



# Pokémon

**Pokémon**<sup>[a][b]</sup> is a Japanese media franchise consisting of video games, animated series and films, a trading card game, and other related media. The franchise takes place in a shared universe in which humans co-exist with creatures known as Pokémon, a large variety of species endowed with special powers. The franchise's primary target audience is children aged 5 to 12,<sup>[3]</sup> but it is known to attract people of all ages.<sup>[1]</sup> *Pokémon* is estimated to be the world's highest-grossing media franchise and is one of the best-selling video game franchises.

The franchise originated as a pair of role-playing games developed by Game Freak, from an original concept by its founder, Satoshi Tajiri. Released on the Game Boy on 27 February 1996, the games became sleeper hits and were followed by manga series, a trading card game, and anime series and films. From 1998 to 2000, *Pokémon* was exported to the rest of the world, creating an unprecedented global phenomenon dubbed "Pokémania". By 2002, the craze had ended, after which *Pokémon* became a fixture in popular culture, with new products releasing to this day. In the summer of 2016, the franchise spawned a second craze with the release of *Pokémon Go*, an augmented reality game developed by Niantic.

Unlike most IPs, which are owned by one company,<sup>[12]</sup> *Pokémon* is jointly owned by three: Nintendo, Game Freak, and Creatures.<sup>[2]</sup> Game Freak develops the core series RPGs, which are published by Nintendo exclusively for their consoles, while Creatures manages the trading card game and related merchandise, occasionally developing spin-off titles. The three companies established The Pokémon Company (TPC) in 1998 to manage the *Pokémon* property within Asia. The *Pokémon* anime series and films are co-owned by Shogakukan. Since 2009, The Pokémon Company International (TPCi), a subsidiary of TPC, has managed the franchise in all regions outside Asia.<sup>[13][14]</sup>

**Pokémon**



International franchise logo, designed by Chris Maple in 1998<sup>[1]</sup>

<b>Created by</b>	<u>Satoshi Tajiri</u>
<b>Original work</b>	<u><i>Pocket Monsters Red</i> and <i>Pocket Monsters Green</i></u> (1996)
<b>Owners</b>	<u>Nintendo</u> <u>Creatures</u> <u>Game Freak</u> <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Years</b>	1996–present
<b>Print publications</b>	
<b>Comics</b>	See <u>list of <i>Pokémon</i> manga</u>
<b>Films and television</b>	
<b>Film(s)</b>	See <u>list of <i>Pokémon</i> films</u>
<b>Animated series</b>	<u><i>Pokémon</i></u> (1997–present)
<b>Games</b>	
<b>Traditional</b>	<u><i>Pokémon Trading Card Game</i></u>
<b>Video game(s)</b>	<u><i>Pokémon</i> video game series</u>
<b>Official website</b>	
<u>Official hub</u> ( <a href="https://www.portal-pokemon.com/">https://www.portal-pokemon.com/</a> )	

# Name

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The original full name of the franchise is ***Pocket Monsters*** (ポケットモンスター, *Poketto Monsutā*), which has been commonly abbreviated to *Pokemon* (ポケモン) since its launch. When the franchise was released internationally, the short form of the title was used, with an acute accent (´) over the *e* to aid in pronunciation.<sup>[15]</sup> As a Japanese word composed of English loanwords, the word *Pokémon* is an example of a wasei-eigo.<sup>[16]:30</sup>

*Pokémon* refers to both the franchise itself and the creatures within its fictional universe. As a noun, it is identical in both the singular and plural, as is every individual species name;<sup>[17]</sup> it is grammatically correct to say "one Pokémon" and "many Pokémon", as well as "one Pikachu" and "many Pikachu".<sup>[18]</sup>

## General concept

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The *Pokémon* franchise takes place in a shared universe in which humans co-exist with creatures known as Pokémon. The original pair of games contain 151 Pokémon species, with new ones being added in subsequent games; as of January 2024, 1,025 Pokémon species have been introduced.<sup>[c]</sup> Most Pokémon are based on real-life animals or mythical creatures from folklore.<sup>[19]</sup> For example, Pikachu are a yellow, mouse-like species with tails shaped as lightning bolts, able to blast powerful electric jolts through the air.<sup>[20][21][22]</sup>

The player character takes the role of a Pokémon Trainer. The Trainer has three primary goals: travel and explore the Pokémon world; discover and catch a specimen of each Pokémon species in order to complete their Pokédex; and train a team of Pokémon and have them engage in battles. Most Pokémon can be caught with spherical devices known as Poké Balls. Once the opposing Pokémon is sufficiently weakened, the Trainer throws the Poké Ball against the Pokémon, which is then transformed into a form of energy and transported into the device. If the catch is successful, the Pokémon is tamed and under the Trainer's command from then on. If the Poké Ball is thrown again, the Pokémon re-materializes into its original state. The Trainer's Pokémon can engage in battles against opposing Pokémon, including those in the wild or owned by other Trainers. Because the franchise is aimed at children, these battles are never presented as overtly violent and contain no blood or gore.<sup>[II]</sup> Pokémon never die in battle – they faint upon being defeated, and can then be rejuvenated at a Pokémon Center.<sup>[III]</sup>

When a Pokémon wins a battle, it gains experience points.<sup>[31]</sup> After gaining a certain amount of them, the Pokémon levels up, and its statistics rise. As its level increases, the Pokémon learns new offensive and defensive moves to use in battle.<sup>[32][33]</sup> Furthermore, many species can undergo a form of spontaneous metamorphosis called Pokémon evolution, and transform into stronger forms.<sup>[34]</sup> Most Pokémon will evolve at a certain level, while others evolve through different means, such as exposure to a certain item or trading with another trainer.<sup>[35]</sup>

# History

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## Origins

The main idea behind *Pokémon* was conceived by Satoshi Tajiri. Tajiri was born on 28 August 1965,<sup>[36]</sup> and grew up in Machida, a suburb of Tokyo.<sup>[37]</sup> As a child, he enjoyed discovering and catching insects and other small creatures in the various ponds and fields that surrounded his town.<sup>[38][39]</sup> During Japan's economic miracle, many cities, including Machida, were significantly expanded. As a consequence, Machida's nature was largely destroyed. In his second year of junior high school,<sup>[40][41]</sup> an arcade hall opened in Tajiri's neighborhood, introducing him to video games. While studying electrical engineering at Tokyo College of Technology, Tajiri began publishing a *doujinshi* magazine titled *Game Freak*. The title was inspired by the 1932 film *Freaks*, which Tajiri was fascinated with at the time.<sup>[42]</sup> He self-published the first issue of the magazine in March 1983, at the age of 17.<sup>[43][44]</sup> At the time, magazines specializing in video games did not yet exist in Japan, allowing *Game Freak* to fill a gap in the market.<sup>[45][46]</sup> Sometime later, Tajiri was contacted by aspiring manga artist Ken Sugimori, who became *Game Freak*'s illustrator.<sup>[47]</sup> *Game Freak* folded in the late 1980s,<sup>[43]</sup> by which point Tajiri had become a respected game journalist in Japan's fledgling video game industry.<sup>[48]</sup>

Tajiri's knowledge of video games brought him into contact with Tsunekazu Ishihara. Ishihara had studied Arts and Science at Tsukuba University, and was trained in CGI. After working in advertising for two years, Ishihara joined a company named Sedic in 1983, which created video graphics and software,<sup>[49]</sup> including one video game, *Otocky* (1987).<sup>[50][51]</sup> As video games grew in popularity, Sedic also produced a number of game-related television shows for Fuji Television's late-night slot.<sup>[49]</sup> In his job as a TV producer, Ishihara befriended Tajiri, as well as Shigesato Itoi, who would later become CEO of Ape, Inc.<sup>[52][53]</sup> Ishihara was also the general director of the world's first gaming encyclopedia: *TV Games: Encyclopedia of Video Games* (テレビゲーム—電 視 遊 戯 大 全, *Terebigēmu — Denshi Yūgi Taizen*).<sup>[54][55]</sup> Journalist Kenji Hatakeyama wrote that, at the time, Ishihara was probably the most well-connected man in the industry.<sup>[56]</sup> Masakazu Kubo, who would later play a vital role in *Pokémon*, wrote that Ishihara possessed a knowledge of games that was "beyond comparison".<sup>[57]</sup> Ishihara was also interested in playing cards,<sup>[58][59]</sup> and contributed to the development of at least three simple card games designed by Itoi and published by Ape.<sup>[d]</sup>

In 1986, Tajiri, Sugimori, and a few other enthusiasts started an informal development team called Game Freak, named after the magazine it grew out of. Over the next few years, they independently developed the puzzle game *Quinty*, working on it alongside school or their regular jobs.<sup>[66]</sup> However, no one within the group knew how to make the game's music. After consulting all his contacts, Tajiri got in touch with Junichi Masuda, who became the group's composer.<sup>[67]</sup> *Quinty* was finished in 1989, and published by Namco.<sup>[68]</sup> Tajiri officially incorporated Game Freak Co., Ltd. on 26 April 1989.<sup>[69]</sup>

## 1989–1995: Development of *Red* and *Green*

Tajiri started to think of what was to become *Pokémon* while completing *Quinty*, and before he officially founded Game Freak. Around this time, Nintendo announced the upcoming release of the Game Boy, a handheld console that would revolutionize the gaming industry. Tajiri learned that

the device would have a link port, and with the corresponding Game Link Cable, two Game Boys could be linked together.<sup>[70]</sup> Sometime later, Tajiri remembered an incident while playing *Dragon Quest II* (1987), a role-playing game (RPG) for the Famicom (NES). The game features randomly appearing items of varying rarity, including an extremely rare item called Mysterious Hat.<sup>[e]</sup> Tajiri did not encounter any, while Ken Sugimori, who was also playing the game, encountered two. Upon recalling this experience, Tajiri realized that the cable now made it possible to transfer things from one cartridge to another.<sup>[IV]</sup> He noted that, until then, the Game Link Cable was only used for competing, but not for something else.<sup>[75]</sup> Combining this inspiration with his memories of catching insects and other small species, Tajiri's idea would eventually evolve into a virtual recreation of his boyhood experiences,<sup>[76]</sup> and an attempt to "regain the world that he had lost".<sup>[77]</sup> He would later state that the game represents "the story of a boy's summer day".<sup>[78]</sup>



Two original Game Boys connected with a Game Link Cable

Tajiri and his Game Freak staff began pondering over a game centered on capturing creatures of differing rarity. Since the Game Boy is a portable device, these creatures could then be exchanged with other players in real life using the link cable. Once the player has caught a creature in-game, it was to be stored in miniaturized form in a special capsule. This facet of the game was inspired by *Ultraseven*, a *tokusatsu* show that Tajiri had enjoyed as a child.<sup>[79]</sup> The series' titular character owns a number of capsules containing miniaturized *kaiju* (monsters), which come out and return to their original sizes when the capsule is thrown into mid-air. *Kaiju* media in general were an important influence on *Pokemon*, as many Game Freak staff members had grown up with them.<sup>[72][80]</sup> Other influences that have been cited by Tajiri include: *gashapon*, capsules with toy figures in them that can be drawn from vending machines;<sup>[81][82]</sup> collectible cards, such as baseball cards, *Ultraman* cards and *menko*;<sup>[V]</sup> *The Final Fantasy Legend* (1989), the first RPG for the Game Boy;<sup>[87]</sup> and petting in Japan, with Tajiri noting that having *Pokemon* is similar to having pets.<sup>[88]</sup> Tajiri initially named his project *Capsule Monsters*, which GF's staff commonly shortened to *Capumon*.<sup>[89]</sup> However, it later turned out that the term *Capsule Monsters* could not be trademarked, and it was subsequently decided to call the game *Pocket Monsters*, which became *Pokemon*. Former GF staff member Akihito Tomisawa wrote that the phrase "Capsule Monsters" was already registered.<sup>[89]</sup> According to journalist Kenji Hatakeyama, the word "capsule" could not be used in the trademark.<sup>[90]</sup> Tomisawa wrote that the Game Freak staff then came up with several alternatives, before someone within the team suggested "Pocket Monsters".<sup>[89]</sup>



*Gashapon* capsules have been cited as an inspiration for *Pokemon*.

In March 1989, Nintendo co-founded Ape, Inc. with Itoi. Ape's principal work was *Mother* (1989), a role-playing game written by Itoi, but it was also founded with the intent to give outside talent a chance to pitch new, innovative games.<sup>[53][58]</sup> At the time, Ape was housed in the same Kanda-Sudachō office building as Nintendo, located in Tokyo.<sup>[91]</sup> Ishihara, a friend of both Itoi and Tajiri, was involved with Ape's management (and would become its vice-president in 1991).<sup>[53][56]</sup> Tajiri's relationship with Ishihara prompted Tajiri to present his idea for *Pocket Monsters* at Ape's office.<sup>[92][93]</sup> Present during Tajiri's pitch was Takashi Kawaguchi, who worked at Nintendo's

General Affairs Department and was also a manager at Ape.<sup>[58][94]</sup> Kawaguchi brought the idea to Nintendo president Hiroshi Yamauchi, who reportedly said: "This is it. This is the idea I've been waiting for."<sup>[95]</sup> By pure coincidence, Ishihara had come up with an idea for a game similar to that of Tajiri, and around the same time was discussing it with Ape. This game, *Toto*, involved "using the Game Boy as an insect cage". Ishihara emphasized, however, that the idea of trading creatures with the link cable was Tajiri's. GF and Ape agreed to merge their projects together.<sup>[96]</sup> According to Tajiri, the two teams initially collaborated on the game, but the work proved difficult, one of the reasons being that Ape was busy developing *EarthBound*.<sup>[97][98]</sup> Tajiri eventually figured that "rather than working with Ape, we had to do something on our own, or the project would never get finished".<sup>[97]</sup> Ape, Inc. is not credited on the final product.

The development contract was signed at the beginning of 1990, with a planned delivery of the game in October.<sup>[99]</sup> Tajiri directed the project, working under Ishihara.<sup>[100]</sup> Ishihara was the producer – he managed the budget, staff, and work schedule, monitored the game's overall progress, and served as a liaison between Game Freak and Nintendo.<sup>[96][101]</sup> Ishihara also contributed ideas to the development,<sup>[59]</sup> and helped with debugging.<sup>[102][103]</sup> Sugimori was in charge of the graphics and character design.<sup>[104]</sup> Masuda created all music and sound effects, and did part of the programming.<sup>[105]</sup> The budget that Nintendo granted to Game Freak was low;<sup>[99]</sup> thus, *Pocket Monsters* was initially planned as a small, compact game, based primarily around Tajiri's core idea of exchanging.<sup>[87][106]</sup> However, as development progressed, GF's ideas and ambitions for *Pokemon* grew.<sup>[87]</sup> They soon realized that the game they were beginning to envision would not be easy to make. Sugimori admitted that, at the time, no one at GF had much knowledge of RPGs. "We thought we could handle it, but as we began working, we realized it was going to be tough", he acknowledged.<sup>[107]</sup> *Pocket Monsters* was suspended indefinitely, and GF turned their focus on other titles (see Game Freak § Games).

