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# Super Metroid

***Super Metroid***<sup>[a][b]</sup> is an action-adventure game developed and published by Nintendo for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System in 1994. It is the third installment in the *Metroid* series, following the events of the Game Boy game *Metroid II: Return of Samus* (1991). Players control bounty hunter Samus Aran, who travels to planet Zebes to retrieve an infant Metroid creature stolen by the Space Pirate leader Ridley.

The gameplay focuses on exploration, with the player searching for power-ups that are used to reach previously inaccessible areas. It features new concepts to the series, such as the inventory screen, an automap, and the ability to fire in all directions. The development staff from previous *Metroid* games—including Yoshio Sakamoto, Makoto Kano and Gunpei Yokoi—returned to develop *Super Metroid* over the course of two years, with half a year earlier to gain approval for the initial idea. The developers wanted to make a true action game, and to set the stage for Samus's reappearance.

The game received critical acclaim, praising its atmosphere, gameplay, music and graphics. It is often cited as one of the best video games of all time. Although the game did not sell well in Japan, it fared better in North America and had shipped 1.42 million copies worldwide by late 2003. *Super Metroid*, alongside *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* (1997), is credited for establishing the "Metroidvania" subgenre, and has inspired other games within the genre. It also became popular among players for speedrunning. The game was followed by the 2002 release of *Metroid Fusion* and *Metroid Prime*, ending the series' eight-year hiatus. It was emulated for the Virtual Console service on various Nintendo platforms since 2007 and as part of the Super NES Classic Edition microconsole in 2017.

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<span></span> <div>North American box art featuring Samus Aran in battle with Ridley</div>	
Developer(s)	Nintendo R&D1 Intelligent Systems
Publisher(s)	Nintendo
Director(s)	Yoshio Sakamoto
Producer(s)	Makoto Kano
Programmer(s)	Kenji Imai
Artist(s)	Hirofumi Matsuoka Masahiko Mashimo Hiroyuki Kimura
Writer(s)	Yoshio Sakamoto
Composer(s)	Kenji Yamamoto Minako Hamano
Series	<i>Metroid</i>
Platform(s)	Super NES
Release	JP: March 19, 1994 NA: April 18,

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	1994
	PAL: July 28, 1994
Genre(s)	Action-adventure
Mode(s)	Single-player

## Gameplay



Power-ups and abilities, such as the Grappling Beam, allow Samus to reach previously inaccessible areas. Her health, stock of weapons and a gridded mini-map are displayed on the top of the screen.

*Super Metroid* is a 2D, side-scrolling action-adventure game,<sup>[2]</sup><sup>[3]</sup> which primarily takes place on the fictional planet Zebes—a large, open-ended world with areas connected by doors and elevators.<sup>[4]:18–19</sup> The player controls Samus Aran as she searches the planet for a Metroid that has been stolen by Ridley, the leader of the Space Pirates.<sup>[4]:5</sup> Samus can run, jump, crouch, and fire a weapon in eight directions; she can also perform other actions, such as wall jumping—jumping from one wall to another in rapid succession to reach higher areas. The "Moon Walk" ability, named after the popular dance move of the same name, allows Samus to walk backwards while firing or charging her weapon.<sup>[5]:8–9</sup>

Throughout the course of the game, the player can acquire power-ups that enhance Samus's armor and weaponry, as well as grant her special abilities, allowing them to gain access to areas that were previously inaccessible.<sup>[3]</sup> The Morphing Ball allows Samus to curl into a ball, roll into tight places and plant bombs; the Spring Ball adds an ability to jump while in Morphing Ball form.<sup>[5]:10–11</sup> The Speed Booster can be used to run at high speeds, and can crash onto barriers and enemies.<sup>[6]</sup> The Space Jump allows Samus to jump infinite times to cover great distances, and the Hi-Jump Boots allow for a higher jump.<sup>[4]:24</sup> The Grapple Beam can be used to swing across open areas.<sup>[6]</sup> The X-ray Scope is used to see items and passages through hidden walls and other surfaces.<sup>[5]:12</sup>

