

The year is 2002, the Gamecube's been out for a hot minute and Nintendo realizes they haven't made a Mario Party for it. Can't have that, the system's **starved** for Mario content, so then we got one of them. We got four of them, actually. Alongside Mario Kart: Double Dash, Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour, Mario Power Tennis, Mario Superstar Baseball, Super Mario Strikers, DDR Mario Mix. Hey, at least Golden Sun hadn't been sacrificed yet! The first Mario Party on the Gamecube was a revolutionary title, most known for being the first Mario Party on the Gamecube.

Yeah, okay, so look: I don't think I can muster up the energy for this one. Not only is Mario Party 4 just another Mario Party game, I happen to think it kinda sucks, and none of my friends ever want to play it with me. Probably for good reason. It's bland, frustrating, and doesn't really do a lot to advance the series. In fact, it does quite a bit to **regress** it.

That, however, doesn't change the fact that this **is** yet more Mario Party, and this is yet another episode of a series that seeks to examine the finer points of the Mario Party games. What makes them tick? How well do they balance luck, skill, and strategy? Which mini-games are the best? What boards are the best? Does anyone really care about this stuff besides me? And, in the end: do they make for a sufficiently fun Mario Party? Welcome to another episode of Chance Time!

Wait wait wait - Reversal of Fortune? Really? You've gone and changed the name of one of your most iconic features, you freaks. What am I supposed to do now? This title doesn't even make sense anymore. Ah, whatever, we're rolling with it anyway. Chance Time!

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Before we begin proper, I've never really explained how I play these games online with my friends. So, if you're interested in playing Mario Party with your friends online, I would join the Mario Party Netplay discord, follow the necessary links, and download the specialized builds of Project64 and Dolphin. These builds are optimized for netplay, include 100% save files, and have a host of quality of life hacks including increased speed. It's really the best way to play the older Mario Party titles in the modern day, but I will ask you to **please** not ask the discord for ISOs or ROMs. They will not provide those for you, you'll have to figure that out on your own.

Where you get your hands on those **items** is entirely up to you, but before you do that, may I recommend protection? After all, this video is brought to you by NordVPN. Using NordVPN, you can completely eliminate the notion of internet regional barriers. As far as your internet connection is concerned, you can live in the UK, Canada, Australia: anywhere your heart desires! You can bypass the regional restrictions of your favorite streaming sites, or even just make it easier to access websites in another language. Best of all, there is a strict no logging policy. NordVPN will not track or collect your private data. They simply provide you the tools to free yourself: the internet is yours for the taking. Don't let yourself be stopped from playing some Mario Party with your friends. You can get a huge discount on a two year plan right now if you

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And now, let's jump into the mini-games.

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## Mini-games

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Here's the thing, despite my distaste for Mario Party 4, its minigames don't immediately scream trouble. At least, not at the outset. You know the drill by this point, we start with the 4-player minigames.

Booksquirm, Manta Rings, and Mr. Blizzards Brigade are all about precise movement, avoiding obstacles while contending with other players. In Manta Rings, you have to mash the A button and make sure you've successfully pushed your opponent away from the ring you're about to enter. In Mr. Blizzards Brigade, you have to contend with ice physics, avoiding the snowballs that will freeze you, making sure not to bump into your opponents. Finally, Booksquirm is one of the most iconic minigames in the series, where you have to stand under one of the holes in the page above you. As the game goes on, the pages turn faster, the amount of holes to stand under decrease, and it can get pretty hectic. It's easy to see why this became such a favorite.

Toad's Quick Draw is all about timing. Toad will quickly hold up a color, and you have to shoot that balloon before anyone else. There's always this tense build-up before Toad raises the flag, and it's funny to see everyone scrambling afterwards. Mario Speedwagons is similarly about a kind of timing, where you have to make sure you switch gears as soon as your speedometer hits the red. This mini-game, alongside Three Throw, are a bit too easy to game once you know the optimal timing, though. Three Throw especially, there's a specific rhythm you can perform to always land basketballs in the highest scoring middle baskets. Depending on where you're standing, you'll also be able to lock most other players out of the middle baskets fairly easily, giving you an unfair advantage in many circumstances.

