

# Video arcade

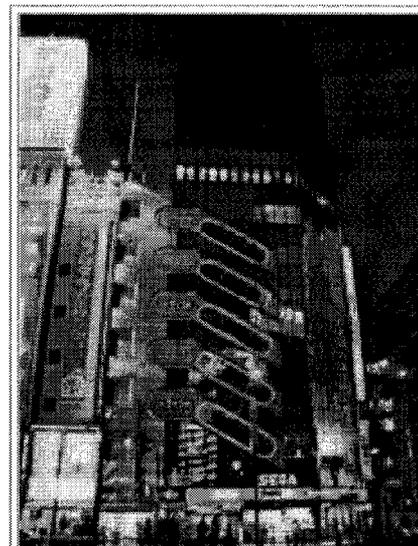
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A **video arcade** (also known as an **amusement arcade** in the United Kingdom, **game center** (ゲームセンター *gēmusementā*<sup>?</sup>) in Japan, or as an "arcade") is a venue where people play arcade video games that are housed in colourfully-decorated cabinets. The cabinets consist of a video monitor, gameplay controls (often a joystick) and buttons, computer hardware and software, and a coin-, token-, or magnetic card-based payment mechanism.

While most classic 1980s-era video games such as *Space Invaders* and *Donkey Kong* are played in tall upright cabinets, some games such as *Ms. Pac-Man* are played in smaller boxes with a flat, clear glass or acrylic glass top. As well, some car racing games such as *The Fast and the Furious* and flight simulation-style games include a seat or enclosed area for the player.

In addition to video games, arcades may also have other games, such as pinball machines, redemption games, merchandiser games, or coin-operated billiards tables. In some countries, some types of video arcades are legally allowed to provide gambling machines such as slot machines or pachinko machines.

Video arcades started springing up in the late 1970s and were most popular during the golden age of arcade games, the early 1980s. Arcades became popular with adolescents, which led parents to be concerned that video game playing might cause children to skip school. Many video arcades began closing in the late 1990s, as the technology of home video game consoles began to rival and eventually exceed that of arcade games. However, video arcades remained popular in Japan, where they are called game centers (ゲームセンター).



GiGO, a large Sega game center in Akihabara, a neighbourhood in the Japanese city of Tokyo

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## Types of games

The video games are typically in arcade cabinets. The most common kind are *uprights*, tall boxes with a monitor and controls in front. Customers insert coins or tokens into the machines (or use magnetic cards) and stand in front of them to play the game. These traditionally were the most popular arcade format, although presently American arcades make much more money off deluxe driving games and ticket redemption games. Japanese arcades, while also heavily featuring deluxe games, continue to do well with traditional JAMMA arcade video games.

Some machines, such as *Ms. Pac-Man* and *Joust*, are occasionally in smaller boxes with an acrylic glass top; the player sits at the machine playing it, looking down. This style is known as a *cocktail-style arcade game table*, since they were first popularized in bars and taverns. For other games on this type of machine, the players sit on opposite sides with the screen facing the player. A few cocktail-style games had players sitting next to rather than across from each other. *Gun Fight* had these type of tables.

Some arcade games, such as racing games, are designed to be sat in or on. These are sometimes referred to as *sit-down* games. Sega and Namco are two of the largest manufacturers of arcade games.

In addition to video games, arcades may also have other games, such as pinball machines and merchandiser games. Pinball machines have a tilted, glass-covered play area and use mechanical flippers to direct a heavy metal ball towards lighted targets. Redemption games use tickets that can be redeemed for prizes such as toys or novelty items. The prizes are typically behind a counter or in a glass showcase, and an arcade employee gives the items to the player in exchange for tickets. Merchandiser games reward winners with prizes such as stuffed toys, CDs, or other items dispensed directly from the machine.

Arcades typically have change machines to dispense tokens or quarters when bills are inserted. They also have vending machines which sell soft drinks, candy, and chips. Arcades may play music through a station over a public address system. Video arcades typically have subdued lighting to reduce glare on the screen and enhance the viewing of the games' video displays, as well as of any decorative lighting on the cabinets.

In some countries, some types of video arcades are legally allowed to provide gambling machines such as slot machines and pachinko machines. Large arcades may also have small coin-operated ride-on toys for small children. Some businesses, such as Dave & Buster's, combine a bar and restaurant with a video arcade.

## History

### 1970s and 1980s

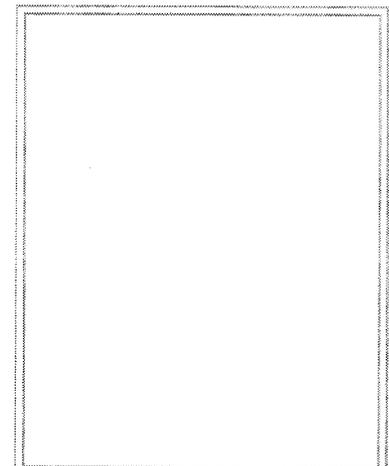
Arcades catering to video games began to gain momentum in the late 1970s with games such as *Space Invaders* (1978) and *Galaxian* (1979) and became widespread in 1980 with *Pac-Man*, *Centipede* and others. The central processing unit in these games allowed for more complexity than earlier discrete circuitry games such as Atari's *Pong* (1972).

During the late 1970s, video arcade game technology had become sophisticated enough to offer good-quality graphics and sounds, but it was still fairly basic (realistic images and full motion video were not yet available, and only a few games used spoken voice) and so the success of a game had to rely on simple and fun gameplay. This emphasis on the gameplay is why many of these games continue to be enjoyed today despite having been vastly outdated by modern computing technology.