The heads-up display shows Samus's health, the supply mode for Reserve Tanks, icons that represent weapons, and a map display showing her location and its surroundings.<sup>[5]:7</sup> The inventory screen allows the player to enable and disable weapons and abilities. While the beam weapon can be combined, the Spazer and Plasma

beams cannot be used simultaneously. The backup units called Reserve Tanks can be used automatically when Samus's health is depleted.<sup>[4]:14–15</sup> The game also features an automap to help players navigate the different areas of the game. Additionally, the player can use the map computer found in each part of the planet to reveal unexplored areas.<sup>[4]:13</sup> To save their progress, the player must find and use one of the save stations scattered around the planet.<sup>[4]:16</sup> The game can also be saved at Samus's gunship, which fully recharges her health and ammunition as well.<sup>[4]:18</sup> *Super Metroid* has three endings based on the time taken to complete the game, which determine whether Samus poses with or without her suit. The best ending is achieved when the game is completed under three hours.<sup>[5]:119</sup>

## Plot

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After bringing the last Metroid to the Ceres space colony for study, Samus Aran receives a distress call. She returns to find the scientists dead and the infant Metroid stolen by Ridley, the leader of the Space Pirates. Samus escapes from the colony and follows Ridley to the planet Zebes.<sup>[7]</sup> She searches the planet for the Metroid and finds that the Pirates have rebuilt their base there.<sup>[4]:5</sup>

After defeating the four bosses, including Kraid and Ridley, Samus arrives in Tourian,<sup>[5]:109</sup> where she encounters the Metroid larva, which has grown to an enormous size. It almost kills Samus, but remembers her and departs.<sup>[5]:113</sup> Samus confronts Mother Brain, the biomechanical creature that controls the Zebes systems. Mother Brain is about to kill Samus, but is attacked by the Metroid larva, which drains its energy and transfers it to Samus. Mother Brain destroys the Metroid, but is defeated by Samus with the Hyper Beam, a powerful weapon created from the energy given to her by the Metroid.<sup>[8][9]</sup> Samus escapes before Zebes self-destructs; if the player chooses to rescue the Dachora and the Etecoons, the creatures Samus encountered in the game, they are shown leaving the planet in the distance.<sup>[5]:118–119</sup>

## Development

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*Super Metroid* was developed by Nintendo R&D1<sup>[10]</sup> with a staff of 15 managed by Gunpei Yokoi. It was written and directed by Yoshio Sakamoto, and produced by Makoto Kano.<sup>[11][12][13]</sup> Intelligent Systems, who co-developed the original *Metroid* with R&D1, handled the programming.<sup>[14]</sup> The opening was narrated by Dan Owsen, a Nintendo of America employee.<sup>[11][15]</sup>

*Super Metroid* was released almost a decade after the original *Metroid*. Sakamoto said: "We wanted to wait until a *true* action game was needed. [...] And also to set the stage for the reappearance of Samus Aran."<sup>[12]</sup> It took half a year for Nintendo to approve the project, and two further years to develop.<sup>[12]</sup>

The developers' primary goal was to make a "good action game". It is the first *Metroid* game to let Samus fire in all directions while moving.<sup>[12]</sup> It is also among the first open-world games with a map feature, which shows the outlines of rooms and indicates important locations and items.<sup>[10]</sup> The team wanted to create a large map, but found it difficult to organize the amount of graphic data involved, and so broke it into smaller parts. Areas from previous *Metroid* games were included to create a sense of familiarity.<sup>[12]</sup>

Shortly before the game's release, the North American Entertainment Software Rating Board, a self-regulating

organization, was formed in response to the increasing violence in games such as *Mortal Kombat* (1992).<sup>[16]</sup> Asked whether he thought the controversy would cause a backlash for *Super Metroid*, Sakamoto explained that Samus's purpose is to maintain peace in the galaxy, saying: "It's not violence for the sake of violence."<sup>[12]</sup> The game was demonstrated at the Winter 1994 Consumer Electronics Show, and was named the best SNES game at the show by *GamePro*.<sup>[17]</sup>

## Audio

The music for *Super Metroid* was composed by Kenji Yamamoto and Minako Hamano,<sup>[11][13][18]</sup> and uses 16-bit versions of music from previous games.<sup>[12]</sup> The SNES sound hardware allowed the use of recorded sounds simultaneously on eight channels, as opposed to three PSG channels and one noise channel of the NES. Yamamoto decided that rich and expressive sounds, such as a female chorus, would be required to portray the setting realistically.<sup>[19]</sup> He composed the main theme by humming while riding his motorcycle from work.<sup>[19][20]</sup>

