

ENGAGED

family gaming

The Magazine

Enter the Arena

Video games are center stage for the Olympics Esports Series 2023!



Let's Go to the Movies

Family games are making a splash on the silver screen!

Reviews are In

Take a closer look at some great new games!





From the Editor's Desk

Hey there, fellow gaming parents!

I'm absolutely stoked to talk to you about the fantastic lineup of games coming our way this year! As the head honcho of this digital mag, I'm always on the lookout for the best gaming experiences for you and your kids. And let me tell you, this year is shaping up to be one for the ages!

I can hardly contain my excitement for the amazing games we'll all get to play, like Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom and Street Fighter 6! I mean, can you even imagine the epic game nights we're about to have? And the best part? There's so much more to come, especially with those juicy fall releases we're all waiting for with bated breath.

Now, I won't bore you with long-winded descriptions of the games, but let me tell you, they are going to be mind-blowing! We're talking next-level fun and adventure that will make your family game nights the stuff of legends. I can already see the smiles, the laughter, and the occasional "I can't believe I just did that!" moments happening in living rooms all over the world.

But that's not all, folks! Keep your eyes peeled for the latest scoop on family-friendly titles. We've got our ears to the ground, and we're ready to spill the tea as soon as we get wind of the next big thing. So, buckle up, and get ready for the ride of your life – it's going to be a game-changer (pun totally intended)!

In the meantime, don't forget to dive into our treasure trove of articles, reviews, and top picks, all carefully put together to help you discover your family's next favorite game. And hey, why not join our awesome community of gaming parents? Share your experiences, trade tips, and show off your fave titles – we'd love to hear from you!

Thank you for being a part of our gaming family and for sharing this wild and wonderful journey with us. It's an exciting time to be a gaming parent, and we're thrilled to be right there with you, every step of the way.

Get your family game on!

Stephen Duetzmann, Founder, Editor in Chief



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Olympics Esports

The IOC has officially announced that Esports are coming to the Olympics!

The 2023 Olympic Esports Series is an exciting event that the whole family can enjoy together. For the first time, the series will feature live, in-person finals, giving talented players the chance to advance to the Olympic Esports Finals 2023. Hosted at Singapore's Suntec Centre from June 22nd to 25th, these thrilling finals will be a major highlight of the newly announced Olympic Esports Week 2023.

Gathering in Singapore for this one-of-a-kind competition, participants will go head-to-head in front of enthusiastic fans, vying for the esteemed title of Olympic Esports Series champion. To ensure parents and children worldwide can join in the excitement, the electrifying finals will be streamed live on [Olympics.com](https://olympics.com) and Olympic social media channels.

Building on the success of the Olympic Virtual Series, the IOC's new competition format aims to support the growth of virtual sports within the Olympic Movement. The 2021 series, held before the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games (that were delayed due to the pandemic), saw over 250,000 participants from over 100 countries compete.

The 2023 Olympic Esports Series shows how the Olympic Movement, gaming, and esports communities keep working together, creating fun and exciting chances for players and fans of all ages.

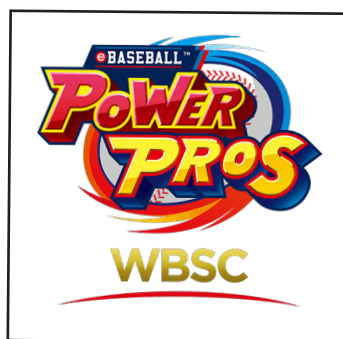
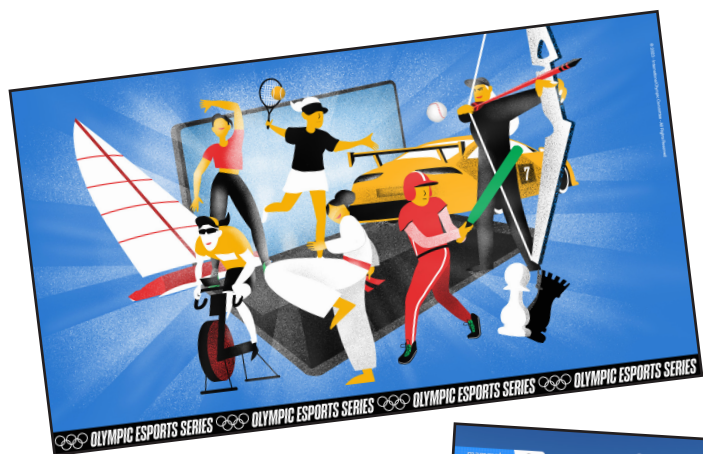
The events that will be included are:

- ★ **Archery** (in partnership with the World Archery Federation, played using Tic Tac Bow)
- ★ **Baseball** (in partnership with the World Baseball Softball Confederation, played using WBSC eBASEBALL™: POWER PROS)
- ★ **Chess** (in partnership with the International Chess Federation, played using Chess.com)

Continues on next page



Olympic flag
© 2012 / Comité International Olympique (CIO) / FURLONG, Christopher



Olympic Esports Series 2023 Games: (clockwise from top) Official Esports Series images, Tic Tac Bow, Chess.com, WBSC eBASEBALL: POWER PROS.

