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Metroid Prime

Metroid Prime is a first-person action-adventure video game developed by Retro Studios and Nintendo for the GameCube video game console.^[1] It was released in North America on November 17, 2002, and in Japan and Europe the following year. *Metroid Prime* is the fifth main installment in the *Metroid* series, and the first *Metroid* game to use 3D computer graphics. Because exploration takes precedence over combat, Nintendo classifies the game as a first-person adventure rather than a first-person shooter.^[2] On the same day as its North American release, Nintendo also released the Game Boy Advance game *Metroid Fusion*, marking the return of the *Metroid* series after an eight-year hiatus following *Super Metroid* (1994).^{[3][4]}

Metroid Prime is the first of the three-part *Prime* storyline, which takes place between the original *Metroid* and *Metroid II: Return of Samus*.^{[5][6]} Like previous games in the series, *Metroid Prime* has a science fiction setting in which players control the bounty hunter Samus Aran. The story follows Samus as she battles the Space Pirates and their biological experiments on the planet Tallon IV. The game was a collaboration between Retro's staff in Austin, Texas, and Japanese Nintendo employees, including producer Shigeru Miyamoto, who suggested the project after visiting Retro's headquarters in 2000.

The game garnered critical praise and commercial success, selling more than a million units in North America alone.^[7] It won a number of Game of the Year awards, and it is considered by many critics and gamers to be one of the greatest video games ever made, remaining one of the highest-rated games on Metacritic.^[8] In 2009, an enhanced version was released for the Wii as a standalone game in Japan, and as part of the *Metroid Prime Trilogy* compilation internationally.^[9]

Contents



North American packaging artwork

Developer(s)	Retro Studios Nintendo
Publisher(s)	Nintendo
Director(s)	Mark Pacini
Producer(s)	Shigeru Miyamoto Kensuke Tanabe Kenji Miki Akira Otani Michael Mann
Programmer(s)	Mark Johnston
Artist(s)	Todd Keller James H. Dargie
Composer(s)	Kenji Yamamoto Kouichi Kyuma
Series	<i>Metroid</i>

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Platform(s)	GameCube Wii
Release	November 17, 2002 GameCube NA: November 17, 2002 JP: February 28, 2003 EU: March 21, 2003 AU: April 3, 2003 Wii JP: February 19, 2009
Genre(s)	Action-adventure
Mode(s)	Single-player

Gameplay



Samus in battle with a Flying Pirate. The player is controlled from a first-person perspective.

Metroid Prime is a 3D action-adventure game in which players control series protagonist Samus Aran from a first-person perspective, unlike previous games of the *Metroid* series,^{[10][11]} with third-person elements used for Morph Ball mode.^[10] The gameplay involves solving puzzles to reveal secrets, platform jumping, and shooting foes with the help of a "lock-on" mechanism that allows circle strafing while staying aimed at the enemy.^{[10][11]}

Samus must travel through the world of Tallon IV searching for twelve Chozo Artifacts that will open the path to the Phazon meteor impact crater, while collecting power-ups that let her reach new

areas. The Varia Suit, for example, protects Samus' armor against high temperatures, allowing her to enter volcanic regions. Some items are obtained after boss fights. Items must be collected in a specific order; for example, players cannot access certain areas until they find a certain Beam to open doors, or discover new ordnance with which to beat bosses.^{[12][13]} Players are incentivized to explore to find upgrades such as ammunition packs and extra health.^[14]

The heads-up display, which simulates the inside of Samus' helmet, features a radar display, a map, ammunition for missiles, a health meter, a danger meter for negotiating hazardous landscape or materials, and a health bar and name display for bosses. The display can be altered by exchanging visors; one uses thermal imaging, another has x-ray vision, and another features a scanner that searches for enemy weaknesses and interfaces with mechanisms such as force fields and elevators.^[12] The game introduces a hint system that

provides the player with clues about ways to progress through the game.^[15]

Players can gain two features by connecting *Prime* with *Metroid Fusion* using a GameCube – Game Boy Advance link cable: cosmetic use of the Fusion Suit that Samus wears in *Fusion* and the ability to play the original *Metroid* game.^{[12][16]}

