konshuu

MY HERO ACADEMIA

➤ ANIME SHOWING
NOUCOME

(My Mental Choices Are Completely Interfering With My School Romantic Comedy)

A living visual novel protagonist, Kanade Amakusa is given a set of options that dictate his next actions; these appear at random times with unknown options, a power he calls "Absolute Choices." He later classifies three different types of options: some options force him to take certain actions, some options change others physically or mentally, and some have unpredictable consequences. These choices can be weird and perverted, and because he lacks control of his power, he is shunned by his classmates. On a walk home from school, Kanade uses his power and makes an unknown girl fall from the sky. She tells Kanade that she is a messenger of God, and that he has proposed a challenge to Kanade: if Kanade can complete several objectives, and not fail at a single one, then he will lift the curse of "Absolute Choices." If he fails, the curse will accompany him for the rest of his life.

Studio: Diomedea
Original Creator: Takeru Kusakabe

MANGA RECOMMENDATION
BOKURA WA MINNA KAWAISOU

JOSH "BUBEEZ" ROQUE

If the entire romance manga genre could be condensed into a single space, it would be in the pages of Bokura Wa Minna Kawaisou. Kazunari Usa is the typical high schooler brought to his knees by the unintentional charm of his senpai and neighbor, Ritsu. A bookworm and as social as a solitary wolf, she befriends Usa after living in the same building complex and finding their mutual love of books. Along with other complex neighbors with complex personalities, the fun and the drama go hand-in-hand as Usa tries his best to get Ritsu's attention, to no avail. Her eyes are cold, stunning, and always nose-deep in a book; though the occasional blush and smile keep Usa's hopes up. As they learn more about each other, more problems seem to show up uninvited: jealousy, anger and frustration keep their relationship at odds.

COMPETITIVE POKEMON BATTLING: A PRIMER

AUSTIN "COZYKUNS" TAI

With the looming release of the seventh installment of the Pokémon franchise, Pokémon Sun and Moon, many old fans of the series are gearing up to once again relive the Pokémon adventure that captivated them as children. Some of us aim to craft a team of the cutest possible Pokémon. Some of us have one goal in mind: to catch 'em all. And some of us decide that we wish for a place in immortality alongside legends such as Red in the Hall of Fame, so we dream to be the very best… These are the type of people that, knowingly or not, enter the world of competitive battling.

The driving motivation for the world of competitive battling is simply to see who, under the perfect conditions, turns out the be better battler. Because of the need for perfect conditions, competitive Pokémon battles all take place in the endgame of Pokémon. While your level 80 Pidgey may pack quite the punch in the cartridge games, one thing that separates competitive Pokémon battlers from the novices and amateurs that call themselves the Elite Four in the cartridges, is that all of their Pokémon are the strongest that they can possibly be. With few exceptions, the Pokémon that you'll face in your quest to become the greatest are have the perfect EV spreads, are equipped with 31 IVs in at least five stats, and have a plethora of moves to choose from, including TMs, Egg Moves, and even moves that are only obtainable via purification in Pokémon XD: Gale of Darkness. All of the above, your opponent has access to. But of course, as in any fair fight, so do you. So the world of competitive battling isn't one where you train your Pokémon to become the best they can be; it's the world where they're already at the peak of their potential.

But, as it turns out, capturing and training the best possible Pokémon to perfection is a huge time sink. Obtaining the right natures, EV spreads, IV spreads, and so on... Crafting the perfect Pokémon in the cartridge games is nigh impossible without spending countless hours on it. The quest for perfection was the driving impetus for the creation of Pokémon simulators. Pokémon simulators are a competitive battler's best friend. Every single Pokémon in existence, coupled with all its unique abilities, moves, and natures, are gimmies in a Pokémon simulator. The only thing required of a competitive battler in a Pokémon simulator, is that they create a team of six or fewer Pokémon, and that they assign their own custom movesets, EV spreads, abilities, and natures. In addition, simulators allow you to battle against people from all over the world from the comfort of your couch. Most simulators even feature rankings and ladders, allowing you to compare yourself with the rest of the world. Every day, thousands of people vye for those #1 ladder spots on multiple servers and simulators.