Continued from previous page

- ☆ **Cycling** (in partnership with the UCI, played using Zwift)
- ☆ **Dance** (in partnership with the World DanceSport Federation, played using JustDance)
- ☆ **Motor Sport** (in partnership with the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile, played using Gran Turismo)
- ☆ **Sailing** (in partnership with World Sailing, played using Virtual Regatta)
- ☆ **Taekwondo** (World Taekwondo, played using Virtual Taekwondo)
- ☆ **Tennis** (International Tennis Federation, played using Tennis Clash) ★★

“The Olympic Movement brings people together in peaceful competition. The Olympic Esports Series 2023 is a continuation of that, with the ambition of creating more spaces to play for both players and fans of elite competition. We look forward to witnessing some of the world’s best compete on the global stage, as well as exploring together shared opportunities and lessons - across health and wellbeing, training and innovation.”

~ David Lappartient,
Chair of the IOC Esports Liaison Group



Olympic Esports Series 2023 Games: top row (from l. to r.) Zwift, Tennis Clash, JustDance; bottom row (from l. to r.) Gran Turismo, Virtual Taekwondo, Virtual Regatta

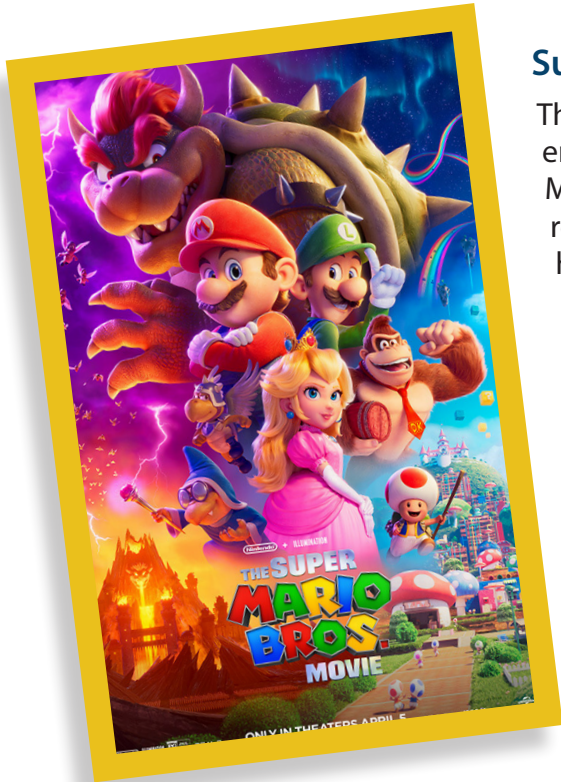
Did you know...

There's a rating system for video games? The ESRB rating system is designed to inform you about the content and age-appropriateness of video games. Engaged Family Gaming has broken it all down so you know the difference between an E and an AO rating, and everything in between. [Click here](#) for more!



Family Gaming at the Movies

2023 has been a great year for family gamers to go to the movies! Take a look at our thoughts on some of the recent hits below!



Super Mario Movie

The Super Mario Movie is 90 minutes of nostalgia-fueled fun. Every frame of the gorgeous animation is laced with references to the Mario Games of the past. The score is inspired and contains clever references to the various motifs in different levels across Mario's history.

The plot is paper thin and I didn't care for a second. Mario and Luigi are struggling to make it on their own in the real world and find themselves transported to the Mushroom Kingdom and Bowser's territory respectively. The rest of the movie is all about Mario's adventure to save his brother. They probably could have spent a little bit more time developing the relationship between Mario and Luigi, but they gave us a wild trip into Donkey Kong's country instead.

We recommend this movie to families with kids of all ages and can't wait for the inevitable sequels.