The golden age of arcade games in the 1980s was a peak era of video arcade game popularity, innovation, and earnings. Color arcade games became more prevalent and video arcades themselves started appearing outside of their traditional bowling alley and bar locales. Games were designed in a wide



The *Orb* by *Music video arcade* was popular in video arcades during the 1980s.



variety of genres while developers had to work within strict limits of available processor power and memory. The era also saw the rapid spread of video arcades across North America and Japan. Video arcade games started to appear in supermarkets, restaurants, liquor stores, bars, and gas stations.

*Galaga*, a successful game of the Golden Age, borrows its theme from *Galaxian* and adds twists of its own.

In some cities and towns in the US, largely due to parents' demands, video arcades would be monitored by a sheriff or policeman to prevent truancy, and many children would not be allowed entry into the arcades unless the schools were closed. Police appearances near the arcades were also intended to discourage drug dealers or thieves.

High game turnover in Japanese arcades required quick game design, leading to the adoption of standardized systems like JAMMA, Neo-Geo and CPS-2. These systems were essentially arcade-only consoles where the video game ROM could be swapped easily to replace a game. This allowed easier development and replacement of games, but it also discouraged the hardware innovation necessary to stay ahead of the technology curve.

Most US arcades didn't even see the intended benefit of this practice since many games weren't exported to the US, and if they were, distributors generally refused to release them as simply a ROM, preferring to sell the entire ROM, console, and sometimes cabinet as a package. In fact, several arcade systems such as Sega's NAOMI board are arcade versions of home systems.

## 1990s

By the 1990s, the number of video arcades in North America was decreasing. Arcades experienced a short resurgence of popularity in the mid-1990s, but soon began to decline again. This decline was due mainly to the fact that the technology of home video game consoles began to rival and eventually exceed that of arcade games. Also, the rise of the Internet offered a recreational diversion that would keep many potential arcade customers home. Many arcades still exist in the US, but not in nearly the large numbers of the early 1980s. However, video arcades remained popular in Japan, where they are called game centers (ゲームセンター).

Japanese game centers are made up of four general types of machines: sit-down games, prize-awarding games, casino games, and photo booths. Sit-down games are still the most popular, and as mentioned above, Sega dominates the market for sit-down games. However, Konami's Bemani division has dominated the music simulation genre of games, which is becoming increasingly popular in Asian culture. Prize-awarding games often include machines such as the UFO catcher. Casino games (メダルゲーム, literally "medal game") include pachinko and slot machines, although players cannot win money from these machines. Instead, winnings are paid out in tokens (called "medals," hence the name), which may be used to play more games or redeemed for prizes.

In the United Kingdom, arcades were particularly popular in seaside resorts where, until around 1994, a game would cost between 10 pence and 30 pence. The decline of the traditional arcade, however, did not occur in line with the stagnation in improved technology. Indeed, it was the huge leap towards polygon 3D in the mid-1990s that caused the decline. As home console graphics improved, arcade games had to impress the potential player with expensive, novel cabinets featuring interactive guns, swords, footpads and other features.

With the improvements in arcade game technology came considerable price rises, often at £1 a game. This isolated the traditional teen male visitor and many of the businesses fell into decline. They were forced to accommodate more for their other traditional visitor group, the middle-aged male, which precipitated a shift towards gambling. As a result, many arcades in the UK today are comprised mostly of slot machines. This parallels the move in the US towards redemption gaming, which itself resembles gambling; redemption, however, is targeted towards children as well as adults.

## 2000s

In the mid-2000s, Madrid businessman Enrique Martínez updated the video arcade for the new generation by creating a "hybrid movie theater with...fog, black light, flashing green lasers, high-definition digital projectors, vibrating seats, game pads and dozens of 17-inch screens attached to individual chairs." At the Yelmo Cineplex in Spain, \$390,000 was spent refitting a theaters into a "high-tech video gaming hall seating about 50 people." In Germany, the CinemaxX movie theatre company is also considering this approach. It conducted a four-month trial with video games to test the level of demand for video gaming in a theater setting.<sup>[1]</sup>

Manufacturers started adding innovative features to games in the 2000s. Konami used motion and position sensing of the player in *Police 911* in 2000 and *Mocap Boxing* in 2001.<sup>[2][3]</sup> Sega started using "Tuning cards" in games such as the *Initial D* series of games allowing the customer to save game data on a card vended from the game. Arcade games continued to use a variety of games with enhanced features to attract clients, such as motorized seating areas, interconnected games, and surround sound systems. Redemption and merchandiser games are also a staple of arcades in the 2000s. One of the most popular redemption games, *Deal or No Deal* by ICE, simulates the popular television game show. Merchandiser games such as *Stacker* by LAI Games gives the player the chance to win high end prizes like iPods and cell phones.

## Major game center operators

- Sega
- Namco Cybertainment
- Taito
- Aeon Fantasy
- Fun Field
- Adores
- Capcom
- Mycal Create
- Wide Leisure
- Next Japan
- Soyu
- Atlus
- AmLead
- Banpresto
- Unica
- Matahari
- Round One

## See also

- List of video arcade games
- Joypolis
- European Gaming & Amusement Federation

## References

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2. ^ Police 911 Videogame by Konami (2000) - The International Arcade Museum and the KLOV ([http://www.klov.com/game\\_detail.php?game\\_id=9066](http://www.klov.com/game_detail.php?game_id=9066))

3. ^ MoCap Boxing Videogame by Konami (2001) - The International Arcade Museum and the KLOV ([http://www.klov.com/game\\_detail.php?game\\_id=8724](http://www.klov.com/game_detail.php?game_id=8724))

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