Photo Finish is a little too simple for my liking. You have to finish a jigsaw puzzle before anyone else. That's pretty much it. You're working with eight pieces so it's a pretty quick game. Since there are only so many puzzles, eventually you're gonna run into a player who knows where all of the pieces go, and then it just becomes a bit of a curbstomp. I think maybe this minigame needed a bit more of a shakeup. The pieces display moving pictures, which you'd think would be a bit disorienting. But the movement never fundamentally changes what you're looking at, so it's no different from a regular jigsaw puzzle. And even if the moving backgrounds did regularly

change to throw the player off, only having eight pieces means that the potential complexity is reduced a lot. It's just a bit underwhelming. A puzzle minigame that isn't underwhelming, though, is Bob-omb Breakers. This is similar to the color match game in Mario Party 3, but with a twist that makes it even more fun. Instead of being locked to your own board, you can now place blocks in someone else's section, meaning everyone is essentially playing with the same board. The player that gets the points for a chain is the one who initiates it. It's so much fun to block other players, or swoop in and steal their chains. It's really chaotic, and fits the spirit of Mario Party much better than everyone playing individually.

Slime Time and Domination are your classic "mash a to win" which may as well be a recurring staple. 2 renditions of it is a bit much, though, I think we'd be okay with just the one. Especially since "Take a Breather" has the spirit of a mashing mini-game, you simply mash the L and R buttons instead. It can start to feel like they're padding out the minigame roster just a little bit. Mario Medley is the best rendition of this minigame, where you're placed into a swimming competition. You spam buttons here, but you're not trying to see who's the fastest. Instead, you have a stamina bar to keep track of, meaning this is actually a minigame about maintaining as much speed as possible, without going overboard. You can't save too much stamina or you'll fall behind pretty quickly, but you can't use too much of it or you won't be able to spend all of it at the home stretch. You can never quite tell who's in the lead, players will bounce in and out of first place fairly regularly, and it almost always ends as close as it began. It's a hell of a lot more engaging than "spam this button."

The 2v2 minigames are, unsurprisingly, the best of the bunch. It's really hard to screw these up. I'd say the only one which feels a little awkward is Cheep Cheep Sweep. The idea here is to get your partner to move Cheep Cheeps into your net, which is all well and good, but I find the hit detection on your net to be a little too wonky. The Cheep Cheeps can also just completely swerve around you for some reason, meaning it often feels like a crapshoot. Literally every other 2v2 is perfect, though.

The Great Deflate asks you to time your ground pounds with your partner to deflate an inflatable thwomp. A really fun challenge of teamwork and, might I just say, one of the cutest ideas for a minigame in the series. Right Oar Left is about communicating what direction you want to go. Moving your right oar turns you to the left, and your left to the right. Moving them both moves you forward. You have to make sure both of you are on the same page, avoiding obstacles and keeping up your speed to make it to the end as quickly as possible. Order Up is a memory-based challenge. Memorize the position of the food items before they spin, and uncover the two items Toad is looking for. You can announce which items you'll be memorizing so your partner can focus on something else. A fun test of your memory. Pair-A-Sailing sees one player on the boat and another on the parasail. The player on the boat has to avoid obstacles in their path, sure, but they also need to be mindful of their speed. Speeding up will make the parasailer fly higher, while bumping into obstacles or otherwise losing your speed will make them descend. It's about making sure your partner on the parasail is in the best possible position to swipe those coins, it's a really creative one that I like a lot.

I think my favorite 2v2, though, is Dungeon Duos. There's just something about it. Each player has to help each other through this dungeon, whether it be through button mashing, platform turning, warp pipe jumping, or air pumping. It's this huge gauntlet where one mistake can put you quite a ways back. It tests your ability to mash, it tests your coordination and trust in your partner to platform well, it tests your ability to spread out and most efficiently find the correct warp pipe, and it tests your L and R pressing rhythm to pump up the hot air balloon as efficiently as possible. I've never been in Dungeon Duos and had a bad time, unless I was paired with a CPU.

And, as per usual, 1v3s are fairly hit or miss. Hop or Pop is pretty impressive in just how much fear it's able to put into me from the start. The three can only bounce around in their balls, while the one can move freely to try to pop them. I think what makes this such a tense skirmish is the difference in freedom of control. The best option the three have is this triple jump that can cover a lot of height and distance, but once that's over, you're left sitting there contemplating your next move. Meanwhile, the player looking to pop you has the freedom to do basically whatever they want, though they are pretty slow. You can bump into your partners, too, and it's always terrifying.

You move from that great 1v3 to Fish N' Drips. There's not much room for debate here, the one player has a massive advantage. The idea is that the one player gets a sequence of buttons they have to input quickly, while each of the three players is given one button to press when it's their turn. That's all well and good, but the three players have to wait for the bucket to be passed to each individual player before they get to press their button, while the one player can just quickly press theirs and dump the bucket. Assuming both sides are performing optimally, the one player will always win, because they have much less waiting time. I have almost never seen the three players win this minigame, even when the one player makes a few notable mistakes, it's comical how one-sided it is.