After the game's initial development phase in 1990 and 1991,<sup>[108]</sup> the staff "tinkered with it from time to time", as Sugimori put it.<sup>[109]</sup> For instance, by October 1992, a large number of Pokemon had been designed, and a poll was held that month among all staff members to gauge the popularity of the different species. Several more such votes followed to determine collectively which Pokemon should be included.<sup>[110]</sup> Still, development had mostly come to a halt until the summer of 1994, after the release of the platform game *Pulseman*, upon which Tajiri decided it was time to make a serious effort towards finishing *Pocket Monsters*.<sup>[111]</sup> By this point, Game Freak's experience had grown considerably. Over the years, a number of new staff members had been added to the company. One of them was Atsuko Nishida, a graphic artist who created *Pikachu*, among others.<sup>[112][113][114]</sup> Ishihara used his knowledge of card games to add more depth to the battle system, and among other things suggested Pokemon types. Ishihara also came up with the idea of the Pokedex, a portable encyclopedic device which players can use to keep track of the Pokemon they caught.<sup>[59]</sup> Throughout the years, Tajiri had several conversations with Shigeru Miyamoto,<sup>[115]</sup> Nintendo's top game designer who Tajiri described as a mentor figure.<sup>[79]</sup> Although, in a 2018 retrospect, Miyamoto downplayed his role in advising Tajiri, and stated that his contributions to *Pokemon* were in fact limited.<sup>[116]</sup> Miyamoto did, however, suggest the use of different colored cartridges for the game, in response to Tajiri's and Ishihara's musings about making each playthrough slightly different, as to 'individualize' the player's experience.<sup>[117]</sup> According to Tajiri, "five or seven colors" were considered,<sup>[118]</sup> but they eventually settled on two versions of the game: a *Red* version and a *Green* version. Otherwise identical, each had Pokemon not found in the other, encouraging players to socialize and trade to complete their collection.<sup>[117]</sup>



Ishihara aspired to create video games of his own.<sup>[119]</sup> As *Pocket Monsters Red* and *Green* were nearing completion, Ishihara founded Creatures, Inc. on 8 November 1995. Upon founding, the company was housed in the same office building as Nintendo in Tokyo.<sup>[120]</sup> Co-ownership of the *Pokemon* property, which Ishihara helped create, was subsequently assigned to Creatures. This resulted in *Pokemon* having three legal owners: Game Freak, the main developer; Creatures, representing producer Ishihara; and Nintendo, the publisher. Anne Allison wrote that Nintendo also bought the property after *Red* and *Green* were finished.<sup>[121]</sup> Kenji Hatakeyama noted that the ownership structure of *Pokemon* is uncommon.<sup>[12]</sup> He wrote that "Pokemon is probably the only property in the world today for which the original rights are not concentrated in a single company", like The Walt Disney Company does with their IPs.<sup>[122]</sup> Tajiri and Ishihara did consider merging Game Freak and Creatures at one point. However, Tajiri decided against it because he feared it would erase what he had built up since he was a teenager. "I felt threatened by the idea of changing how Game Freak was operating, and starting back over with Mr. Ishihara", he said. "It was an identity problem. If Game Freak ceased to exist, then so would I". Tajiri noted that, since Game Freak and Creatures both focus on *Pokemon*, it sometimes felt more like different departments than different companies.<sup>[92]</sup>

*Pocket Monsters Red* and *Green* were finally finished in December 1995.<sup>[123]</sup> A release date of 21 December that year was announced,<sup>[124]</sup> but missed. After sufficient cartridges, manuals and packages had been manufactured, the pair of games ended up being published on 27 February 1996. However, the property was copyrighted in 1995, and "©1995" is shown on the title screens<sup>[125]</sup> and cartridges.<sup>[126]</sup> This year is since used on the copyright notice<sup>[2]</sup> seen on many *Pokemon* products, even though no actual *Pokemon* product was released in 1995.<sup>[127]</sup>

## 1996–1998: Rise in Japan

### Release of *Red* and *Green*

Nintendo had no high expectations of *Pocket Monsters Red* and *Green*, and media largely ignored the game(s).<sup>[128]</sup> By 1996, the seven-year-old Game Boy console was considered yesterday's news and near the end of its lifecycle.<sup>[27][129][130]</sup> On the other hand, new Game Boys continued to be manufactured and sold.<sup>[131]</sup> The console was widespread and, due to its age, affordable to children.<sup>[27][132]</sup> Also, the Game Boy had experienced a small revival in Japan in 1995 due to the success of *Mario's Picross*. Coincidentally, this game was directed by Ishihara, and co-developed by Ape. The popularity of *Mario's Picross* incited Nintendo to develop the Game Boy Pocket,<sup>[133]</sup> a slimmer and improved version of the Game Boy, released in Japan on 21 July 1996.<sup>[134]</sup> Because of the timing and naming, some were under the impression that the Game Boy *Pocket* was made to promote *Pocket Monsters*, but this was in fact a coincidence that would end up benefiting both.<sup>[135]</sup>

### *CoroCoro* manga, Mew lottery

Two media channels that would play important roles in the *Pokemon* franchise were the *CoroCoro Comic*, released monthly, and its sister magazine *Bessatsu CoroCoro Comic*, released bi-monthly. Both manga magazines are published by Shogakukan, a long-time business partner of Nintendo, and have featured manga based on Nintendo properties (e.g. *Super Mario-kun*, *Kirby of the Stars*, *Donkey Kong*). At the time of *Pokemon*'s release, the main *CoroCoro* magazine was read by one in four elementary school students.<sup>[136]</sup> *CoroCoro*'s deputy editor-in-chief was Masakazu Kubo. On Ishihara's suggestion,<sup>[137]</sup> Kubo commissioned the creation of a manga adaptation. Written and

illustrated by Kosaku Anakubo, its first chapter was featured in the March/April issue of *Bessatsu CoroCoro Comic*, released on 28 February 1996, the day after *Red* and *Green*'s release.<sup>[138]</sup> Shogakukan, which frequently surveys their target groups, determined that the *Pocket Monsters* manga was well received.<sup>[139]</sup>

To further promote *Red* and *Green*, the May issue of *CoroCoro*, released on 15 April 1996, announced the "Legendary Pokemon Offer", centered around a mysterious, secret Pokemon called Mew.<sup>[140][141]</sup> Mew was a last-minute addition to *Red & Green*. It is unobtainable in the game(s) through usual means, and was intended to be used at a later point in some post-launch activity.<sup>[142]</sup> To participate in the promotion, *CoroCoro* readers had to send in a postcard, and from the entrants, 20 were selected at random. The winners then had to send in their cartridge so that Mew could be uploaded onto it. The lottery was a success and increased word-of-mouth.<sup>[27][142]</sup> By September, sales of *Red* and *Green* had surpassed 1 million units.<sup>[143]</sup>

## **Pokemon Blue**

Even after the release of *Pokemon Red* and *Green*, Game Freak continued testing their game(s) for the purpose of bug fixing<sup>[f]</sup> and training new staff members. Trainees were also tasked with creating new sprites for the game. The resulting new version was dubbed *Pokemon Blue*.<sup>[145]</sup> It was originally not meant to be sold. Only a small number of handmade copies were made, intended as a special gift to "20 to 100 people".<sup>[146]</sup> After Kubo learned of it, he encouraged Tajiri and Ishihara to allow an official release of *Blue*. President Hiroshi Yamauchi initially rejected this, fearing it would confuse people into believing it was an entirely new *Pokemon* game. Kawaguchi then suggested an alternative, which Yamauchi agreed with: *Blue* would not receive a normal retail release, but would instead be made available only through mail order for a limited time as a special offer.<sup>[147]</sup> It was announced in the November issue of *CoroCoro*, which explicitly stated that *Blue* was not a new game, but rather a special, limited edition to celebrate 1 million sales of *Red* and *Green*.<sup>[141]</sup> The offer was a surprisingly big success: 300,000 units were expected to be sold, but more than double that amount was ordered.<sup>[148][149]</sup>

## **Trading Card Game**

The *Pokemon Trading Card Game* was one of the first collectible card games (CCGs) developed in Japan. Its creation was influenced by *Magic: The Gathering*, the first CCG in history.<sup>[150][151][152]</sup> Indeed, the *Pokemon Trading Card Game* can be considered a simplified version of *Magic*.<sup>[153][154]</sup> First released in the United States in 1993, *Magic* had gained popularity not just in North America and Europe, but also in Asia.<sup>[155]</sup> Ishihara was fond of playing cards,<sup>[59]</sup> and had contributed to the development of at least three simple card games designed by Shigesato Itoi and released through Ape, Inc.<sup>[d]</sup> At the time, Ishihara was particularly interested in *Magic: The Gathering*.<sup>[150]</sup> While developing the *Pokemon* RPG, he realized that the concept behind it could be adapted into a *Magic*-like CCG.<sup>[58]</sup> The *Pokemon Trading Card Game* was designed by Ishihara,<sup>[156]</sup> Akihiko Miura, Kōichi Ōyama, and Takumi Akabane.<sup>[157]</sup> All were former staff members of Ape and had previously worked on *EarthBound* (1994): Miura was the game's main designer, Ōyama was its art director, and Akabane was one of its chief debuggers.<sup>[158]</sup>

While card games have a long history in Japan, a collectible card game was a relatively new concept there, and at the time not widely known.<sup>[159]</sup> Because of this, Ishihara had difficulties finding distributors. Sometime in 1995, Ishihara pitched the card game to Nintendo. They agreed to have the cards manufactured, subcontracting an unidentified printing company. However, Nintendo did not want the hassle of having to develop a distribution system from the ground up,

i.e. finding retailers willing to sell a CCG.<sup>[160]</sup> Ishihara was then contacted by Satoshi Kayama, director of a small firm called Media Factory. Like Ishihara, Kayama was a fan of card games. He felt that CCGs would soon rise to prominence in Japan, and had been gathering information on the possibility of developing such a game in some form. When Kayama heard that Creatures had developed a CCG, he contacted Ishihara and offered to distribute it, signing the contract near the end of 1995.<sup>[161]</sup>

*CoroCoro* again proved a valuable information channel. The *Trading Card Game* was first announced in the November issue, the same one that announced *Pokemon Blue*.<sup>[162]</sup> The issue came bundled with two promo cards: one of Purin (Jigglypuff) and one of Pikachu. Surveys showed that they were respectively the most and second-most popular Pokemon at the time.<sup>[163]</sup> On 20 October 1996, the first card set was released.<sup>[164]</sup> Booster packs were launched the same day, containing 10 randomly inserted cards.<sup>[165]</sup> In the West, the booster packs would contain 11 cards.<sup>[g]</sup> The original set would be titled the Base Set in English. Many more sets would follow. Despite being ignored by the media, except for *CoroCoro*,<sup>[166]</sup> the cards became an instant success upon release. 87 million *Pokemon* cards were shipped by the end of March 1997, six months after its launch, and one month before the debut of the next big installment of the franchise: the *Pokemon* anime. The success of the TV series would cause the cards' sales figure to explode: by March 1998, a total of 499 million cards had been produced in Japan.<sup>[167]</sup>

## Anime production and premiere

By August 1996, Kubo had become convinced of *Pokemon*'s potential, and believed Shogakukan should create an anime adaptation.<sup>[168]</sup> Nintendo felt reluctant, believing that the property had developed enough as it had over the course of six months. At that time, they did not consider such a significant expansion to be necessary.<sup>[169]</sup> Nintendo also noted that if the anime would flop, it would negatively affect future *Pokemon* games.<sup>[170]</sup> Ishihara initially opposed the idea, because he thought it would overly hasten the 'consumption' of the property: he feared that if the series would end, people would assume that *Pokemon* has ended, and move on to the next thing.<sup>[171]</sup> At the time, Creatures and Game Freak were planning the sequel(s) to *Red* and *Green*, *Pokemon Gold* and *Silver*, and Ishihara did not want the anime to end before they could release their new games.<sup>[172][173]</sup> Kubo was ultimately able to resolve the concerns of all parties involved. An important aspect of Kubo's bargaining power was the then-ongoing Mini 4WD craze and its accompanying hit series *Bakusō Kyōdai Let's & Go!!*. Kubo had an important role in the creation of both, which impressed the stakeholders.<sup>[174]</sup> To appease Ishihara, Kubo promised him that the anime would last for at least a year and a half. This was unusually long for a debuting anime, and required a big investment.<sup>[172][175]</sup> Kubo's proposal for *Pocket Monsters* was officially approved on 26 September 1996.<sup>[176]</sup> For Nintendo of Japan, it was the first time they licensed a TV series.<sup>[177]</sup> Kubo assigned independent producer Choji Yoshikawa to lead the project.<sup>[178]</sup>

Shogakukan Productions, commonly called ShoPro, was Shogakukan's production company. The animation company they commissioned was OLM, Inc. (Oriental Light and Magic), on Kubo's suggestion.<sup>[179]</sup> Kunihiko Yuyama, one of OLM's founding members, became the anime's director. ShoPro assembled a team of five writers, plus two supporting writers.<sup>[180]</sup> All key people involved with the production of *Pokemon* were well-experienced and had proven track records within Japan's anime industry. Yoshikawa felt that the team got lucky. "The probability of so many great people coming together at the same time is very low", he said.<sup>[181]</sup> Per Tajiri's explicit condition,<sup>[182]</sup> every anime team member had to play the game extensively, including the



illustrators and voice actors.<sup>[181]</sup> The anime staff "unanimously agreed that the game was interesting"<sup>[183]</sup> and "felt connected with each other through the world of *Pokemon*",<sup>[181]</sup> feeling positively challenged to make an anime that would match the game's quality.<sup>[184]</sup>

A production council was formed to produce the anime. Different people appeared at different meetings, but four individuals usually present were Ishihara of Creatures, Sugimori of Game Freak, Yuyama of OLM, and independent producer Yoshikawa. Yoshikawa had the final say. The council decided on the anime's worldview, characters, general storyline, and various important details. The early meetings, which were also attended by Tajiri, usually started with a Q&A session in which Tajiri and Ishihara were asked about the *Pokemon* universe.<sup>[186]</sup> The council was careful to have the anime be in concordance with the video game. Inevitably, there had to be differences between the two, but all agreed that the overall worldview as envisioned by Tajiri should not be disturbed.<sup>[187]</sup> At the start of the video game, the player has to choose one of three starter *Pokemon*: Fushigidane, Hitokage, or Zenigame (*Bulbasaur*, *Charmander*, or *Squirtle*). The council didn't want to unfairly popularize any of them, and wanted the protagonist to start out with a different *Pokemon*.<sup>[188][189]</sup> Kenji Hatakeyama, who interviewed various people involved with the creation of *Pokemon*, wrote that, by coincidence, three people independently suggested to the council that a *Pikachu* should be a main character in the anime: Kubo, Yuyama, and Keisuke Iwata of TV Tokyo's Film Department.<sup>[190]</sup> In the end, all council members agreed that *Pikachu* should be one of *Pocket Monsters*' central icons, as they expected *Pikachu* to appeal to both boys and girls, as well as their mothers. This would expand the franchise's audience, which was considered a core objective of the anime.<sup>[191][192]</sup>