One of the original Pokémon simulators, and the one that left behind the greatest legacy, was Shoddy Battle, which harkens back to the good ol' days of Ruby/ Sapphire/ Emerald. Shoddy Battle was a Java 6.0 applet designed and created by a small team of people with a shared interest in competitive Pokémon battling. Eventually, the applet became the defacto standard for Pokémon battling, featuring an easy to use teambuilder, decent graphical interface, and an integrated chat room plus ladder for each server that ran the Shoddy Battle program.

But Shoddy Battle was not without its flaws. For one, the graphical interface, while decent, was nowhere close to mimicking the cartridge games. Shoddy Battle featured static sprites atop static backgrounds, contained no attack animations, and had a health bar that instantly depleted. Shoddy was also privy to a score of bugs or incorrectly programmed Pokémon mechanics. For example, the interaction between multi-hit moves such as Double Slap and the item Focus Sash was notoriously broken in Shoddy Battle. Focus Sash is an item which allows the holder to endure a fatal hit. If they started the turn with full HP and were hit by a move which would cause them to faint, instead of fainting, they would be left clinging to consciousness with one HP. The in-game interaction with multi-hit moves and Focus Sash is that, if the Focus Sash "breaks" after a hit, and the attack continues, then the successive attacks can cause the opposing Pokémon to faint. In Shoddy Battle, this

was not the case; a Pokémon equipped with a Focus Sash could take a flurry of fatal hits in one turn and still walk away with one HP.

Buggy as it was, Shoddy Battle became the most prominently used simulator of its time, peaking at around 500 users on a good day. Nowadays, technology has vastly improved, and Pokémon Showdown! is now the most widely used Pokémon simulator, complete with moving sprites, dynamic battle effects, much more accurate mechanics, and all the pros that came with the Shoddy Battle package.
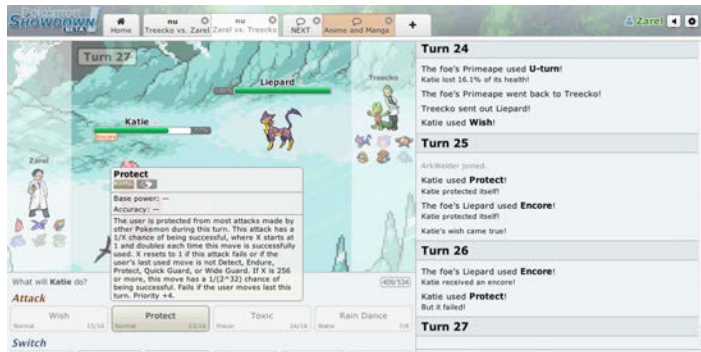
As anyone who has played the cartridge games should already know, not all Pokémon are created equal. In the competitive Pokémon world, it doesn't matter how much you've trained or how many contest ribbons your Wooper has; intrinsically, it's never going to be the same as that dashing Suicune on your opponent's field. Suicune is just on a completely different level compared to Wooper. These separate-but-equal planes of existence are known as "tiers." At its core, a tier is simply a bogus category that speaks nothing more for a Pokémon than how frequently it is used. Usage statistics from the most busy Pokémon simulator servers are accumulated and parsed under the assumption that Pokémon used more frequently than other Pokémon are also stronger than those other Pokémon. A bunch of tier listings can then be made.

The most commonly played tier, and what is often labeled as the most "competitive" tier, is OverUsed, or "OU" for short. Standing above the OU tier is the "Uber" tier, which is in essence a banlist for the OverUsed tier. Underneath OU is the UU tier, and anything that's in the OU tier or above cannot be used for a UU battle. UU also has its own respective banlist: "BL," which is comprised of Pokémon that are too strong for UU, but don't appear frequently enough to be in OU. In order to create these ban lists, suspect tests for each tier are held, usually around once every month. Anything that is deemed overcentralizing, uncompetitive, or "harmful to the metagame" is treated as a suspect, and these suspects are tested by a group of privileged voters on a website called Smogon University.

