

= Nine Hours , Nine Persons , Nine Doors =

Nine Hours , Nine Persons , Nine Doors is a visual novel adventure game developed by Chunsoft . It was released in Japan in 2009 and in North America in 2010 for the Nintendo DS , with an iOS version following in 2013 in Japan and 2014 in the rest of the world . The game is the first installment in the Zero Escape series , and is the predecessor to the 2012 game Zero Escape : Virtue 's Last Reward .

The story follows Junpei , a college student who is abducted along with eight other people and forced to play the " Nonary Game , " which puts its participants in a life @-@ or @-@ death situation , to escape from a sinking cruise liner . The gameplay alternates between two types of sections : Escape sections , where the player completes puzzles in escape @-@ the @-@ room scenarios ; and Novel sections , where the player reads the game 's narrative and makes decisions that influence the story , making it branch into six different endings . The whole plot is not revealed in just one playthrough ; the player has to reach the one " true " ending to get all the information .

Development of the game began after Uchikoshi joined Chunsoft to write a visual novel for them that could reach a wider audience ; Uchikoshi suggested adding puzzle elements that are integrated with the game 's story . The inspiration for the story was the question of where inspiration comes from ; while researching it , Uchikoshi came across the biochemist Rupert Sheldrake 's theories , which became the main theme of the game . The music was composed by Shinji Hosoe , while the characters were designed by Kinu Nishimura . The localization was handled by Aksys Games ; they worked by the philosophy of keeping true to the spirit of the original Japanese version , opting for natural @-@ sounding English rather than following the original 's exact wording .

Nine Hours , Nine Persons , Nine Doors was positively received , with reviewers praising the story , writing and puzzles , but criticizing the game 's tone and how the player is required to re @-@ do the puzzles every time they play through the game . Reception of the game 's presentation was mixed . The Japanese release was a commercial failure , while the game sold better than expected for the genre in the United States .

= = Gameplay = =

Nine Hours , Nine Persons , Nine Doors is a visual novel adventure game in which the player assumes the role of a man named Junpei . The gameplay is divided into two types of sections : Novel and Escape . In the Novel sections , the player progresses through the storyline and converses with non @-@ playable characters . These sections require little interaction from the player as they are spent reading the text that appears on the screen , which represents either dialogue between the various characters or the inner thoughts of Junpei . During Novel sections , the player will sometimes be presented with decision options that affect the course of the game . The decisions made result in one of six branching storylines , each with a unique ending . The whole plot is not revealed in just one playthrough ; the player needs to reach the " true " ending to get all the information behind the mystery . To reach this ending , the player needs to reach one specific ending beforehand . Some of the endings contain hints to how to reach further endings .

In between Novel sections are sixteen different Escape sections , which occur when the player finds themselves in a room from which they need to find the means of escape . These are presented from a first @-@ person perspective , with the player being able to move between different pre @-@ determined positions in each room . To escape , the player is tasked with finding various items and solving puzzles , reminiscent of escape @-@ the @-@ room games . At some points , the player may need to combine objects with each other to create the necessary tool to complete a puzzle . The puzzles include various brain teasers , such as baccarat and magic squares . An in @-@ game calculator is provided for math @-@ related problems , and the player can ask characters for hints if they find an Escape room too difficult . All Escape sections are self @-@ contained , with all items required to solve the puzzles being available within that section ; items are not carried over between Escape sections . After finishing an Escape section , it becomes available to replay from the game 's main menu .

= = Plot = =

= = = Characters and setting = = =

Nine Hours , Nine Persons , Nine Doors features nine main characters , who are forced to participate in the Nonary Game by an unknown person named Zero . The characters adopt code names to protect their identities due to the stakes of the Nonary Game . The player @-@ controlled Junpei is joined by June , a nervous girl and an old friend of Junpei whom he knows as Akane ; Lotus , a self @-@ serving woman with unknown skills ; Seven , a large and muscular man ; Santa , a punk with a negative attitude ; Ace , an older and wiser man ; Snake , a blind man with a princely demeanor ; Clover , a girl prone to mood swings ; and the 9th Man , a fidgety individual .

The events of the game occur within a cruise ship , though all of the external doors and windows have been sealed , and many of the internal doors are locked . The game 's nine characters learn that they have been kidnapped and brought to the ship to play the Nonary Game , with the challenge to find the door marked with a " 9 " within nine hours before the ship sinks . To do this , they are forced to work in separate teams to make their way through the ship and solve puzzles to find this door . This is set in part by special locks on numbered doors that are based on digital roots ; each player has an bracelet with a different digit on it , and only groups of three to five with the total of their bracelet 's number with the same digital root as marked on the door can pass through .