A boy hugging a *Pikachu*-costumed performer. *Pikachu* became a popular character among both boys and girls.<sup>[185]</sup>

During the council's first meeting, Yoshikawa brought up the issue on whether the *Pokemon* in the anime could talk, and if not, how they could communicate. In the video games, each has a specific cry. In *Anakubo's CoroCoro* manga, most could speak. At first, the council believed there should be a mixture of *Pokemon* that could talk and some that could not. However, this idea was eventually discarded: the *Pokemon* had to make a specific cry. The council agreed that *Pokemon* were like animals, and while they and humans should be able to understand each other in the series, they should not speak each other's language.<sup>[193]</sup> It was decided that *Pikachu* would repeatedly say its own name in various intonations. The role of *Pikachu* was given to Ikue Otani. During try-outs, Yuyama had Otani voice *Pikachu* in normal Japanese, as well as in 'Pikachu talk', in which it only said the syllables of its name. Yuyama realized that, even in the latter style of limited communication, Otani was experienced enough to still convey the messages and emotions needed.<sup>[194]</sup>

ShoPro paid half of the production cost of *Pokemon*. *TV Tokyo* paid the other half and was granted co-ownership of the anime.<sup>[195]</sup> The ads during the show's commercial breaks were managed by advertisement agency *JR Kikaku*, which was in turn paid by sponsors buying advertisement space.<sup>[196]</sup> In negotiating with *TV Tokyo*, Kubo managed to secure the 19:00 – 19:30 timeslot on Tuesdays.<sup>[197]</sup> *Pocket Monsters* premiered on 1 April 1997. By November, it had become the highest-rated program on *TV Tokyo*.<sup>[198]</sup> The anime succeeded in its goal of widening *Pokemon*'s audience. Although the video games and the cards remained mostly of interest to boys, the anime

also got more girls interested in the franchise, and girls' purchases of *Pokemon* products increased.<sup>[185]</sup> This has been partly credited to Pikachu, who gained widespread popularity among both boys and girls.<sup>[199]</sup> The success of this character would later lead to the game *Pocket Monsters Pikachu* (*Pokémon Yellow: Special Pikachu Edition*), released in Japan on 12 September 1998.<sup>[200][201]</sup> An adaptation of *Pokemon Blue*, this version was made to resemble the TV series more.<sup>[202]</sup>

### Copyright council formed, merchandising expands

In the early months of the franchise, Nintendo was the contractual representative for *Pokemon*, and thus the central contact point for all *Pokemon*-related licensing (the approval of branded products).<sup>[203]</sup> Around the time that planning of the anime begun, licensing requests for *Pokemon* started to increase, which Nintendo had difficulties handling due to a lack of (experienced) staff.<sup>[204]</sup> Nintendo consequently granted ShoPro exclusive licensor rights. This was the first time that Nintendo of Japan (NoJ) granted licensor rights to another company, aside from its overseas subsidiaries Nintendo of America (NoA) and Nintendo of Europe (NoE).<sup>[205]</sup>

A copyright council was formed, headed by Ishihara. Beginning in April 1997, the council met every Tuesday, in the conference room of Creatures' office, at the Nintendo Kanda Building in Sudachō, Tokyo.<sup>[120][206][207]</sup> Attendees usually included Ishihara and his secretary, representatives of Nintendo, Game Freak, ShoPro, TV Tokyo, and JR Kikaku, as well as head of the anime Yoshikawa.<sup>[208]</sup> Broadly put, every meeting had three types of agenda items: discussing *Pokemon*-related events and basic policies in Japan, discussing Shogakukan publication plans, and considering merchandise proposals.<sup>[209]</sup> For merchandising, the council set the bar high. Fiercely protective of *Pokemon*'s brand equity, Ishihara was unwilling to greenlit an item just because it had a picture of a Pokemon printed on it. To avoid the market being flooded with low-quality goods, Ishihara put very specific demands on the products he evaluated.<sup>[172][210]</sup> Furthermore, in most cases, the council opted to contract one company for each product category.<sup>[211]</sup> Because of this, most merchandise proposals were rejected: of the approximately 7,500 applications submitted in 1997, only about 5% was approved.<sup>[212]</sup>

By March 1998, 35 companies offered licensed *Pokemon* goods, and there were approximately 700 *Pokemon* products.<sup>[134][213]</sup> Tomy manufactured *Pokemon* toy figures and plush dolls.<sup>[214]</sup> Bandai made *Pokemon gashapon*, dolls and *ramune*-flavored candy in a plastic box in the shape of a Game Boy.<sup>[215]</sup> Meiji Seika produced *Pokemon* chocolate snacks and pudding.<sup>[134][216]</sup> The lucrative franchise provided a much-needed boost to Japan's economy, which was stagnating in what would later be called the Lost Decade.<sup>[217][218]</sup> An example of a firm that benefited greatly from *Pokemon* was food manufacturer Nagatanien. From May 1997, the company began selling *Pokemon*-branded curry, *furikake*, and baking mixes.<sup>[134][219]</sup> In December 1997, Nagatanien was hit hard by the collapse of one of its biggest sales channels, Toshoku, in what was then the third-largest bankruptcy in Japan's postwar history.<sup>[220][221]</sup> Nonetheless, due to their *Pokemon*-licensed products, Nagatanien reported net profits in fiscal years '97 and '98, despite having forecasted losses.<sup>[219][220][222]</sup>

### "Dennō Senshi Porygon" incident

In the evening of 16 December 1997, the *Pokemon* franchise was hit by a crisis related to the broadcast of the anime's 38th episode, "Dennō Senshi Porygon" (Computer Warrior Porygon). It was watched by approximately 4.6 million households.<sup>[223]</sup> In the episode, the cast is transported into a virtual world, accompanied by a Porygon, an artificially-made Pokemon. While flying

through cyberspace, they are attacked by an anti-virus program which mistakes them for viruses, shooting "vaccine missiles" at them resulting in explosions of bright, rapidly swapping red and blue flashes.<sup>[224]</sup>

The intense stimuli brought about by the episode triggered a variety of adverse health effects in more than 10,000 viewers,<sup>[225]</sup> primarily irritated eyes, headaches, dizziness, and nausea.<sup>[226]</sup> A small part suffered a photosensitive epileptic seizure, manifested in loss of conscious and/or convulsions.<sup>[226][227]</sup> Hundreds<sup>[h]</sup> of children were brought to hospitals, although some had recovered enough upon arrival and did not need to be hospitalized. No one died. Broadcasting of *Pokemon* was halted, and new guidelines were implemented to help prevent similar events from happening.<sup>[233]</sup> With the show on hiatus, ShoPro and OLM worked on a feature *Pokemon* film. By the time the incident occurred, its script was already written and storyboards were being made. In mid-January, the staff resumed creating new episodes.<sup>[234]</sup> The anime series returned on 16 April 1998.<sup>[235]</sup> The film, titled *Pocket Monsters the Movie: Mewtwo Strikes Back* (*Pokémon: The First Movie*), premiered on 18 July 1998, becoming the fourth highest grossing film of the year in Japan.<sup>[236][237]</sup>

Ultimately, the incident did not damage the *Pokemon* franchise – it in fact grew further during and after the anime's hiatus. While video rental tapes were removed from shelves,<sup>[238][239]</sup> all other *Pokemon* products continued to be sold as usual, and customer demand for them remained high.<sup>[240][241]</sup> Helping matters was a general understanding among businesses that the anime was not canceled, but rather suspended, and many executives (correctly) expected the show to be resumed after precautions had been taken. Supermarkets and other distribution outlets responded calmly to the crisis, and did not remove *Pokemon* products from their sales floors.<sup>[242]</sup>

## 1998–2000: International expansion

### North America

Possibly the first official to show interest in a North American launch of *Pokemon* was Minoru Arakawa, founder and then-president of Nintendo of America (NoA). Arakawa visited Japan to participate in Shoshinkai 1996, held 22–24 November. It was around this time when he first played one of the three *Pokemon* titles released at the time. He thought the games were promising, but Nintendo of Japan (NoJ) had no plans at the time to release them elsewhere. He returned to America with a few cartridges and tested the game on his employees – they did not believe it would work in the US.<sup>[244]</sup> At the time, role-playing games (RPGs) were not very popular outside Japan,<sup>[245]</sup> and NoA executives believed that American children did not have the attention span for such a complex title.<sup>[246]</sup> Americans were said to be more interested in sport- and action-oriented games, preferably with realistic graphics.<sup>[17][247]</sup> Japanese people, by contrast, were alleged to care more about characters and plot.<sup>[248]</sup> Up to that point, few Japanese properties had been successfully mainstreamed in the US, and if they

"When we started this project in Japan, one of the first things I was told was that this kind of thing would never appeal to American audiences. They said, 'Because the characters are in a very Japanese style, you cannot sell them to Americans'. So from the very beginning, I never thought there would be an English version. Now, it's just as popular in the United States [as in Japan], and I realized that we shouldn't always believe the opinions of conservative marketers."

Shigeru Miyamoto, August 1999<sup>[243]</sup>

were, it was alleged to be on account of having been properly Americanized: *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* was considered a prime example of this.<sup>[249]</sup> Visually, *Pokemon* was believed to be too *kawaii*, or cute. It was assumed that *Pokemon* could not succeed on cute alone – it must also be cool.<sup>[250][251]</sup> In an effort to enhance the franchise's coolness, NoA considered a graphical redesign and contracted a few external artists to create some test-designs for the American market.<sup>[246][251]</sup> The mockups they proposed included 'graffiti style' drawings,<sup>[251]</sup> 'beefed-up' and more muscular looking *Pokemon*,<sup>[252]</sup> and a new Pikachu that looked like "a tiger with huge breasts".<sup>[250]</sup> Arakawa concluded that it "didn't work",<sup>[251]</sup> and by that time, the anime had begun its production in Japan, leading NoA to conclude it was too late for a graphical revamp anyway.<sup>[246]</sup>

Of pivotal importance to *Pokemon*'s global expansion was Alfred R. Kahn, CEO of US-based 4Kids Entertainment, NoA's licensing agent since 1987.<sup>[253][254]</sup> Convinced of the franchise's potential, Kahn agreed to invest an undisclosed sum in return for both the anime and licensing rights.<sup>[245]</sup> *Pokemon* became one of the first Japanese media franchises in which both the localization of the anime and the licensing of merchandise was handled by a single company, as well as a non-Japanese company.<sup>[255]</sup> Kahn suggested to use the short version of the name, "Pokémon", adding an acute accent (´) over the *e* to assist with pronunciation and "give it a little flair".<sup>[15]</sup> NoJ president Hiroshi Yamauchi officially approved the project in late November,<sup>[256]</sup> and subsequently announced it at Space World 1997.<sup>[257]</sup> However, three weeks later, the "Dennō Senshi Porygon" incident happened, which Kubo felt made even more people resistant to the idea of an overseas introduction.<sup>[258]</sup>

Market research turned back negative: American kids reportedly did not like *Pokémon*.<sup>[259]</sup> Arakawa ignored the study and, convinced of the franchise's potential, allocated an enormous budget to *Pokémon*'s launch. The exact amount was not disclosed, but was reportedly equal to or more than \$50 million (c. \$96.46 million in 2024), approximately the same amount as the launch budget of the Nintendo Entertainment System in 1985. Arakawa admitted that it was "quite a bit of money", but NoA "had been doing well for several years, so we had a lot of money to spare". He opined that if *Pokémon* would be as successful in the US as it had been in Japan, "an investment of 1 would turn into 100".<sup>[260]</sup> NoA and 4Kids proceeded to devise a strategy on how to localize *Pokémon* for the United States.<sup>[246]</sup> Arakawa appointed Gail Tilden to lead the project, prompting her to leave her position at Nintendo Power magazine.<sup>[261]</sup> Tilden said that they "decided to make an all-out effort to repeat the phenomenon in the Western world".<sup>[27]</sup> In two press releases, NoA self-described *Pokémon*'s marketing campaign as "aggressive".<sup>[262][263]</sup>

The localization of the *Pokémon* anime was done by 4Kids, and directed by Norman J. Grossfeld. Grossfeld strongly believed that the anime should be Americanized.<sup>[264]</sup> At NATPE 1998, he asked ShoPro for a "kind of carte blanche, to let me change the show as I think would work for this market", to which ShoPro agreed.<sup>[265]</sup> However, no national TV station was interested in buying the anime or financing its localization.<sup>[15][245]</sup> Kahn then decided to self-finance *Pokémon*'s production costs, despite realizing this "could very well bring down 4Kids" if the show would fail.<sup>[265]</sup> According to Kahn, they "spend a fortune" on the localization.<sup>[26]</sup> To have it broadcast in syndication, 4Kids offered the show for free to local TV stations across the country, in exchange for a portion of the advertising revenue.<sup>[15][245]</sup> NoA assisted, persuading dozens of stations to carry the series by offering to buy some of their advertisement space, spending a total of \$5 million (c. \$9.65 million in 2024).<sup>[247][265]</sup> Despite all this, most broadcasters were still reluctant to carry *Pokémon*, with Grossfeld experiencing difficulties getting through their "preconceived notions or their snobbery for Western-produced animation over something from Asia".<sup>[265]</sup> At the time,

anime had not yet found mainstream popularity in the West. Contemporary news reports cited *Sailor Moon*<sup>[VI]</sup> as an example of an anime that had failed to catch on with American youth.<sup>[i]</sup> Still, with NoA's help, 4Kids ultimately succeeded in contracting 112 broadcasters for *Pokémon*,<sup>[271]</sup> reaching "about 85 to 90 percent"<sup>[272]</sup> of television households. However, many broadcasters gave it off-peak time slots, with starting times like 06:00 or 06:30.<sup>[15][247]</sup> Prior to the late 1990s, this was the case for many anime in the US.<sup>[255]</sup>

Grossfeld came up with the advertising slogan "Gotta catch 'em all!" as the English equivalent to the Japanese *Pokemon GETTO daze~!* (ポケモンゲットだぜー！, Get (the) Pokémon!).<sup>[273][274]</sup> The phrase "miraculously managed to gain approval" by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), which normally prohibits the use of injunctions in ads directed at children (e.g. "You must buy this!"). While the tagline may sound commanding, the FCC reasoned that the act of *catching* is at the core of *Pokémon*'s play. Therefore, the phrase was allowed.<sup>[275]</sup> The series' theme song was written by John Loeffler and John Siegler, and performed by Jason Paige.<sup>[276]</sup> In commissioning the track, Grossfeld specifically requested the song's chorus to be written around the "Gotta catch 'em all" phrase, firmly embedding the slogan into the theme.<sup>[274]</sup>

