



Pokémon Crystal

Pokémon Crystal Version^[a] is a role-playing video game developed by Game Freak and published by Nintendo for the Game Boy Color in Japan in 2000 and internationally in 2001. The game is an enhanced edition of the 1999 titles *Pokémon Gold* and *Silver* and the final of the second generation of games in the Pokémon franchise. *Crystal* featured several additions to the core gameplay of its predecessors, including additional story elements, a new Battle Tower area, the option to play as a female character, animation of Pokémon sprites during battles, and other minor fixes and improvements. The Japanese version of the game also utilized the capabilities of the Mobile System GB, a peripheral that allowed players to trade and battle over cell phones and a paid subscription service. These enhancements were enabled by the improved capabilities of the Game Boy Color, consequently it was the first game in the series to not be compatible with the Game Boy.

Released following the commercial success of *Pokémon Gold* and *Silver*, *Crystal* experienced similar commercial and critical acclaim, with the combined titles forming the best-selling game for the Game Boy Color and the third-best-selling game for the Game Boy family of handheld consoles. Critics praised *Crystal* for its additional features and improvements, whilst noting that many of the features in the non-Japanese version of the game, which lacked the Mobile System GB, were minor in nature. Retrospective assessment of *Crystal* has been highly positive, with several critics noting the game's introduction of a range of features that would become commonplace in later iterations of the Pokémon franchise, and its role in maintaining interest during a waning period for the franchise.

Gameplay

Pokémon Crystal



Box art for *Pokémon Crystal*, depicting the legendary Pokémon Suicune

<u>Developer(s)</u>	<u>Game Freak</u>
<u>Publisher(s)</u>	<u>Nintendo</u>
<u>Director(s)</u>	<u>Satoshi Tajiri</u> <u>Junichi Masuda</u>
<u>Producer(s)</u>	<u>Satoru Iwata</u> <u>Satoshi Yamamoto</u> <u>Shigeru Miyamoto</u> <u>Tsunekazu Ishihara</u>
<u>Designer(s)</u>	<u>Junichi Masuda</u> <u>Koji Nishino</u> <u>Toshinobu Matsumiya</u>
<u>Programmer(s)</u>	<u>Shigeki Morimoto</u> <u>Tetsuya Watanabe</u> <u>Takenori Ohta</u>
<u>Artist(s)</u>	<u>Ken Sugimori</u>
<u>Writer(s)</u>	<u>Junichi Masuda</u> <u>Koji Nishino</u> <u>Toshinobu Matsumiya</u>

Similar to *Pokémon Gold* and *Silver*, *Pokémon Crystal* is a role-playing video game where players navigate a fictional world by capturing, training, and battling with Pokémon. In addition, *Crystal* enhances aspects of *Gold* and *Silver*, providing cosmetic and gameplay improvements. The visual presentation of *Crystal* is enhanced through the animation of Pokémon sprites when first encountered in battle, the inclusion of signposts appearing on the screen when entering a new area, and a range of minor graphical enhancements to various locations in the game.^[1] It includes the ability to select one of two player characters, adding Kris, a female trainer, with a unique sprite.^[2] The game introduces a Battle Tower, a new stadium that allows players to battle a series of seven trainers with three Pokémon set at customizable maximum levels to win prizes.^[2]

<u>Composer(s)</u>	Junichi Masuda Morikazu Aoki <u>Go Ichinose</u>
<u>Series</u>	<u>Pokémon</u>
<u>Platform(s)</u>	<u>Game Boy Color</u>
<u>Release</u>	<u>JP</u> : December 14, 2000 <u>NA</u> : July 29, 2001 <u>AU</u> : September 30, 2001 <u>EU</u> : November 2, 2001
<u>Genre(s)</u>	<u>Role-playing</u>
<u>Mode(s)</u>	<u>Single-player</u> , <u>multiplayer</u>

Mobile System GB

The Japanese release of *Pokémon Crystal* supported the Mobile System GB, an adapter and paid online service connecting a Game Boy Color unit to cellular phones for wireless networking between devices.^[3] The Mobile System GB enabled players to battle and trade with players online, read news, take quizzes, play minigames, and connect the game to a Nintendo 64 using a 64 GB Pack to play battles using the data from *Pokémon Stadium 2*.^[4] Features were dependent on a paid subscription with the service provider, incurring a monthly service fee for each feature between ¥10 to 100 (equivalent to ¥10.31 to 103 in 2019).