Items

Throughout the game, players must find and collect items that improve Samus's arsenal and suit, including weapons, armor upgrades for Samus's Power Suit and items that grant abilities—including the Morph Ball, which allows Samus to compress herself into a ball in order to roll into narrow passages and drop energy bombs, and the Grapple Beam, which works by latching onto special hooks called grapple points, allowing Samus to swing across gaps. Unlike those in earlier games in the series, the beam weapons in *Metroid Prime* have no stacking ability, in which the traits of each beam merge. Instead, the player must cycle the four beam weapons; there are charge combos with radically different effects for each. Other upgrades include boots that allow Samus to double-jump and a Spider Ball upgrade that allows her to climb magnetic rails.^[12]



While Samus is in Morph Ball form, the view changes to a third-person view.

Items from previous *Metroid* games appear with altered functions. Art galleries and different endings are unlockable if the player collects a high percentage of items and Scan Visor logs. *Prime* is one of the first *Metroid* games to address the reason Samus does not start with power-ups acquired in previous games; she begins the game with some upgrades, including the Varia Suit, Missiles and Grapple Beam, but they are lost during an explosion on the Space Pirate frigate *Orpheon*.^[17] The producers stated that starting with some power-ups was a way to give the player "different things to do" and to learn the functions of these items before settling into the core gameplay.^[18]

Synopsis

Background and setting

Metroid Prime is the first of the three-part *Prime* storyline. Retro Studios wrote an extensive storyline for *Metroid Prime*,^[19] which was considered a major difference from previous *Metroid* games. Short cutscenes appear before important battles, and a scanner in the heads-up display extracts backstory-related information from objects.^[11] The *Prime* trilogy is set between the events of *Metroid* and *Metroid II*,^{[5][6]} but according to some sources, including Brazil's former Nintendo distributor Gradiente and the *Nintendo Power* comics adaptation of *Metroid Prime*, the events in the *Prime* games occur after *Super Metroid*.^{[20][21]} The Brazilian publicity states that the Phazon meteor is a piece of Zebes, which was destroyed after *Super Metroid*.^[20]

However, one of the logbook entries from *Metroid Prime 3: Corruption* reveals that the meteor was a "Leviathan" from the planet Phaaze.^[22]

The game takes place on the planet Tallon IV, formerly inhabited by the Chozo race.^[23] Five decades ago, the Chozo race fell after a meteor impacted on Tallon IV. The meteor contaminated the planet with a corruptive, mutagenic substance that the Space Pirates later named Phazon,^{[23][24]} and also brought with it a creature known to the Chozo as "The Worm".^[25] A large containment field emitter of the Artifact Temple in the Tallon Overworld area was built as a seal to the meteor's energies and influence within the crater where it landed,^[26] which the Space Pirates attempt to disable or bypass in order to gain better access in order to extract the Phazon.^[27] The containment field is controlled by twelve Chozo artifacts that are scattered around the planet.^{[12][28]}

Plot

Samus Aran intercepts a distress signal from the Space Pirate frigate *Orpheon*, whose crew have been slaughtered by the Pirates' own genetically modified, experimental subjects. At the ship's core, she battles with the Parasite Queen, a giant version of the tiny parasites aboard the ship. The Parasite Queen is defeated and falls into the ship's reactor core, initiating the destruction of the ship. While Samus is escaping from the frigate, she encounters a cybernetic version of Ridley called Meta Ridley. During her escape, an explosion damages Samus's suit, causing some of her abilities to malfunction. Samus escapes the frigate and chases Ridley in her gunship towards the nearby planet Tallon IV.^{[29][30]}