While NoA and 4Kids were allowed a fair degree of liberty in their localization of *Pokémon*, the Japanese copyright council, headed by Ishihara, had the last say over it. All decisions regarding adjustments and promotion had to gain final approval of the Japan side.<sup>[277]</sup> This included all of the merchandise, for which a 'two-step system' was created. All (aspiring) licensees in North America were to send their merchandise proposals to 4Kids.<sup>[245]</sup> Staff of both 4Kids and NoA then made a pre-selection and send the approved proposals to Japan, where the council made the final decision. Many submissions were bounced at the US stage, and thus never got sent to Japan. Tilden noted that processing all license applications, and mailing all approved prototypes and their documentation to Japan, was a lot of work. Arakawa did consider streamlining the process by moving someone from Japan to the US, but no person could be found who was as competent as Ishihara.<sup>[278]</sup>

The *Pokémon* anime was first broadcast on 7 September 1998.<sup>[279][280]</sup> *Pokémon Red Version* and *Blue Version* were released three weeks later, on 28 September 1998.<sup>[281]</sup> To localize the card game, Nintendo contracted Wizards of the Coast, the creator of *Magic: The Gathering*.<sup>[282]</sup> The *Pokémon Trading Card Game* was officially launched nationwide on 9 January 1999, although pre-sold in select stores in December.<sup>[283]</sup> Coinciding with the North American launch of *Pokémon* was the release of the Game Boy Color on 23 November 1998.<sup>[284]</sup>

## Other regions

The American version of the *Pokémon* anime started broadcasting in Australia and New Zealand on 28 September 1998. *Red* and *Blue* were subsequently released there on 23 October. Various territories in Asia followed: the anime series debuted in Hong Kong on 16 November, in Taiwan on 23 November, in Shanghai on 24 November, in Beijing on 10 January 1999, and in South Korea on 14 July 1999.<sup>[285]</sup>

Outside North America, 4Kids distributed the anime in cooperation with Brian Lacey of Lacey Entertainment.<sup>[286][287]</sup> The series was presented at MIP TV, in Cannes, France, from 3–8 April 1998.<sup>[288]</sup> Broadcasters were initially not interested due to its Japanese origins, and preferred to wait and see how the anime would fare in the US. After its American success, Lacey received inquiries about the series throughout 1999 from multiple international broadcasters.<sup>[286][289]</sup> Lacey noted that, in Europe, this was a stark contrast compared to previous years: "I was trying to

sell this sort of stuff for years and buyers would tell me they were moving away from Japanese animation shows", he said.<sup>[289]</sup> In October 1999, the franchise was launched in the European key markets of Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Spain.<sup>[290]</sup> The anime started broadcasting in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden in December 1999.<sup>[289]</sup> In 2000, broadcasting rights for the first season were secured by TV stations in South Africa, Russia, Iceland, and Finland.<sup>[291]</sup> In Israel, the anime debuted in February 2000. For unclear reasons, *Red* and *Blue* were not officially released there. Thriving only on the strength of the TV series, *The First Movie*, the cards, and imported video games, the Israeli *Pokémon* still became a success.<sup>[292][293]</sup>

By the end of 2000, *Pokémon* games had been released in 70 countries, the anime was broadcast in 51 countries, the films were released in 33 countries, and the cards had been translated into 11 languages.<sup>[294]</sup>

## 1999–2000: Pokémania

In North America, the debuting *Pokémon* franchise quickly rose to success. *Red* and *Blue* sold 200,000 copies in its first month. By December 1998, the *Pokémon* anime had become the highest-rated syndicated children's show during the weekdays.<sup>[286]</sup> This attracted the attention of two media companies: Warner Bros., co-owner of The WB channel; and Saban Entertainment/Fox Family Worldwide, owners of the Fox Kids channel. A bidding war ensued between the parties, which was won by Warner Bros.<sup>[295]</sup> On 13 February 1999, *Pokémon* launched on the Kids' WB national television block. The debut episode became the most watched premiere in Kids' WB's history.<sup>[296]</sup> In European countries, the anime received similar levels of success. For example, in Germany, "a highly competitive kids market", *Pokémon* was purchased by RTL 2. The show's popularity bolstered the entire program block, more than tripling its viewers. Andrea Lang, RTL 2's editor of cartoons and children's programs, said: "We were speechless. We've never had a comparable success".<sup>[289]</sup> By March 1998, half a year before *Pokémon*'s overseas launch, 499 million *Pokémon* cards had been produced. By March 1999, the total number of cards shipped reached 764 million. By March 2000, this figure would grow further to 4.255 billion cards, manufactured in both Japanese and American factories.<sup>[167]</sup>

By April 1999, there was a general consensus in the US that *Pokémon* had become a phenomenon and the newest children's fad.<sup>[VII]</sup> By some, the fad was referred to as "Pokémania",<sup>[VIII]</sup> including journalists of *Time*<sup>[27]</sup> and *USA Today*.<sup>[304]</sup> In the US, severe scarcity occurred of *Pokémon* goods,<sup>[25]</sup> especially *Pokémon* cards,<sup>[305]</sup> causing companies to miss profits.<sup>[306]</sup> A *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* article, published on 3 August 1999, cited a Toys "R" Us manager as saying that a supply of 600 booster packs would last 24 hours. The CEO of one card distributor stated that they were "thousands of boxes behind" on orders. In the same article, a Wizards spokeswoman stated that more employees and printers had been hired to increase card production.<sup>[307]</sup> However, near the end of the month, a different Wizards spokeswoman told *The Washington Post* that they had "exhausted most of the card-printing capacity of the United States".<sup>[17]</sup> Similarly, *USA Today* reported in November 1999 that factories making Hasbro's Pokémon toys had expanded production by 20 times, but demand still exceeded supply.<sup>[308]</sup> In Europe, scarcity of *Pokémon* merchandise also occurred.<sup>[289]</sup>

In part due to the *Pokémon* craze, Nintendo saw a 250% increase in profits in 1999 compared to the previous year,<sup>[17]</sup> reaching a six-year high.<sup>[309]</sup> The *Pokémon* franchise accounted for over 30% of Nintendo's revenue that year.<sup>[310]</sup> *Pokémon*'s popularity also caused a sharp increase in sales of the Game Boy line.<sup>[246][311][312]</sup> The financial windfalls came at a time when Nintendo lost



dominance in the home console market, with the Nintendo 64 being outsold by Sony's PlayStation.<sup>[313][314][315]</sup> The global success of *Pokémon* compensated this loss somewhat.<sup>[IX]</sup> Scholars David Buckingham and Julian Sefton-Green went even further, writing in 2004: "while Nintendo is now among Japan's most profitable corporations, it could be argued that the company would have struggled to survive without Pokémon".<sup>[320]</sup>

4Kids, initially a little-known firm,<sup>[245][253]</sup> expanded thirty times in revenues,<sup>[321]</sup> and was named the fastest-growing company in America in the 4 September 2000, issue of *Fortune* magazine.<sup>[254][322][323]</sup> Many businesses that timely obtained a *Pokémon* license reaped considerable profits.<sup>[321][324]</sup> In the summer of 1999, a massive run on stocks of publicly traded *Pokémon* licensees caused their value to increase dramatically. However, by November, most investors were shorting their shares. Realizing that *Pokémon* was a fad that would peak and fall at some point, investors were bearish about its prospects.<sup>[325]</sup>

*Pokémon: The First Movie* premiered in North America on 12 November 1999, and in Europe the following year. Despite being negatively received by many Western critics, it became one of the most successful Japanese animated films of all time.<sup>[326]</sup> In the United States, November 1999 was estimated to have been the peak of Pokémania.<sup>[X]</sup> Supporting the American release of *The First Movie* was a promotional action with Burger King, one of the largest in the history of the fast-food industry.<sup>[331][332][333]</sup> The success of the promotion resulted in supply issues; restaurants often ran out of *Pokémon* toys to include with their meals.<sup>[334][335]</sup> On 27 December,<sup>[336]</sup> Burger King recalled its Poké Ball toy after a 13-month-old girl died suffocating on one.<sup>[337][338]</sup>

*Pokémon Gold* and *Silver*, the successors to *Red/Green/Blue*, were released in North America on 15 October 2000.<sup>[339]</sup> In Europe, they were released on 6 April 2001.<sup>[340]</sup>

## The Pokémon Company and Pokémon USA established

On 23 April 1998, Pokémon Center Co. Ltd. was founded as a joint venture by Nintendo, Creatures, and Game Freak.<sup>[342]</sup> It was initially formed for the management of specialized merchandise stores called Pokémon Centers, of which the first location opened in Nihonbashi, Tokyo, on 18 July 1998.<sup>[343][344]</sup> Throughout the years, multiple Japanese Pokémon Centers would open and close. As of September 2025, a total of 23 Pokémon merchandise shops exist in Japan.<sup>[345]</sup> An American Pokémon Center also existed in New York City from 2001<sup>[346]</sup> to 2005.<sup>[347]</sup> It was then remodelled into Nintendo World,<sup>[348]</sup> later renamed Nintendo New York.<sup>[349]</sup>



Pokémon Center Mega Tokyo, a large Pokémon merchandise shop in Sunshine City, Ikebukuro.<sup>[341]</sup>

After the release of *Gold* and *Silver*, Tsunekazu Ishihara began setting out a number of long-term goals for the *Pokémon* franchise, which included releasing a movie every year.<sup>[I]</sup> As part of Ishihara's plan, the Pokemon Center Co. Ltd. was reformatted into The Pokémon Company (TPC),

and officially renamed in October 2000.<sup>[343][350]</sup> The goal of TPC is to centralize and streamline the global management of Pokémon.<sup>[351]</sup> Satoru Iwata, who had joined Nintendo of Japan in June, was involved with the company's creation, which was one of his first jobs at Nintendo.<sup>[350]</sup>

In February 2001, Pokémon USA (PUSA) was established, an affiliated firm of The Pokémon Company.<sup>[343]</sup> The company's first president was Tatsumi Kimishima (who would later become president of NoA, and subsequently president of NoJ).<sup>[352]</sup> In 2002, Kimishima was succeeded by Akira Chiba.<sup>[353]</sup>

## 2001–2006: End of the craze, business reforms

In North America, Pokémania peaked in 1999, slowing down throughout the next year.<sup>[354]</sup> On 29 April 2000, the anime was bumped off Kids' WB's No. 1 spot after holding it for 54 weeks. Around the same time, *Pokémon* was surpassed at Fox Kids by its rival *Digimon*.<sup>[355]</sup> In Europe, the craze peaked in 2000.<sup>[356][357]</sup> On 20 January 2001, *The New York Times* reported that *Pokémon's* trading card market had collapsed in the US.<sup>[358]</sup> A June 2001 survey in the United Kingdom confirmed that *Pokémon's* popularity was waning there.<sup>[359]</sup> Joseph Tobin wrote: "By the summer of 2001, Pokémon's shelf space in Japanese and U.S. toy stores was but a fraction of what it enjoyed in the fall of 1999".<sup>[360]</sup> By the end of 2001, Pokémania was fading globally, and by 2002, the fad was largely over.<sup>[361]</sup>

From 2000 to 2002, Game Freak developed *Pokémon Ruby* and *Sapphire*, the successors to *Gold* and *Silver*, for the newly released Game Boy Advance. Masuda, who was appointed to assistant director during *Gold* and *Silver*,<sup>[362]</sup> was promoted to director for *Ruby* and *Sapphire*, with Tajiri making himself executive director.<sup>[363]</sup> Masuda was concerned that the end of Pokémania indicated the end of *Pokémon* as a whole: "After *Gold* and *Silver* came out, it was a huge hit around the world, but shortly after everyone was saying, 'That's it. The Pokémon fad is over! It's dead!'".<sup>[364]</sup> Determined to keep the franchise going, GF not only wanted to "prove people wrong" with *Ruby* and *Sapphire*, but already started planning their sequels: *Diamond* and *Pearl* (2006). They also began planning remakes of older installments, starting with *FireRed* and *LeafGreen* (2004), remakes of the original *Red* and *Green*.<sup>[364]</sup>

*Ruby* and *Sapphire* were released in Japan on 21 November 2002, and in the rest of the world the next year. The games introduced 135 new Pokémon, bringing the total amount to 386. Because of this, Golin Harris, NoA's ad agency,<sup>[246]</sup> advised them to move away from the "Gotta catch 'em all!" slogan. They reasoned that if new, younger players were drawn into the franchise with *Ruby/Sapphire*, they would find the concept of "catching them all" to be a daunting if not impossible task if they didn't also have *Red/Blue/Yellow* and *Gold/Silver/Crystal*.<sup>[365]</sup> Author Daniel Dockery noted that "from both a marketing perspective and, really, a legal perspective, it would not be to the company's advantage to keep pushing that slogan".<sup>[365]</sup>

By 2002, the relationship between Pokémon USA (PUSA) and Wizards of the Coast had deteriorated. That year, at least seven high-profile employees were poached from Wizards by PUSA: Wizard's former art director, senior graphic designer, business manager, events marketing director, project management director, and two vice presidents. All employees had signed NDAs.<sup>[366][367]</sup> In March 2003, PUSA told Wizards that their contract would not be renewed, and that Wizards would not be distributing the new *Ruby & Sapphire* card set.<sup>[368]</sup> Later, Wizards was also prohibited from releasing the sets *Jamboree* and *Legendary Collection II*.<sup>[369]</sup> Notably, *Jamboree* was the first set containing cards designed by Wizards themselves. As considerable time

and money was invested into creating them, Wizards was upset when they were barred from putting them out. On 1 October 2003, the day after their agreement expired, Wizards filed suit against Pokémon USA, alleging that the defendant had seized their intellectual property and trade secrets, and illegally tried to gain advantage over them in the competitive trading card market.<sup>[366][367]</sup> The case was settled out of court.<sup>[370]</sup> *Jamboree* and *Legendary Collection II* have remained unreleased.<sup>[367]</sup>

In October 2001, 4Kids Entertainment signed a new contract with PUSA, continuing to serve as *Pokémon's* exclusive licensing agent and anime localizer.<sup>[351]</sup> On 23 December 2005, it was announced that the agreement would not be renewed and would expire on 31 December, with PUSA moving all licensing in-house.<sup>[371][372]</sup> The localization of the anime would be done by PUSA in cooperation with TAJ Productions. PUSA proceeded to replace almost all of the original English voice actors, who were still under contract with 4Kids.<sup>[373]</sup> This decision "raised the ire of fans and the actors themselves".<sup>[374]</sup> According to Stuart Zagnit, who voiced Professor Oak, the recasting was done to cut back on costs.<sup>[373]</sup>

In March 2003, Pokémon UK was established in London as a British representative of The Pokémon Company.<sup>[343]</sup>

## 2006–2012: Generation IV–V, TPCi established

Following *Ruby and Sapphire*, *Pokémon Diamond and Pearl* were released for the Nintendo DS on 28 September 2006, in Japan<sup>[375]</sup> and on 22 April 2007, in North America.<sup>[376]</sup> A third version, *Pokémon Platinum*, was released on 28 September 2008, in Japan<sup>[377]</sup> and on 22 March 2009, in North America.<sup>[378]</sup> They form the fourth generation (Generation IV) in the *Pokémon* video game series.<sup>[379]</sup> *Diamond and Pearl* were designed based on the DS's various features such as its Wi-Fi capabilities and slot for Game Boy Advance cartridge.<sup>[380]</sup> Pokémon president Tsunekazu Ishihara dubbed the games as the "ultimate" Pokémon titles because they allowed the player to trade and battle Pokémon including every Pokémon from previous iterations globally through WiFi, as opposed to previously only able to do so locally and with fewer Pokémon.<sup>[381]</sup> The games' characters are 2D and the environments are rendered in 3D, and it is considerably difficult to differentiate them because Game Freak designed them this way to innovate the graphics while also retaining the traditional game style and feel.<sup>[382][383]</sup>

