

The Top Ten Nintendo Games of All Time (Part 2)

The wait is over! We proudly present the top four NES games of all time. Last week, we unveiled numbers ten through five – you can read that [here](#). As is typical with any top ten we have done, there was some controversy. (See: Tecmo Super Bowl landing at number 5.) Nevertheless, we are satisfied with our results and the top four games are all deserving of any accolades that come their way.

For our money, the classic Nintendo Entertainment System is the high-water mark in the video game industry. It captured the imaginations of millions during its run and continues to make new fans every time a child is introduced to it in all its 8-bit glory. Enjoy reading our final four and be sure to let us know what you think in the comment section below.



4. Contra

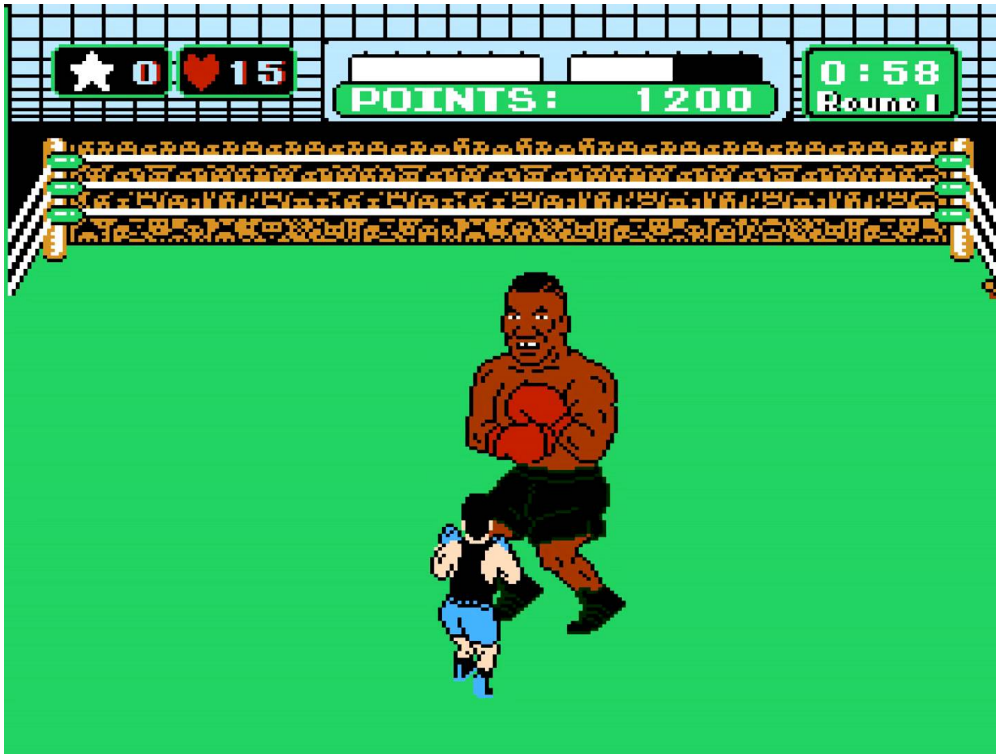
We played this thing for hours prior to owning it – we had borrowed it from a friend. We were blissfully unaware of the legendary cheat code at that time so we slogged our way through as much of it as possible. Then, on the day my little brother bought the game from a neighbor, we brought it home with the cheat code in hand, and we proceeded to beat it our first time through. I've always felt bad for my little brother that we finished this game the first day he owned it. I think he spent \$30 on the thing.

Show of hands: How many of you could beat this game without the cheat code? Be honest.

Bonus question: How many of you remember the cheat code?
(Phill Lytle)

—

To answer Phill's question. I could (and still can) beat *Contra* without the cheat code (which, of course, I still have memorized to this day). I, unfortunately, never owned *Contra* during my childhood, but it is probably the video game I rented the most (probably enough to buy it several times over). (Nathan Patton)



3. Mike Tyson's Punch-Out

I have never been more than a casual observer of actual boxing. Likewise, I have never had a strong desire to play a boxing video game. *Mike Tyson's Punch-Out* (or just *Punch-Out* as the franchise was branded at a later date) is the exception. This masterpiece of a video game appealed to everyone whether they enjoyed boxing or couldn't care less about it ([that one's for you, Phill!](#)). *Punch-Out* took a big risk by making the player's character stationary. Your character, Lil Mac, couldn't move around the ring. Instead, you were limited to dodging and ducking. This brilliant decision made every fight a test of pattern recognition and reflexes. There was little more satisfying on the NES than landing a counter punch at the perfect time in the perfect location which sent your opponent crumbling to the mat. *Punch-Out* was as much a puzzle game as a boxing game. Success depended on trial and error and finding each opponent's specific weaknesses. And every opponent was vastly different presenting a different puzzle to solve. Completing the game by

beating Tyson remains to this day a source of bragging rights among gamers. (Mark Sass)

—

Before Mike Tyson got so weird that Bill Simmons coined the highest level of weirdness “The Tyson Zone,” he was the baddest of men in the sports world. He was so intimidating he beat the undefeated heavyweight champion Michael Spinks in like 90 seconds one fight. So putting his name and likeness on an already popular boxing game called “Punch Out” was a brilliant advertising move.