After landing in the Tallon Overworld, Samus explores nearby areas of Tallon IV and discovers the Chozo Ruins, the remains of the Chozo civilization. As she explores the ruins, she learns the Chozo on the planet had been killed by Phazon from a meteor that impacted on Tallon IV many years ago. After regaining her lost abilities in the ruins, Samus finds her way to the Magmoor Caverns, a series of magma-filled tunnels, which are used by the Space Pirates as a source of geothermal power. Following the tunnels, Samus travels to the Phendrana Drifts, a cold, mountainous location which is home to an ancient Chozo ruin and Space Pirate research labs used to study the Metroids. After obtaining new abilities, Samus explores the wreckage of the crashed *Orpheon* and then infiltrates the Phazon Mines, where she learns the outcome of the Phazon experimentation project, including the Metroid Prime, a creature that had come to Tallon IV with the meteor. Advancing deeper into the mines, Samus fights her way through the Phazon-enhanced Space Pirates and obtains the Phazon Suit after defeating the monstrous Omega Pirate.^{[29][30]}

Samus discovers the Artifact Temple that the Chozo built to contain the Metroid Prime and to stop the Phazon from spreading over the planet. To gain access to the meteor's Impact Crater, Samus collects and unites the twelve Chozo artifacts. As Samus returns to the temple with the artifacts, Meta Ridley appears and attacks her. Samus defeats Ridley and enters the Impact Crater, where she finds the Metroid Prime. After she defeats it, the Metroid Prime absorbs Samus's Phazon Suit and explodes. Samus escapes the collapsing crater and leaves Tallon IV in her ship.^{[29][30]} If the player completes the game with all of the items obtained, the Metroid Prime is shown reconstructing itself into a body resembling Samus.^[31]

Development

According to producer Shigeru Miyamoto, Nintendo did not develop a *Metroid* game for the Nintendo 64 (N64) as Nintendo "couldn't come out with any concrete ideas".^[32] *Metroid* co-creator Yoshio 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, supposedly because the developers thought they could not equal *Super Metroid*.^[33]

Metroid Prime was a collaboration between Nintendo EAD and R&D1 and the American company Retro Studios. Retro was created in 1998 by an alliance between Nintendo and Iguana Entertainment founder Jeff Spangenberg. The studio would create games for the forthcoming GameCube targeted at a mature demographic.^[34] After establishing its offices in Austin, Texas in 1999, Retro worked on four GameCube projects. When Miyamoto visited Retro in 2000, he suggested a new *Metroid* game after seeing their prototype first-person shooter engine.^[35] In 2000 and early 2001, four games in development at Retro were canceled,^[36] including an RPG, *Raven Blade*, leaving *Prime* the only game in development.^[37] During the last nine months of development, Retro's staff worked 80- to 100-hour weeks to reach Nintendo's deadline.^[35]

Nintendo created the music, Retro handled art and engineering, and both teams worked on the overall design.^[1] The Japanese crew, which included producers Miyamoto, Kensuke Tanabe, Kenji Miki and designer and *Metroid* co-creator Sakamoto, communicated with Retro through e-mails, telephone conferences and personal gatherings. The game was planned to use a third-person perspective, but after Miyamoto intervened this was changed to first-person perspective and almost everything already developed was scrapped. The change was prompted by camera problems experienced by Rare, which was developing the N64 game *Jet Force Gemini*. According to director Mark Pacini, Miyamoto "felt that shooting in third person was not very intuitive"; Pacini also said that exploration is easier using first-person.^[38] Pacini said that after picking that perspective, the crew decided not to make a traditional first-person shooter. He said, "We weren't trying to fit in that genre. We had to break down the stereotypes of what a first-person game is and make a fun *Metroid* game."^[1]

Pacini stated that Retro tried to design the game so that the only difficult parts would be boss battles and players would not be afraid to explore because "the challenge of the game was finding your way around".^[39]



Concept artwork of the Impact Crater

We didn't want to make just another first person shooter. ... Making a first person shooter would have been a cheap and easy way to go. But making sure the themes and concepts in *Metroid* were kept was something that we wanted to do. And translating those things into 3D was a real challenge. For example, translating the morph ball was one of the hardest things to do.