In *Platinum*, the developers focused on changing the most essential elements from *Diamond* and *Pearl* to maintain continuity with the previous games. Director Junichi Masuda stated that since they designed *Diamond and Pearl* as the "ultimate" *Pokémon* titles, it was only necessary to make *Platinum* "even stronger" than them. They approached this by designing the "Origin Forme" for the legendary Pokémon Giratina, ensuring that the design would appear significantly different from its regular form in *Diamond* and *Pearl* and to express the games' core antimatter and Distortion World concepts.<sup>[384]</sup> The title Platinum was chosen to reflect a precious material that "shines" and is different from diamond and pearl and their associations of "love" and "happiness" respectively.<sup>[385]</sup>

*Pokémon HeartGold* and *SoulSilver* were released on 12 September 2009, in Japan and on 14 March 2010, in North America as part of Generation IV.<sup>[386][387]</sup> They are remakes of *Gold* and *Silver*,<sup>[388]</sup> aiming to balance familiarity for the original games' players and new content for newcomers.<sup>[389]</sup> The titles reflected the theme of the bond between trainers and their

Pokémon.<sup>[389]</sup> The developers faithfully recreated the original story and added elements from the Generation IV games and *Yellow*, the latter of which was released concurrently with *Gold* and *Silver*.<sup>[389][390]</sup>

In 2009, Pokémon USA and Pokémon UK merged to form The Pokémon Company International (TPCi).<sup>[13]</sup> This subsidiary of The Pokémon Company (TPC) has since managed the *Pokémon* franchise outside of Asia.<sup>[14]</sup>

In Generation V, *Pokémon Black* and *White* were released on 18 September 2010, in Japan for the DS<sup>[391]</sup> and on 6 March 2011, in North America.<sup>[392]</sup> The games feature enhanced visual effects and increased use of 3D graphics. The developers excluded old Pokémon and strategies, while introducing over 150 new Pokémon to evoke a sense of novelty and to provide new players a more "leveled playing field" against old players.<sup>[393]</sup> The games seek to attract both new players and returning players through its detailed walkthrough and the addition of C-Gear (a real-time communication tool to improve the trade and battle experiences), respectively.<sup>[394]</sup>

The games were followed by *Pokémon Black 2* and *White 2*, which were released on 23 June 2012, in Japan<sup>[395]</sup> and on 7 October 2012, in North America.<sup>[396]</sup> The games were developed for the DS rather than the more powerful Nintendo 3DS to maintain continuity with the game world in *Black* and *White* and they were presented from a different perspective in the storyline.<sup>[397]</sup> Since the games are their first sequels, director Masuda explained that they have strived to find a "fine balance" to appeal to both newcomers and returning players by implementing introductory explanations, and by placing a Pokémon Center in the first in-game city, they were able to further this approach by providing newcomers with a detailed walkthrough and also returning players with new updates.<sup>[398]</sup> During development phase, director Takao Unno revealed that they had experimented with a 100-player multiplayer experience via their communication feature Entralink drawing from their vision of players "sharing the same space, same time and same game" but this feature was never implemented due to technical limitations.<sup>[399]</sup>

## 2013–2018: 3D, Generation VI–VII, *Pokémon Go*

In Generation VI, *Pokémon X* and *Y* were released worldwide for the 3DS on 12 October 2013,<sup>[400]</sup> and they are the first games to be released in this way. The developers focused on the themes of "beauty", "bond", and "evolution", and it is based on these themes that they created the games' core mechanic where Pokémon could achieve a higher form of evolution by strengthening their bonds with trainers; however, to maintain game balance, they limited this feature to a special, temporary phenomenon.<sup>[401]</sup> The games' shift to fully 3D graphics allowed the player to freely manipulate the camera angles although due to technical limitations objects far away are rendered in lower polygon models, and producer Hitoshi Yamagami addressed to 2D players that "Game Freak [developers are also] big fans of 2D graphics... So there are some elements in there that I [Yamagami] think fans of 2D will appreciate as well."<sup>[402]</sup> When asked about the Horde battle and Sky battle types, he stated that Horde battles are to supplant the roles of "really strong pokemon [*sic*]" to help the player more easily progress through the games and also to add "more excitement to the battles and a sense of danger", and that they added the Sky battles to take advantage of the games' 3D camera angels capabilities.<sup>[403]</sup>

*Pokémon Omega Ruby* and *Alpha Sapphire* were released worldwide for the 3DS on 21 November 2014<sup>[404]</sup> and on 28 November 2014, in Europe as part of Generation VI.<sup>[405]</sup> They are remakes of *Ruby* and *Sapphire*.<sup>[406]</sup> The developers adopted *X* and *Y*'s core game mechanic and added enhanced 3D graphics.<sup>[407]</sup> According to director Masuda, they reviewed the original mechanic

and concept and expressed them using modern hardware, such as replacing the original PokéGear feature for the enhanced versions BuzzNav and DexNav to more effectively provide information enabled by the games' hardware capabilities. They seek to explore the concept of Pokémon coexisting with humans and nature, revisiting the concept behind original games' setting, which translated to "richness or abundance in nature and bonds between people and nature" in Japanese. To appeal to the newer audience in *X* and *Y*, the developers decided to connect the story with *X* and *Y* by further exploring their core mechanic.<sup>[408]</sup>

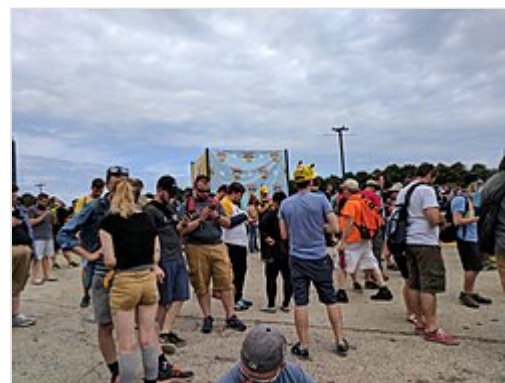
In Generation VII, *Pokémon Sun* and *Moon* were released worldwide for the 3DS on 18 November 2016, and on 23 November 2016, in Europe.<sup>[409]</sup> The developers chose Hawaii for inspiration due to its distinctive warm sunlight and clear moonlight and unique biomes that helped support the games' regional Pokémon variance concept. Ohmori said, as director, he aimed to focus on the concept of "Pokémon as these living creatures, [and really focus] on them being alive." Having the release date on the 20th anniversary of Pokémon in mind, he treated this project as a "celebration of that life, and to really express this respect for life". As he contemplated about life and its origins, Ohmori considered the significance of the Sun, enabling life with its light, and the Moon's impact on certain species' reproduction. He explained how the Sun, the Moon, and the Earth "work [together] to influence [one another], and life as a result grows and flourishes based on [this] relationship."<sup>[410]</sup>

Ohmori stated that with the innovation to 3D in *X* and *Y* the designers decided to examine more minor aspects concerning with the Pokémon themselves such as their motions, such as when they designed the games' first starter Pokémon to capitalize on its owl-like characteristics with its head "twists round and round". With the 3DS technologies, the developers are able to design the characters to be more expressive as themselves including different facial expressions and reactions. In addition to portraying Pokémon harmoniously coexisting with people and vice versa in the games, the developers replaced the traditional Gym mechanic with Island Trials, deepening the players' connection with the story and their Pokémon.<sup>[411]</sup> The enhanced versions *Pokémon Ultra Sun* and *Ultra Moon* were released worldwide on 17 November 2017.<sup>[412]</sup> The games added an alternate storyline and additional characters, Pokémon, and other features.<sup>[413]</sup> Developer Shigeki Morimoto revealed that they were developed by the younger staff members and veterans so the more veterans can prioritized on developing more important titles,<sup>[414]</sup> and the developers considered them to be their culmination with the 3DS.<sup>[415]</sup>

## 2016: Release of *Pokémon Go*

In 2016, the *Pokémon* franchise spawned a second worldwide fad with the release of *Pokémon Go*, a mobile augmented reality game. The app originated as a Google April Fools' Day joke in 2014: the "Google Maps Pokémon Challenge". The prank was conceived by Tsunekazu Ishihara and Satoru Iwata.<sup>[416]</sup> On Ishihara's initiation,<sup>[417]</sup> the hoax was turned into an actual video game developed by Niantic. Ishihara was a fan of Niantic's previous transreality game, *Ingress*, and saw the game's concept as a perfect match for *Pokémon*.<sup>[417]</sup>

Through in-game purchases, the game generated more than \$160 million by the end of July 2016,<sup>[418]</sup> with App Annie reporting that *Pokémon Go* had generated around \$10 million in revenue every day that



Players during the *Pokémon Go* Fest in Chicago in 2017

month.<sup>[419]</sup> The same month, Sensor Tower reported that the game had passed more than \$200 million in worldwide revenue, beating every existing record set by *Clash of Clans* and *Candy Crush* by a wide margin.<sup>[420]</sup> The average daily usage of the app on Android devices in July 2016 exceeded that of *Snapchat*, *Tinder*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, and *Facebook*.<sup>[421]</sup> By 2 September 2016, *Pokémon Go* had generated more than \$440 million in worldwide revenue, according to Sensor Tower.<sup>[422]</sup> By 30 September, it had received 500 million downloads and grossed \$470 million in 80 days, according to market research firm Newzoo.<sup>[423]</sup> *Pokémon Go* reached the milestone of \$600 million in revenue after only 90 days on the market, becoming the fastest mobile game ever to do so.<sup>[424]</sup>

*Pokémon: Let's Go, Pikachu!* and *Let's Go, Eevee!* were released for the *Nintendo Switch* on 16 November 2018. They are part of Generation VII.<sup>[425]</sup> Inspired by *Pokémon Yellow*, the games seek to introduce newcomers and a new generation of players (particularly *Pokémon Go* players) to the *Pokémon* series in addition to catering old players. As such, the games feature similar capture mechanics to *Go* where the player throws Poké Balls to catch wild Pokémon rather than battling them like traditional *Pokémon* games. In addition, the games feature the same setting and characters as the first generation of games and the original animated series, and include exclusively the original 151 Pokémon to further appeal to their targeted audience.<sup>[426][427]</sup> The only new Pokémon featured are Meltan and Melmetal.<sup>[428]</sup>

## 2019–present: Generation VIII–IX, open-world gameplay

Generation VIII<sup>[429]</sup> debuted with the release of *Pokémon Sword* and *Shield* on 15 November 2019, for the Switch.<sup>[430]</sup> Director Shigeru Ohmori stated that they designed the games based on what they believed of the biggest *Pokémon* theme of becoming/being "the greatest or strongest", which was expressed in the games' Dynamax / Gigantamax Pokémon core mechanic and the games' increasingly powerful software and hardware capabilities. Ohmori further revealed that through developing the *Let's Go* games as research projects for the Switch, they were able to gain valuable experiences and knowledge to develop *Sword* and *Shield*. He noted that they took advantage of the Switch's high resolution and TV connectivity to implement the games' gigantic-size core Pokémon mechanic. They envisioned the games' setting to be a "wide-open space" that is different from the traditional route systems and is constantly changing where the player can meet and explore with other players.<sup>[431]</sup>

Many pre-existing Pokémon are not available in *Sword* and *Shield*. This "Dexit", as it was called, led to fan backlash.<sup>[432]</sup> *Sword* and *Shield* were the first *Pokémon* games to receive DLC expansions: Part 1—*The Isle of Armor*, and Part 2—*The Crown Tundra*; they were released on 17 June 2020, and 22 October 2020, respectively.<sup>[433]</sup> They include additional storylines, places, Pokémon, characters, and other features.<sup>[434]</sup>

In 2020, the *COVID-19* pandemic broke out. The resulting widespread ennui and excessive leisure time inspired a resurgence in popularity and interest of *Pokémon* cards,<sup>[435]</sup> which was further popularized by various *Youtubers* and other *influencers*, such as *Logan Paul*.<sup>[436][437]</sup> The craze resulted in severe supply shortages, and customers' inappropriate and obsessive behavior raised safety concerns in many retail outlets. *Pokémon* cards' values skyrocketed, prompting collectors to submit cards and overwhelm card grading agencies.<sup>[438][439]</sup> The Pokémon Company responded by reprinting impacted products at maximum capacity to ensure price stabilization and general accessibility.<sup>[440]</sup>



Remakes of *Diamond* and *Pearl*, *Pokémon Brilliant Diamond* and *Shining Pearl* were released on 19 November 2021, for the Switch as part of Generation VIII.<sup>[441]</sup> They are the first core series games to be developed by a third-party developer, ILCA, rather than Game Freak.<sup>[442]</sup> The developers revealed that the games would not assume the anticipated style of the *Let's Go* Games and feature traditional game mechanics.<sup>[443]</sup> *Pokémon* intends to celebrate their 25th anniversary with the release of the remakes by revisiting old games and mechanics, which they faithfully reproduced with enhanced 3D graphics.<sup>[444][445]</sup>

*Pokémon Legends: Arceus* was released on 28 January 2022, for the Switch as a prequel to *Diamond* and *Pearl*.<sup>[446]</sup> It is part of Generation VIII.<sup>[447]</sup> The game "represents a new approach for the *Pokémon* video game series" as it transitions from traditional RPG mechanics to add real-time elements in their games. Unlike traditional *Pokémon* games, the player can catch Pokémon by throwing a Poké Ball in real-time rather than triggering a battle; however, they can still choose the latter to weaken it for capture. Many in-game aspects, particularly its landscape, heavily resemble those of *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*.<sup>[448][449][450]</sup>

Generation IX<sup>[451]</sup> was introduced with the release of *Pokémon Scarlet* and *Violet* for the Switch on 18 November 2022. The games are the first *Pokémon* games to feature an entirely open-world experience as opposed to the partially open-world experience in previous *Pokémon* games such as *Sword* and *Shield*, and it also departed from the traditional gym mechanics and the elite four battles to opt for unique road quests. The games' improved multiplayer experience allowed for up to four players to travel together.<sup>[452][453]</sup> Their DLC, *The Hidden Treasure of Area Zero*, consists of two parts, *The Teal Mask* and *The Indigo Disk*; *The Teal Mask* was released on 12–13 September 2023<sup>[454]</sup> and *The Indigo Disk* was released on 14 December 2023.<sup>[455]</sup> An epilogue to *The Hidden Treasure of Area Zero* was released on 11 January 2024.<sup>[456]</sup>

On 27 February 2024, TPCi announced *Pokémon Legends: Z-A*, set to release on 16 October 2025 for the Nintendo Switch and Nintendo Switch 2.<sup>[457][458]</sup> It is part of Generation IX. A successor to *Legends: Arceus*, this game returns to the Kalos region seen in *X* and *Y*.