Yamamoto also served as a sound programmer,<sup>[20]</sup> and wrote a program that sends sound data to the audio chip.<sup>[19]</sup> He also created sound effects,<sup>[20]</sup> including those created for an infant Metroid to convey different emotions.<sup>[19]</sup> The simultaneous roles as a composer, a sound programmer and a sound effect creator gave Yamamoto ideas to produce a distinct *Metroid* soundtrack "with a sound programmer's ear, with a sound effect creator's ear, and with the approach methodology and theory of a composer." The arrangements and remixes of the game's themes were used in *Metroid Prime* and its sequels, because Yamamoto wanted to satisfy old *Metroid* fans, describing it as a "present" for them.<sup>[20]</sup>

A soundtrack album, *Super Metroid: Sound in Action*, was published by Sony Records on June 22, 1994. It contains 38 tracks and has a running time of 58:49. It includes the original *Metroid* soundtrack by Hirokazu Tanaka, and additional tracks arranged by Yoshiyuki Ito and Masumi Ito.<sup>[21]</sup>

## Release

The game was released by Nintendo in Japan on March 19, 1994,<sup>[22][23]</sup> in North America on April 18,<sup>[23]</sup> and in Europe on July 28.<sup>[23]</sup> It was distributed on a 24-megabit cartridge, making it the largest Super NES game of its time.<sup>[24]</sup> It was re-released through the Nintendo Power service in Japan on September 30, 1997.<sup>[22]</sup> *Super Metroid* became available as a Wii Virtual Console game in North America on August 20, 2007,<sup>[25][26]</sup> in Japan on September 20,<sup>[22][27]</sup> and in Europe on October 12.<sup>[28]</sup> In *Super Smash Bros. Brawl*, it is also one of the trial games available in the "Masterpieces" section, which uses Virtual Console technology to emulate older hardware and have time constraints.<sup>[29]</sup> The game was later released on the Wii U Virtual Console in May 2013, initially available during the trial campaign for a cheaper price before reverting to its regular price the next month.<sup>[30]</sup> The New Nintendo 3DS-specific Virtual Console also received the release in April 2016.<sup>[31]</sup>



Yoshio Sakamoto, the director and writer of *Super Metroid*, at the 2010 Game Developers Conference

In September 2017, Nintendo released the Super NES Classic Edition, which included *Super Metroid* among its games.<sup>[32]</sup> *Super Metroid* and other Super NES games were added to the Nintendo Switch Online subscription service in September 2019.<sup>[33]</sup>

## Reception

*Super Metroid* was met with critical acclaim.<sup>[2]</sup> Chris Slate of the *Game Players* video game magazine thoroughly enjoyed *Super Metroid*, claiming that it "easily lives up to everyone's high expectations". He was satisfied with how Nintendo mixed complex gameplay with "state-of-the-art" graphics and sound. Slate found the newly added auto-mapping feature something that players really needed, saying that it was the only feature in *Super Metroid* that the original *Metroid* should have had. Concluding his review, Slate stated, "Action fans can't afford to miss *Super Metroid*. [...] You'll want to play through again and again even after you've beaten it."<sup>[39]</sup> *Nintendo*

*Power* mentioned that the game "may well be the best action adventure game ever", calling it the "wave of the future". They praised the game's graphics, sound, and controls, while their only negative comment was, "Even 100 megabits of *Metroid* wouldn't be enough."<sup>[37]</sup> *Electronic Gaming Monthly* gave *Super Metroid* their "Game of the Month" award, comparing it favorably to the original *Metroid* and applauding the graphics, the many weapons and items available, and the music. Each of the four reviewers gave it scores of nine out of ten.<sup>[34]</sup> *GamePro* criticized that the controls are often awkward or difficult and that many of the power-ups are either lifted from other SNES games or simple upgrades of other power-ups in the game, but praised the game's massive size along with the auto-mapping feature, saying it "makes a potentially frustrating game accessible to a far wider audience."<sup>[41]</sup> Andy Robinson of GamesRadar was pleased with the game's "phenomenal" soundtrack, complimenting it as "one of the best videogame scores of all time".<sup>[13]</sup>