Candlelight Flight is pretty fun, you have to get your squirt guns to cross paths with the one player carrying a candle. The squirt gun is pretty pathetic, if we're being honest, and it's really hard to tell if your line of water is even going to hit the one player. Because of that, though, it becomes more about predicting where the one player will move, and attempting to trap them. I'd say it's fairly well-balanced, if not a little in favor of the player with the candle due to how many hits they can take and how easy it is to avoid the water.

Money Belts is even more comically one sided than Fish N' Drips. The one player will just get all of the coins on the top belt. Yeah, you can **technically** fall down if you're really bad, but the majority of one players are going to nab nearly all of the coins, leaving only scraps for the three with virtually nothing they can do about it. I've never seen a team of three get themselves a coin bag, it's just too easy for one player to get them all. And what **really** sucks about this is that it's a coin minigame, meaning it does indeed count towards the minigame star. So one player will get two or three free minigame wins without even trying.

The rest are pretty much the same. Making Waves is pretty fun, try to knock the player off the middle platform by ground pounding. Blame it on the Crane is a little too easy for the three to juke the slow moving crane, unless the crane mover gets a lucky prediction. These minigames are almost always hit or miss.

Though there are only six of them, the Battle minigames on offer are some of the tightest we've ever seen. Trace Race is an extremely novel idea, where you have to trace a line with your crayon, doing little loops and harsh turns. It's actually pretty difficult to trace this thing while also moving. Chain Chomp Fever is a classic, forcing four players into a small arena and asking them to avoid the fire on the ground and the Chain Chomp chasing after them. It even has a cool element of scaleable difficulty, where if the chain Chomp runs out of walls to hit, it will immediately start running somewhere else. If two players manage to last long enough, the chain Chomp will be blasting across the screen at Sonic speeds. This one's always fun.

Paths of Peril is a **bit** too luck-based for my liking, since you can theoretically pick all the worst paths, but since it is also founded on skillful maneuvering, I give it a pass. It's fun to try making it through this obstacle course as fast as possible without falling off. You can even hang back a bit to watch the path that another player might take. That way, you can pick the other shorter path, or pick the same shorter path and try to get through it faster than your opponent. It's fine enough. However, the king of all Battle Minigames, the returning champion, the best luck-based minigame to ever exist: Bowser's Big Blast. It's good for all the same reasons it was in the second game. It's tense, it's funny, it's the chaos and catharsis of Mario Party in its purest possible form, and proof positive that sometimes luck-based mechanics can be good fun.

And now, a series first: Bowser minigames. Occasionally, when you land on a Bowser space, you'll be forced into one of three Bowser minigames with the other three players. The ultimate loser will lose half of their coins, all of their coins, or even an entire star, so no matter the minigame, the tension is high. Darts of Doom is a fairly simple timing-based minigame, finding the best time to stop the cursors and throw your darts to get as many points as possible. Trying to avoid the Bowser bullseye can be pretty difficult and might make you wait longer than you should to press that button. Balloon of Doom is really fun too, where you each take turns ground pound inflating a Bowser balloon. You can ground pound at the height of your jump to inflate it more, or do a small ground pound to inflate it less. You better hope you're not the one to pop that balloon, basically, and it can be fun to do huge ground pounds if you know you aren't in danger. The fact that the loser is punished so severely is enough to make even the simplest of concepts all the more terrifying.

Which brings me to my favorite of the bunch: Fruits of Doom. The premise is simple. Bowser will rattle off a list of fruit, slow for a few seconds, and lightning fast for the rest. It's up to you to figure out how many of each fruit he asked for. Basically, there's an assortment of fruit available. As long as you give him a fruit that he asked for, you're good. He might even ask for the same fruit multiple times, giving you more wiggle room. But what I absolutely love about this minigame

is that there's just no way you're going to be able to see everything that he asked for, meaning someone will eventually be put in a situation where they have to take a wild guess. Bowser, the madman, can also fake you out before taking a bite, even if it's the correct fruit. It's such a rollercoaster of emotions, and it makes me wish these bowser minigames were more common. Of course, you don't want to be playing these all the time, but more often than not, landing on a Bowser Space just spawns Koopa kid, and it's kind of a bummer considering how rare Bowser spaces usually are. Still, Bowser minigames are much better than the standard roulette you used to get, and I'm glad 4 was able to introduce them.

While most of 4's minigames are fun, there are a few things which make this selection feel a bit underwhelming. This game only has 34 minigames in its regular rotation compared to 3's 40. There are two less battle minigames overall, and duel minigames have been completely removed. Though you could say Bowser minigames make up for that, their relative rarity means that you almost never see them. So, not only are there a few too many boring or frustrating minigames than usual, the relative lack of them means you'll be potentially repeating them far more frequently. It's certainly a solid set of minigames, but it's not really even close to being the series' best.