= = = Story = = =

At the start of the game , Junpei wakes up in a cabin inside a cruise liner , wearing a bracelet displaying the number " 5 " . He escapes the room , and encounters eight people , including June . Zero announces over a loudspeaker that all nine are participants in the Nonary Game . Zero explains the rules , and states each carry an explosive in their stomach that will go off if they try to bypass the digital root door locks . The 9th Man still goes through a door by himself , and is killed . Fearing what harm might come to them , the group adopts code names , and splits up to explore the ship . The player has the option to select which group that Junpei travels with , which affects the story ; several choices lead to Junpei 's death . Through various choices , Junpei learns of a previous Nonary Game and the connections of the other characters through that , as well as studies about morphic resonance and stories of the Egyptian priestess Alice , who is frozen in ice @-@ 9 .

In one ending , Junpei learns that Zero was a participant of the first Nonary Game , and set up the second Nonary Game as revenge towards Ace . The surviving players confront Ace and learn he had manipulated the 9th Man to violate the rules and get himself killed in order to both cover his identity and gain access to the 9th Man 's bracelet . As they find the door with the 9 , Akane becomes weak . Santa watches over her while the others enter the door , leading to an incinerator , where Ace grabs Lotus and holds her at gunpoint . Discovering the incinerator is about to activate , Snake tackles Ace , and Lotus and Seven pull Junpei out of the incinerator before it goes off , consuming Snake and Ace . Junpei returns to Akane , finding her nearly dead . Zero says over the loudspeakers that the game 's loser has been determined ; Junpei acts defiant , but Zero clarifies that he is referring to himself . Junpei investigates a nearby room , and returns to find Akane and Santa have disappeared , after which he is knocked out by a gas grenade .

After this ending , the player can access the " true ending " , in which Junpei learns that the previous Nonary Game was run by Cradle Pharmaceutical , who kidnapped nine pairs of siblings and separated them onto the ocean @-@ bound Gigantic and a mock @-@ up in Building Q in the Nevada desert , to explore morphic fields ; the research anticipated that the stress of the game would activate the fields between siblings , allowing solutions solved by one to be sent via these fields to their counterpart at the other location . This research was to help Ace , the Cradle Pharmaceutical CEO , cure his prosopagnosia . The first Nonary Game went awry : Akane and her brother Santa had been placed at the same location instead of being separated , and Seven had

discovered the kidnappings and rescued the children from the ship . Ace had grabbed Akane before they could escape , and forced her into the incinerator room where she faced a sudoku puzzle that she could not solve , and apparently died .

Junpei and the others reach the incinerator ; Akane disappears and Santa escapes with Ace hostage , trapping the others inside . It is then revealed that the portion of the game 's narrative portrayed on the bottom DS screen is presented from Akane 's point of view during the first Nonary Game . Through morphic fields , she connected to Junpei during the second Nonary Game , witnessing several possible futures and passing that information to Junpei to help him survive . Junpei then faces the same sudoku puzzle Akane did , and relays the solution back to Akane in the past , allowing her to escape with Seven and the other children . Junpei realizes that Akane was Zero and , with assistance from Santa , had recreated the game and all the events she had witnessed in order to ensure her survival . As they escape they discover that the game had taken place in Building Q the entire time , and that Akane and Santa have fled , leaving behind a car with Ace restrained in the trunk . In the game 's epilogue , they drive away hoping to catch up to them and , shortly after , pick up a hitchhiker whom Junpei recognizes as Alice .

= = Development = =

Nine Hours , Nine Persons , Nine Doors was developed by Chunsoft and directed by Kotaro Uchikoshi . Chunsoft had made successful visual novels in the past , but wanted to create a new type of visual novel that could be received by a wider audience ; they contacted Uchikoshi and asked him to write visual novels for them . He came up with the idea to include puzzles that are integrated within the story , and need to be solved in order for the player to make progress .

The inspiration for the story was the question " where do mankind 's inspirations come from ? " ; Uchikoshi researched it , and found the British biochemist Rupert Sheldrake 's theories of morphogenetic fields , which became the main theme of the game . The theory is similar to telepathy , which answers the question of how organisms are able to simultaneously communicate ideas to each other , without physical or social interaction . Uchikoshi used the theory to develop the concept of esper characters , which are able to either transmit or receive information from another individual . Because of the vital role of the number 9 in the plot , each of the characters was based off one of the nine personality types from the Enneagram of Personality . Another source of inspiration was the visual novel Banshee 's Last Cry , which , like Nine Hours , Nine Persons , Nine Doors , begins with putting the characters in a state of discomfort .

