which shows the power button of a console that looks like Xbox Series X, along with images of a laptop and a smartphone. These explain how to sync the new controller with compatible hardware, but the manual doesn’t show older Xbox One models, nor does it show a possible alternate or smaller console design for Series S. Whether that means Series S will have the same monolithic shape as Series X remains to be seen.

When shown photos of the leaked controller, Ars’s sources

would go no further than confirming the existence of Xbox Series S as a product. We're still left assuming that it lines up with over a year of rumors about the codenamed "Lockhart" console, which would come in at a lower price than Xbox Series X and play its software with specific performance downgrades—perhaps a 1080p-friendly version of XSX's 4K resolution and "Velocity Architecture" aspirations, or a more direct focus on Game Pass-enabled xCloud game streaming.

Our suspicions about a Lockhart console grew when Microsoft pulled the Xbox One X off of store shelves last month, leaving a substantial performance gap for new console buyers between the current Xbox One S and the upcoming Xbox Series X.

Xbox chief Phil Spencer has previously assured fans that existing Xbox One controllers and peripherals (other than Kinect) are forwards-compatible with Xbox Series X software, making new-controller purchases less imperative for anyone already in the Xbox One ecosystem. This stands in contrast with PlayStation 5, as its next-gen games will require Sony's new DualSense controller.

We have reached out to Microsoft representatives with questions about Xbox Series S and will update this report with any response.

Listing image by Zak S

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