

How To Play Retro Games On Android?

Want to play retro games on your Android smartphones? Then, check out our guide to set up the emulators on your smartphone for retro gaming.

Gamers plus Android smartphones, a common combination these days – to the point that you carry it *ALL DAY* with you. So, why not play some classic retro games on them too?

Is that possible? Yes! You can enjoy the many retro games on your Android smartphones using *EMULATORS*. So in this article, we'll talk about:

- [Android Smartphone Gaming Compatibility](#)
- [Download An Emulator On Android Smartphone](#)
- [Get Some Retro Games “ROMs”](#)
- [Load The Emulation Core “Console”](#)
- [Emulator Gaming Experience On Android Smartphone](#)

To help you set up the emulator, let's look into this guide now!

How To Play Retro Games On Android?

In case you are not familiar with **emulators**, they are software that mimics the old consoles to let you play retro games on any device. So, here are the steps that you need to do, so you can emulate and play the retro games on an Android smartphone:

1. Android Smartphone Gaming Compatibility

The first and foremost thing that you need to do is check the specification of your Android smartphone. For this, you'll have to look into its:

- **Central Processing Unit (CPU)** – Is it capable of performing the heavy hardware computation for the game?
- **Graphic Processing Unit (GPU)** – Can it render the required visuals of the game?
- **Random Access Memory (RAM)** – Is the display memory enough to run the game smoothly? Will the levels load fast when launched?
- **Storage Space** – Does it have the space to store games?
- **Battery Life** – How long can you play the games on your Android smartphone?
- **Display Size** – Is the screen size large enough to view the gameplay comfortably?

You need to consider the fact that your Android smartphone is not for gaming purposes. Androids have indeed released gaming smartphones. But they are pretty expensive and can't offer the gaming experience of the dedicated gaming consoles. So, the better option is to go and buy the [original gaming console to play retro games](#).

But still, if you want to use your Android smartphone for retro gaming. Then, use a separate and decent phone for retro gaming. Not the one that you use on a daily basis. As emulators tend to use a lot of memory, hardware, and other resources. That causes your Android smartphone's battery life to reduce.

2. Download An Emulator On Android Smartphone

You can go for the free ones that are available on [Google Play](#). Because they are reliable and work great with most of the retro games. So, you'll have to:

- Go to **Google Play**, type in "emulators", and tons of emulator apps will display on your smartphone's screen.
- Among all the results, download the one that best fits your specifications and gaming requirements. But, don't forget to check out the feedback and ratings of other users for the emulators.

- We are installing **RetroArch** on our Android smartphone as a part of our guide. Since it's one of the top emulators available for free and supports almost all retro gaming consoles.

You can get the [RetroArch app directly from its website](#). But we recommend downloading from the device that you want to use as an emulator. Because Google Play will be able to detect whether your Android smartphone is compatible with it or not.

3. Get Some Retro Games “ROMs”

Remember the small box, called Game Cartridges? Now, of course, we can't use that with our Android smartphone. Instead, we use **ROMs** for it. To put it simply, ROMs are the software image – just like the game cartridges – that loads the game into any emulator.

But you have to make sure that:

- Your emulator app has a **console compatible with the ROMs** of the game.
- ROMs are **legal, authentic, and downloaded** from well-known official sites.

You can find ROMs on many official gaming sites. Some popular ROMs sites are Rom Hustler, Romspedia, Retrostic, ClassicGameRom, Gamulator, DopeROMs, and ROMsmania.

Just make sure to get any ROMs from official sources to avoid any illegal or copyrighted violation. Also, do not distribute the ROMs on the internet even if you get access to it. As it can have legal consequences since it's illegal.

So basically, it's all about downloading legal ROMs that are compatible with your emulator installed on your Android smartphone.

4. Load The Emulation Core “Console”

The Core is the emulation of the physical console on which the games were loaded to play. The official sites of emulators such as RetroArch, Dolphin, PCSX2, Stella, and others release Core updates from time to time. The better the emulation, the better the gaming experience will be.

So continuing the emulator setup, it's time to load the emulation core (or console) into the emulator. For that, you'll have to:

- Launch the **RetroArch on your Android smartphone**. Since this is the emulation software that we have installed for the guide. You can get other emulators from official sites.
- Select **Load Core**. There will be three options: a list of cores (if installed previously), online core download, and install/restore Core from directories.
- Tap **Download a Core**. Here you see the long list of emulated consoles available in RetroArch.
- Scroll and install the one that is **compatible with your ROMs**.
- A pop-up at the bottom will **confirm the Core's download**.
- Then head back to the **Load Core Menu**, where you'll see the **Core (or console)** in the upper section of the screen.
- Tap on the **Core** that you just downloaded. You'll see the **ROMs to play!**

The steps may vary if you are using some other emulator. More or less, you'll be able to get an experience of playing retro games on your Android smartphones with the emulated ROMs (Game Cartridge) and Core (Console).

5. Emulator Gaming Experience On Android Smartphone

Emulators may not work very well with some of the games. It has some emulation limits that cause it to lower the bar of gaming experience for a *TRUE* gamer. Because not all options or visuals can be put into such a small device. Plus, those games were not developed to work like this.

Now don't get up wrong. There are small consoles giving an exceptional gaming experience – like [Switch](#), [3DS](#), [PSP](#), and many others. But the *REAL PROBLEM* is, the Android smartphones weren't meant to be gaming devices. They do not have that kind of resources built in them.

Even if you try to enhance the gaming experience by connecting your Android smartphone to a larger screen for a better gameplay display. Or use a game controller instead of using its touchscreen. It just *DOES NOT FEEL RIGHT!*

Other than that, the gaming Android phones are not meant to play these games. They have their own separate library. Plus, these retro games were developed for a specific retro console.

So, the gaming experience with emulators on the Android smartphone will definitely be different. And your idea of enjoying the classic retro games will remain unsatisfactory.

FAQs About How To Play Retro Games On Android?

Still, got some questions? Let me answer some of the commonly asked questions here:

What consoles can you emulate on Android?

There are many free emulators available on [Google Play](#). It can work as a GameBoy Advance, Nintendo DS, Gamecube/Wii, NES, SNES, N64, PS1, and even more. There isn't any limit to it as emulators are evolving every day especially, due to the surge in retro gaming since the pandemic.

What is the best emulator for retro games?

Some of the popular emulators are RetroArch (Multi-System), Dolphin (GameCube and Wii), PCSX2 (PS2), DeSmuME (Nintendo DS), Stella (Atari), and many more. However, even being the best emulator does give you the actual retro gaming experience. And, it may be able to emulate well for some old games.

Are emulators legal?

Using emulators is perfectly legal. However, sharing copyrighted ROMs of games is illegal and not recommended to use in any case.

Are game ROMs illegal?

If you buy a physical or digital copy of the game, then it's legal. However, if it's not purchased from the game's official store or other official places, then it is illegal.

To Wrap Up

Being a game enthusiast, you might want to try some of your all-time favorite retro games on your Android device. Indeed emulators are impressive software, but they are not perfect. It doesn't give the same gaming experience. So, we highly recommend you get your hands on the [original retro games and classic consoles](#) to enjoy the nostalgia games at their fullest!