We loved Glass Joe for how easy he was to beat. We loved King Hippo for how his pants dropped when you hit him in the belly. We loved Soda Popinski for how he talked trash. We loved Great Tiger for his unorthodox teleport move. We even loved Doc Lewis and referee Mario! But as Little Mac, beating Tyson was the golden grail. I never could do it, but those who did in my small farming community in rural SC were legends. (Gowdy Cannon)

—

The first time I played this game was at a J.C. Penny or similar establishment. (They had a Nintendo system displayed and you could give it a test run.) I had never seen *Punch Out* before and had no idea what I was doing. Spoiler alert: I thought I was Glass Joe and “won” that fight convincingly.

Flash forward a few years when we finally owned the game and I realized only losers lose to Glass Joe. I redeemed myself by finally beating the game though, so I have that going for me.

Quick question, and be honest here: you peed yourself a little the first time you reached Mike Tyson, didn't you? We all did. And that's okay. (Phill Lytle)



2. The Legend of Zelda

Everything from the golden cartridge to the open-world, passive storytelling of this game was larger than life for me as a kid. I loved all of the secret passages and having to rely on strategy guides (Jeff Rovin's "How to Win at Nintendo Games" and the Nintendo Power fold-out overworld map) to try and discover what you needed to do next in the game. Getting the raft, bombing holes in the walls, hands that could grab you and take you back to the beginning of the dungeon, playing the flute, the graveyard ghosts, all of it was magical. And there was a huge sense of accomplishment for me when I finally defeated Ganon, only then to discover an entirely new take on the world awaited. (D.A. Speer)

—

With the exception of playing it a few, brief times at a friend's house, I came to this game relatively late in life. Amazingly, that did not diminish my love for it. I did not have to discover every secret for myself since they were all documented online by that point, yet still, I have loved every minute of playing this game. This simply was just not the type of game I enjoyed playing as a child. If it had been, it would

probably be up there with *Super Mario Bros. 3*, but it is very much the type of game I enjoy playing as an adult. (Nathan Patton)



1. Super Mario Bros. 3

Best game ever? We think so. Personally, I would take *Tecmo Super Bowl* over *Mario 3*, but it would be by the slimmest margin. *Mario 3* was revolutionary. The original *Mario* was a fun game. It was the first NES game that most people played, and it was great. *Mario 2* was wacky and weird and strange and felt so different from the first one that a lot of us had a hard time really getting into it. But *Mario 3* was the perfect blend of all the great new ideas from *Mario 2* combined with all the stuff we loved about *Mario 1*, but somehow better in every way. The game felt HUGE! Massive worlds. Plenty of secrets. Great gameplay. Honestly, I can't think of a single negative thing to say about it. It's a flawless game. (Phill Lytle)

—

The three games I've played the most as far as actual time spent in the game are, in no particular order, *World of Warcraft*, *Lord of the Rings Online*, and *Super Mario Bros. 3*.

Two of those are very open online RPGs that one can easily spend hours in doing pretty much nothing. The other is a classic side-scroller that I can beat in about 12 minutes. I lived on the west coast for a year but don't remember hardly any of it because I spent almost all of that time discovering every nook and cranny of this game.

The gameplay of *Super Mario Bros. 3* is perfect (no, that's not an overstatement). The world design and level design were absolutely mind-blowing at the time, and have held up well over the years. This is, without a doubt, the best NES game... and the best video game of any system of all time. (Nathan Patton)

—

I remember when I first got this game. It came out in February 1990, and in December of the same year, my parents surprised us with an NES for Christmas. For my 6th birthday in January of '91, *Mario 3* was my big gift from mom and dad. I remember opening up the gift and seeing the yellow box, then opening it and pouring over the manual. It would come to redefine my ideas of how much fun gaming could be. I played it all afternoon and night after my birthday party, and I remember that my parents fixed Tony's pizza that night and I ate 9 pieces while playing the game. The game just never got old. It was the perfect side-scrolling game. Lots of fun and as challenging as you wanted it to be. Giant world, the desert sun that comes down and attacks you, hopping around in a boot, the cryptic tanooki suit, the extremely hard to get hammer brothers suit, P-wings, the warship end bosses, the warp whistles, the dark and hellish last world where wrenches and bombs come flying at you a mile a minute... The team behind this game absolutely nailed it and pushed the NES to its limits. Koji Kondo wrote the music too, which was, and still is, great. As a recent podcast put it, "This was Nintendo's farewell love letter to the NES." (D.A. Speer)

So there you have it. Agree? Disagree? Let us know below! And once you finish telling us how awesome (or dumb) we are in the comments section, you can check out these other articles on REO.

[*The Top Ten Nintendo Games of All Time \(Part 1\)*](#)

[*The Top Ten Movie Franchises of All Time \(Part One\)*](#)