—Michael Kelbaugh, Retro Studios president since 2003^[38]

Senior designer Mike Wikan said that the focus on exploration led the team to spend time making the platform jumping "approachable to the player", and to ensure the gameplay had "shooting [as] a very important, though secondary, consideration".^[40] Retro developed the storyline under the supervision of Yoshio Sakamoto, who verified that the ideas were consistent with the lore of the earlier games.^[19] The developers intended that Kraid, a boss from *Metroid* and *Super Metroid*, would appear in *Prime*, and designer Gene Kohler modeled and skinned him for that purpose, but he was cut for time reasons.^[41] The team considered implementing the Speed Booster power-up from *Super Metroid* but concluded it would not work well because of the first-person perspective and "limitations imposed by the scale of our environment".^[40]

The first public appearance of the game was a ten-second video at SpaceWorld 2000.^[42] In November of the same year, Retro Studios confirmed its involvement with the game in the "job application" part of its website.^[43] In February 2001, the game was confirmed by Nintendo, which also announced that because of its emphasis on exploration and despite the first-person perspective, *Metroid Prime* would be a first-person adventure rather than a first-person shooter.^[2] In May 2001, the game was showcased at E3 2001, with its title confirmed as *Metroid Prime*.^[44]

Audio

Kenji Yamamoto, assisted by Kouichi Kyuma, composed the music for *Prime*.^[45] The soundtrack contains arrangements of tracks from previous games in the series because Yamamoto wanted "to satisfy old Metroid fans. It's like a present for them", he said.^[46] The initial Tallon Overworld theme is a reinterpretation of *Metroid*'s Brinstar theme, the music heard in Magmoor Caverns is a new version of the music from *Super Metroid*'s Lower Norfair area, and the music heard during the fight with Meta Ridley is a fast-paced reimagining of the Ridley boss music first featured in *Super Metroid*—which has reappeared in most *Metroid* games since. Tommy Tallarico Studios initially provided sound effects for the game,^[47] but Shigeru Miyamoto thought they were not yet good enough for an extended presentation at SpaceWorld 2001.^[48] The game supports Dolby Pro Logic II setups and can be played in surround sound.^[17] The official soundtrack to the game was released on an album called *Metroid Prime & Fusion Original Soundtracks*, which was published by Scitron on June 18, 2003.^[49]

Release

Metroid Prime was released for the GameCube in North America on November 17, 2002, and in Japan and Europe the following year on February 28, 2003 and March 21, 2003, respectively.^{[50][51]}

Prime was released for the GameCube in five versions. The original North American and Japanese NTSC versions and the second North American version, which contained minor changes, all used a loader that sometimes caused the game to freeze in specific rooms. The European PAL version resolved these glitches and contained altered elements of the gameplay to prevent sequence breaking, a slower loader that prevented the occasional crashes, slightly different story details, and narration in the opening and closing scenes. Some of these changes were carried over from the PAL version to the NTSC region's Player's Choice re-release, along with additional changes not made in other releases.^[52] This version, which was bundled with a silver

GameCube, also contained a second disc featuring a preview trailer and a demo for *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes*, a timeline of *Metroid* games, and an art gallery.^[53]^[54]

Re-releases

Metroid Prime was rereleased in Japan in 2009 for the Wii as part of the *New Play Control!* series. It has improved controls that use the Wii Remote's pointing functionality. The credit system from *Metroid Prime 3: Corruption* is also included to unlock the original bonus content and the ability to take snapshots of gameplay.^[55] Internationally, the Wii version was released in *Metroid Prime: Trilogy*, a single-disc compilation containing *Prime*, *Echoes*, and *Corruption* for Wii.^[9] On January 29, 2015, the compilation became available for download from the Wii U's Nintendo eShop.^[56]^[57]

Reception

Metroid Prime became one of the best-selling games on the GameCube. It was the second best-selling game of November 2002 in North America, behind *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*,^[72] 250,000 units were sold in the first week of its release.^[73] As of July 2006, the game had sold more than 1.49 million copies in the U.S. alone,^[7] and had earned more than US\$50 million.^[74] It was also the eighth best-selling GameCube game in Australia.^[75] More than 78,000 copies were sold in Japan,^[76] and Nintendo added the game to its Player's Choice line in the PAL region.^[77]