Contrary to the popular belief that the Pokémon tier lists are controlled by a secret club or elitists to exclude Pokémon that they just can't handle from being used, the process of becoming a voter is actually open to the public. These voters receive access to vote in the suspect test based on a meritocracy; by proving their worth on the Smogon ladder, they are given the privilege to determine whether or not that suspect will survive the test. Once a new generation of Pokémon come out, or no more fishy Pokémon are left stomping the metagame, then that metagame is deemed "stable." The goal of these suspect tests is to construct a metagame where a good variety of Pokémon are deemed worth using, and no Pokémon in the tier is sufficiently more powerful or abused than another.

So competitive Pokémon battling is, in actuality, some really serious business. The only reason for a loss in the world of competitive battling is because your strategy and team of Pokémon was inferior to your opponent's. Well, as it turns out, not entirely. One of the biggest complaints that people have about the game of Pokémon is the amount of randomness that comes with it. Common attacking moves that need to be used like Fire Blast, Focus Blast, and Stone Edge, as well as some status moves like Dark Void and WIll-O-Wisp, come with imperfect accuracy. This is the "hax" that occurs in Pokémon battles, as it's dubbed. But these random elements usually average themselves out over time. And, as dismayed as you may be when the opponent's Jirachi flinches its way to victory, more likely than not, you've also had a similar streak of luck that turned a hopeless game into a victory. It's important to remember that, at the end of the day, you still are playing a game created by the team of Game Freak, who are much more focused on capturing the hearts of children worldwide (and the wallets of their parents), then they are with creating the ultimate competitive game.

HOW TO GET YOURSELF INTO
DRAGON QUEST

ANDY "JOHN ZHANG" CHEN

Ask anyone around you what his or her favorite JRPG is and the response you will get is probably Final Fantasy. Final Fantasy, developed by Square Enix, is a highly acclaimed worldwide bestseller in the JRPG genre. Most people who play video games have at least heard of the franchise. It should come as no surprise that the number one selling NES JRPG game and SNES JRPG games are respectively… Dragon Quest III and Dragon Quest VI. Wait, what? Believe it or not, despite the popularity of Final Fantasy, Dragon Quest games have outsold Final Fantasy games for the NES and SNES consoles, as well as many other consoles when explicitly looking at Japanese sales. Even Dragon Quest VII sold more copies than the most popular Final Fantasy game, Final Fantasy VII, in Japan. The Dragon Quest series, also developed by Square Enix (then Enix), have remained widely unknown in the West until the release of Dragon Quest VIII in 2004 along with the recent DS and smartphone remakes of the NES and SNES versions of the games. Yet in Japan, Dragon Quest is definitely the much more popular game. In fact, it is so popular that many people know the spell effects just from their wacky names. For example, メラ (mera), a single-target fire spell, and ホイミ (hoimi), which refers to a basic healing spell, appear in every Dragon Quest title; many Japanese people who grew up with the game naturally know the effects of the spells, even though the spell names are completely made up. This phenomenon probably makes Dragon Quest stand out from other JRPGs. While Japanese fans have played these games as they were released in Japan, it is definitely harder for Western JRPG players who have not played the series to know where to begin. Hopefully, the next several minutes of your reading time will give you insight on where to begin in the main Dragon Quest series. (For the remainder of the article, Dragon Quest will be abbreviated as DQ, much like how Final Fantasy is abbreviated as FF, and its characters and spells will be referred to by their English names.)