Uchikoshi started writing the script by working on the ending first . From there , he would continue to work backwards , in order to not get confused when writing the plot . The game 's setting , with characters who are trapped and try to escape , was meant to embody two of humanity 's instinctive desires : the unconscious desire to return to one 's mother 's womb and shut oneself away , and the desire to escape and overcome one 's current condition . This was a theme Uchikoshi had used before , when writing the visual novel Ever 17 : The Out of Infinity . Among scrapped story elements were the use of hands as a major part of the story ; in the final stages of production , Uchikoshi 's higher @-@ ups did not accept this focus , forcing him to re @-@ write the story . The characters were originally supposed to be handcuffed to each other as they try to escape , but the idea was scrapped as it was seen as overused , with appearances in games such as Mahou Shoujo Riska .

The Escape sequences were created to appeal to players ' instinctive desires : Uchikoshi wanted them to feel the instinctive pleasure that he described as " I found it ! " . For the puzzles , he would consider the details within the story , and the props and gimmicks found in the game ; after deciding on them , they were integrated with the puzzles . He also used puzzle websites as reference . He did not design the puzzles himself , instead leaving the puzzle direction to other staff , while checking it multiple times .

= = Release = =

Nine Hours , Nine Persons , Nine Doors was originally released in Japan by Spike on December 10

, 2009 , for the Nintendo DS . An American release followed on November 16 , 2010 . In the United States , a replica of the in @-@ game bracelets was included with pre @-@ orders at GameStop ; due to low pre @-@ orders , Aksys made these available on their website 's shop , both separately and bundled with the game . Upon release , Nine Hours , Nine Persons , Nine Doors became the eleventh Nintendo DS game to be rated M by the ESRB . Coinciding with the release of the game 's sequel , Zero Escape : Virtue 's Last Reward , Nine Hours , Nine Persons , Nine Doors got a reprint titled Zero Escape : Nine Hours , Nine Persons , Nine Doors , with new box art featuring the Zero Escape brand . The game 's soundtrack was published by Super Sweep on December 23 , 2009 . A novelization of the game , titled Kyokugen Dasshutsu 9 Jikan 9 Nin 9 no Tobira Arutana , was written by Kenji Kuroda and released by Kodansha in two volumes in 2010 : Ue and Shita .

An iOS version of the game , 999 : The Novel , was developed by Spike Chunsoft as the second entry in their Smart Sound Novel series . It was released in Japan on May 29 , 2013 , and worldwide in English on March 17 , 2014 . This version lacks the Escape sections of the Nintendo DS version , and features high resolution graphics and an added flowchart that helps players keep track of which narrative paths they have experienced ; additionally , dialogue is presented through speech bubbles . In 2016 , Spike Chunsoft announced that they would port the game to other platforms , with added voice acting .

### = = = Localization = = =

The North American localization of the game was done by Aksys Games ; Chunsoft was introduced to them by Spike when looking for a company that could publish the game in North America . When Aksys evaluated the game , many at the company did not believe in it and turned it down ; as many of the people who evaluate games at Aksys do not speak Japanese , it was difficult for them to determine whether a game was good or not . In the end they decided to localize it , which was considered a big risk for the company .

The localization was done by the philosophy of keeping true to the spirit of the original Japanese , making dialogue sound like what a native speaker of English would say instead of strictly adhering the original 's exact wording . The localization editor , Ben Bateman , did this by looking at the writing from a wider view , line by line or scene by scene rather than word by word or sentence by sentence , and thinking about how to convey the same ideas in English . Most parts of the game that include a joke in the localization also have a joke in the Japanese version , but a different one ; Bateman did however try to make similar types of jokes , with similar contents and ideas . The game 's use of Japanese language puns led to problems , as many of them relied on Japanese dialects to function ; for these , Bateman replaced them with new puns in English . He was given mostly free rein in what he could change or add , as long as it did not disrupt the plot .

During the localization , Bateman had to keep track of the numerous plot points throughout the game , as the script had not been written in chronological order due to the numerous endings . Localizing the game took roughly two months . Another big challenge was getting the localization done in time : Nobara Nakayama , the game 's translator , worked on it for 30 days , and the editing process took two months . Because of this , Bateman had to do most of the work " on the fly " . Nakayama had started playing the game prior to starting work on the localization , but did not finish playing it until she was more than halfway through translating it ; after learning that the plot hinged on a Japanese pun , they had to halt the localization , discuss it with Uchikoshi , come up with a solution , and go through the whole game to make sure that it still made sense .

### = = Reception = =

Nine Hours , Nine Persons , Nine Doors holds a score of 82 / 100 at the review aggregator Metacritic , indicating generally favorable reviews . It was a commercial failure in Japan , with 27 @,@ 762 copies sold in 2009 and an additional 11 @,@ 891 in 2010 , reaching a total of 39 @,@ 653 copies sold . Meanwhile , American sales were described as being strong ; according to Uchikoshi , this was a surprise , as the visual novel genre was seen as being particular to Japan and

unlikely to be accepted overseas .