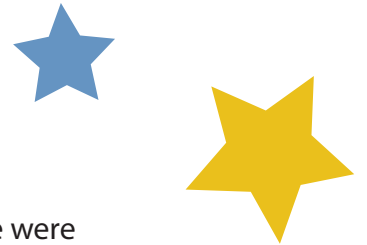
Dungeons & Dragons: Honor Among Thieves

Gamers far and wide were vibrating with excitement awaiting the release of the newest Dungeons and Dragons movie, Honor Among Thieves. My family went into the theater hoping for a good Dungeons & Dragons movie, and we got a movie that had us laughing out loud in the theater. The movie was so well done, you do not need to be a fan of the TableTop Role Play game to enjoy. This star studded cast certainly brought a high quality to the movie, which did not take itself seriously either.

Of course there were monsters and elements that fans would recognize, and it added to the experience. Without spoiling anything, this movie has all the elements fans and those dragged along to watch the movies will enjoy. There is mischief, mayhem, plans going awry, characters surprising us, and then growing through their struggles. There were many twists and turns that kept us on the edge of our seats. Dungeons & Dragons: Honor Among Thieves proved to be a great movie for all families that enjoy the action, epic battles, strife, and silliness. ★★



Board Game Review: Her Story



2-5 players / Age 8+

There are so many stories to tell. In Her Story by Underdog Games, players are taking on the task of researching iconic women in history to tell their stories. The story of each woman is told in a chapter of an eight-chapter book.

Gameplay Overview

Her Story is played over rounds with three simple actions to choose from.

★ **Research:** Players may choose one Research Token from the field to add to their player board.

★ **Draft a Chapter:** Players can add a Character Card to an empty Drafting Area if they do not have enough Research Tokens to add that chapter to their book yet.

★ **Complete a Chapter:** Add a Chapter Card to your book. Research tokens are discarded when you have met all the research requirements to add a chapter to your book.

The game-end condition is triggered when one player completes eight chapters, and the rest of the players get one more turn.

Family Game Assessment

The mechanics of the game were quick to learn and the rounds progressed quickly. Her Story is a light-weight game and is recommended for ages eight and up. As far as game play, it is an accurate age benchmark. The readability of both the front and backs of the cards is accessible for an intermediate level reader (roughly a third grader at about 8 years old), though the back text may have some references that might be confusing for a young reader without understanding the historical context. That said, Her Story could be a great introduction to some of these points in history, and an opportunity to pursue age-appropriate books for further learning.

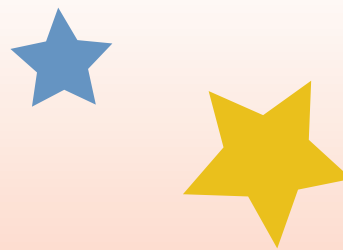
The player interaction as we were vying for the same research tokens was very enjoyable. The game also allows each player the option to, up to twice per game, clear all the research tokens and refill with new tokens from the bag. Needless to say for players planning to take a Research Token needed, they had to pivot their plan for their next turn.

Final Thoughts

We are completely enamored with this game. Our gameplay was slowed down, however, with us stopping to read the cards for women being featured who we were unfamiliar with. Our game group also had quite a few side conversations about the choices on which women had special powers on their cards, as well as the victory points listed. Due to our side conversations and extra time spent with some of the cards, the game did take a little longer than expected, but we enjoyed every minute of the time spent. ★★



More Board Games



Everdell

1-4 players / Age 14+

Enter the world of Everdell with absolutely stunning artwork, a three-dimensional tree, and top-notch components. Strategically place your critters to collect resources and build your city before winter arrives. With many ways to earn points (and gain the victory) it can be anyone's game until the very end.



Trails

2-4 players / Age 10+

Experience the beauty of the National Parks with the stunning artwork of ten different parks and trails. This small box game is easy to learn and players take on the role of a hiker taking photographs gathering acorns, leaves, and rocks. There is even a bear meeple that moves around the board. Enjoy your hike both in the day and night, with different benefits to your night hike.

This Game Goes to Eleven

2-6 player / Age 8+

Rock out and turn the volume up to 11 in This Game Goes to Eleven. Add cards to the discard pile, get it exactly to 11 and pass the cards to another player. But go over and the cards are yours. Look out for the Quiet Librarian, she can thwart the 11 card or reset the cards to zero! Can you end with the least amount of cards and get it turned up to 11?

Poetry for Neanderthals

2+ players / Age 7+

Can you limit all your words to a single syllable? In Poetry for Neanderthals you have to get your team to guess the word on the card by describing it using only single-syllable words. Should you use "big words", your penalty is a bop with the No Stick!

Tinderblox

2-6 players / Age 6+

Test your dexterity to build the highest campfire with a tiny portable game. Tinderblox has you build the campfire using different blocks, sometimes single, sometimes up to three at the same time. You may even be required to use your non-dominant hand. How high can it be built before some of the blocks collapse? Pick your play area carefully: once they fall, blocks go flying!