Dragon Quest kept much of its game structure over its long history. The illustrations for the game are done by the famous Dragon Ball creator Akira Toriyama, who still creates character and monster designs for the game to this day. The games all feature an overworld. In the older games, the player controls a party of sprites, usually consisting of four members. However, in the more recent games such as in DQVIII, DQIX, the overworld characters switch from 2D sprites to 3D models. The battle system has remained the same, turn-based battle sequence where enemy monsters and the player take turns playing out their selected moves. However, since DQIV, there is an option to let the AI handle the actions for you depending on the "battle plan" you choose. This was originally implemented to give the player the impression that the game is not just about "you," but your party members' actions as well, which was something completely new for the JRPG genre when DQIV was first released. There have been some minor modifications such as the AI introduction to turn-based battles, but it has widely remained the same unlike FF. And finally, the story generally involves defeating an evil demon lord of some sort in a medieval setting. Of course, there are many differences between each of the games, but they all follow this similar story. The nostalgia evoked by these common traits have helped capture many Japanese players to this day. But for western players, which game should they play? Currently, the series has nine games with the tenth game being an MMORPG, which sadly cannot be played with a foreign IP address. For the sake of introducing newcomers to the game, I have provided a general play order.

For the best "modern" DQ experience, Dragon Quest VIII: Journey of the Cursed King is definitely the best choice. While DQIX came after it, one of the most important factors of the franchise— "meeting your party members as you progress"—(which is not only common in DQ but also other JRPGs) is not present in DQIX. For this reason, DQVIII, with its amazing cell-shaded 3D rendering of Akira Toriyama's artwork, should be preferred. The game packs a lot of content into a great story, leading to an easy 50 hours of gameplay for an average run through the game. The game is the first in the series to use the "tension" mechanic, in which the character spends one turn building up tension to increase their power for their next move. Repeated build-up of tension leads to an exponential increase in power, at the cost of being vulnerable to attacks. This mechanic contributed a lot more to the strategy behind its turn-based battles. It is no surprise that the tension system remained part of the game after DQVIII due to the complexity it brought to combat. Additionally, the characters no longer followed a linear growth pattern with the introduction of "skill points," which allowed the player to allocate points every few levels in various specialties such as Sword Mastery, Staff Mastery, or plain-old Fisticuffs. This mechanic is famous across MMORPGs and helped direct DQ towards a new path. In addition to the new "tension" and "skill points" mechanics, classic spells from previous DQ titles such as Frizz (メラ, fire spell), Zap (デイン, thunder spell), and Heal (ホイミ, self-explanatory) have showed up once again in the series' eighth title. The wonderful mixture of detailed graphics, story, and new and classic elements to the battle system definitely brings Dragon Quest VIII to the top of the list of best plays for a newcomer.

The next title to recommend really branches out from here. If the player enjoyed DQVIII for its modern approach to the game, then the next in line should be Dragon Quest IX: Sentinels of the Starry Skies, which features completely customizable main characters and party members. While its customization options fit individual tastes, many fans regard it as the "offline MMORPG" because the game is arguably too customizable, featuring many similarities with an MMORPG such as customizable avatars, customizable outfits, customizable classes, etc. without putting too much into the background stories behind each party members (a trait which was very strong in the previous games). In fact, all of the cutscenes in the game are just about the main character, and party members (that you also create yourself) are cut out completely. Regardless, the game was highly acclaimed in both the West and Japan because of its new approach and the numerous DLC that were introduced with its release on the Nintendo DS.