The writing and narrative were well received by critics , with Andy Goergen of Nintendo World Report labeling it as " a strong argument for video games as a new medium of storytelling " . Reviewers at Famitsu called the story enigmatic and thrilling . Carolyn Petit at GameSpot felt that the lengthy Novel sections amplified the fear and tension throughout the game , while Heidi Kems of GamesRadar compared them to " high @-@ quality thriller novels " . Jason Schreier of Wired criticized the prose for being inconsistent , but said that the use of the narrator was clever and unusual . Susan Arendt at The Escapist called the story multi @-@ layered and horrifying . Zach Kaplan at Nintendo Life liked the dialogue , but found the third @-@ person narration to be dull and slow , with out @-@ of @-@ place or clichéd metaphors and similes . Both Chris Schilling at Eurogamer and Lucas M. Thomas at IGN felt that the urgency portrayed in the game 's story sometimes was at odds with the tone or timing of the dialogue , such as lengthy conversations while trapped inside a freezer , or lighthearted dialogue and jokes . Thomas called the premise gripping , and said that the mythology , conspiracies and character backgrounds were engrossing . Tony Ponce at Destructoid said that the characters initially seemed like a " stock anime cast " , but that the player discovers more complexity in them after moving past first impressions . Kaplan felt that each character was well developed , fleshed out and unique , and could pass for real people .

A Famitsu writer said that they enjoyed solving puzzles , and that it gave them a sense of accomplishment ; similarly , Goergen , Petit , Schilling and Arendt called the puzzles satisfying to solve . Goergen found some puzzles to be cleverly done , but said that some were esoteric . Ponce and Petit liked that the puzzles never became " pixel hunts " , and how everything is visible as long as the player looks carefully ; because of this and the lack of red herrings , time limits and dead ends , Ponce found it to be better than other escape @-@ the @-@ room games . He applauded the large amount of content , saying that even someone only buying the game for the puzzles would be satisfied . Schilling and Thomas appreciated the puzzles , but found some solutions and hints to be too obvious or explanatory . Kems found the puzzles excellently done and challenging , but disliked how difficult it was to reach the true ending . Kems and Schreier appreciated how the puzzles felt logical , while they , along with Thomas and Arendt , criticized how the player has to re @-@ do puzzle sequences upon subsequent playthroughs . Goergen , Schreier , Thomas and Arendt all appreciated the fast @-@ forward function , as it made repeated playthroughs more bearable , but Thomas felt that it didn 't go far enough in speeding up the process .

Goergen found the sound design unmemorable , saying that the music does not add much and that players would be likely to mute the game after hearing the " beeping " sound effect used for dialogue for too long . Meanwhile , Ponce and Petit liked it : Ponce called the score " masterful " and said that it " gets under your skin at the right moments " , while Petit said that she appreciated the sound , which she called atmospheric and " [ sending ] shivers up your spine " . She was unimpressed with the environments , but said that they were clear and easy to look at . She liked the character portraits , calling them expressive and , paired with the dialogue , enough to make the player not care about the lack of voice acting . Ponce , too , felt that the game did not need voice acting . He felt that the way the game favored textual narration over animated cutscenes made it more immersive , allowing the player to imagine the scenes . Goergen said that the graphics were well done , but that they did not do much for the atmosphere . Kaplan called the presentation " awesome " , saying that it looked great and that the artwork stood on its own despite the simplicity of the animations , and that the soundtrack was " fantastic " .

= = = Accolades = = =

The game has won some awards : IGN awarded it the Best Story of 2010 award ; RPGFan gave it their award for Best Graphic Adventure of 2010 on a handheld system ; and Destructoid awarded it their Editor 's Choice Award . Bob Mackey at 1UP.com featured Nine Hours , Nine Persons , Nine Doors on a list of " must @-@ play " Nintendo DS visual novels , citing its story , themes and " zany narrative experimentation " , and Jason Schreier at Kotaku included it on a list of " must @-@ play " visual novels worth playing even for people who do not like anime tropes . RPGFan included it on a

list of " 30 Essential RPGs of 2010 @-@ 2015 " , calling it " one of the most engaging and thoughtful narratives [ they ] had ever seen in a video game . "

= = Sequels = =

Nine Hours , Nine Persons , Nine Doors is the first game in the Zero Escape series , and was originally intended to be a stand @-@ alone game . The development for the sequel began after the first game got positive reviews . Zero Escape : Virtue 's Last Reward , the successor to Nine Hours , Nine Persons , Nine Doors , was announced in August 2011 . Developed by Chunsoft for the Nintendo 3DS and PlayStation Vita , the game was first released on February 16 , 2012 in Japan , and later that year in North America and Europe . Virtue 's Last Reward also follows a group of nine people , and focuses on game theory , specifically the prisoner 's dilemma . Zero Time Dilemma is set between the events of the previous two games , in a facility intended to test the logistics of a Mars colony and the psychology of the people living within it , and has morality as its main theme .