What to buy, and what it costs

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What to buy, and what it costs

An honest answer to the first question everyone asks. If you read nothing else, read the box below.

6-minute read | Prices checked November 2026

THE SHORT ANSWER

If you're not sure, start here

Choose your first game before buying a device. A PlayStation 5 Digital Edition is a straightforward sofa option at about $600 before tax, with a controller included. It plays Hogwarts Legacy, Dragon Age: Inquisition, Baldur's Gate 3, Stardew Valley and Elden Ring, but not Animal Crossing or World of Warcraft. For those, choose a compatible Nintendo system or computer respectively. You may already own a device that can play Stardew Valley.

YOUR CHOICES

Pick the one that fits

USE WHAT YOU HAVE

Your computer, tablet or phone

May only need the game

Check the game's requirements first. Stardew Valley has computer and mobile versions; other games may need more powerful hardware.

✧ Our first pick

A CONSOLE

PlayStation 5 Digital Edition

About $600

A simple sofa option for several of our destinations. Not for Animal Crossing or World of Warcraft.

A GAMING PC OR HANDHELD

A compatible gaming PC or Steam Deck

Steam Deck from $789

More to set up and look after. Best if you already enjoy tinkering with computers.

The PlayStation and Steam Deck prices below are US prices before tax, checked on 13 November 2026. Prices, bundles and availability can change. Check the linked official store before paying, and choose a game before choosing hardware.

Why the PlayStation 5?

It is a straightforward option for Hogwarts Legacy, Dragon Age: Inquisition, Baldur's Gate 3, Stardew Valley and Elden Ring. It does not play Animal Crossing: New Horizons or World of Warcraft. Xbox Series X|S also plays those five games, so PlayStation is not the only route. Elden Ring is a demanding challenge rather than a gentle first game.

Our destination pages link to the right stores. The publishers list supported platforms for **Hogwarts Legacy** (https://www.hogwartslegacy.com/en-us), **Dragon Age: Inquisition** (https://www.ea.com/games/dragon-age/dragon-

age-inquisition), **Baldur's Gate 3** (https://baldursgate3.game/) and **Stardew Valley** (https://www.stardewvalley.net/faq/).

It also asks very little of you. You plug it into your TV, sign in, and buy games from the store on the screen. A controller is in the box. You play from the sofa, though the console and games will still need updates.

The menus can be made easier to read from across the room. In the settings you'll find four text sizes, bold text, high contrast and a zoom. (Each game has its own text settings too.)

Which PlayStation 5?

These are the main options in **Sony's US store** (https://direct.playstation.com/en-us/hardware/ps5), rounded for planning:

- **Digital Edition, about $600.** Our pick. It has no slot for discs, so you buy games through the console's own store.
- **With a disc drive, about $650.** Worth the extra $50 if you'd like to buy boxed games, borrow them, or buy them second-hand.
- **PS5 Pro, about $900.** More power than a beginner needs. Skip it.

You may see "PS5 Slim" in shops. Check the exact model, storage and whether a disc drive is included rather than relying on the name alone.

What about the other consoles?

Choose around the game you want, not just the number of games a machine can play.

- **Xbox Series S or Series X.** Both are alternatives for Hogwarts Legacy, Dragon Age: Inquisition, Baldur's Gate 3 and Stardew Valley. Series S is digital-only; for Series X, check whether the model includes a disc drive. Compare current prices and storage in the **Xbox console store** (https://www.xbox.com/en-US/consoles).
- **Nintendo Switch or Switch 2.** These are the route to Animal Crossing: New Horizons. Hogwarts Legacy and Stardew Valley also have Nintendo versions. The original Switch and Switch 2 editions are not interchangeable in every direction: check the exact edition before buying. See **Nintendo's Animal Crossing buying guide** (https://animalcrossing.nintendo.com/new-horizons/buy/).

You do not need to buy extra storage immediately. Check the games you plan to install and the space included with the device first.

Can I use the computer I already have?