For those who feel like they want more retro aspects of the game or really like learning about characters in general, the next in line will be DQIV, V, or VI. These games are referred to as the Zenithian Saga, which revolves around a floating castle in the sky. Each of these games made major changes in terms of story progression. In DQIV: Chapters of the Chosen, the game is broken up into five main chapters and a bonus chapter; in each chapter, the player plays as one subset of the main characters, the "chosen" ones to defeat evil. After the player completes each of these chapters, the subsets unite to fight the evils that endanger the world. In DQV: Hands of the Heavenly Bride, the player after a certain point in the game must choose a bride to marry to move forward in the game. This choice is permanent and cannot be changed unless the player makes multiple saves or restarts the game completely. This series is widely regarded in Japan as having the best story in the entire DQ series due to its development and the struggles the player faces with their loved one as they progress through the story. Additionally, the game introduces a monster capturing system which makes it similar to Pokemon, with the exception that the player fights alongside their allied monsters. This game was released 3 years before Pokémon, so this mechanic was extremely innovative during its release. Finally, Dragon Quest VI: Realms of the Revelation features the one of the most expansive overworld map across all of the DQ series. It features 4 unique overworld maps: the Dream World, Real World, Underwater Sea, and the Dark World. While most of the other Dragon Quest

games before only featured at most 2 different overworld maps, DQVI doubles that amount and pushes the limits of the SNES console by creating the series' first game with animated monster sprites in battles. The game reinvents the class system where the player can train in multiple disciplines such as Fighter and Magician yet still retain all of the abilities learned across each class, while in previous games characters specialize in at most one or two things. Finally, the story is the most expansive out of all of the previous titles due to interconnecting stories involving all of the overworlds, which also heavily concentrates on the theme of "discovering oneself". In addition to all that, this series is the first Dragon Quest title to feature a little sister character, who in-fact does call the protagonist onii-chan. No surprise the series is also popular to people who are interested in imouto-type girls.

The Zenithian Saga is definitely the most important subset of DQ games to check out for story. From this point, after playing at least one of the aforementioned 3 games, the sequence of playing the rest of the series won't matter too much. However, there are still some important features to consider for the remaining games. Dragon Quest VII: Fragments of the Forgotten Past takes the class system in Dragon Quest VI and made it far more complex, with more jobs and options of becoming "monsters" as a job class, the game features a lot more customization in that field. While the game only features two overworlds, one that takes place in the past and one in the present, the game is the longest DQ game to date with an expected gameplay time of over 100 hours. This is because every town in the game is originally missing from the world map and the heroes must travel back into the past to solve problems and make the cities be existent in the present. Because of this unique feature, every town's problems takes several hours of gameplay to resolve, unlike the previous games where not every town played a huge role in the plot of the story. For those that want a huge game in the classic 2D sprites, DQVII is definitely a fantastic choice. Finally, the classics of the classics, the Roto Saga featuring Dragon Quest I, II, and III is basically one story told across 3 games and is more definitively chronological than the Zenithian

series. The games are very simple especially in DQI and DQII, where in the first game, there is only one character in a party while in the second game, the party increased to size of 3. While these two games are chronological, DQIII serves as the prequel of DQI and the first game in the series with a player-customizable party, instead of meeting new allies during the story. These games are relatively short and the combined length of these three games is probably shorter than DQVII, yet definitely gives the most retro feeling out of all the Dragon Quest games and maybe JRPGs in general.

Dragon Quest remains a timeless game in Japan and the series was only fully released in the west in 2011 with the release of the DS remake of DQVI. A new DQ game is currently being developed appropriately named Dragon Quest XI, which is scheduled for a 2017 Japan release and also a Western release, is the first DQ main series game that isn't a MMORPG to be released in almost 8 years. As JRPGs grew in popularity in the West, Dragon Quest was finally able to set foot in the western market, but sadly may not have been able to be a part of the childhoods of many western games. Hopefully, this was able to give a little insight on where to get started in the wonderful Dragon Quest universe.

Konshuu proudly accepts guest submissions from club members! If you'd like to have content featured, please submit to:

J.MP/KONSUB

KONSHUU STAFF

WEEKLY EVENTS

Anime Showings and Socials
9 Evans
Mondays, 7:00 - 10:00pm

Manga Socials
106 Dwinelle
Thursdays, 5:30 - 6:30pm

Game Nights
2030 VLSB
Thursdays, 7:30 - 10:00pm

WEEKLY SHOWINGS

Dimension W
Himouto! Umaru-chan

GOOD LUCK ON FINALS!