By 2024, the *Pokémon* franchise had earned a total of 100 billion US dollars, making it the highest-grossing media franchise ever.<sup>[16]:53</sup>

## Media

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### Video games

*Pokémon* video games have been released in a wide variety of genres. The role-playing games (RPGs) developed by Game Freak are considered the core series of the franchise.<sup>[459][460][461]</sup> Various spin-off games also exist, such as *Pokémon Mystery Dungeon*, a roguelike RPG series, *Pokémon Ranger*, an action RPG series, and *Detective Pikachu* (2018), an adventure game. *Pokémon* games, in particular the core RPGs, are commonly classified in generations. For example, Junichi Masuda referred to *Diamond* and *Pearl* (2006) as Gen 4,<sup>[462]</sup> and *X* and *Y* (2013) as the 6th generation.<sup>[463]</sup>

Until 2011, *Pokémon* games were released exclusively on Nintendo's consoles. With the rise of the smartphone during the 2010s, The Pokémon Company also began developing, publishing, and licensing *Pokémon* titles for the mobile phone market, most notably *Pokémon Go* (2016), an

augmented reality game developed by Niantic that spawned a worldwide craze in the summer of 2016.<sup>[423][424]</sup>

According to the official website of The Pokémon Company, as of March 2025, over 489 million *Pokémon* game units have been sold worldwide.<sup>[464]</sup>

## Trading card game

The *Pokémon Trading Card Game* (PTCG) was one of the first collectable card games (CCGs) in Japan. It was inspired by *Magic: The Gathering*.<sup>[150][151][152]</sup> In the card game, the players use a 60-card deck featuring Basic and evolved Pokémon, Energy cards, and Trainer cards to help them knock out the opponent's Pokémon, drawing prize cards and winning the game.<sup>[465]</sup> Cards are classified into various levels of rarity, ranging from Common to Rare Holofoil with a holographic illustration. Rare cards, including limited edition, exclusive cards, and older cards, are highly valued among collectors due to their scarcity.<sup>[466][467]</sup>

According to the official website of The Pokémon Company, over 75 billion cards have been printed as of March 2025.<sup>[464]</sup>



Palkia, a card from the *Diamond and Pearl Base Set*

## Anime

As of 2025, the *Pokémon* anime consists of over 1,300 episodes across 28 seasons. Its current season, *Pokémon Horizons – Rising Hope*, started airing on 11 April 2025. The anime originally focused on Ash Ketchum and his travels across the Pokémon world with his partner, Pikachu. They were retired as protagonists at the end of season 25.<sup>[468]</sup> The 26th season, *Pokémon Horizons*, introduced two new protagonists, Liko and Roy.<sup>[469]</sup> A total of 23 anime films have been released, the most recent being *Pokémon the Movie: Secrets of the Jungle* (2020).<sup>[470]</sup>

Spin-off series from the anime have also been produced, including a variety show titled *Weekly Pokémon Broadcasting Station* (週刊ポケモン放送局, *Shūkan Pokémon Hōsōkyoku*), which aired on TV Tokyo from 2002 to 2004 and aired in English as part of *Pokémon Chronicles*.<sup>[471][472]</sup> Several television specials have been released. 27 short films starring Pikachu were produced, primarily preceding the films.<sup>[473]</sup> Various animated mini-series also exist.

## Live-action

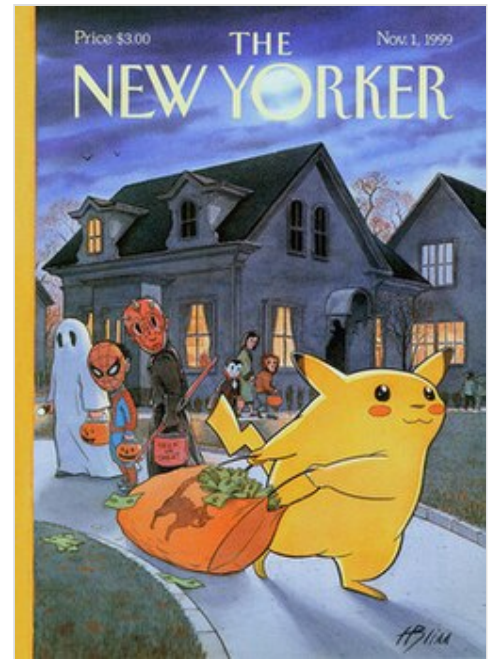
*Detective Pikachu*, a live-action/animated film based on the video game of the same name, was released in 2019.<sup>[474]</sup> A sequel was announced even before the original premiered.<sup>[475]</sup> However, despite a number of updates over the next few years, the film did not materialize. As of 2025, the status of the sequel is not known.

A live-action television drama produced by The Pokémon Company and TV Tokyo, titled *Pocketto ni Bōken o Tsumekonde* ("A Pocketful of Adventures"), premiered on TV Tokyo on 20 October 2023.<sup>[476]</sup>

## Reaction to Pokémania (1999–2000)

In 1999 and 2000, *Pokémon* was an unprecedented, ubiquitous fad in the Western world. *Time* magazine described it as "a multimedia and interactive barrage like no other before it".<sup>[27]</sup> The franchise, primarily aimed at children, elicited mixed responses from parents and teachers, some of them critical. In a 2004 essay, anthropologist Christine R. Yano even claimed that the reactions at one point constituted a moral panic.<sup>[477]</sup>

The bulk of the criticism on *Pokémon* was directed at the trading cards,<sup>[478]</sup> in particular the booster packs, sealed packages of 11<sup>[g]</sup> randomly inserted cards that were sold separately from the main sets. The cards are of varying scarcity, the most valuable being the "holofoil cards" (also called "holographic" or "foil cards"), in which the illustrations of the Pokémon have a shiny overlay effect. The rare cards can only be found in booster packs, and the rarest ones are very infrequently included. Joseph Tobin noted that rarity in this case is "artificially created", and "effectively a form of gambling" in which children need to repeatedly purchase booster packs to get more rare cards.<sup>[479]</sup> Gilles Brougère described a cynicism among adults that corporations could apparently, "out of thin air", ascribe value to cards which they saw as valueless, thereby "deceiving vulnerable young consumers and garnering excessive profits".<sup>[478]</sup>



1 November 1999 cover of *The New Yorker*, which depicts a Pikachu carrying away a bag overflowing with money while trick-or-treating. Artwork by Harry Bliss.

As the franchise's popularity grew, children began taking their *Pokémon* cards to school for trading and playing. Soon, the cards were alleged to be "disrupting learning, poisoning playground friendships and causing such distraction that some children forget their homework, tune out in class and even miss school buses as they scramble to acquire one more card".<sup>[480]</sup> The cards were "turning the playground into a black market",<sup>[481]</sup> with card swaps sometimes inciting conflicts. Certain children engaged in "aggressive trading",<sup>[482]</sup> tricking other (often younger) kids into unfair deals, forcing teachers to arbitrate.<sup>[XI]</sup> Some parents expressed their concerns about the craze, but feared that their children would be ostracized if they were to deny them *Pokémon* products.<sup>[482][487][488]</sup> In the US, the *Pokémon* cards ended up "almost universally banned" from school grounds.<sup>[489]</sup> Similar bans occurred in Canada,<sup>[490][491]</sup> Australia,<sup>[492]</sup> New Zealand,<sup>[493]</sup> and European countries.<sup>[482][494][495]</sup> In September 1999, US-based law firm Milberg filed a class-action lawsuit against Nintendo of America, Wizards of the Coast, and 4Kids. The suit claimed that the booster packs constitute a form of lottery and promote gambling in kids.<sup>[496][497]</sup> Susan Estrich noted that similar lawsuits had been filed against trading-card makers in the US, without success.<sup>[498]</sup> The *Pokémon* card suit is not known to have gone to court, and is believed to have been settled.<sup>[k]</sup>

The *Pokémon* anime series was criticized by some as "cheap Japanese animation"<sup>[500]</sup> that is "violent"<sup>[28][501][502]</sup> and has "little educational value".<sup>[503]</sup> Michelle Orecklin of *Time* dismissed the TV series as "less a cartoon than a half-hour exercise in Pokémon product placement".<sup>[504]</sup> Anne Allison wrote that even those within Pokémon's US marketing team agreed that the anime's

visuals were "not especially sophisticated" compared to Disney cartoons.<sup>[500]</sup> *Pokémon: The First Movie* premiered in the United States on 12 November 1999, and in European countries in February 2000. While a huge box-office success, the film was received negatively by several Western film critics.<sup>[505][506]</sup> *The Guardian* decried it as a "contemptuously cheap animated cash-in on the monster kids' craze".<sup>[507]</sup> The American adult animated series *South Park* satirized *Pokémon* in the episode "Chinpokomon", aired on 3 November 1999. In the episode, the titular media franchise is portrayed as a low-quality line of products that is part of an evil plan by the Japanese government to invade the US. *South Park* co-creator Matt Stone commented that, at the time, *Pokémon* was "scary huge".<sup>[508]</sup>

Author Chris Kohler wrote that *Pokémon* was considered "ruthlessly commercial", and that it "program[med] children to be consumers of anything and everything Pokémon".<sup>[509]</sup> CNN quoted child psychiatrist John Lochridge as worrying that "Pokémon's creators and marketers deliberately set out to create a fantasy world so compelling that children would quickly become obsessed". He believed that kids were being "brainwashed", and said: "I have had parents tell me that they cannot get their kids to do anything except Pokémon, so this stuff seems to really capture their minds, in a way".<sup>[6]</sup> These concerns were countered by psychologist William Damon, who told *Newsweek* that obsessing is in fact a normal part of a child's neurological development. It should concern parents only when the obsession gets dangerous or excessive.<sup>[510]</sup> An op-ed in the New Zealander newspaper *The Dominion Post* claimed that the anti-Pokémon sentiment was particularly American: "The backlash, which seems largely confined to the United States, may be no more than the sound of the world's leading cultural imperialist gagging on a taste of its own medicine".<sup>[511]</sup>

As Pokémania built, Western media started reporting on several crimes associated with *Pokémon*. These included violence<sup>[492][512]</sup> (including two reported stabbings),<sup>[513][514]</sup> burglaries,<sup>[515][516]</sup> robberies<sup>[494][512]</sup> (some at knifepoint),<sup>[517][518]</sup> and shoplifting.<sup>[519][520]</sup> Almost all these incidents were connected to the *Pokémon* cards, and the individuals involved were almost always underage. In the US, the incidents peaked in November 1999.<sup>[327]</sup> In England, *Pokémon*-related delinquency reached a head in April 2000.<sup>[517][521]</sup> High prices on the grey market were a motive behind some of the crimes, "posing a great temptation for older kids and bullies to take advantage of weaker children".<sup>[522]</sup> At specialty shops and online auctions, a rare *Pokémon* card could be bought and sold for \$50 or more (c. \$94 in 2024).<sup>[523][524]</sup>

Aside from the negative reactions, many media also cited alleged beneficial effects of *Pokémon*.<sup>[525][526][527]</sup> It was noted that the video games and the cards require children to read, memorize, calculate, and plan out a strategy.<sup>[5][167][528]</sup> Both encourage socialization, and trading Pokémon requires negotiating skills.<sup>[6][17][23]</sup> Stephanie Strom wrote in *The New York Times* that the *Pokémon* anime taught children "traditional Japanese values – responsibility, empathy, cooperation, obedience, respect for elders, humility".<sup>[529]</sup> Anne Allison interviewed various American parents during Pokémania. She found that while most of them were "utterly mystified" about *Pokémon*, few were overly worried about it, instead meeting the craze with "befuddled acceptance". Allison also notes that the Columbine High School massacre occurred during Pokémania (on 20 April 1999), causing violent television, music, and games to be scrutinized. Compared to these media, she notes, *Pokémon* is in fact rather tame.<sup>[530]</sup>

In contrast, *Pokémon* received far less criticism in its native country of Japan. Anthropologist Christine R. Yano attributes this to cultural differences, which includes: 1) greater acceptance of exuberant consumerism – to buy is to be a good citizen; 2) less focus on media influence – instead, Japan's educational system, bullying, and dysfunctional families are more often the target of



attention; 3) less separation between child- and adulthood – what is suitable for adults is not necessarily considered unsuitable for kids; 4) Pokémon being permeated with *kawaisa* (cuteness), a hallmark of Japanese culture; 5) Japan's core religions, Buddhism and Shinto, are less moralizing in nature.<sup>[531]</sup> However, Oliver Burkeman wrote in *The Guardian* that the *Pokémon* cards were also banned from some Japanese schools.<sup>[30]</sup>

## Legacy and influences

After World War II, Japan experienced a period of unprecedented growth and became well-known in the Western world for its consumer products, such as radios (e.g. Panasonic, Toshiba), cars (e.g. Toyota, Mitsubishi), and Sony's Walkman.<sup>[532]</sup> From 1991 onwards, its economy stagnated, causing the country to lose its status as an economic superpower. However, during the 1990s and 2000s, Japan re-emerged as a source of 'cool' cultural goods, embraced by a growing international audience interested in Japanese culture.<sup>[XII]</sup> Nintendo, Sega, and Sony launched several popular video game consoles and franchises.<sup>[248][537][538]</sup> In terms of children's properties, the success of *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* changed perceptions on the viability of such Japanese imports in the West.<sup>[539][540][541]</sup> The Tamagotchi fad (1997–98),<sup>[542]</sup> centered around a portable digital pet device, was said to have "paved the way for Pokémon".<sup>[247]</sup>

Anne Allison wrote that, before the 1990s, Japan figured little in the face of the worldwide hegemony of Euro-American cultural industries, in particular that of the US. "Hollywood has been hostile to imports", she wrote, "and foreignness has largely been, and been seen as, an impediment to mass popularization in the United States".<sup>[543]</sup> The surprise success of *Pokémon* was "an undeniable breakthrough in the homeland of Disney" that "changed preexisting assumptions about the US marketplace at the same time that it was constantly resisted for deviating from them".<sup>[544]</sup> *Pokémon* was a welcomed boon to Japan's faltering economy,<sup>[217]</sup> and positively influenced the country's soft power.<sup>[545][546]</sup> Sociologist Yoshinori Kamo interviewed various American children and found that kids who thought *Pokémon* was cool, were more likely to believe that Japan was a cool nation.<sup>[547]</sup> Anne Allison gave a similar finding: all the children she interviewed knew where *Pokémon* originated, and "many said that, as a result of *Pokémon* and other 'cool' Japanese goods, they had developed an interest in Japan. A number said that they now wanted to study Japanese and travel there one day".<sup>[548]</sup> Author Chris Kohler wrote: "Japanese are proud of *Pokémon*, the most successful export of Japanese popular culture ever".<sup>[549]</sup> Although, sociologist Koichi Iwabuchi questioned to what extent *Pokémon* really is 'Japanese', and to what extent it is simply a good property with universal appeal. He noted that Japanese nationalist commentators celebrated *Pokémon*'s global success and retrospectively attributed this to its "Japanese cultural power",<sup>[550]</sup> while ignoring the localization of *Pokémon* overseas,<sup>[551]</sup> as well as decades of increasing cooperation and cultural exchange between countries (globalization).<sup>[552]</sup>

