

The Real Cost of 'Free' Games That Many People Don't Consider

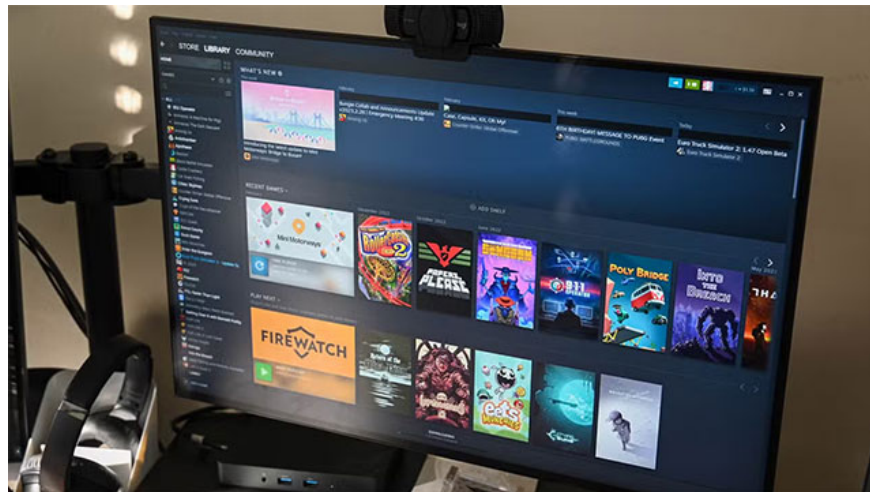
Who doesn't love free stuff? But when it comes to video games, free often comes with a price. Games that don't require upfront payment often have hidden costs that we sometimes don't realize.

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Games piled up, can't play them all

Imagine you are a master of hunting for free games: Epic Store every month, Play Store, App Store, Xbox... you can download tons of them. Then sit and look at your huge game library with pride.

But wait... Do you have enough time to play? For adults like us who have to work and raise children, we are lucky to be able to play a few hours a week. Just when one title is finished, a dozen new free games appear. And so the list of untouched games grows longer and longer, and you simply can never 'digest' it all.



Actually, owning a huge game library is good, but many people feel suffocated. Looking at the pile of games in stock, they want to... delete them all to get rid of debt!

Advertising is a waste of time

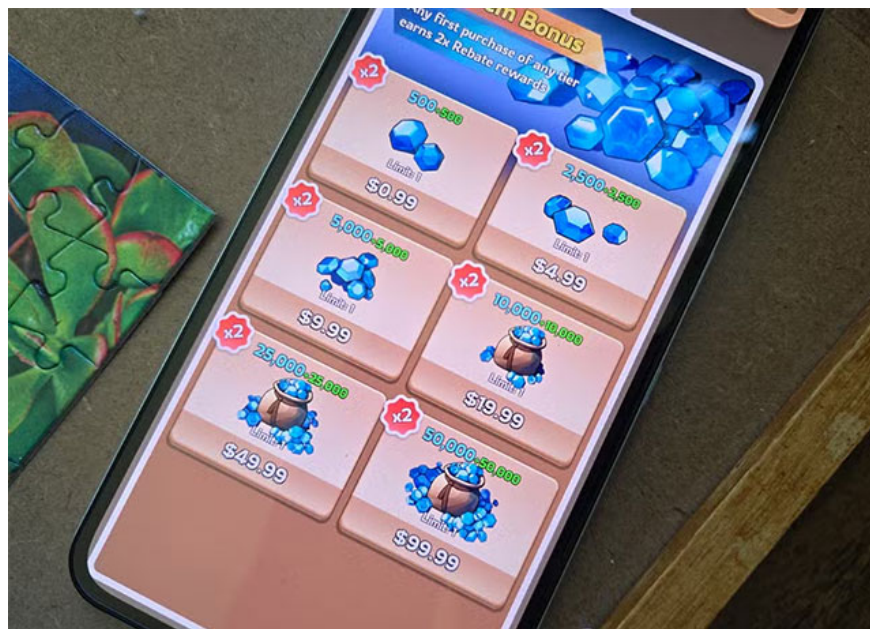
Many free games, especially on phones and tablets, are riddled with ads. Personally, I can't stand full-screen banner ads while I'm playing, and even a full-screen pop-up is enough to make me quit the game immediately.

Free mobile games without ads are like 'pho without onions' - very rare! I'm allergic to flashing banners and pop-ups that cover half the screen. After playing for 5 minutes, I see ads for "super cool" games (which are actually just 'love scam' clips).

I had no choice but to watch a 30-second video that I couldn't skip. I wanted to throw my phone away! I'll only play games with ads if I pay to turn them off—then "free" becomes "paid"!

Free at first but 'empty wallet' when playing deeper

You enter the game for free, play a few rounds and find it quite interesting. Then suddenly: you have to buy a cool character, you have to top up a nice weapon, if you want to level up quickly you have to buy a "buff" item. And so on, little by little, then another. At the end of the month, you suddenly realize: "Oh, I've already spent a million dollars on the game!".

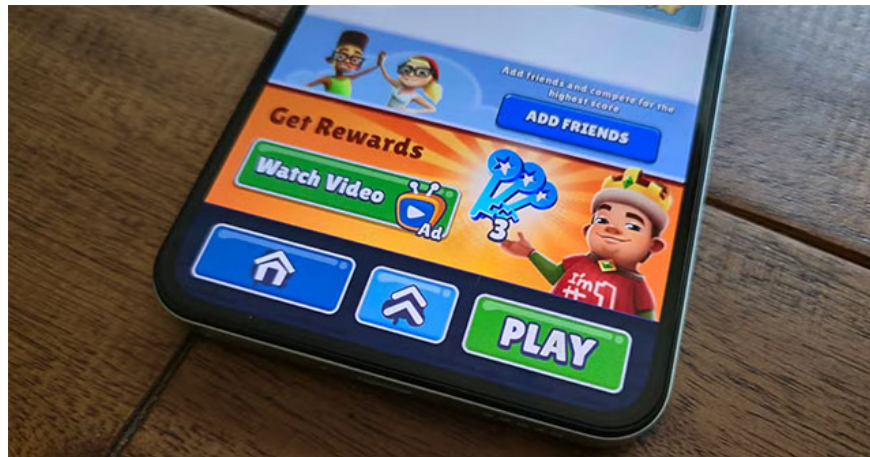


It's like going to a casino: you know you're going to lose money, but you keep thinking "play a little more, maybe.". Free games also slowly drain your wallet: loot boxes, free coins every day to lure you in, limited events to force you to buy quickly. It's easy to get addicted to playing, not only children but also adults sometimes can't help but spend money!

Be careful with data collection

Many free-to-play games aren't just about wallets, they're also about collecting player data. If a game requires you to create an account, chances are they're tracking how you play. Niantic—the company behind Pokemon

Go—became valuable not just because it created a global phenomenon, but because of the vast amount of data it collects. As Kotaku reported in 2019, Niantic isn't just mapping the world, it's mapping player behavior.



In general, cheap games are better than free games. There are plenty of paid games under \$10 that offer a complete experience—no ads, micropayments, or tracking. Games are increasingly expensive to develop, so publishers are always looking for ways to recoup their costs, making 'free' more expensive than it seems.

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