Your controller, button by button

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Your controller, button by button

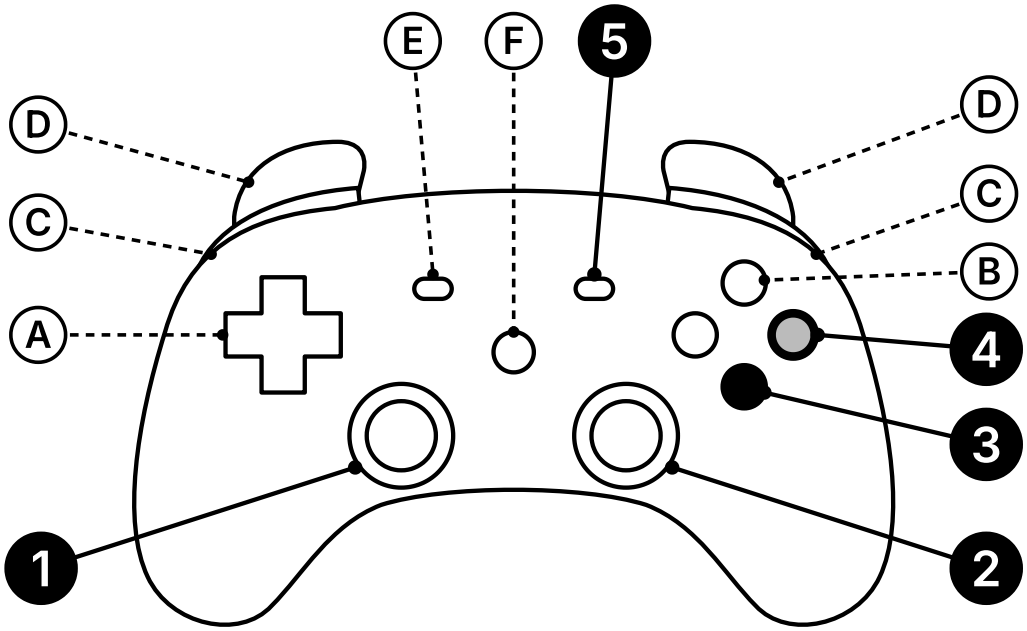
What every part does, how to hold it, and the five buttons you'll use in your first hour.

7-minute read

THE SHORT ANSWER

If you're not sure, start here

A controller looks busy, but you only need five things to start. The left stick moves you. The right stick looks around. One button on the right does things (talk, open, pick up), and the one beside it goes back. The Menu button pauses the game. Everything else can wait, and the game will show you which button to press when it matters.

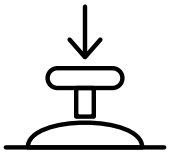


YOUR FIRST HOUR

1. **Left stick:** Move
2. **Right stick:** Look around
3. **Confirm button:** Do things (yes)
4. **Back button:** Go back (no)
5. **Menu button:** Pause

EVERYTHING ELSE

- **A** **Direction pad:** Up, down, left, right
- **B** **Other two buttons:** The game tells you
- **C** **Shoulder buttons:** Front of the top edge
- **D** **Triggers:** Squeeze
- **E** **View button:** Map, photos, it varies
- **F** **Home button:** Leave the game



Sticks press in too

Every controller has the same parts in roughly the same places, whichever console it belongs to. The buttons may have letters, shapes or colors on them depending on the brand. We call them by where they sit, so this guide works for any controller.

How do I hold it?

Hold it with both hands, as you'd hold a sandwich you're about to eat. The two handles rest in your palms.

- Your **thumbs** sit on top. The left thumb rests on the left stick. The right thumb rests near the four buttons on the right.
- Your **first fingers** rest on the top edge, on the buttons there.
- Your **other fingers** wrap around the handles underneath. They just hold on.

Grip it loosely. You'll be holding it for an hour or more, and a tight grip tires your hands. If your hands ache, put it down. The game can wait.

What are the five I'll use first?

1. The left stick: moving

The small round stick on the left, under your left thumb. Push it the way you want to walk. Push it a little to walk slowly, and all the way to go faster. Let go and you stop.

2. The right stick: looking around

The stick on the right, lower down. It turns your view, as if you were turning your head. Most beginners find this the hardest part, and it gets easier within an hour or two.

If looking up and down feels back to front, the game's settings let you flip it. Look for "Invert" or "Invert Y-axis".

3. The confirm button: doing things

One of the four buttons on the right. On most controllers it's the bottom one. It's the "yes" button: it picks things up, opens doors, talks to people and chooses things in menus.

The game will show this button on screen whenever there's something to do. On Nintendo consoles the two swap places: confirm is the right-hand button and back is the bottom one. If you're not sure, watch for the picture on screen.

4. The back button: going back

The button beside the confirm button, usually the right-hand one of the four. It's the "no, go back" button. It closes a menu or steps back one screen. Pressing it by accident won't do any harm.

5. The Menu button: pausing

A small button near the middle of the controller, on the right. It may be called Menu, Options, Start or "+", or have three little lines on it. Press it and the game stops. Nothing moves until you press it again.

Use it whenever you need to answer the door, think, or take a break. The pause menu is also where you'll find the game's settings and, in most games, Save.

What do the other parts do?

You don't need these yet. They're here so nothing on the controller is a mystery.

The other two buttons on the right

The two that aren't confirm and back. Each game uses them for its own things, such as jumping, opening a map or using a special skill. The game will tell you what they do as you go.

The direction pad

The cross shape on the left, below or above the left stick. It's four buttons in one: up, down, left and right. It's handy in menus, where it moves you one step at a time. Some games use it for shortcuts, such as switching between items.

The shoulder buttons and triggers

On the top edge, two on each side, under your first and second fingers. The front ones are flat buttons, and the ones behind are triggers you squeeze. Games often use them to aim, block or swap between things.

Pressing the sticks in

The sticks are also buttons: push straight down on one until it clicks. Some games use this to run or crouch. You'll rarely need it at first, and it's easy to do by accident, so don't worry if your character suddenly crouches.

The View button

A small button near the middle, on the left. It may be called View, Select, Share, Create or "-". Each game uses it differently. In many it opens the map. On some consoles it takes a photo of the screen.

The Home button

Usually in the middle of the controller, often with the console's logo on it. It takes you out of the game to the console's main screen. The game stays where you left it, and pressing Home again usually takes you back. The main screen is also where you turn the console off.

What do I do when I'm stuck?

Press the Menu button. Everything stops. Take a breath and look at what the menu offers.

Read the screen. Games show you which button to press, often as a small picture of the button in a corner of the screen. If you missed it, many games list the controls in the pause menu, under a heading like "Controls" or "Help".

Make it easier. Most games have a difficulty setting in the pause menu, under "Settings" or "Gameplay". Turning it down isn't cheating. That's what it's there for.

Nothing is happening when I press buttons. The controller may need charging, or it may have gone to sleep. Press the Home button to wake it. If the battery is flat, plug it into the console with its cable, and it charges while you play.

My character walks by on their own. Check nothing is resting on a stick. If it still happens, the stick may be worn. The settings often let you raise the "dead zone", which makes the stick ignore small movements.

I want to change which button does what. Most consoles let you change the buttons in their accessibility settings, and many games have their own. Some also let you hold a button instead of tapping it again and again.

I'm truly lost. Search for the name of the game and what you're trying to do, for example "Skyrim how to open the map". Somebody will have asked before you.