In the 20th century, anime found niche popularity in North America and Europe in series (*Astro Boy*, *Kimba the White Lion*, *Speed Racer*) and films (*Akira*, *Ghost in the Shell*).<sup>[XIII]</sup> The *Pokémon* TV series and films marked a breakthrough for anime, contributing to its growing worldwide success at the turn of the 21st century.<sup>[XIV]</sup> For some children, *Pokémon* was their introduction to 'Japanimation',<sup>[557][558]</sup> serving as a "gateway" to other anime, manga, and Japanese culture in general.<sup>[559][560]</sup> *Pokémon: The First Movie* became one of the most successful Japanese animated films in history.<sup>[326]</sup> After *Princess Mononoke*, *Pokémon: The First Movie* became the second

anime film to open at mainstream cinemas in the West, as opposed to the usual art house venues.<sup>[561]</sup> Pioneering anime importer John Ledford noted that *Pokémon* underscored the commercial potential of anime, thus making it interesting from a business perspective.<sup>[562]</sup>

In the field of video games, the main *Pokémon* series became the paradigm of the monster-taming game. While not the first to use this concept, the *Pokémon* games became so synonymous with it that later titles involving catching and training monsters, RPGs or not, were inevitably compared to *Pokémon*.<sup>[563][564][565]</sup> Examples of this include *Dragon Warrior Monsters* (1998),<sup>[XV]</sup> *RoboCop Sun and Star* (1998),<sup>[571][572]</sup> *Spectrobes* (2007),<sup>[XVI]</sup> *Invizimals* (2009),<sup>[XVII]</sup> *Monster Crown* (2021),<sup>[XVIII]</sup> and *Palworld* (2024).<sup>[XIX]</sup>

The success of *Pokémon* encouraged companies to look for other popular Japanese properties that might be localized for Western markets.<sup>[255][593][594]</sup> The importing of at least three similar franchises were confirmed by business executives to have been (partly) inspired by *Pokémon: Yu-Gi-Oh!*,<sup>[595]</sup> *Digimon*,<sup>[596]</sup> and *Monster Rancher*.<sup>[597]</sup> The import of *Cardcaptor Sakura* (as *Cardcaptors*) might also have been prompted by *Pokémon*.<sup>[598][599]</sup>

## Footnotes

- a. Pronunciation: /ˈpəʊkəmɒn/ *POH-kə-mon*, US also /ˈpoʊkɪmɒn/ *POH-kee-mon*.
- b. Japanese: ポケモン, Hepburn: *Pokemon*
- c. This count excludes Mega Evolutions, Dynamax, Gigantamax, regional variants, and other forms. These are not considered separate species of Pokémon, but variations of existing ones.
- d. Four<sup>[60]</sup> original card games are known to have been designed by Itoi: *Slot Brothers*,<sup>[61]</sup> *Edoka*,<sup>[62]</sup> *Hanamaru*,<sup>[63]</sup> and *Rameka*.<sup>[64]</sup> The 1998 book *The Secrets of Pokemon* states that the last three games were contributed to by Ishihara.<sup>[65]</sup>
- e. In *Dragon Quest II*, the item is called ふしぎなぼうし, *Fushigina Bōshi*, i.e. Mysterious Hat. The Japanese *Pokemon* RPGs feature an item called ふしぎなアメ, *Fushigina Ame*, i.e. Mysterious Candy. This item raises the level of a Pokemon by one. In the English games, it is called Rare Candy.
- f. Shortly after the original release of *Red/Green*, and before the release of *Blue*, Game Freak also made a slightly tweaked, new revision of *Red/Green*, which included bug fixes. Newly pressed cartridges shipped to stores subsequently had the updated *Red/Green* version installed on them.<sup>[144]</sup>
- g. From the original Base Set to the Neo Destiny sets, the booster packs contained 11 cards. After that and throughout the third generation 'EX' sets, the booster packs contained 9 cards. From the fourth generation *Diamond and Pearl* sets onwards, the packs contained 10 cards. Since the seventh generation *Sun and Moon* sets, the packs have again contained 11 cards.
- h. A definitive number could not be established. The Fire and Disaster Management Agency announced that, as of 17:00, 17 December, a total of 685 people had been taken to hospitals in direct relationship to the *Pokemon* episode. Of these, 208 people were actually hospitalized.<sup>[228]</sup> However, different figures have been stated by different sources.<sup>[229][230]</sup> *Pokemon Story* (2000), a 500+ page book on *Pokemon*, states that "approximately 750 children" were taken to hospitals, of which 135 were hospitalized.<sup>[231]</sup> It has been reported that, due to the incident catching the country off-guard, different methods of surveying were used throughout Japan, and these methods were not always accurate.<sup>[232]</sup>



- i. However, *Sailor Moon* did gain a cult following at the time.<sup>[268]</sup> After being pulled from syndication in spring 1996 due to low ratings,<sup>[269]</sup> it was broadcast again on USA Network from June 1997 to March 1998.<sup>[270]</sup> The anime subsequently had a successful run on Cartoon Network's Toonami block from 1 June 1998, to 5 July 2002, a timeframe that overlapped Pokémania.<sup>[268][270]</sup>
- j. Shogakukan kept this condition until 2021. As of 2025, the last animated *Pokémon* feature is *Pokemon: Coco* (ポケモン ココ), released in Japan on 25 December 2020. It was released worldwide (excluding Japan, Korea, and China) as *Pokémon the Movie: Secrets of the Jungle* on 8 October 2021. Between 1998 and 2021, a total of 23 anime films were released.
- k. In her 2006 book *Millennial Monsters*, Anne Allison mentions the card suit and writes, within parentheses, that it "was eventually settled out of court".<sup>[499]</sup> However, she does not cite a source for this. The full sentence does contain an inline citation to a *New York Times* piece, but this article doesn't state that the case was settled.

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38. "スペシャルさん（ゲームフリーク）VS さん（クリーチャーズ） — 4ページ" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20030205151333/https://www.nintendo.co.jp/nom/0007/taidan1/page04.html>) [Interview: Satoshi Tajiri (Game Freak) vs. Tsunekazu Ishihara (Creatures) — Page 4]. *Nintendo Online Magazine*. nintendo.co.jp. July 2000. Archived from the original (<https://www.nintendo.co.jp/nom/0007/taidan1/page04.html>) on 5 February 2003. (Translation (<https://archive.today/20210118225356/http://lavacutcontent.com/satoshi-tajiri-ishihara-interview/>))
39. Parkin, Simon (11 October 2013). "Pokémon – from bugs to blockbuster" (<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/gamesblog/2013/oct/11/pokemon-blockbuster-game-technology>). *The Guardian*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20161011213837/https://www.theguardian.com/technology/gamesblog/2013/oct/11/pokemon-blockbuster-game-technology>) from the original on 11 October 2016. "Satoshi Tajiri [was] obsessed with catching insects in his youth"
40. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 133.

41. Sato, Tetsurō (30 March 1998). "「ポケモン」" [The Birth of Pokemon]. In Ohtsuki, Takahiro (ed.). *ポケモンの魔法* [*The Magic of Pokemon*]. Mainichi Newspapers. p. 131. ISBN 978-4620312187.
42. Sato, Tetsurō. "The Birth of Pokemon". In Ohtsuki (1998), p. 132–133.
43. Miya & Tajiri (2004), p. 55–57.
44. "Interview with Satoshi Tajiri" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20230909075910/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwSSWGxgCwM>). *GameCenter CX*. Season 1. Episode SP. Japan: Fuji TV. 30 May 2004. Event occurs at 10:40 – 11:46. Archived from the original (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwSSWGxgCwM>) on 9 September 2023.
45. Tomisawa (2000), p. 168: " は、 のようなゲー が された の はまだ していなかった。だからこそ、それを なり なりにまとめてやれば、ゲー プレイヤーたちからの きな があるだろう、と えたのだ。" ["At that time, magazines specializing in gaming did not yet exist as they do today. Therefore, he figured there would be a great demand among gamers for a kind of pamphlet or small book with gaming information."]
46. Sato, Tetsurō. "The Birth of Pokemon". In Ohtsuki (1998), p. 133. " はTVゲームの を した など だった。『ゲームフリーク』は のTVゲームファンに コミで が り、 を やしていった。 からの のリクエストも した。" ["At that time, there were no magazines that explained video game strategies. "Game Freak" spread by word of mouth among video game fans nationwide, and the number of subscribers grew. Requests for game strategies from readers also started pouring in."]
47. Miya & Tajiri (2004), p. 146–148.
48. Tomisawa (2000), p. 198-200.
49. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 82.
50. Otocky (<https://www.mobygames.com/game/61185/otocky/credits/nes/>) at MobyGames.
51. Sedic (<https://www.mobygames.com/company/20165/sedic/>) at MobyGames.
52. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 82-83.
53. Tomisawa (2000), p. 30.
54. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 83.
55. *テレビゲームー* (<https://archive.org/details/tv-games>) [*TV Games: Encyclopedia of Video Games*]. Kawade Kosan Co., Ltd. 1 June 1988. ISBN 978-4946432316.
56. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 97-98.
57. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 80.
58. "ポケモン !! さん ( インタビュー" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20021216011425/http://www.nintendo.co.jp/nom/0007/kawaguti/page01.html>) [The secret story of Pokemon's birth is revealed!! Interview with Takashi Kawaguchi (Nintendo)]. *Nintendo Online Magazine*. nintendo.co.jp. July 2000. Archived from the original (<http://www.nintendo.co.jp/nom/0007/kawaguti/page01.html>) on 16 December 2002.
59. " が る、ゲームフリークが で じる になるまで" (<https://lavacutcontent.com/masuda-game-freak-history/>) [Game Freak's Path to Worldwide Fame, As Told By Masuda]. *Shūkan Famitsu*. 23 May 2019. pp. 82–86. Archived (<https://archive.today/20250207170813/https://lavacutcontent.com/masuda-game-freak-history/>) from the original on 7 February 2025. "Ishihara in particular was fond of card games and used that insight to advise on how to add more depth to the battle system. To be honest, things like the Pokemon types, the link cable battles, and the Pokedex were all added later in development based on his suggestions. (...) Ishihara also gave us some pointers on the story and setting."



60. "デザイナー ゲームリスト : " ([https://www.gamers-jp.com/playgame/db\\_searchlist.php?mode=2&search\\_str=561&order=1](https://www.gamers-jp.com/playgame/db_searchlist.php?mode=2&search_str=561&order=1)) [Game list by designer: Shigesato Itoi]. *gamers-jp.com*. Archived ([https://web.archive.org/web/20230514204726/https://www.gamers-jp.com/playgame/db\\_searchlist.php?mode=2&search\\_str=561&order=1](https://web.archive.org/web/20230514204726/https://www.gamers-jp.com/playgame/db_searchlist.php?mode=2&search_str=561&order=1)) from the original on 14 May 2023.
61. "APE スロットブラザーズ" (<https://order.mandarake.co.jp/order/detailPage/item?itemCode=1052117728>) [APE Shigesato Itoi Slot Brothers]. *Mandarake*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20230514205504/https://order.mandarake.co.jp/order/detailPage/item?itemCode=1052117728>) from the original on 14 May 2023.
62. "エイブ カード エドカ" (<https://order.mandarake.co.jp/order/detailPage/item?itemCode=1169338910>) [Ape Shigesato Itoi Edka card game]. *Mandarake*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20230514210420/https://order.mandarake.co.jp/order/detailPage/item?itemCode=1169338910>) from the original on 14 May 2023.
63. "はなまる ゲーム" (<https://archive.today/20220622201508/https://jp.mercari.com/item/m15364262459>) [Hanamaru composition game]. *Mercari*. Archived from the original (<https://jp.mercari.com/item/m15364262459>) on 22 June 2022.
64. "ラメカ " (<https://archive.today/20220623203341/https://jp.mercari.com/item/m66913545673>) [Rameka Shigesato Itoi]. *Mercari*. Archived from the original (<https://jp.mercari.com/item/m66913545673>) on 23 June 2022.
65. Pokemon Business Study Group (1 June 1998). *ポケモンの [The Secrets of Pokemon]*. Shogakukan. p. 113.
66. Tomisawa (2000), p. 226.
67. Tomisawa (2000), p. 225.
68. Tomisawa (2000), p. 248-254.
69. "Company Profile" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20170819115442/http://www.gamefreak.co.jp/company/about.html>). *gamefreak.co.jp*. Archived from the original (<http://www.gamefreak.co.jp/company/about.html>) on 19 August 2017.
70. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 484.
71. Tajiri, Satoshi (1 December 1995). *ゲームデザイン [New Game Design]*. *Enix*. p. 156. (Translation (<https://archive.today/20250207171259/https://lavacutcontent.com/satoshi-tajiri-new-game-design/>))
72. *Pocket Monsters Encyclopedia*. Aspect. 5 April 1996. p. 140. ISBN 978-4893664945. (Translation (<https://archive.today/20220706223226/https://lavacutcontent.com/satoshi-tajiri-pokdex-interview/>))
73. Tomisawa (2000), p. 20-21.
74. Interview with Satoshi Tajiri (2004). Event occurs at 28:04 – 29:54.
75. Pokemon Business Study Group (1998), p. 35.
76. Tomisawa (2000), p. 23.
77. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 133-135: "つまり、ゲームを った を として、 の ゲームを るまでの は に われたわけですが、その われた を、ゲームを った の はもう り そうとして、ポケモンを り したのでした。" ["In other words, the world Tajiri knew up to the day he learned about games was lost forever. But after that, Tajiri tried to regain the world that he had lost by creating Pokemon."]
78. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 316.
79. Larimer, Tim; Yokota, Takashi (22 November 1999). "The Ultimate Game Freak" (<https://content.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,2040095,00.html>) (online exclusive). *Time*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20170421073919/http://content.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,2040095,00.html>) from the original on 21 April 2017. "Ultraman with his capsule monsters—they all became ingredients for the game."