Maybe. It depends on the computer.

- **A Windows computer** can run Hogwarts Legacy, Dragon Age: Inquisition, Baldur's Gate 3, Stardew Valley and World of Warcraft if it meets each game's requirements. Animal Crossing: New Horizons is not a Windows game. A controller is optional for many computer games; World of Warcraft is a keyboard-and-mouse starting point.
- **An ordinary office laptop** may handle a lighter game such as Stardew Valley, but do not assume it can run demanding games such as Hogwarts Legacy or Baldur's Gate 3.

- **A Mac** has versions of Baldur's Gate 3, Stardew Valley and World of Warcraft. Check the required Mac model, chip and operating system for the particular game before buying.
- **A phone or tablet** can play the mobile version of Stardew Valley. That does not mean it can install the console or computer editions of our other destinations. **Stardew's official FAQ** (https://www.stardewvalley.net/faq/) links to the iOS and Android versions.

Blizzard's **Forever starter guide** (https://news.blizzard.com/en-us/article/24315280/new-players-starter-guide-welcome-to-world-of-warcraft-forever) explains its Windows/Mac and keyboard-and-mouse setup.

Not sure what your computer can do? Look up the game in the Steam store (Steam is the main shop for computer games). Scroll down to "System Requirements" and compare the list with your computer. If that list means nothing to you, a console is the easier road.

What's a Steam Deck?

It's a computer shaped like a large handheld game, with the controls built in. **Valve lists Steam Deck OLED** (https://www.steamdeck.com/en/oled/) from $789, or $949 with more storage. It plays games from the Steam store, but being sold on Steam does not guarantee that a game works well on Steam Deck.

Check each game's current Steam Deck compatibility rating and the reasons shown on its Steam page before buying. Some games need extra launchers or controls. Do not buy one assuming it will play every destination, especially Animal Crossing or World of Warcraft without extra setup.

A ready-made gaming computer varies widely in price. Match it to your chosen game's recommended requirements and include a screen, keyboard and mouse in the budget if you do not already have them. There is no need to buy a powerful machine just to start with a lighter game.

Do I need to pay every month?

For the single-player parts of Hogwarts Legacy, Dragon Age: Inquisition, Baldur's Gate 3, Stardew Valley and Animal Crossing, buying the game does not normally require a monthly gaming subscription. Console online multiplayer can require a separate service. Check the game's store listing before paying for one.

World of Warcraft is different. Retail has a free trial up to level 20, with restrictions. Continuing beyond the trial requires a subscription or game time, and the latest expansion can be a separate purchase. Forever also requires a WoW subscription or game time; do not assume Retail's free trial applies to it. See Blizzard's **Retail trial information** (https://worldofwarcraft.blizzard.com/en-us/return) and **Forever information** (https://worldofwarcraft.blizzard.com/en-us/forever).

What do the games cost?

Buy one game to begin with, not the whole list. Prices differ by game, device, edition and sale, so there is no useful single total for all our destinations. World of Warcraft also has ongoing costs, unlike a simple one-off game purchase.

Use the official store links on each **destination page** (/destinations) to check the current price. Include tax, any subscription you actually need and any necessary hardware in your budget. Optional deluxe editions and add-ons can wait.

Before you buy, check the game's page says it plays on the console you own. PlayStation 5 and PlayStation 4 are listed separately; some destinations use a compatible older-console version. Digital-only consoles cannot use game discs.

Do I need a new TV?

Almost certainly not. Any TV with an HDMI socket will do, and most TVs from the last 15 years have one. The cable comes in the box with the console.

Is second-hand fine?

Yes, for consoles and for games on a disc. Buy from a shop that gives you a few weeks to return it, or ask a private seller to show it switched on and working. Be wary of deals on auction sites that look too good.

Games you download can't be sold on or bought second-hand.

Where should I buy it?

From the maker's own online store, or any large shop you already trust. Check the shop’s return policy before paying, especially for opened consoles and downloaded games. Return rights and refund conditions differ.