The Mobile System GB was launched in Japan on 14 December 2000. However, Nintendo ultimately made the decision to not release the Mobile System GB in markets other than Japan.^{[5][6]} Journalists speculated reasons for this decision, including conflicts in international cell phone standards, and the lack of mobile infrastructure in other countries.^{[7][8]} Commenting from an American perspective, *IGN* noted that "billing and popularity of cellular phones are very different than in America, and (the Japanese) market is designed specifically for devices such as this. It might not be practical for Nintendo to release the device here...it's questionable whether enough young gamers would have a cellular phone to use it with."^[9]

The Mobile System GB network remained active until 14 December 2002.^[4]



Players with the Mobile System GB adapter and service could trade Pokémon online

Plot

The setting and story of *Crystal* remains largely the same as in *Gold* and *Silver*, with the player seeking to raise and battle Pokémon to defeat the Gym Leaders of Johto and Elite Four to be the Johto League Champion. However, several encounters and additional characters are introduced to the overarching narrative. *Crystal* features a greater role for legendary Pokémon, with the player awakening Suicune, Entei, and Raikou, and encountering them at various stages of the game. The plotline features a new character, Eusine, who has been searching for Suicune, providing the player with a more direct and narrative pathway to battling and capturing Suicune and the remainder of the game's legendary Pokémon.^[2] *Crystal* also includes minor changes to how the player encounters the Gym Leader Clair, and additions to the role of the Pokémon Unown in the Ruins of Alph, with players able to complete additional puzzles to receive rewards and messages from the Unown.^[1]

Development and release

Crystal was developed by Game Freak in 1999 following the release of *Pokémon Gold* and *Silver*.^[10] *Crystal* was the first Pokémon game to feature Junichi Masuda as a lead director, who had previously been a composer for the Pokémon franchise and sub-director for *Gold* and *Silver*.^[11] Nintendo initially announced development of *Crystal* and the Mobile System GB in December 1999, with the game developed under the working title of *Pokémon X*. Artist Ken Sugimori stated that *Crystal* was primarily developed to support Nintendo's launch of the Mobile System GB. Masuda noted that the title of the game was intended to be associated with the "crystals used in electronic transmissions".^[12] Nintendo president Hiroshi Yamauchi stated that "*Pokémon*, which incorporates elements of exchange and 'collection', would be the best way to get people to understand the new genre of games that use mobile phones."^[13]

Nintendo first previewed *Crystal* and the *Mobile System GB* at Space World in August 2000.^[14] *Crystal* was released in Japan on 27 January 2001, following delays to ensure the game could be bundled with the Mobile Adapter GB.^[15] Nintendo previewed the release of *Crystal* for North America at E3 in May 2001,^[16] and released the game in North America on July 29, 2001, Australia on September 30, 2001, and Europe on November 2, 2001.^[17] Promotional releases of *Crystal* in North America included packaging of the game with lime green models of the Game Boy Color, sold as the Pokémon *Crystal Bundle*.^[18] Following its release, *Crystal* was also made available on the Nintendo eShop for the Nintendo 3DS line of handheld consoles on 28 January 2018.^[19]

Reception

Reception	
Aggregate score	
Aggregator	Score
<u>GameRankings</u>	80% ^[20]

Review scores	
Publication	Score
<i>Electronic Gaming Monthly</i>	7.0 / 7.5 / 3.5 ^[21]
<i>Famitsu</i>	34/40 ^[22]
<i>GameSpot</i>	8.4/10 ^[23]
<i>IGN</i>	9/10 ^[17]
<i>Nintendo Life</i>	9/10 ^[24]
<i>Nintendo Power</i>	★★★★★ ^[25]
<i>RPGFan</i>	70% ^[26]
<i>Game Boy Xtreme</i>	80% ^[27]
<i>Nintendo Gamer</i>	88% ^[28]
<i>Pocket Games</i>	8/10 ^[29]

Critical reception to *Pokémon Crystal* upon release was generally positive, with reviewers praising the variety of additional features added to the game. Writing for *GameSpot*, Frank Provo stated that the game's additions provide "a great deal of value", highlighting the features that "enhance and broaden the game's overall variety", including timed events, quality of life improvements and visual embellishments.^[23] *Nintendo Power* highlighted the addition of the Battle Tower, finding the feature a "truly challenging" addition that would appeal to "hard-core fans".^[25] Kelly Starr of *Nintendo Gamer* found "enough little differences" to make the game a "worthwhile addition," directing praise at the ability to play as a female trainer, the inclusion of location signs, and the enhanced animations.^[28]

Many critics considered the additions to *Crystal* insubstantial and difficult to distinguish from *Gold* and *Silver*. Craig Harris of *IGN* noted the game featured improvements to the overall design," but found the cosmetic changes to be "very little", expressing frustration that the title was the "same game engine" that had been used for several years.^[17] Simon Brew of *Game Boy Xtreme* found "little else on offer" for long-time players,^[27] remarking that the game "stretched the traditional formula as far as it could go".^[30] Chris Johnston for *Electronic Gaming Monthly* stated the additions "don't alter the game-playing experience at all," suggesting the changes should have been part of the original game.^[21] Chris Thompson of *Pocket Games* conceded that the game was an "excellent" introduction for new players, but its additions were insufficient to justify a repeat purchase.^[29]