80. Shida, Hidekuni; Matsui, Tomoo (1 May 2001). *ゲーム・マエストロ 〈VOL.4〉 デザイナー/イラストレーター* [*Game Maestro, Volume 4: Designers/Illustrators*]. Mainichi Communications. ISBN 978-4839903879. (Translation (<https://web.archive.org/web/20191109024601/https://shmuplations.com/pokemon/>))
81. Miya & Tajiri (2004), p. 130 (Translation (<https://web.archive.org/web/20160916211112/http://www.glitterberri.com/pokemon-red-blue/early-concept-art/2/>))
82. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 75-76.
83. Tajiri (1995), p. 154 + 155.
84. " スタッフインタビュー/ゲーム が まるまで" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20021215234444/https://www.nintendo.co.jp/nom/0007/gfreak/page01.html>) [Interview with development staff / Making the Game]. *Nintendo Online Magazine*. nintendo.co.jp. July 2000. Archived from the original (<https://www.nintendo.co.jp/nom/0007/gfreak/page01.html>) on 15 December 2002. (Translation (<https://archive.today/20241218191437/https://lavacutcontent.com/sugimori-masuda-developer-interview/>))
85. Pokemon Business Study Group (1998), p. 112.
86. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 43 + 136.
87. "スペシャル さん (ゲームフリーク) VS さん (クリーチャーズ) — 2ページ " (<https://web.archive.org/web/20030410091045/https://www.nintendo.co.jp/nom/0007/taidan1/page02.html>) [Interview: Satoshi Tajiri (Game Freak) vs. Tsunekazu Ishihara (Creatures) — Page 2]. *Nintendo Online Magazine*. nintendo.co.jp. July 2000. Archived from the original (<https://www.nintendo.co.jp/nom/0007/taidan1/page02.html>) on 10 April 2003. (Translation (<https://archive.today/20250207172452/https://lavacutcontent.com/ishihara-satoshi-tajiri-interview/>))
88. Tomisawa (2000), p. 70.
89. Tomisawa (2000), p. 65-66.
90. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 99-101.
91. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 77-78.
92. "スペシャル / 1・さんと さんの6 " (<https://web.archive.org/web/20030205164821/https://www.nintendo.co.jp/nom/0007/taidan2/page01.html>) [Special Conversation, page 1 — Six years of Mr. Tajiri and Mr. Ishihara]. *Nintendo Online Magazine*. nintendo.co.jp. July 2000. Archived from the original (<https://www.nintendo.co.jp/nom/0007/taidan2/page01.html>) on 5 February 2003. (Translation (<https://archive.today/20250207172452/https://lavacutcontent.com/ishihara-satoshi-tajiri-interview/>))
93. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 97-99.
94. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 15 + 96.
95. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 97.
96. Tomisawa (2000), p. 31-32.
97. Miya & Tajiri (2004), p. 104.
98. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 487.
99. Tomisawa (2000), p. 32-33.
100. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 102.
101. Pokemon Business Study Group (1998), p. 43.
102. "Secrets of Pokémon: How A Game Captured The World's Kids" ([https://web.archive.org/web/20000817051831/http://abcnews.go.com/sections/world/DailyNews/pokemon\\_000208\\_chat.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20000817051831/http://abcnews.go.com/sections/world/DailyNews/pokemon_000208_chat.html)). *ABC News*. ABC News. 8 February 2000. Archived from the original ([http://abcnews.go.com/sections/world/DailyNews/pokemon\\_000208\\_chat.html](http://abcnews.go.com/sections/world/DailyNews/pokemon_000208_chat.html)) on 17 August 2000. "Exeggutor is my favorite. That's because I was always using this character while I was debugging the program."

103. Mochizuki, Takashi (21 September 2016). "How Pokémon Became a Monster Hit" (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/how-pokemon-became-a-monster-hit-1474437211>). *The Wall Street Journal (Online)*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20161004202141/http://www.wsj.com/articles/how-pokemon-became-a-monster-hit-1474437211>) from the original on 4 October 2016. "Mr. Ishihara said that Exeggutor became his friend while he checked the programming of the game, and together they explored many places within it and captured characters."
104. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 105-106.
105. Tomisawa (2000), p. 74 + 76–77.
106. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 488.
107. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 108.
108. Kawaguchi interview (2000): " の1 くらいは くなが などを ってきていたんですが、そのうちパツタリととだえてしまった。" ("For the first year and a half, Tajiri-kun brought in prototypes, but then he stopped working on it.")
109. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 118.
110. Tomisawa (2000), p. 106-107.
111. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 131.
112. "Atsuko Nishida interview" ([https://web.archive.org/web/19980121112202/http://www.gamefreak.co.jp/POKEMON/INTER/ATSUKO/INTER\\_AT.HTM](https://web.archive.org/web/19980121112202/http://www.gamefreak.co.jp/POKEMON/INTER/ATSUKO/INTER_AT.HTM)). *gamefreak.co.jp*. 1997. Archived from the original ([http://www.gamefreak.co.jp/POKEMON/INTER/ATSUKO/INTER\\_AT.HTM](http://www.gamefreak.co.jp/POKEMON/INTER/ATSUKO/INTER_AT.HTM)) on 21 January 1998.
113. "Creator Profile: The Creators of Pikachu" (<https://www.pokemon.com/us/pokemon-news/creator-profile-the-creators-of-pikachu/>). *pokemon.com*. 26 July 2018. Archived (<https://archive.today/20200825031541/https://www.pokemon.com/us/pokemon-news/creator-profile-the-creators-of-pikachu/>) from the original on 25 August 2020.
114. Sato (3 May 2018). "Pikachu Originally Had A Second Evolution Called 'Gorochu' With Large Fangs And Two Horns" (<https://www.siliconera.com/pikachu-originally-second-evolution-called-gorochu-large-fangs-two-horns/>). *Siliconera*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20191122201827/https://www.siliconera.com/pikachu-originally-second-evolution-called-gorochu-large-fangs-two-horns/>) from the original on 22 November 2019.
115. Tomisawa (2000), p. 35.
116. Miyamoto, Shigeru (16 May 2018). "Retrospect by Shigeru Miyamoto". In Kikuta, Hiroyuki (ed.). *Satoshi Tajiri: A Man Who Created Pokemon*. Shogakukan. pp. 150–156. ISBN 978-4092701304. (Translation (<https://web.archive.org/web/20191109024601/https://shmuplations.com/pokemon/>))
117. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 152-154.
118. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 503.
119. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 231-232.
120. "COMPANY – クリーチャーズ" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20170704195257/http://www.creatures.co.jp/company/>). *creatures.co.jp*. Archived from the original (<http://www.creatures.co.jp/company/>) on 4 July 2017. " クリーチャーズ ( )" [Establishment of Creatures Co., Ltd. (Kanda-Sudachō, Chiyoda)]
121. Allison, Anne (30 June 2006). *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*. University of California Press. pp. 197–198 + 239. ISBN 978-0520245655.
122. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 474-476.
123. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 157.
124. "Pre-release flyer" ([https://archives.bulbagarden.net/media/upload/6/6b/RG\\_prerelease\\_flyer\\_original\\_release\\_date.jpg](https://archives.bulbagarden.net/media/upload/6/6b/RG_prerelease_flyer_original_release_date.jpg)). Archived ([https://web.archive.org/web/20230417065134/https://archives.bulbagarden.net/media/upload/6/6b/RG\\_prerelease\\_flyer\\_original\\_release\\_date.jpg](https://web.archive.org/web/20230417065134/https://archives.bulbagarden.net/media/upload/6/6b/RG_prerelease_flyer_original_release_date.jpg)) from the original on 17 April 2023. Retrieved 27 June 2023.

125. *Pokemon Green Lavender Town (not an emulator)* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvD5vFSwAIY>). BlueOctopede. 23 February 2011. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20230403222342/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvD5vFSwAIY>) from the original on 3 April 2023 – via YouTube.
126. Cartridges of *Red* (<https://web.archive.org/web/20230516180252/https://www.mobygames.com/game/38723/pocket-monsters-akai/cover/group-143854/cover-407960/>) and *Green* (<https://web.archive.org/web/20230516180312/https://www.mobygames.com/game/38673/pocket-monsters-midori/cover/group-50120/cover-135095/>). *MobyGames*.
127. Baird, Scott (31 January 2021). "Why The Pokémon Red & Blue Intros Have The Wrong Date" (<https://screenrant.com/pokemon-red-blue-wrong-release-date-delay-intro/>). *ScreenRant*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20220123163157/https://screenrant.com/pokemon-red-blue-wrong-release-date-delay-intro/>) from the original on 23 January 2022.
128. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 166 + 174.
129. Tomisawa (2000), p. 17.
130. Frank, Allegra (28 September 2018). "Pokémon veteran Junichi Masuda reflects on the series' early days" (<https://www.polygon.com/interviews/2018/9/27/17909916/pokemon-red-blue-junichi-masuda-interview>). *Polygon*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20181230152625/https://www.polygon.com/interviews/2018/9/27/17909916/pokemon-red-blue-junichi-masuda-interview>) from the original on 30 December 2018. "Even when we were talking to our friends in the industry and saying that, "Oh, we're working on a Game Boy game," they were like, "Really? You're working on a Game Boy game? That's not going to sell very well, don't you think?" That's kind of what the atmosphere was like in Japan at the time."
131. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 169.
132. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 178.
133. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 170.
134. Sato, Tetsurō. "Pokemon course for fathers". In Ohtsuki (1998), p. 118.
135. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 171.
136. Pokemon Business Study Group (1998), p. 73.
137. Pokemon Business Study Group (1998), p. 75-76.
138. Pokemon Business Study Group (1998), p. 74.
139. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 195.
140. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 204.
141. "ポケットモンスター「100バージョン」 [To commemorate the sales of over 1 million copies of *Pokemon Red* and *Green*, a new *Blue* version has been released!]. *CoroCoro Comic*. 15 April 1996. pp. 59–60. (Translation (<https://archive.today/20250207173209/https://lavacutcontent.com/corocoro-comic-pokemon-blue/>))
142. "Just Making The Last Train" (<https://iwataasks.nintendo.com/interviews/ds/pokemon/0/0/>) (Interview). Iwata Asks. Interviewed by Iwata, Satoru. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20230328012400/https://iwataasks.nintendo.com/interviews/ds/pokemon/0/0/>) from the original on 28 March 2023.
143. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 532.
144. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 200: "ミュウがするというを けると、すぐにデバグプログラムを こし、 できるタイミングの から、 ミュウの をさらに に しました。その にはミュウが するカートリッジと しないカートリッジ が することになりました。" ["As soon as they [Nintendo] received reports of Mew appearing, they initiated a debugging program and sealed the Mew data even tighter, starting with the next batch of shipped cartridges. As a result, there were now cartridges on the market in which Mew could appear and cartridges in which Mew could not appear."].

145. Tomisawa (2000), p. 14: " と く が されたあとも、 されていたバグを り く や、 の などの も めて、 を したゲー フリークの で に られていたものだったのだ。しかし、グラフィック からの で、ポケモンたちの を し く き こすなどしているうちに、〈 バージョン〉 はかなり の いものになっ てきた。" ["Even after *Red* and *Green* had been released, the games were still being tested in-house at Game Freak, the company in charge of their development, in order to remove any remaining bugs and to train new employees. However, at the request of the graphic designers, the Pokémon characters were redrawn, and eventually, the *Blue Version* turned out a very polished product."].
146. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 210.
147. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 212-213.
148. Tomisawa (2000), p. 16.
149. Pokemon Business Study Group (1998), p. 88-89.
150. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 153.
151. Pokemon Business Study Group (1998), p. 112-117.
152. Kimura (2006): " は けて に、 WOC マジック・ザ・ギャザリング」とい うトレーディングカードゲームが で であること、 たちが した「ポケットモ ンスター カードゲーム」は「マジック・ザ・ギャザリング」をヒントにしているが、 のオリジナルトレーディングカードゲームであることを えた。そして の をかけた、 つかの から り みを されていることも に えた。" ("Kayama went on to tell Iwasaki that a trading card game called "Magic the Gathering" made by WOC [Wizards of the Coast] was very popular in the United States, and that the "Pokemon Card Game" developed by Ishihara and his colleagues was inspired by "Magic the Gathering". However, it was a completely original trading card game made in Japan. He also told Iwasaki that, so far, several major wholesalers he had approached had rejected the project.")
153. Brougère, Gilles (5 February 2004). "Pokémon in France". In Tobin, Joseph (ed.). *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon*. Duke University Press. p. 197. ISBN 978-0822332879.
154. "Pyramid Review: Pokemon Trading Card Game" (<http://www.sjgames.com/pyramid/sample.html?id=571>). *Pyramid*. SJGames.com. 29 January 1999. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20201021223225/http://www.sjgames.com/pyramid/sample.html?id=571>) from the original on 21 October 2020.
155. Pokemon Business Study Group (1998), p. 113.
156. *#Pokemon20: The Pokémon Company's Tsunekazu Ishihara* ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R7S\\_b5BxaB0&t=54s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R7S_b5BxaB0&t=54s)). The Official Pokémon YouTube channel. Event occurs at 00:56. Archived ([https://web.archive.org/web/20240124100022/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R7S\\_b5BxaB0](https://web.archive.org/web/20240124100022/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R7S_b5BxaB0)) from the original on 24 January 2024 – via YouTube. "I was working really hard on its development at the time. That really takes me back."
157. Pokémon Trading Card Game Credits (<https://www.mobygames.com/game/4707/pokemon-trading-card-game/credits/gameboy-color/>), *MobyGames*.
158. EarthBound credits (<https://www.mobygames.com/game/6676/earthbound/credits/snes/>), *MobyGames*.
159. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 226.
160. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 233-234.
161. Pokemon Business Study Group (1998), p. 118-119.



162. Kimura (2006): "ポケモンカードゲームの は、10 15 の コロコロコミック 11 で めて された。 (...) この は、 バージョンの を したのと じであった。" ("The Pokemon card game was first revealed in the November issue of the monthly *CoroCoro Comic*, released on October 15. (...) This issue was the same one that announced the magazine's mail order of the *Blue* version.")
163. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 239.
164. Hatakeyama & Kubo (2000), p. 225.
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## Multi-reference notes

- I. Attributed to multiple references:<sup>[4][5][6][7][8][9][10][11]</sup>
- II. Attributed to multiple references:<sup>[23][24][25][26]</sup>
- III. Attributed to multiple references:<sup>[27][28][29][30]</sup>
- IV. Attributed to multiple references:<sup>[71][72][73][74]</sup>
- V. Attributed to multiple references:<sup>[83][84][85][86]</sup>
- VI. Attributed to multiple references:<sup>[5][247][266][267]</sup>
- VII. Attributed to multiple references:<sup>[5][297][298][299]</sup>
- VIII. Attributed to multiple references:<sup>[300][301][302][303]</sup>
- IX. Attributed to multiple references:<sup>[316][317][318][319]</sup>
- X. Attributed to multiple references:<sup>[327][328][329][330]</sup>
- XI. Attributed to multiple references:<sup>[483][484][485][486]</sup>
- XII. Attributed to multiple references:<sup>[533][534][535][536]</sup>
- XIII. Attributed to multiple references:<sup>[267][272][553][554]</sup>
- XIV. Attributed to multiple references:<sup>[26][29][555][556]</sup>
- XV. Attributed to multiple references:<sup>[566][567][568][569][570]</sup>



XVI. Attributed to multiple references:<sup>[573][574][575][576][577]</sup>

XVII. Attributed to multiple references:<sup>[578][579][580][581][582]</sup>

XVIII. Attributed to multiple references:<sup>[583][584][585][586][587]</sup>

XIX. Attributed to multiple references:<sup>[588][589][590][591][592]</sup>

## External links

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- Official hub to regional Pokémon websites (<https://www.portal-pokemon.com/>)
  - Pokémon Center (<https://www.pokemoncenter.com/>), official merchandise web shop
  - Official Pokémon GO site (<https://pokemongolive.com/>)
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