The former British video game publication *Super Play*, which had three editors review the game, also enjoyed it. The magazine's Zy Nicholson noted that the game was better than his favorite game, *Mega Man X*, describing *Super Metroid* as "more of an experience than a game". Comparing the game to the 1986 film *Aliens*, Nicholson felt that the game was best experienced when played in the dark with the volume turned up. He found the game so compulsive that he was tempted to play "without eating or sleeping". The publication's Tony Mott named the game's atmosphere its best aspect, calling the game a mix of *Turrican* (1990), *Aliens*, *Exile* (1989), and *Nodes of Yesod* (1985). Appreciating the game's controls, Mott applauded Nintendo's ability

### Reception

Aggregate score	
Aggregator	Score
GameRankings	97% <sup>[2]</sup>
Review scores	
Publication	Score
<i>EGM</i>	36/40 <sup>[34]</sup>
<i>GameSpot</i>	8.5/10 <sup>[35]</sup>
<i>IGN</i>	9.5/10 <sup>[36]</sup>
<i>Nintendo Life</i>	10/10 <sup>[38]</sup>
<i>Nintendo Power</i>	4.425/5 <sup>[37]</sup>
<i>Game Players</i>	97% <sup>[39]</sup>
<i>Super Play</i>	92% <sup>[40]</sup>

to create a refined gameplay. He concluded his review by calling *Super Metroid* "undoubtedly the best game I've played this year so far", predicting that anyone who plays the game would be "playing a game destined for classic status". The third reviewer, James Leach, agreed with Nicholson and Mott that *Super Metroid* was what *Mega Man X* should have been. Concluding his review, Leach wrote that *Super Metroid* contained everything he looked for in a video game: "playability, hidden tricks, powerful weapons and steamingly evil baddies". After summarizing the reviews, the magazine's verdict was, "We all love this game. *Super Metroid* is absolutely marvelous and *you* should own it."<sup>[40]</sup>

IGN called *Super Metroid*'s Virtual Console version a "must-own", commenting that although the game was released nine months after the Wii launched, they felt that it was worth the wait. For players who have never played *Super Metroid*, IGN claims that they owe themselves as gamers to "finally find out about what you've been missing all these years".<sup>[36]</sup> In his review for GameSpot, Frank Provo found it "absolutely astonishing that Nintendo let 13 years go by before making *Super Metroid* readily available again", but considered the most important thing was that players "can now play this masterpiece without having to track down the original Super Nintendo Entertainment System cartridge or fumble with legally questionable emulators". Despite admitting that the Virtual Console version was essentially "nothing more than a no-frills, emulated version of a 13-year-old SNES game" that was no longer cutting-edge, he was still pleased with it and reiterated his belief that *Super Metroid* is "one of the best 2D action adventure games ever produced".<sup>[35]</sup>

Although *Super Metroid* received critical acclaim, Rus McLaughlin of IGN said that the *Metroid* series "still fell down on the timing, arriving too late in the SNES lifecycle to earn big sales."<sup>[42]</sup> Robinson similarly noted that, in a series tradition, the game was released "at the wrong place, at the wrong time." He also added that it did not sell well in Japan after struggling against more commercially popular games, such as *Donkey Kong Country*, along with the launch of the PlayStation and Sega Saturn consoles.<sup>[13]</sup> With the help of strong marketing from Nintendo, *Super Metroid* sold better in North America,<sup>[13]</sup> and a year after its release, Nintendo placed it on their Player's Choice marketing label.<sup>[25]</sup> By late 2003, the game had shipped 1.42 million copies worldwide.<sup>[43]</sup>

## Accolades

Super Metroid collected several awards and honors. *Electronic Gaming Monthly* named *Super Metroid* a Game of the Month for May 1994, gave it an Editors' Choice award,<sup>[34]</sup> awarded it as the Best Action Game of 1994,<sup>[44]</sup> and named it the best game of all time in 2003.<sup>[45]</sup> IGN ranked *Super Metroid* 3rd (2003), 10th (2005) and 7th (2007) in its top 100 games of all time lists.<sup>[46][47][48]</sup> Likewise, IGN readers ranked the game 11th in its top 99 games of all-time list in 2005,<sup>[49]</sup> and 4th in its top 100 games in 2006.<sup>[50]</sup> Richard George of IGN also ranked *Super Metroid* 3rd in its top 100 SNES games, crediting its "flawless action, impeccable level design, out-of-this-world atmosphere, a totally badass heroine and an enormous overworld to explore."<sup>[51]</sup> GamesRadar named *Super Metroid* the best SNES game of all time,<sup>[52]</sup> while *Nintendo Power* named it the best game in the *Metroid* series, beating out *Metroid Prime* and *Metroid: Zero Mission*.<sup>[53]</sup> *GamePro* listed *Super Metroid* as one of the fifteen must-play retro games on the Wii.<sup>[54]</sup>

