FREE GUIDE · 2 OF 3

Setting up your console

From the box to your first game, one step at a time. Set aside an hour and put the kettle on.

12-minute read

THE SHORT ANSWER

If you're not sure, start here

Connect the console to your TV with the cable from the box, plug it into the wall and press its power button. From then on the TV tells you what to do: pick your language, join your Wi-Fi and sign in to a free account. Then the console updates itself, which can take an hour or more the first time. When that's done you'll see the home screen, and your first game is a few button presses away.

Every console sets up in much the same way, whichever one you bought. The screen tells you what to do at each step, and pressing the wrong button won't break anything. This guide goes through it in order, with a short note wherever a PlayStation 5, an Xbox, a Nintendo Switch 2 or a Steam Deck does something its own way.

Give yourself an hour. Most of it is waiting while the console downloads things, so a cup of tea and the crossword are welcome.

What do I need before I start?

- **Your Wi-Fi name and password.** They're often on a sticker on the back of your router, the box your internet company gave you.
- **An email address** you can open, for your account.
- **A free plug socket** near the TV.
- **A free HDMI socket** on the TV. It's a flat socket with two of its corners cut off, usually labelled HDMI 1, HDMI 2 and so on.

What's in the box?

Every console comes with its controls and a way to plug it in, and all but the Steam Deck come with an HDMI cable, the cable that carries the picture and sound to your TV. Keep the box until everything works, in case anything needs to go back.

PlayStation 5

The console, one controller, an HDMI cable, a power cable, a USB cable for charging the controller, and two small plastic feet for laying the console on its side. A game called Astro's Playroom is already installed.

Xbox Series X or Series S

The console, one controller, two AA batteries for the controller, an HDMI cable and a power cable.

Nintendo Switch 2

The console, two small controllers called Joy-Con 2 that clip onto its sides, a grip that joins them into one controller, two wrist straps, a dock (the stand that connects the console to your TV), an HDMI cable, a power adapter and a

USB-C cable for it.

Steam Deck

The Steam Deck, with its controls built in, a charger and a carrying case. It's made to be held in your hands, so there's no HDMI cable. Playing it on the TV needs a dock, sold separately.

Where do the cables go?

Do this with everything switched off, and plug the power in last.

1. Plug one end of the HDMI cable into the back of the console and the other end into your TV. It only fits one way up, so if it won't go in, turn it over rather than push. Make a note of the number beside the TV socket.
2. Plug the power cable into the console, then into the wall.

That's all most consoles need. A few differences:

- **PlayStation 5:** if you're laying it flat, put the console on a soft cloth and fit the two feet into the grooves underneath first. On the back, the HDMI cable goes in the socket marked HDMI OUT and the power cable in the one marked AC IN.
- **Xbox:** the sockets on the back have small raised marks you can feel. The power socket has a single dot and the HDMI socket a single dash.

- **Nintendo Switch 2:** you set it up on its own screen first, then connect the TV. Plug the power adapter into the wall and its cable into the bottom of the console, and clip on both Joy-Con 2: the one with the – button goes on the left, the one with + on the right. The console switches itself on. Once setup is finished, open the cover on the back of the dock, move the power cable from the console to the top socket, plug the HDMI cable into the middle one, and close the cover. Plug the adapter straight into the wall, not into a power strip. Then slide the Joy-Con 2 off the console (press the small button on the back of each), clip them into the grip, and lower the console into the dock with its screen facing the front.
- **Steam Deck:** there's nothing to connect except the charger. Plug it in for a while before you start.

How do I turn it on?

1. **Turn the TV on** and switch it to the HDMI socket you used. Press the button on your TV remote marked Input or Source (sometimes it's a picture of an arrow going into a box) until you reach the right number. A blank screen or "No signal" is normal until the console is on.
2. **Press the power button on the console.** On a PlayStation 5 it's on the front, and the light blinks blue, then turns white. On an Xbox it's the Xbox button on the front. A Nintendo Switch 2 switches on when you plug it in. On a Steam Deck, hold the power button on the top edge for a few seconds.

On a PlayStation 5, if you leave the first screen alone for a minute, a voice starts reading the screen aloud. That's the screen reader, made for people who find the screen hard to see. You can turn it off later in the settings, under Accessibility.

How do I get the controller working?

The first time, the console and the controller need introducing, much as you pair your phone with a car's Bluetooth. This is called pairing, and you only do it once.

- **PlayStation 5:** plug the controller into the console with the USB cable from the box, then press the PS button in the middle of the controller. After that it works without the cable.
- **Xbox:** put the two AA batteries in the back of the controller and press the Xbox button at the top. If it doesn't connect, press and hold the small Pair button on the front of the console, next to the USB socket, then the Pair button on the top edge of the controller.
- **Nintendo Switch 2:** clipping the Joy-Con 2 onto the console pairs them. They snap on with a magnetic click.
- **Steam Deck:** the controls are built in, so there's nothing to pair.

For the setup screens you only need two things: the left stick to move around, and the confirm button to choose. On PlayStation, Xbox and Steam Deck the confirm button is the bottom one of the four buttons on the right. On a Nintendo it's the right-hand one, marked A. Our guide **Your controller, button by button** (/travelers-pack/controller) covers the rest.

What does it ask me first?

Your language, then your country and time zone, then your internet. Pick your Wi-Fi name from the list and type the password. A keyboard appears on the screen: move to each letter and press confirm. It's slow, like texting on an old mobile phone, and capital letters count. If the console is near your router, a network cable works too, but Wi-Fi is fine.