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So, before we can dig deep and analyze the boards, we're gonna have to go over how the board mechanics have changed. Fairly notable changes have been made, and to be frank: most of them aren't great.

One of the first things you'll notice is the lack of items. Mario Party 3 had 20 potential items to grab, and many of them were game-changers. Reverse Mushrooms let you move backwards, Cellular Shopper gave you a portable shop, Bowser Phone let you force a Bowser space; and then, of course, if you got one of the super rare items, you'd be setting the game to the last five turns or forcing someone to play Game Guy. Mario Party 3 had a wealth of options available to the player at any one time, lending the game much more strategic potential. A lot of the time, the choice of what item you want to buy at the shop, or what item to shoot for in a minigame, was a paralyzing one.

Mario Party 4 kept only the essentials. Magic Lamp warps you to the star, Chomp Call moves the star space, Warp Pipe switches player positions, Swap Card switches items, and Boo Ball is a portable coin or star steal. It's pretty disappointing that we lost so many cool items with nothing to really replace them. But KingK, you say, what about the Mega and Mini Mushrooms? Entire boards revolve around these items this time, so isn't that a worthy replacement? Well, you'd think so.

Basically, item spaces in this game have been reduced to a 50/50 guess. One box has a mega mushroom, the other has a mini mushroom. Mega Mushrooms function like normal mushrooms in that you get an extra dice block, but with a few additional properties. Firstly, you'll steal ten

coins from whoever you pass while you're Mega, meaning they're also a great offensive tool. Unfortunately, it also has the property of completely bypassing board events such as the lottery, shop, and the star space itself. Meanwhile, the mini mushroom won't bypass board events, but it will reduce your dice block range. Now, you're rolling from 1 to 5. Using this, however, will let you access mini-exclusive board events, and slide through mini-pipe exclusive pathways. Functionally, it replaces the skeleton key doors.

There's a lot about this system that I admire. Giving Mushrooms more utility is a cool idea. No longer do you simply buy a mushroom for more dice blocks: you're buying it to steal coins, or you're buying it to access a restricted path. Every board has a bevy of new events to incorporate the mini mushroom, and the Bowser board even has a cool mechanic involving the Mega Mushroom... but then, there's the problem with this system. For the central mechanic Mario Party 4 is hedging its bets on, these items are not nearly as useful as you'd imagine. A lot of the time, unless you're super far from the star, or there are a bunch of players which just so happen to be ahead of you, using a Mega Mushroom is not a great idea. You don't really want to be skipping these board events, much less skipping the star, so these mushrooms can quickly become dead weight if the opportunity doesn't present itself.

On the flipside, you'll almost always have a good use for a mini-mushroom. The kicker is that the mini-mushroom is a horrendous replacement for the skeleton key. Where before, you could pass by the door and put in the key: now, you have to land a few spaces before the pipe, use your mini-mushroom, and then hope you roll high enough to make it through the pipe. It's a cute idea, but practically, they're not very easy to rely on. There's a pretty good chance you'll shoot right over the possible five spaces before the mini pipe, and even more of a chance that you'll miss the mini-roll even if you do make it. I get that they wanted the mini mushroom to have some kind of drawback, but I really don't think limiting your max roll to 5 was a particularly good idea. I suppose it gives more value to the Super mini mushroom, lending you an additional dice block, but it just makes seeing these additional pathways and board events much rarer.

These problems wouldn't be as pronounced if all of the boards didn't build themselves around it. Item spaces are abundant, and literally all they do is give you either a Mega or a Mini-mushroom. All of the other items are confined to shops. Additionally, like skeleton key doors before them, mini-pipe pathways can sometimes have stars behind them: annoying in the n64 games, sure, but at least there you'd be guaranteed the pathway if you at least had a key. Here, it's a dice roll. It also locks a big chunk of each board's identity behind this roll. A bunch of cool **minigames** which dot the board that you can play for coins or items. They're neat little games, but you'll rarely get to see anyone play them. All you're really left to engage with is the newly added lottery, where you spin to see if you're a winner. It's a cool addition, but I don't really think it's enough to make up for what we've lost.

Even Chance Time sucks now. Instead of the perfectly fine dice block system from before, now you play some pinball. Supposedly, a random amount of power is applied to your shot, meaning even if you hit the ball with the same power every time, the ball will end up in a completely

different place. Cool, right? Except the third and final shot, where the resources you'll be trading are decided, 9 times out of ten you'll be doing coin swap. There's so much clutter on the board that the ball will pretty much always land in the leftmost spot. Coin swap can potentially be game changing, but it can also be fairly uneventful. I have personally almost never seen any star exchanges happen on this stupid pinball table and it really sucks the fun out of Chance Time.