## Legacy

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*Super Metroid* is often regarded as one of the best games of all time.<sup>[6][13][42]</sup> Jeremy Parish of USgamer remarked that *Super Metroid* is a "kind of game you can return to time and again and always come away with some fresh insight or observation."<sup>[8]</sup> Andrew Webster of *Ars Technica* found the game's atmosphere impressive, and noted that the developers had perfected the aspect on solitude, a concept introduced in the first *Metroid* game.<sup>[3]</sup> *Game Informer* writer Joe Juba cited the game's ending as "one of the most memorable and empowering moments in gaming history."<sup>[9]</sup>

As *Super Metroid* gave players awards based on how long it took them to complete the game, it has become a popular choice for speedrunning, a style of play in which the player intends to complete the game as quickly as possible for the purpose of competition.<sup>[13][42][55]</sup> *Super Metroid*, alongside Konami's 1997 game *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*, is also credited for establishing the "Metroidvania" genre.<sup>[56][57]</sup> It was cited as an influence on other Metroidvania games, including *Shadow Complex*<sup>[58]</sup> and *Axiom Verge*.<sup>[59]</sup>

Several ROM hacks for *Super Metroid* were released by fans, which added new features that are not included in the original game.<sup>[60]</sup> *Super Metroid: Redesign*, created by "drewseph" in 2006, features new items, expanded areas and modified physics.<sup>[60][61][62]</sup> In 2011, a Japanese hacker named "SB" released a ROM hack titled *Metroid: Super Zero Mission*, which intends to combine elements from *Super Metroid* and the later-released *Metroid: Zero Mission*.<sup>[60]</sup>

## Sequels

After *Super Metroid*'s release, there would not be another sequel for eight years, as none of the games in the *Metroid* series up to this point had enjoyed the level of success that the *Mario* and *The Legend of Zelda* franchises had.<sup>[13]</sup> *Metroid* series producer Gunpei Yokoi left Nintendo in August 1996, amid the failure of the Virtual Boy, and later died in a car accident in October 1997.<sup>[63][64]</sup>

During the series' hiatus, fans eagerly awaited a *Metroid* game for the Nintendo 64 (N64).<sup>[42]</sup> According to Shigeru Miyamoto, Nintendo did not develop a *Metroid* game for the N64 as they "couldn't come out with any concrete ideas".<sup>[65]</sup> Sakamoto said he could not imagine how the N64 controller could be used to control Samus. Nintendo approached another company to make an N64 *Metroid*, but the offer was declined because the developers thought they could not make a game that could equal *Super Metroid*'s standards.<sup>[66]</sup>

In late 2002, two new *Metroid* games were released by Nintendo, marking the return of the series after an eight-year hiatus.<sup>[13][42]</sup> The games were *Metroid Fusion*, a 2D side-scroller developed for the Game Boy Advance by Nintendo R&D1, the same team that developed *Super Metroid*;<sup>[42][67][68]</sup> and *Metroid Prime*, a first-person action-adventure game developed for the GameCube by the American company Retro Studios and the first *Metroid* game to use 3D graphics.<sup>[42][69]</sup> Both *Fusion* and *Prime* garnered critical acclaim,<sup>[13]</sup> with the latter winning several Game of the Year awards.<sup>[70]</sup> After *Metroid Prime*, three more games in the first-person perspective and a pinball spin-off were released, including its sequel, *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes* (2004).<sup>[13][42]</sup>



# References

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## Notes

- a. Japanese: スーパーメトロイド Hepburn: *Sūpā Meteoroido*
- b. The opening cutscene alternatively refers to the game as *Metroid 3*.<sup>[1]</sup>

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## External links

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- *Super Metroid* (<https://www.mobygames.com/game/super-metroid>) at MobyGames

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