Key to the Kingdom

2-5 players / Age 7+

Not many games have you changing the board during the game. In Key to the Kingdom players can just through whirlpools which have players opening or closing portions of the board, revealing or covering areas. Complete Minor Adventures or Key Adventures (to collect part of the Key, unlocking access to the Demon King). Will you be able to gather what you need and defeat the Demon King?

Video Game Review: Octopath Traveler 2



The original **Octopath Traveler** was announced alongside the Nintendo Switch to great fanfare. It had a unique artstyle that mixed pixel-art sprites and buildings with HD assets like flowing water, swirling sand, and amazing lighting effects. It really was a sight to behold.

That name, however, was very confusing until it launched. But, now we understand that it explains the formula for the plot and gameplay. The game features eight protagonists as they gather together and travel across the world completing their stories. This was a novel concept, but left a lot to be desired.

Octopath Traveler 2 fixes all of the first games deficits. The art style is gorgeous (in fact the lighting on the PS5 version is among the best I have seen). The protagonists are all very interesting (they include a merchant who wants to end all poverty, and a mage who wants to prove his innocence after being framed for a murder!).

I'll start with the obvious. OT2 is a turn-based RPG where you build a party of characters and move around on a map dealing with random encounters as you go from place to place. This is a tried and true formula that has been in place since the Nintendo era. This is an archaic design compared to modern RPGs that often put the monsters on the map itself to encounter (and potentially avoid), but it was very nostalgic for me.

Once you get past the archaic parts, the game's design sings. The goal in combat is to overcome each opponent's defenses and "stagger" them. You do this by damaging them with attacks that they are weak against (like spears, or ice magic). This makes every fight into a puzzle while you poke at the enemy to find their weaknesses only to exploit them. This is particularly fun in the epic boss fights where you need to stagger the bosses in order to prevent them from pulling off massive (and often fight-ending) attacks.

The story is also more interesting this time as the characters interact with each other's stories more often. They aren't exactly entangled. But each of the eight stories comes to an interesting conclusion (even if they aren't all surprising).

Once the stories are complete there is an end game segment featuring a series of boss encounters that are among the most challenging fights I have ever had in an RPG. They are long, tactical, and really pushed my knowledge of the game mechanics to the limit. (When you get here... don't take them lightly. One of them was more than a half hour long!)

Conclusion

This isn't going to be a perfect game in every house, but any families that have an affinity for old school JRPGs will definitely want to check this one out. Its a a great experience. ★★



More Video Games

HiFi Rush

HiFi Rush is a rhythm action game set in a bright and cheerful dystopia (No. I'm not kidding.) Mastery requires learning to time each hit of your combo to the beat. This makes every combat feel like a dance. If that sounds good to you, then have at it! But, I would maybe pass if you have two left feet.



Power Wash Simulator

There is something so very satisfying about using a powerwasher. This is an opportunity to do that without the rental fee or the water bill. Clean away everyone!

Advance Wars 1 and 2 Re-boot Camp

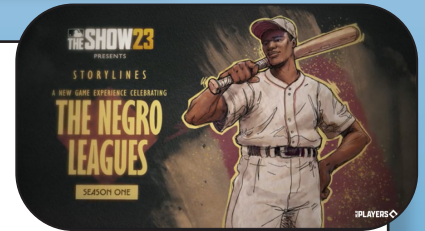
This colorful remake of two Game Boy Advance classics was originally slated for release a year ago, but was delayed indefinitely because of the ongoing invasion of Ukraine. Nintendo has decided to end the delay and release it as of April 21st. This is a great chance for Switch owners to play two great turn based strategy games.

Terra Nil

Terra Nil is a resource-management game that challenges players to restore desolate, toxic wastelands to their former beauty. By introducing technology to scrub the environment, players will raise (and lower) the temperature, affect the humidity, and watch the oceans teem with reformed coral reefs. As the flora flourishes, the native fauna will return just in time for the player to recycle it all and begin anew somewhere else on the planet. You can play Terra Nil on PC for \$24.99 and mobile (Netflix) today.

MLB® The Show 2023

This is an annual trip to the ball park that is always a major event, but this year's edition includes a game mode that features stories from the Negro Leagues that existed during the segregation era. Some of the best baseball players in history played in that league and this should be required playing for anyone who calls themselves a baseball fan.