Alright, well, you know: that all kinda sucks, but the core of the experience is still there. We've still got some decent items and mechanics, surely the boards themselves are good enough that this stuff shouldn't matter all that much right? Uhhhhhhhhhh.

We'll get the least important thing out of the way first: thematically they're some of the most uninspired boards in the series. Each board has the same general look to them, with spaces on floating walkways. A lot of the charm of previous boards is gone, because the very ground you walk on is the same every time. You get the surface level elements, a roller coaster in Toad's Midway Madness, a Roulette in Goomba's Greedy Gala, and musical instruments and candles in Boo's Haunted Bash: but that's about it. They're merely background noise, because all you're left looking at are the same buildings grafted to the same walkways. Is this a big deal? Not really, but I do think a board's visual charm can help its appeal. Mario Party 2's boards are, in part, good because of their general design, but they're also well-remembered because of their unique visual design and music. Everyone remembers Western Land, and I think there's a very good reason for that. What truly separates Goomba's Greedy Gala and Boo's Haunted Bash? Toad's Midway Madness and Koopa's Seaside Soiree? Not a huge deal, but it would have helped each board stand out more.

Alright, let's get down to brass tacks. Toad's Midway Madness is the standard beginner board. Here, the main gimmicks are the teapot junctions and the rollercoaster in the middle. Hitting a happening space will make the coaster move to the top right or bottom left of the board, depending on its last location. You can also choose to ride the coaster at either of these spots. The teapots change which direction they spit you out whenever anyone uses one, or whenever someone hits the designated happening space for it. I don't mind this board. I enjoy the rollercoaster gimmick, since you can avoid the rollercoaster path if you want to, for the most part. The Star space can spawn on this path, though, so you're gonna have to take the risk every once in a while. I also like the teapot junctions, in theory, since you can bypass one of them with a mini mushroom pipe, giving you a bit more control of when the junctions change.

Except, what I just said is again dependent on you rolling high enough to make it through the pipe in the first place, a constant problem among every board. Plus, the other teapot junction, the one at the very start of the board, is one of the worst things I have ever seen. You remember Mario's Rainbow Castle? How part of the fun of that board was trying to anticipate your opponent's roll, wiggling your way in and out of the pack so you ended up at Toad rather than Bowser? Toad's Midway Madness seems to have misunderstood what makes this good entirely and starts every player about ten spaces away from a teapot junction. One direction takes you

to the rest of the board, and the other takes you right back to start, looping around again. Not only is there a happening space nearby that can and will complicate things, there will always be **one** person who gets fucked over by this junction because they rolled too low. It's not even about rolling high or low, you just better hope you roll enough that someone either passes you up, or stays behind you long enough that you can make it through yourself.

I find that most every board in this game has **something** in it resembling this teapot junction, a mechanic so intrusive and punishing that it tends to ruin the experience for one or more players. Otherwise, I think this board is pretty well designed. If you want to get to the other side of the board quickly, you can ask Toad for a ride; I mentioned earlier that the second teapot junction is completely skippable with a mini mushroom, and the mini mushroom minigames are pretty fun. It's simply that, to experience what this board has to offer, you have to be one of the lucky saps who gets out of hell in the beginning, and you might just not be that lucky. I consider that to be a pretty massive problem, and unfortunately I don't think it gets much better from here.

Koopa's Seaside Soiree has a fun central mechanic. Much like the Koopa bank, whenever you pass one of the spaces in the middle, Koopa will take five coins from you and gradually build his little cabana. This will accumulate until someone lands on one of the nearby happening spaces, where Koopa has you pay for a visit to his cabana, and it's promptly washed away by the ocean. Basically like a Koopa bank except you **don't** want to land on that space. I find that to be a pretty interesting little central mechanic, but it's quickly overshadowed by the awful 50/50 banana peel junctions on either side of the board. On each path, there will be a 50/50 roll to decide whether you take the top path or the bottom path. Both bottom paths lead back to the bottom where you're eventually funneled into the middle again. However, unless there's a star on the bottom path, it's almost always the worst option since there are far more spaces to travel. The top paths are each the far more interesting options. One of them leading to a guaranteed lottery, and both of them leading to a mini pipe with boo and a mini-game respectively. The mini-pipe on the right, though, might be one of the most ridiculous pathways I've ever seen in a Mario Party game. So here's the deal: the mini-pipe is on the top path immediately after the banana peel junction. What you have to do is land right before the junction, use your mini mushroom, hope that you roll high enough **and** that you get to go to the top path. If any of those factors don't land in your favor, you aren't seeing this path. You just aren't. And it really sucks because it seems like there was a lot of effort put into these little mini-games, but you're almost never going to actually see them unless you get extremely lucky.

