



## Computer Games

Computer games (or video games) are a huge industry, selling over \$100 billion each year. They've been around for decades, but over that time they have changed dramatically and gone through several different trends. More often than not, a desire for better graphics and more in-depth gameplay in computer games is one of the biggest reasons that computers get faster and more powerful.

### IN THE BEGINNING

Arguably the first computer game was built in 1952 by professor A.S. Douglas. He created a computerised version of noughts and crosses called OXO. In 1958, a man named William Higinbotham created an early form of digital tennis at a laboratory in New York. Both of those games could only be played on the computer that they were created on. The first computer game to be created that could be installed on different computers came in 1962. Steve Russell built a game called Spacewar! at MIT in North America. The game was a space combat game and could be installed on a type of computer called a PDP-1 computer. These were incredibly expensive and powerful and could only be found at universities, but it was a step forward.

### CONSOLES

Nowadays, most people play computer games on home consoles or home computers. The first console arrived just after Spacewar! In 1967, a group of developers invented a small game system that could be played on a television at home. It was called the Odyssey. The first one was sold in 1972, but it was never a success. In total, there were 28 games released for the Odyssey, and one of them went on to be incredibly popular elsewhere.

In 1972, Atari released a new type of games system - arcade games. Arcades had been popular in America for decades, with pinball machines and other coin-operated devices offering hours of entertainment. The first arcade game had been released a year earlier but hadn't taken off. When Atari released Pong, the now-famous tennis-style game where players move a small rectangle to "bat" a ball back to the opponent, nobody realised how successful it would be. In 1975, Atari released a home version of the same game which was equally popular. Pong was based on one of the Odyssey games, and the original creators took Atari to court, where they won.

Atari released the first home console that used joysticks and could have different games on it in 1977. The Atari 2600 was an important milestone in computer game history.

Other important events in the late 1970s and early 1980s included the release of Space Invaders, Pac-Man and Donkey Kong. It also saw the company Activision formed who became the first company to just make games and not the console to play them.

### THE CRASH

Despite massive popularity, the early 1980s saw a crash in the games console market. Many companies went out of business, and it took years to recover. It wasn't until 1985 when the very first Nintendo console was released that it started to pick back up. Nintendo was the first company to insist on certain levels of quality for companies making games for its consoles. Before then, a lot of games were released in a rush and didn't work very well. Nintendo also made handheld gaming popular when they released the first Game Boy in 1989 with the ever-popular game, Tetris.

### CONSOLE WARS

The first console war hit the streets in 1991. Sega had released the Master System in 1986 and the Genesis in 1989, but neither had been able to compete with Nintendo's NES. In 1991, Sega released Sonic the Hedgehog and Nintendo released the Super Nintendo (SNES). For the first time, people had two consoles to choose from that were equally powerful and with fantastic and exclusive games. You couldn't play Sonic on the SNES, and you couldn't play Mario on the Sega Genesis: it was time to make a choice - Sega or Nintendo!





**1**

a) Tick one box in each row to show whether each of the following statements is **true** or **false**.

	True	False
Mario was created for Atari		
The first console was sold in 1991		
Sega and Nintendo were rivals		
Pong was an original game		

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 mark

b) Explain why people had to choose between Sega and Nintendo.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 mark

**2**

Look at the section headed: ***In the beginning.***

Complete the table below with **one** piece of evidence from the text to support each statement.

	Evidence
Early computer games weren't suited for people at home.	
Spacewar! could only be played in universities.	

\_\_\_\_\_ 2 marks





**3**

a) How much money does the computer games industry make each year?

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1 mark

b) How have they changed since the first games?

**Give two reasons.**

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2 marks

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**4**

Look at the section titled **Consoles**.

Which words would best describe **Pong** when it was first released?

Tick **two**.

familiar

groundbreaking

revolutionary

expected

2 marks

**5**

When was Sonic the Hedgehog first released?

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1 mark

# SATs Practice - Answers

1. a) **Give 1 mark for four correct answers**

False

False

True

False

b) **Give 1 mark for answers similar to:**

Both consoles had different characters and couldn't play each others' games.

**or**

People had to pick their favourite so that they could play with the character they wanted to

2. **Give 1 mark for each of the following pieces of evidence:**

Early games could only be played on the computer on which they were created.

**and**

Spacewar! could only be played on a type of computer found in universities

3. a) \$100 billion

b) **Give 1 mark each (to a maximum of 2 marks) for the following:**

You can now get handheld computer games

Games are faster with better graphics

They can be played on home consoles / at home

They use control pads or joysticks

Games are of a higher quality

Games have popular characters

4. **Give 1 mark each for: groundbreaking and revolutionary**

5. 1991