

# Best console depends on the gamers

In our home, tech purchases have always been well planned and researched. That is until the frigid temperatures of the winter school break forced me, my wife and our three little girls inside for an entire week.

After the 1,001st screening of “Barbie & Her Sisters in the Great Puppy Adventure” (two thumbs up from me) tensions were high. But it was something else that spurred an impulsive purchase. It was a nine-year-old broken Xbox 360 controller that got us out of the house on a quest for a new gaming console.

Pre-children, my wife and I loved to spend (or waste) our precious non-work hours blasting zombies or solving mind-numbing puzzles. We have a Nintendo Wii, possibly the best wedding gift ever, and an Xbox 360. The Xbox was a pre-first-child gift from my wife to me. Then one daughter joined us. Then a second. Then a third – and those consoles quickly gathered dust.

Our daughters, ages three, five and eight, are into “Star Wars,” so I put our disc of “Lego Star Wars – The Complete Saga” into the Xbox and handed them controllers with fresh double-A batteries. It was like seeing a part of their brains unlock. They were Jedis controlling little Lego Jedis on adventures across the galaxy.

Then one of the controllers broke.

After determining the average price of a new controller was \$35, I looked up from my laptop and said, “For \$250, we could just get a new Xbox.” The response was a little unexpected. My wife said, “Really? Just go do that.”

I said this purchase was impulsive and that’s mostly true – it wasn’t planned.



The Kinsellas decided the best system for them was the Xbox One S.



Alex Kinsella

However, it had been heavily researched – even drooled over – for the past few years. After careful consideration of our options; including Xbox One, PlayStation 4 and Nintendo Switch, we purchased an Xbox One S console.

Here’s the background.

## Nintendo Switch

Released in March 2017, the Nintendo Switch is the most unique of the three contenders. It’s the seventh console released by home-video-game pioneer Nintendo and its design continues Nintendo’s tradition of setting the bar and breaking past it. The Switch combines the best parts of console and mobile gaming in one unit.

Say you are about to leave the cottage for a long drive home. You – or your child, I guess – can start a game in the car on the Switch’s 6.2-inch, 1280 x 720p LCD screen. Get home hours later, detach the Switch’s Joy-Con controllers and place the Switch into its dock connected to your television. Now you’re playing the same game — and at the same point — in up to 1080p resolution.

Nintendo’s consoles are also home to three of gaming’s most popular series; “Super Mario Bros.,” “Legend of Zelda” and “Pokemon.” The Switch continues this tradition with the release of “Super Mario Odyssey” and “The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild.” You can pick up a Nintendo Switch console for about \$400 at your local gaming or electronics store.

## PlayStation 4

The PlayStation 4 is Sony’s eighth console and the exclusive home to titles such as “Call of Duty: WWII,” “Destiny 2” and “Uncharted: The Lost Legacy.” While the Nintendo Switch offers an innovative form factor and mobile play, the PlayStation 4’s strengths are in its industry-leading hardware.

The PlayStation 4 currently comes in two models – the PlayStation 4 1TB Thin (about \$379) or the updated PlayStation 4 1TB Pro (about \$499). Both were released in late 2016 as updates to the original PlayStation 4 that hit the market in 2014.

The Pro and Slim models support the same game library, game controllers and playback of streaming content such as Netflix at 4K resolution on a 4K television. They also have access to more than 500 online titles on the PlayStation Now service, a Netflix for PlayStation games offering with a monthly subscription (\$99 for 12 months).

Both Pro and Slim models also support online, multiplayer-gaming via the PlayStation Network and come with one terabyte of storage standard.

The major difference between the two is the more powerful hardware included in the PlayStation 4 Pro. This upgraded hardware supports 4K rendering of newer PS4 Pro Enhanced games, including “Uncharted 4,” “Assassin’s Creed Origins,” “Deus Ex: Mankind Divided” and “Gran Turismo Sport.”

## Xbox One S and Xbox One X

Originally released in 2013, the Xbox One platform currently has two models on the market – the Xbox One S (about \$299) and Xbox One X (about \$599). Both the One S and One X support 4K playback of streaming content on a 4K television, and they can both play any game developed for the Xbox One platform. Online game play is offered via the Xbox Live network (\$69.99 for 12 months). You can also access more

than 100 free games a month with the Xbox Game Pass subscription (\$9.99 per month).


At the upper end is the new Xbox One X. Released last November, the Xbox One X is Microsoft’s answer to the PlayStation 4 Pro’s impressive hardware and 4K game support. The Xbox One X comes with one terabyte of storage standard and supports 4K game play with titles marketed as Xbox One X Enhanced, such as “Call of Duty: WWII,” “F1 2017” and “Madden NFL 18.”

The Xbox One S is available in bundles with different games and either 500 gigabytes or one terabyte of storage. These bundles currently include the Xbox One S “Minecraft” bundle (500 gigabytes, about \$299) and the Xbox One S 1TB “Assassin’s Creed Origins” bundle (one terabyte, about \$379).

There were a few factors that drove me towards the Xbox One S over the X and the PlayStation 4. We already have invested in games for the Xbox 360. The Xbox One supports these games – backwards compatibility – for more than 300 Xbox 360 titles.

You just insert the game disc and the Xbox One downloads a digital version of the game to your console that you can play.

While the PlayStation 4 and Xbox One support 4K playback of streaming content, only the Xbox One supports Ultra HD Blu-ray discs. We still purchase most movies – especially Disney titles – on disc so we always have them on hand. Sure, you can stream many of these titles but with studios moving their content around and launching their own services, having the physical media for that 1,002nd viewing of “Moana” is a necessity.

With our younger children and my horrible hand-eye co-ordination, the Xbox One S was the right move for us. If you’re a serious gamer – or a parent to one – the PlayStation 4 Pro or Xbox One X are the consoles you should consider. 

Alex Kinsella has been part of Waterloo Region’s tech community since 2004 and is always looking for the next great gadget (or tacos, if it’s Tuesday). Find him on Twitter at @alexkinsella

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