Not to mention, Boo is extremely rare in much the same way. You have to go to the top path, land before the pipe, use your mini mushroom, and roll high enough just to visit Boo. I suppose in this case it's fine to have a board where Boo is less common, and it gives more value to the Boo Ball, but I can't help but feel like a lot of the damage would have been mitigated if you just didn't need to use a damn item and roll to get into these stupid pipe pathways. As if to add insult to injury, there are happening spaces dotted across the board where you're forced to ride a Dolphin to another space, often completely fucking up your position. A good board in theory, absolutely ruined by its other mechanic.

Boo's Haunted Bash is a little less frustrating. Pink Boo is in the center of the board, and when you pass him, all of the pink boo pathways either light up, or fade away. There's not usually much behind these pathways except battle spaces and some happening spaces, and even then, when the bridges are out, you can take the coffin train to bypass one of those pathways anyway. It's simply a mechanic which makes it more inconvenient to get where you need to be, usually when the star is behind a pink pathway. It's easy enough to reach pink boo, so the mechanic doesn't become an overwhelming force on the entire board, instead just shifting the board layout every once in a while. One of the mini games is at least a little more accessible, and Boo is pretty available. It's a pretty standard board, maybe even a little boring. It does have Big Boo, though, and similar to Horror Land in Mario Party 2, whoever activates it will be able to steal coins from all three players, or if they have 150 coins, they can steal a star from each player. It's actually a little more feasible to see this than it was in Mario Party 2, since you only have to be the third person to land on the happening spaces: but it's still pretty damn rare, considering you need the pink boo pathways to be open to even land on the spaces in the first place. It's a fine little board, nothing too exciting, but nothing too frustrating either.

Bowser's Gnarly Party has **a lot** going on, and not necessarily for the better. There are crumbling bridge pathways which switch whenever three players pass it. Curiously, it isn't affected by mega or mini mushrooms at all, which is odd considering the entire game is built around them, but whatever. Not only are the solid bridges subject to change every single time Bowser appears, the crumbling bridges are likely to change all the time too since players will be passing over them like crazy. The good old deathloop is in force on the bottom and top of the board, meaning that you're quite likely to get stuck in both cases if the bridge isn't in your favor. Sometimes, you flat out **need** a bridge to be in a certain place to even reach the star space, meaning that you'll have to pass over it three times just to get it to change, and getting around this board isn't easy. Magic Lamps are more valuable than ever on this board, which sucks because on the top right and bottom left of the board, there are three happening spaces in a row that will burn up one of your items at random. Thankfully, you get mega Mushrooms by the shovel load, but if you happen to get here without one, you'll have to pray you don't lose something good. In a lot of cases you'll probably just want to use your Magic Lamp if you have one. They're the only happening spaces on the board too, so getting the happening star is a lot harder than usual. That leads us to Bowser himself.

Whenever you buy a star, Bowser will appear randomly on the board. He can only show up on potential star spaces, though. While active, he does a variety of things. Every 4 turns he is almost guaranteed to make everyone mini for one turn, which is just a swell mechanic, especially if you're behind those three happening spaces. Actually, it's even more devastating because you aren't allowed to use any of your items when mini, so you're probably gonna lose something. Better keep track of those mini turns, huh? Definitely not an obnoxious as hell gimmick for your Bowser board. Bowser himself will take half of your coins if you pass him normally. Unless you have zero in which case he gifts you 50. You can also get 50 if you pass him with a Bowser Suit, but considering that Bowser suits in this game are Uber rare, and you

can steal 30 coins from anyone you pass, there's almost no reason to do this. So, then, your alternate options are: go mini before Bowser and he'll send you back to start. Wonderful thing about the start space on this board is that you're forced to go either up or down depending on where the solid bridge is, so that's really fun. Your other option is to go mega and play one of two special minigames. Wrestling is actually pretty fun, it's a stamina battle where you try to knock your opponent off. If you can get one of the falling golden mushrooms, it'll pretty much secure you the win; but if you get the other minigame, well... it's just luck based. That's it. And if you lose this minigame, you lose half your coins. If you win, you're literally just allowed to pass. That's it. Bowser goes away until the next star is bought, but that's all. And honestly, in most cases, you probably want Bowser to stick around so he can torment other players. Realistically, unless you just have nothing to your name, using a mini mushroom is your safest bet, which unfortunately means a lot of heading back to start if Bowser is in a shitty place. And you really have no control over where he's gonna go because he changes position every time someone buys a star. I know the common response here is that Bowser boards are supposed to be frustrating, and I agree to an extent, but I still think it has to be a fun kind of punishing. Bowser Land was really good because it struck a nice balance. If you got caught in the path of the parade, you lost a ton of coins and were put back to start. But, you can switch the path of the parade by passing the various junctions, either saving yourself, or dooming your opponents. Plus, the Koopa bank and shops worked opposite to how they normally do, meaning you paid coins for a completely random item, and have to pay back the loan in the Koopa bank. It was an appropriately punishing board with a lot of potential for frustration, but it didn't completely lose itself in that. It was still a fun board in its own right, one that you could make sense of and strategize on. Bowser's Gnarly Party is a huge, complicated, luck-based, chaotic mess where absolutely nothing is guaranteed and stuff is just gonna happen, I guess. More power to ya if you like that kinda thing. I don't find it very fun.

