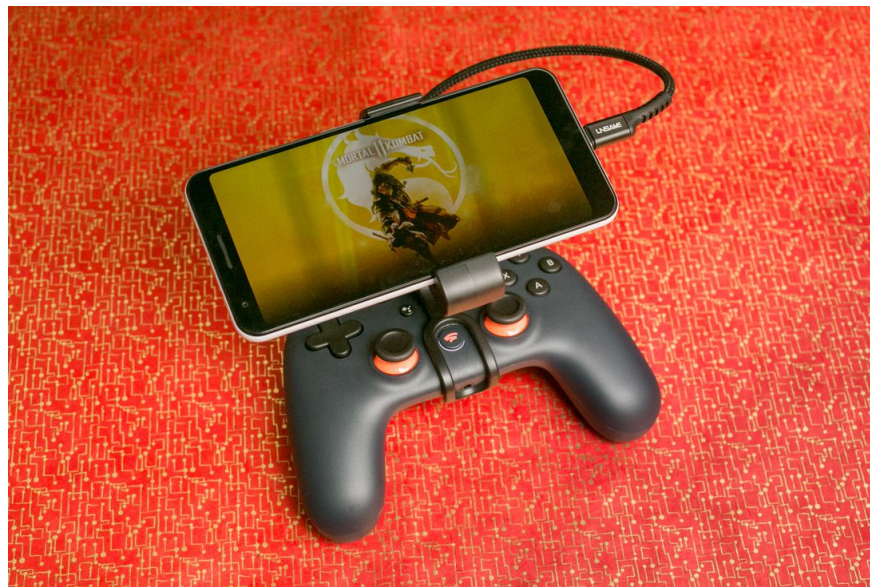


Google Stadia captures rollout, newest games and everything else you need to know

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Google Stadia, the megacorp's service to stream playable games on TVs and mobile devices without a console or PC, is the company's leap into the melee of cloud gaming. Google is typically the biggest fish in any pond, but in cloud gaming it competes with other heavy hitters like Microsoft (xCloud), Nvidia (GeForce Now) and Sony (PlayStation Now).



As so all those services, Stadia games run on powerful data center servers, which makes it possible to render and stream demanding games to lightweight hardware like phones. Sometimes using a custom Stadia controller, sometimes not. Google also provides a platform and tools for developers to create Stadia-optimized versions of their games; your subscription fees go for for extra features, such as 4K and freebies.

If you think Stadia sounds confusing, you're not alone. Fortunately, we can help cut through the hype and explain its promised, but still missing, features.

When Google initially announced Stadia at GDC 2019, it hyped a lot of its grand ambitions, such as Crowd Play and State Share. But while those all may eventually come to fruition, at the moment it's quite a pared-down version of the company's vision. That's common with the incremental rollouts of these services.

For instance, Stadia only works over Wi-Fi now; network connection speed and quality are so important for a decent cloud gaming experience that all the companies that offer the option to play non-native mobile games over cellular networks are being very cautious. Hence the excitement around 5G. And Google is a latecomer to cloud gaming, so it's still at the working-out-the-basic-kinks stage while others have leveled up on to refining the experience. That partially offsets the advantage of its extensive network of data centers.

How much does it cost?

Stadia's pricing can get a little confusing, mostly because Google hasn't begun offering the subscription-only or free plans yet, just the hardware bundles. At launch it offered -- and has since discontinued -- a Founder's Edition, which included a limited-edition blue controller, a Chromecast Ultra streaming device, three months of Stadia Pro, Bungie's full *Destiny 2* experience, first dibs on a username and a buddy pass that gave a friend three months to try Stadia Pro.

That has since evolved into the \$129 (£119) Premiere Edition, which comes with a white Stadia controller, Chromecast Ultra and three months of the Pro subscription. In mid-January 2020, Verizon announced it would be bundling Stadia Premiere Edition with new subscriptions to its top-end Fios Gigabit broadband plan beginning January 29th.

Stadia subscription tiers

Stadia Base	Stadia Pro	Cost	Free	Availability	Coming some time this year	Now (only with Premiere Edition bundle)	Quality	Up to 1080/60fps, stereo sound	Hardware permitting, up to 4K/60p HDR and 5.1 surround	Free games	No	Periodic limited-window offers	Game discounts	No	Limited time discount offers,	percent varies
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Google hasn't provided any time frame for the rollout of the standalone subscription plans or for more countries yet. An update for the Stadia app on Feb. 27 shows there will be a "Pro Pass" that could be for those who want to pay for the service without buying the whole edition to get started. There were also mentions that the free tier of the service might set a limit to how many players can go online in order to make sure paying players aren't affected.

Stadia is available in North America (plus Puerto Rico and Alaska, but not Hawaii or Guam) and selected countries in Western Europe and Scandinavia, including the UK.

How do I buy games?

At the moment, the Stadia game store is walled off behind a login that you can only get with a Premiere Edition account. Games are only available from Google.

Game prices are typically the publisher prices and sold only through Google, so if you're a subscriber, you'll really want to pay attention to those discount offers.

