

Under pressure from Sony's looming entry into the mobile gaming market, Nintendo touched the nerve of an innovation-starved audience with its brave new handheld system.

Nintendo DS

Japan, 2004

Units sold: 135 Million
 Number of games: 1000
 Media format: Card
 Games developed until: ongoing



Being soundly beaten by Sony on the home console front, the mobile gaming market was still Nintendo's to lose in 2004. The Game Boy family's lifespan had been prolonged by the success of the Advance SP model. With Sony knocking on the mobile door with its portable PlayStation (PSP), the time was right for Nintendo to introduce the futuristic 'Dual Screen' system. Its abbreviation 'DS' doesn't denote a simple update of the Game Boy, but stands for a technical revolution.

This book is full of pioneering efforts and inven-tions, and the Nintendo DS manages to score in many categories. It was the first portable console with two displays and the first to incorporate touchscreen con-trols. DS systems were able to connect wirelessly and had built-in user-friendly communication software (PictoChat). They came with plastic stylus pens for use on the touch-screen and even had a microphone for speech input.

There were no shortage of doubts prior to the hardware launch (December 2004 in Japan and the US, March 2005 in

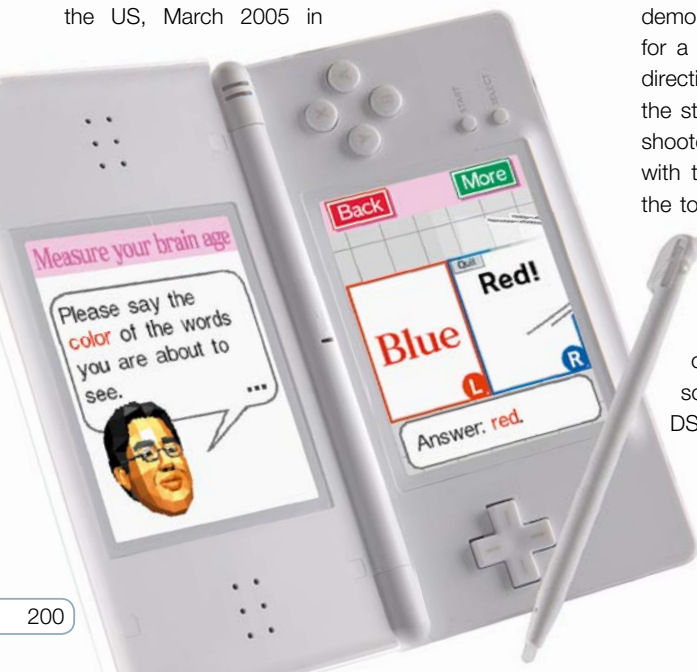


Double up: the original DS featured two ARM CPUs, two displays and two game slots – one for Game Boy Advance cartridges, the other for Nintendo's new flash cards.

Europe). Was Nintendo getting a little carried away with all those innovations? How can games take advantage of the extra screen? The launch title **Super Mario 64 DS**, a graphically polished remake of the N64 classic, demonstrated the suitability of touchscreen controls for a third-person 3D adventure. Instead of using the directional pad, Mario could also be controlled by sliding the stylus across the lower display. In the first person shooter **Metroid Prime Hunter**, which was included with the US DS as a multiplayer demo, a thumb on the touchscreen was used to precisely aim a weapon, similar to PC shooter controls with a mouse.

For Game Boy Advance owners, the transition to the new system was sweetened by an extra GBA cartridge slot to access the previous generation's software library. And the generous battery life of the DS (over 10 hours) more than doubled the stamina

The DS and its slimmed down Lite successor (pictured) became the thinking man's handheld system thanks to 'brain training' puzzle games and language courses.



The DS grew bigger, bolder: the DSi model (left) gained cameras and could play music files, the DSi XL (right) tried to appeal to an older audience with its larger screens.



Starry skies on dual screens: the ninth installment of the long-standing Dragon Quest RPG series debuted on the DS in July 2009 (one year later in the US).

of Sony's PSP. The global duel between both systems began in earnest in 2005. The DS was off to a strong start with launch titles from the likes of Electronic Arts, Sega and Namco. Fresh concepts came from renowned Japanese designers like Sonic creator Yuji Naka and Tetsuya Mizuguchi (who founded a handheld label for Bandai after his work on Space Channel 5 and Rez).

What followed was a string of software successes that took even Nintendo by surprise. It wasn't so much the



The joys of side-scrolling jump-and-runs are perfectly distilled in New Super Mario Bros. This original DS title smashed sales records, moving over 20 million units since its 2006 launch.

updates to established franchises (Advance Wars, Mario Kart, Starfox, Zelda), but rather the new original game concepts that appealed to the mass market and put an end to the PlayStation dominance in the Japanese games charts. Women, children and casual gamers were drawn to the cute **Nintendogs** pet simulations, which sold over 15 million units. Next up was a brain training game boom triggered by cartridges developed with the aid of Japanese neuroscientist Dr. Kawashima. Young and old alike were fascinated by the **Brain Age** puzzles. A whole wave of language, cooking, painting, yoga and other training games followed suit. The old genre establishment benefited from Nintendo's technology ideas as well: action and RPG players swung their stylus like a sword or scribbled magical runes onto the display.

The adventure game genre was revitalized thanks to new themes, stylus controls and speech input. Cing, the new venture of Japanese adventure pioneer Riverhill Software, released the esoteric teen thriller **Another Code** in 2005, the same year that Capcom's courtroom drama **Phoenix Wright** and Atlus' emergency room adventure **Trauma Center** became major successes.

About 2 million gamers were using Nintendo's free WiFi connection service online by late 2006 when Nintendo introduced a web browser for the

This two-colored crimson and black DS model was bundled with Brain Age 2 in Europe.