Shy Guy's Jungle Jam is a fine board, a return to normalcy at the very least. It's pretty big, there's a lot going on, and it generally isn't frustrating. For that alone, I'd say it's probably the best board on offer. The central mechanic here is the river in the middle. There are a number of happening spaces where you make a wish. If the gods approve of your wish, nothing happens; but if they disapprove, the river floods the middle of the board, preventing you from crossing to the other side. Now, this is where Klepto comes in. If you're on the top left of the board, you can pay Klepto to take you to the right. If you're already on the right and the river's flooded, you can enter a mini pipe and take the shy guy raft across to the left. I think this board works pretty much perfectly. The central mechanic isn't too obnoxious and there are relatively simple ways to get around it, though they do require more work so that the central mechanic isn't literally meaningless. Both of the board minigames are out in the open, meaning it's much easier to interact with them. And the mini pipes are **just** mini pipes, so all you have to do to enter them is roll for it. And since shops are pretty common, getting a super mini on this board is pretty likely. You can get across the board quickly with mega Mushrooms too, if need be, meaning that pretty much everything has a use here. Boo is behind a mini pipe, so I guess he's pretty rare, but as I already established, Boo being a little rare and hard to get to isn't inherently a bad thing, and I think it works well for this board. Wow, yeah, I really have nothing bad to say here. Solid board.

It's good that we have Goomba's Greedy Gala, wouldn't want to get too comfortable would we? I consider this lovely board to be a **fucking trashfire**. Here are the central gimmicks. Much like Waluigi's Island you move to the center of the board, and are then put on one of four potential pathways. Unlike Waluigi's Island, however, there is no way to time where you're going if the roulette is slow enough. No, instead, this pathway selection is entirely based on RNG. Now, without any extra information, you pay 5, 10, or 20 coins for a better chance at getting to the quadrant where the star is. It's either that or a completely random other quadrant. Thanks to ZoomZike's excellent Identifying Luck series though, we can see that the ball will land in one of two predetermined spots. One of them on the path to the star, and the other a completely random spot. Simply paying 5 coins, apparently, gives you overwhelming odds to reach the star space, meaning that ten and twenty are pretty overkill. Now, that's all well and good, right? Well, a few things.

I had no idea that's how the roulette worked at all until watching this video, so I'd always just dump 20 coins in there for a guaranteed star space roll. Who knew that I was always going overkill here? Not just that, though, the fact that you can only pay to put yourself in the quadrant with the star is also quite an annoying way to set up this roulette. Although you can land on one of the white spots to get 20 coins and a free choice of where to go, every other time, if you don't want to go to the quadrant with the star, you just have to hope you go somewhere preferable. And there's actually a pretty good reason you might not want to go to one of the quadrants with a star, and that's because of the goombas. In each quadrant, there's a Goomba passby space where you roll a dice block to beat goomba's roll. If you beat his roll, you get ten coins and can continue onward. If you don't beat the roll, you get sent back to start. So, this mechanic is even more horrible than it initially sounds. Yeah, it can for sure suck to lose this dice roll and get sent back to start, but it honestly might even be preferable to the potential alternative. Depending on where you end up, winning this dice roll means being stuck in an eternal clockwise loop. The lower left quadrant, which can have two potential star spaces, is the absolute worst one, in my opinion. You can only get out by making the mini mushroom roll to reach the pipe, which as we've established is a pretty difficult thing to guarantee without a super mini for a multitude of reasons; or by failing this dice roll. Those are the only two ways out, barring a warp pipe or warp space. It is entirely possible, and pretty likely, that you'll just get stuck in a couple of these quadrants. Sure, you can skip over the roll with a mega mushroom, but not only does that mean you'll probably skip over the star space you might be aiming for, it also doesn't help **anyone** from becoming **un-stuck**. The top left quadrant is in a similar boat. Either fail the dice roll, or hit the two happening spaces to get out. Otherwise, you're just stuck. The right of the board is so much more forgiving and I don't really know why. No matter what, you head back to the start space anyway if you're on the right side, meaning getting stuck is impossible. The only tragic thing that can happen here is not beating Goomba and missing your chance to use boo, but I'd say your odds of passing boo by using a Mega Mushroom are much lower than passing a star usually is, depending on where you are anyway. Though that does leave the green path feeling, once again, like a fucking miracle pathway. There's only one potential star space here, meaning there's only one potential chance out of many that you can even pay Goomba to get good odds