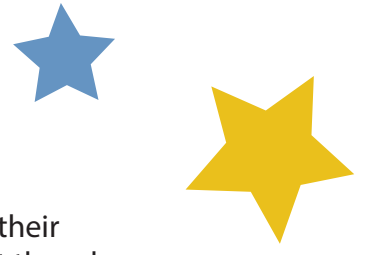
Kirby's Return to Dreamland Deluxe

Kirby is made for kids so this Wii era remake is going to be brand new to them. This is a wonderful game that has all manner of cool powers and fun game modes to keep the younger set entertained (even if the older gamers might struggle a bit).



Metroid Prime Remastered

This is the definitive version of one of the best games in Nintendo's history. Metroid Prime tells an interesting story with no dialogue.

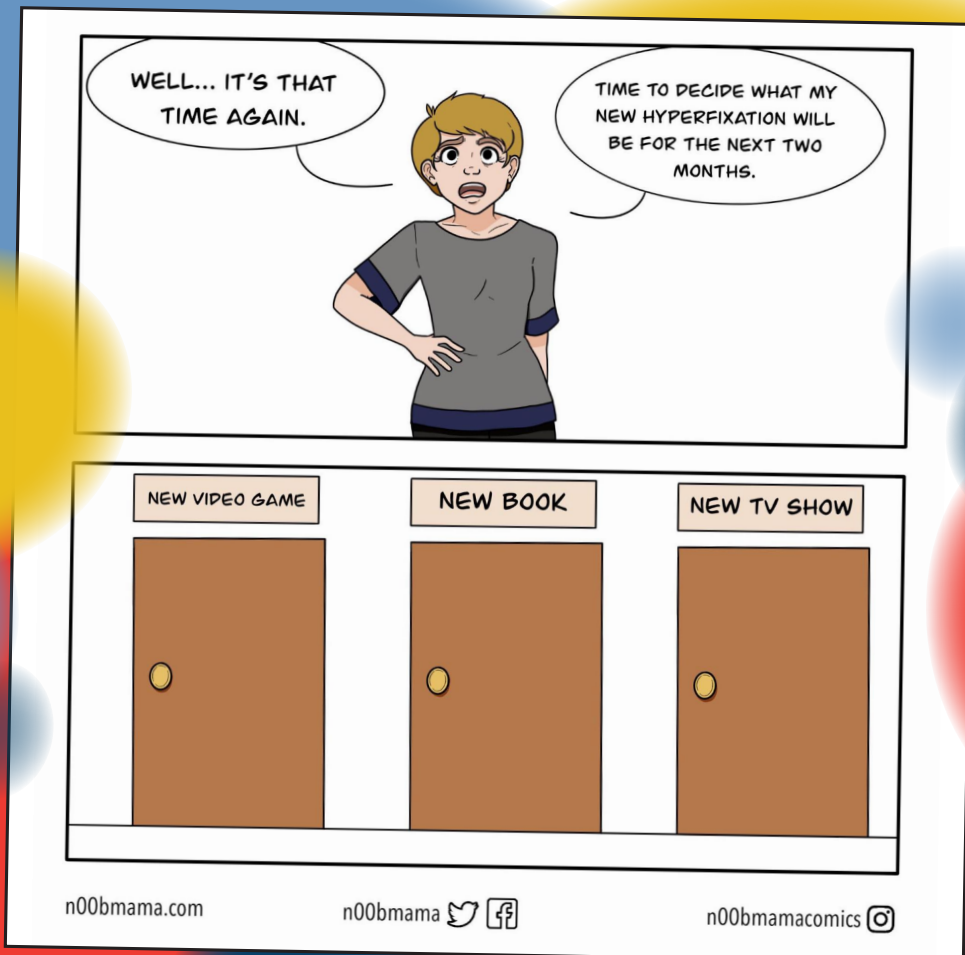


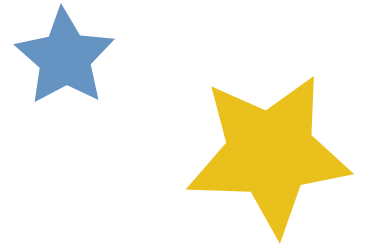
Definition: Deck Builder

A **deck-building game** is a card game where players begin with low-value or undesirable cards. Over the course of the game, players curate the cards that are in their deck. As they add new cards, it creates a new individual draw deck to optimize what they draw. Players accomplish this curation by both discarding and/or adding different cards to their personal decks. The ways players can add new cards to their deck varies game to game. Many games have a central field or market which players can select from to acquire more powerful or desirable cards.

Click [here](#) for a full explanation of "deck builder" and even more game definitions! ★★

Just for Fun





THANK YOU!

Thank you for reading this issue of Engaged Family Gaming - The Magazine. We strive to bring you the latest, most up-to-date gaming info and we appreciate you spending your time with us.

Happy Gaming, from the whole EFG Team!