Cancellation policy

If you decide to cancel your Stadia Pro subscription or choose not to subscribe after your free three months are up, it reverts to Stadia Base, so you can still play any Stadia games you've paid for. However, you lose access to any free games or content that you got as a perk of the Pro subscription. Google saves your progress and add-on history so you can resubscribe and pick up where you left off.

If you return the entire Premiere hardware bundle for a refund within the 15-day window, you lose the Stadia Pro three-month trial and the aforementioned freebies. Game purchases can be refunded within two weeks and less than two hours of gameplay.

The flip side of this, though, is what happens if a game publisher "cancels." We've all seen content disappear from IP-heavy subscription plans like Netflix and Amazon Prime (I still haven't gotten over Doctor Who disappearing at the stroke of midnight on New Year's eve), and some games have been known to drift in and out of subscription services. Google *intends* to keep games available to play if you've spent money on them, but that's a little too fuzzy to consider a policy.

Stadia requirements

In its current state, you can officially play Stadia games on select Android phones -- Google's Pixel 2, Pixel 3, Pixel 3A and Pixel 4; and as of Feb. 20, Samsung's Galaxy S8, S8 Plus, S8 Active, Note 8, S9, S9 Plus, Note 9, S10, S10 Plus, Note 10, S20, S20 Plus, and S20 Ultra; the Asus ROG Phone and ROG Phone 2; plus the Razer Phone and Razer Phone 2.

It also works on iPhone and iPads, TVs (with a Chromecast Ultra and Stadia Controller), in the Chrome browser on laptops and desktops, or on Chrome OS devices. As usual with iOS apps, you can't actually buy games within them, just manage games and play them. However, that doesn't mean people haven't been running them with various degrees of success on unsupported devices, including the Nintendo Switch and not-Google phones.

Since launch, Google has expanded its controller support beyond its own Stadia Controller (\$69 or £59) to any HID-compliant one, which includes many Xbox Controllers and the DualShock 4. It supports TVs via the Stadia Controller (over Wi-Fi) and Chromecast Ultra; the service requires at least Android 6.0/iOS 11 or tablets running Chrome OS 77. You can connect controllers via USB or selectively via Bluetooth, and Stadia does support keyboard and mouse play using Chrome.

Stadia itself still only runs wirelessly over Wi-Fi -- no cellular connections yet, though you can always try running that way using your phone as a hotspot -- but a wired Ethernet connection is still the preferred method for all these services. Google specifies minimum bandwidth requirements for each quality level of 10 megabits per second (720p), 20Mbps (1080p) and 35Mbps (4K). As for data usage, the company says it sucks up to 4.5GB, 12.6GB or 20GB per hour for either of those resolutions, respectively. If your connection is a little erratic or drops, Google buffers the game state for a few minutes to give you an opportunity to fix it.

April's Stadia Pro games

1. The Serious Sam Collection
2. Spitlings
3. Stack on Stacks (On Stacks)

Current game lineup

1. Destiny 2: The Collection
2. Kine
3. Gylt
4. Red Dead Redemption 2
5. Thumper
6. Tomb Raider Definitive Edition
7. Rise of the Tomb Raider
8. Shadow of the Tomb Raider Definitive Edition
9. Mortal Kombat 11
10. Assassin's Creed Odyssey
11. Just Dance 2020
12. Samurai Shodown
13. Lost Words: Beyond the Page
14. Borderlands 3
15. Attack on Titan 2 Final Battle
16. Darksiders Genesis
17. Dragon Ball Xenoverse 2
18. Farming Simulator 19
19. Final Fantasy XV
20. Football Manager 2020
21. NBA 2K20
22. Grid
23. Rage 2
24. Metro Exodus
25. Ghost Recon: Breakpoint
26. Wolfenstein: Youngblood
27. Trial Rising
28. The Crew 2
29. Monster Energy Supercross: The Official Videogame 3
30. Spitlings
31. The Serious Sam Collection
32. SteamWorld Dig
33. SteamWorld Dig 2
34. SteamWorld Quest
35. SteamWorld Heist
36. Doom Eternal
37. Tom Clancy's The Division 2

Upcoming games

1. Stack on Stacks (On Stacks)
2. Panzer Dragoon
3. Marvel's Avengers
4. Cyberpunk 2077
5. The Elder Scrolls Online
6. Watch Dogs: Legion
7. Relicta

8. The Turing Test
9. Monopoly

What's next?

On Jan. 16, the Google Stadia team laid out plans for the first three months of 2020. Along with more features rolling out, the team expects 120 games to be released this year. Among the features promised to arrive next: Expanded capabilities for gaming via stadia.com, including 4K support, Google Assistant improvements and wireless gameplay with the Stadia Controller

An update on Feb. 27 to the Stadia app showed Family Sharing, YouTube streaming and game capturing are partially coded in, which could mean the features will be coming soon.

On Monday, Stadia users on Reddit were able to access their game captures online at Stadia.com/captures. Google says it's doing a slow rollout of the feature, meaning some will have access while others will have to wait until Wednesday when the rollout is complete.

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