to come to the green path. Not only that, there are a whopping three spaces before the mini pipe which leads to this board minigame, something that I personally have never seen in any of my casual games. Who is going to reach this before hell freezes over? Generally, I'm fine with risky stuff like this in small number. I like the idea of using a Mega Mushroom to bypass Goomba, but risking the star in the process. I like the idea of trying to use a mini mushroom roll to reach an exclusive pathway. I like that stuff in isolation, but when every single board, your entire game, is made up of these risky decisions, it starts to become very obnoxious, because it means there's literally no escaping them. You're gonna have to be making risky decisions all the damn time, and that throws off the balance way too much in favor of luck.

For that reason, I don't think the boards on offer here are all that impressive. Most of them have one or two gimmicks that completely ruin the flow of a match, and more often than not leads to frustrated bickering than genuine, strategic fun. This is, unfortunately, a very clear case in which the balance between luck and strategy is completely out of whack.

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Etc

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Mario Party 4 has a story mode! And it's about as useless as it was in 3. You get some exclusive minigames, I guess. That's kinda neat. You play a unique minigame with one of the board mascots after winning their board. Upon winning that minigame, you get their present. Two of them seem to be luck-based, though, so uh... good luck with that. You end with the Bowser Board and you get to do an incredibly easy final boss battle. I don't really expect much from these Mario Party story modes, but at least we get some cute little minigames out of it I guess. Actually, though, this story mode takes advantage of a feature that Party Mode also does: custom minigames. If you can believe it, Mario Party 4 has a feature where you can pre-select which minigames you can play during the board. Essentially you can make a custom minigame pack.

I actually didn't even know you could do this until very recently, but it's a feature I, unfortunately, flat out don't expect from Nintendo games. Options and them, they uh, they don't really mix. But it's cool to see that you and your group of friends are allowed to cut some of the minigames they don't like. Or hey, maybe you can fill a board with only the absolute worst minigames! That works too. It's just a surprisingly nice feature! Glad this will be sticking with the series. (What? It's only in **this** game? Why? **Literally why?**)

Other than that, you've got the extra mode, with some exclusive minigames. They're really not all that exciting. Randomly pick who ate the poison mushroom, or solve this picture puzzle. The boards you can play here revolve around the Mega and Mini mushroom, but instead of stars, you have to have the most coins by the end. They're alright, I guess. Gives more specific use to

the mushrooms than otherwise, but it's also kind of a crapshoot based on rolling better than everyone else. Not much here besides a quaint little distraction.

Finally you can look at your unlockable presents and little trophies. Neat, I guess. There's actually not a lot to Mario Party 4. The transition to the Gamecube didn't do it a lot of favors. It looks nicer, but a bunch of the items were cut, the boards are pretty generic, and mechanically very frustrating and luck based. There are less minigames overall, and the focus on mega and mini mushroom stuff threatens to sour the entire experience. Some good minigames and a few solid boards just can't salvage that for me, I'm sorry. My friends and I almost **never** choose to play Mario Party 4, there's really just nothing here that we can't get elsewhere. I'd still play it over the first Mario Party, I hate that game, but it's extremely underwhelming coming off 2 and 3.

Now, I'm gonna make a few changes to the end of video ranking. For the game rankings, we'll start using Tiermaker since it's eventually going to get a little out of hand, and having a tier list to refer back to will make explaining placements a lot simpler. It also gives me the opportunity to say that I have since changed my mind about Mario Party 3. Originally I put it below 2, but with a lot more playtime, I'm now of the opinion that 3 is more enjoyable for me. I just think the item system is a lot better, there are so many more mini games, all of them are completely original, I think it really does edge out. A few bad boards don't overshadow the good ones, because I really do think you can have a much better time on the good boards than you can in Mario Party 2, despite that game having a more solid overall selection. Mario Party 2 is still great though, don't get me wrong.

Unfortunately, we'll be placing Mario Party 4 just above Mario Party 1. And in terms of the board rankings, from worst to best, we have: Goomba's Greedy Gala, Bowser's Gnarly Party, Koopa's Seaside Soirée, Boo's Haunted Bash, Toad's Midway Madness, and Shy Guy's Jungle Jam.

On the next episode of Chance Time, we'll be taking a look at Mario Party 5, the next Gamecube Mario Party, one of the beefiest games in the series, and definitely one of the most controversial. Until then, my name has been KingK, and I hope you have some well-deserved fun today!