- **Xbox:** the screen suggests finishing setup on your phone, with the free Xbox app, and shows a code to type into it. Typing is easier on a phone, but you can skip the app and carry on with the controller. Both get you to the same place.
- **Nintendo Switch 2:** it asks whether you have an older Nintendo Switch to copy things from. If you don't, skip it. It also offers parental controls, which you can skip if no children will use it.
- **Steam Deck:** it needs Wi-Fi now, because the next step is signing in to Steam.

Why do I need an account?

Every console asks you to make a free account with the company that made it, or sign in to one you already have. It's a PlayStation account on a PlayStation, a Microsoft account on an Xbox, a Nintendo Account on a Switch, and a Steam account on a Steam Deck.

Your account works like a library card. The shop on the console uses it to know which games are yours. Your games belong to your account, not the box, so if you ever replace the console, you sign in and they're all still there.

Typing an email address and a password with a controller takes a while. If you'd rather, make the account first on a computer or phone, on the maker's website, then sign in on the console.

- **Choose a password you don't use anywhere else,** and write it down somewhere safe at home. You'll need it again.
- **It may offer to save a bank card.** You can skip that and add one when you buy your first game.

- **It may offer a paid subscription,** such as PlayStation Plus, Xbox Game Pass or Nintendo Switch Online. You don't need one to play games on your own, so you can say no.

Why is it updating?

Next, the console checks for an update and downloads it. An update is a free fix or improvement from the maker, the same thing your phone does when it asks to update.

The first one is often the biggest, because the console may have sat on a shop shelf for months. Depending on your internet, it can take a few minutes or more than an hour, and a bar on the screen shows how far it's got. The console may restart by itself, perhaps more than once.

Don't switch it off or pull the plug while it's updating, even if the bar seems stuck. This is the moment for that cup of tea.

On an Xbox, Microsoft suggests waiting until this first update is done before you plug in any extras, such as an extra storage drive or a charging stand.

How do I charge the controller?

- **PlayStation 5:** the controller has a battery inside. Plug it into the console with the USB cable. It charges while the console is on or resting (when its light is orange), and you can keep playing while it charges. A full charge takes about three hours. To let it charge while the console rests, go to Settings, then System, Power Saving, Features Available in Rest Mode, and set Supply Power to USB Ports to Always.

- **Xbox:** the controller runs on two AA batteries. When they run low, put in new ones.
- **Nintendo Switch 2:** the Joy-Con 2 charge while they're clipped onto the console, as long as the console is plugged in and switched on or asleep. A full charge takes about three and a half hours.
- **Steam Deck:** plug the charger into the Steam Deck. You can play while it charges.

How do I get to my first game?

When setup finishes, you'll see the home screen: a row of pictures, one for each game or app. To buy a game, open the console's shop, find the game, and choose Buy. The console then downloads it, and a big game can take an hour or more. When it's ready, its picture appears on the home screen. Choose it to play.

- **PlayStation 5:** the shop is the PlayStation Store, on the games home screen. After you buy, choose Download. Astro's Playroom is already installed, and it's a cheerful way to get used to the controller. If your PlayStation has a disc drive, put a game disc in and it installs by itself.
- **Xbox:** the shop is the Microsoft Store. Your games are under My games & apps.
- **Nintendo Switch 2:** the shop is Nintendo eShop, on the HOME Menu. A game card goes in the slot on the top of the console.
- **Steam Deck:** press the Steam button, then choose Store. After you buy, find the game in your Library and choose Install.

Many games download a little more when you first open them. Let that finish too.

How do I switch it off?

- **PlayStation 5:** press the PS button, choose the Power symbol at the bottom of the screen, then Enter Rest Mode or Turn Off PS5. In Rest Mode the light turns orange, and the console can charge the controller and finish downloads.
- **Xbox:** press and hold the Xbox button on the controller, then choose to turn off the console.
- **Nintendo Switch 2:** press the POWER button on the console once to put it to sleep.
- **Steam Deck:** press the power button once to put it to sleep.

Your games will be where you left them, as long as you saved. Each game shows you how.

What do I do when I'm stuck?

The TV says "No signal". Check the TV is on the right input: press Input or Source again and go through the numbers. Push the HDMI cable firmly into both ends. Check the console's light is on. On a Nintendo Switch 2, make sure the console is sitting all the way down in the dock, with its screen facing the front.

The controller won't do anything. On a PlayStation 5, plug it in with the USB cable and press the PS button. On an Xbox, try fresh batteries, then the two Pair buttons. On a Nintendo Switch 2, clip the Joy-Con 2 back onto the console for a moment.

The update seems stuck. Give it half an hour. If an error message appears, turn the console off at its power button, wait a minute and turn it on again. It picks up where it left off.

I've forgotten my account password. Every maker's sign-in page has a "forgotten password" link, which emails you a way to make a new one.

I'm truly lost. Each maker has its own step-by-step setup page with pictures:

- PlayStation 5: **Getting started with your new PS5 console** (https://www.playstation.com/en-us/support/hardware/ps5-get-started-set-up/)
- Xbox: **Set up your Xbox Series X|S console** (https://support.xbox.com/en-US/help/hardware-network/getting-started-set-up/set-up-new-series-x-s)
- Nintendo Switch 2: **First-Time Setup and Connection** (https://www.nintendo.com/en-gb/Support/Nintendo-Switch-2/Nintendo-Switch-2-First-Time-Setup-and-Connection-2843806.html)
- Steam Deck: **Basic Use & Troubleshooting Guide** (https://help.steampowered.com/en/faqs/view/69E3-14AF-9764-4C28)

You can always ask in our community too. Plenty of people there have set up a console for the first time, and they remember how it felt.