Metroid Prime was met with critical acclaim.^[8] *Electronic Gaming Monthly* awarded the game a perfect review score.^[60] It won numerous Game of the Year awards and was praised for its detailed graphics, special effects, varied environments,^[78] moody soundtrack and sound effects,^[11] level design,^[79] immersive atmosphere^[10] and innovative gameplay centered on exploration in contrast with action games such as *Halo*,^[80] while staying faithful to the

Reception	
Aggregate score	
Aggregator	Score
Metacritic	97/100 (70 reviews) ^[8]
Review scores	
Publication	Score
<i>AllGame</i>	★★★★★ ^[58]
<i>Edge</i>	9/10 ^[59]
<i>EGM</i>	10/10 ^[60]
<i>Game Informer</i>	9.5/10 ^[61]
<i>GameSpot</i>	9.7/10 ^[10]
<i>GameSpy</i>	96/100 ^[17]
<i>IGN</i>	9.8/10 ^[11]
<i>Nintendo Power</i>	★★★★★ ^[62]

Metroid formula.^[81] Criticisms included the unusual control scheme, lack of focus on the story, and repetitive backtracking. *Game Informer* considered the control scheme awkward,^[61] *Entertainment Weekly* compared the game to a "1990s arcade game, filled with over the top battle sequences, spectacular visual effects—and a pretty weak plot",^[82] and GamePro stated that inexperienced players "might find it exhausting to keep revisiting the same old places over and over and over".^[83] In 2004, the video game countdown show *Filter* said *Metroid Prime* had the best graphics of all time.^[84]

Metroid Prime appeared on several lists of best games; it was ranked 23rd in IGN's Top 100,^[85] 29th in a 100-game list chosen by GameFAQs users,^[86] and 10th in *Nintendo Power*'s "Top 200 Nintendo Games Ever".^[87] IGN named *Metroid Prime* the best GameCube game,^[88] while GameSpy ranked it third in a similar list, behind *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* and *Resident Evil 4*.^[89] *Nintendo Power* also ranked *Metroid Prime* as the sixth-best game of the 2000s.^[90] *Wired* ranked the game 10th in its list of "The 15 Most Influential Games of the Decade" for popularizing "exploration, puzzle-solving, platforming and story" among first-person shooters, saying that the game was "breaking the genre free from the clutches of *Doom*". *Wired*'s writer continued; "This GameCube title took one massive stride forward for first-person games."^[91] *Metroid Prime* also became popular among players for speedrunning; specialized communities were formed to share these speedruns.^[92]

Legacy

After *Metroid Prime*, three more games in the first-person perspective and a pinball spin-off were released.

Awards	
Publication	Award
IGN	Editor's Choice, 2002 Best GameCube Game ^[63] 2002 Game of the Year runner-up ^[64]
GameSpot	Editor's Choice, 2002 Game of the Year ^[65]
GameSpy	2002 Game of the Year ^[66]
Electronic Gaming Monthly	Platinum Award, Game of the Year (2002) ^[67]
<i>Nintendo Power</i>	Game of the Year (2002) ^[68]
Edge	Editor's Choice, 2002 Game of the Year ^[69]
Interactive Achievement Awards	Console First-Person Action (6th annual) ^[70]
Game Developers Choice Awards	Game of the Year, Excellence in Level Design (2003) ^[71]

The sequel *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes* - in which Samus travels to planet Aether and discovers that a Phazon meteor crashed there, creating an alternate reality, and Samus fights a mysterious enemy called Dark Samus - was released in November 2004 for the GameCube. It was followed by *Metroid Prime Pinball*, a spin-off game featuring the locations and bosses of *Metroid Prime*, developed by Fuse Games and released in 2005 for the Nintendo DS.^[93]

The next game released was *Metroid Prime: Hunters* for the Nintendo DS; its storyline takes place between the events of *Prime* and *Echoes*. A demo of the game, titled *Metroid Prime: Hunters - First Hunt*, was bundled with the Nintendo DS, and the full game was released on March 20, 2006 in North America, and May 5, 2006 in Europe. In its narrative, Samus tries to discover an "ultimate power" while facing six rival bounty hunters. *Hunters* was not developed by Retro Studios, but by Nintendo's Redmond-based subsidiary Nintendo Software Technology. The game contains more first-person shooter aspects than *Prime* and *Echoes*, with removal of assisted aiming, more action-oriented gameplay, and various multiplayer modes.^[94]