Sales

Although not as comparatively successful as *Pokémon Gold* and *Silver* and successive Pokémon releases, *Crystal* was a minor commercial success. Upon release in Japan, the game topped weekly sales charts,^[31] and sold a total of 1,871,307 copies, making it the second most successful *Game Boy Color* game in the country.^[32] In the rest of the world, *Crystal* was the best-selling *Nintendo* title for *Game Boy* consoles in the month of January 2002,^[33] and remained in the *Nintendo Power* top-ten charts for the rest of the year.^[34] In the United States, *Crystal* reportedly sold 600,000 units in the first two weeks of release.^[35]

Internationally, *Crystal* sold 6.3 million units in comparison to the 23.7 million units sold of *Pokémon Gold* and *Silver*.^[36] To date, the game remains the least commercially successful mainline *Pokémon* release by units sold, attributable to the reduced interest in enhanced versions of *Pokémon* titles.^[37]

Legacy

Retrospective reviews of *Crystal* have praised the game as one of the best titles in the Pokémon franchise. Darryn Bonthuys of *GameSpot* stated *Crystal* was "the definitive Pokémon game of the Game Boy era" and one of the best Game Boy Color titles, highlighting its "revolutionary" animations and story.^[38] Chris Tapsell of *Eurogamer* praised *Crystal* as "the best Pokémon game" due to its "peerless artistry", the and "quaint, restricted painterly presentation" of its animations.^[39] Arjun Joshi of *Nintendo Life* remarked that *Crystal* "(added) even more life to an already vibrant game", praising the game's animations and "captivating and memorable" additions to the game's plot.^[40]

Many reviewers have also observed that *Crystal* pioneered features that would become standard in successive Pokémon games, including the pattern of an enhanced version following the release of the primary games in a generation,^[41] the selection of the player character's gender,^[42] an overarching narrative featuring chosen one themes,^{[39][43]} and the inclusion of a Battle Tower feature.^[40] Tomas Franzese of *Dual Shockers* notes that the game was important in establishing "multiple precedents" for the series and its future direction.^[43] *Nintendo Power* commented that whilst the innovation of the Mobile System GB was confined to the Japanese market, its design also served as a major influence for portable networking features of later *Nintendo* products, including the Game Boy Advance Wireless Adapter and *Nintendo DS*.^[44]

Some writers have also expressed that *Crystal* assisted the franchise to maintain appeal during a transitional period. Arana Judith of *Well Played* characterised *Crystal* as the end point of the original vision and design for the franchise due the end of the *Game Boy Color* life cycle and the increasing fatigue with Pokémon in popular culture.^[45] This fatigue was reflected by contemporary critics who had predicted that *Crystal* arrived at a waning point of interest in the franchise.^{[21][27][29]} Judith wrote that whilst *Ruby* and *Sapphire* would reinforce the longevity of the series, the game was released in the context of the general public "seeing Pokémon merchandise fade from shelves" suggesting that "the Pokémon mania that had swept those last years of the 20th century was truly on its way out".^[45] Rhiannon Bevan of *TechRaptor* considered the game's additions were bold and laid the groundwork for what allowed the series to retain enduring popularity.^[46]

Crystal has received retrospective praise for the inclusive impact of a player character with a selectable gender. Writing for *Polygon*, Juno Stump stated *Pokémon Crystal* and *Kris* "impacted [girls] greatly, allowing us to finally see ourselves in a video game and on our very own Pokémon adventure."^[47] Clare McBride of *Syfy Wire* believed the game was impactful for women, stating "Instead of having to name a clearly male character our names and just roll with it, we got explicitly invited into the Pokémon space we'd already been inhabiting."^[48] Although the intent of the feature was to "appeal to cisgender girls", Anya Archer of *Wired* commented on the appeal to transgender audiences of being able to play as a character whose gender does not reflect the one assigned at birth.^[49]

On March 2, 2014, *Crystal* was played by Twitch Plays Pokémon, an interactive experience allowing users of the video game live streaming service Twitch to influence the play of the game through input commands in the chat box.^[50] The game featured the same protagonist and Pokémon to develop a continuity with the previous stream. The stream experienced criticism due to the involvement of players attempting to imitate high-stakes moments in the first stream, such as the release of Pokémon using the PC, as well as the temporary introduction of features that were abandoned, including changes to the "Democracy" and "Anarchy" modes.^[51] The stream of *Crystal* was completed in 13 days and 2 hours.^[52]

Notes

- a. Japanese: ポケットモンスター クリスタルバージョン, Hepburn: *Poketto Monsutā Kurisutaru Bājon*, "Pocket Monsters: Crystal Version"

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External links

- Official website (<https://www.pokemon.com/us/pokemon-video-games/pokemon-crystal-version/>) (US)
 - Official website (<https://www.pokemon.co.jp/game/other/gbc-crystal/>) (in Japanese)
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