Metroid Prime's second full sequel is *Metroid Prime 3: Corruption*, which closes the *Prime* series.^[95] It was released on August 27, 2007 for the Wii console. In *Corruption*'s story, Samus is corrupted by Phazon after being attacked by Dark Samus, who has become the leader of a Space Pirate group and is sending Phazon Seeds to corrupt planets. *Corruption*'s gameplay differs from that of *Prime* and *Echoes*; the assisted aiming is replaced with free aiming with the Wii Remote, and the interchangeable beams are replaced with a stackable upgrade system.

A fourth game in the series, *Metroid Prime 4*, was announced at Nintendo's E3 2017 Spotlight livestream, and is currently under development for the Nintendo Switch.^[96] The game was initially announced to be developed by an entirely new team overseen by series producer Kensuke Tanabe, instead of Retro Studios.^[97] Eurogamer reported in February 2018 that Bandai Namco Singapore was working on the game alongside Nintendo and that the project included some staff members who worked on the cancelled *Star Wars 1313* game.^[98] However, in a January 2019 development update posted on their YouTube channel, Nintendo announced that development of *Metroid Prime 4* was restarted and the project would be handled by Retro Studios.^[99]

Elements of *Metroid Prime* have appeared in other games, such as *Super Smash Bros. Brawl* in which the Frigate Orpheon is a playable stage, featuring the Parasite Queen in the background and several music tracks from *Metroid Prime* as background music. This stage later returned in *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate*.^{[100][101]} *Metroid Prime*'s style of gameplay and HUDs also influenced and was compared to later first-person shooters, such as *Geist*^[102] and *Star Wars: Republic Commando*.^[103]

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24. Retro Studios (November 17, 2002). *Metroid Prime*. GameCube. Level/area: Chozo Ruins - Watery Hall. "**Chozo Lore - "Meteor Strike"**: A meteor came, casting a dark shadow of debris over the land with the violence of its impact. Though we perceived this from beyond space and time, it was but a curiosity: a brief flare in the universe. But the meteor brought with it corruption. A Great Poison burst forth into the land, clawing at life with such violence that we were ripped from our peaceful state and find ourselves wandering as shadows of the mortal forms we left behind, searching for why we are here."
25. Retro Studios (November 17, 2002). *Metroid Prime*. GameCube. Level/area: Chozo Ruins - Crossway. "**Chozo Lore - "Worm"**: The prophecies tell of the coming of the Worm. Born from parasites, nurtured in a poisoned womb, the Worm grows, devouring from within, until the world begins to rot. The words of the seers have come to pass, for there, in the depths of the world, the ravenous Worm lurks and feeds. From the stars it came, blighting Tallon with its Great Poison."
26. Retro Studios (November 17, 2002). *Metroid Prime*. GameCube. Level/area: Tallon Overworld - Artifact Temple. "**Chozo Lore - "Contain"**: And so, before it is too late, we now make our last stand. We have begun to build a temple to contain this darkness: at its heart we will place a Cipher, a mystical lock powered by twelve Artifacts and filled with as much power as we Chozo can harness in our ethereal states. Even when we are done, it may be too late."
27. Retro Studios (November 17, 2002). *Metroid Prime*. GameCube. Level/area: Tallon Overworld - Temple Security Station. "**Pirate Data - "Artifact Site"**: Field team reports are in on an aged structure of alien design built on the surface of Tallon IV. Studies show this structure projects a containment field. This field bars access to a prime source of energy within a deep crater. Science Team believes the field is powered by a number of strange Chozo Artifacts. We have found some of these relics and studies on them have begun. As this field could hinder future energy production operations on Tallon IV, we must dismantle it as soon as possible. If this means the destruction of the Chozo Artifacts, it will be done."
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External links

- *Metroid Prime & Fusion Original Soundtracks* (<https://musicbrainz.org/release-group/b35274ba-b688-3cd6-8e94-0a78b68941e5>) at MusicBrainz (list of releases)

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