

# The History of the Xperia Play Sony Ericsson Android Smartphone

## Plus, the Best Games for the Xperia Play Smartphone

The Xperia Play smartphone, released in early 2011, [doesn't have anywhere near the specs of today's smartphones](#), of course. But, at the time, Android phones were still getting their feet wet in the smartphone market. I'd entirely forgotten about this gaming Sony Ericsson smartphone until I came across a YouTube video on the subject.

One of my favorite video gaming history YouTube channels is [Lady Decade](#), who I discovered as a suggestion after watching a video from [the Gaming Historian](#) (no longer publishing after 2026). In particular, Lady Decade focuses her content on retro game systems, many of which have been forgotten by today. She also covers why major video gaming systems failed to live up to expectations at their time of release. Lady Decade also covers bootleg "demakes" of popular Super Nintendo and Sega Genesis games for the 8-bit Nintendo Entertainment System. While these are amusing, it's the gaming system history that interests me more.

Here's her video about the Xperia Play:

<https://youtu.be/5leFKhZvtps>

As it happens, Lady Decade herself bought an Xperia Play phone at release, super excited by the prospect of playing PS One games on her mobile phone. Many of her co-workers at the time laughed at her, asking her why she didn't invest in a Blackberry instead. This Xperia Play phone was also going up against the fourth generation of Apple iPhones, [the iPhone 4](#) in particular, which had released the year before.

While it never saturated the mobile gaming market, the Xperia Play *did* succeed in its design for an early Android phone. Where the [Nokia N-Gage](#) failed with its extremely awkward design, the Xperia Play would succeed. It looked like a regular Sony Ericsson Android 2.0 phone, but it had a pull-out controller very similar to the PSP (PlayStation Portable). Not only was it designed like a regular controller, it also had touch pads to serve as analog sticks. From an actual control interface perspective, Sony succeeded.

The major selling point beyond its physical design was the ability for you to emulate Playstation One games with Playstation Pocket, a first-party emulator. You could get games legally for it through a special app store set up by Sony. It also did very well with third-party emulation of 8-bit and 16-bit consoles. Naturally, it also handled early Android mobile games just fine, too. The problem is, that's about as far as Sony went with this device, as while an Android PS2 emulator would be eventually made by a third-party, the Xperia Play could only handle some of the less complicated games. After all, it only had 400 MB of storage and 512 MB of RAM. For the time, that was an acceptable device, though.

That being said, it may surprise you to learn then that [the Xperia Play has actually enjoyed a revival even ten years](#) after its release as a mobile emulation system. While it can't emulate 32-bit games with any consistency, despite being a 32-bit device, retro gamers who only care about 8-bit and 16-bit emulation are perfectly happy with it.

The Xperia Play's storage space is extremely limited by today's standards. But, since it's no longer usable as an actual mobile phone, there's a workaround. Some people have figured out how to delete a lot of the unnecessary firmware to focus the device purely on retro game emulation. Also, after some finagling, it's even able to play some PSP games, thanks to being already scaled down for a mobile gaming experience.

## Best Games on the Xperia Play (Android)

Being a phone from 2011, obviously the Xperia Play couldn't update to Android 10, like its future Xperia cousins would starting with 2019 models. At launch, [Eurogamer covered the 60 Android and Playstation games playable on the Play](#). Naturally, this number would increase over the next few years, but not quite as high as some hardcore Playstation gamers might have hoped. There were a few more listed [here on CNet](#), but there isn't a comprehensive list I can find.

In December 2020, YouTube user Zealous Chuck uploaded a video for the [Top 10 Xperia Play games in 2020](#). These included:

- Asphalt 6 Adrenaline
- Assassin's Creed
- Avatar HD
- Brothers in Arms 2
- Bruce Lee: Dragon Warrior
- Dungeon Hunter 2
- Splinter Cell Conviction
- Star Battalion
- Starfront Collision
- Nova 2

Also, there's Crash Bandicoot (pre-installed) and other PS1 games you can still download, if you know where to look...

If you have any suggestions for the best games for this smartphone, please leave a comment so that I can check it out and add it to this section!

## Final Thoughts on the Xperia Play Smartphone

While I have no interest in purchasing one of these retro phones, it was a blast to watch Lady Decade fooling around with her original model that she still has in her possession. Of course, Android emulators have come a long way since, and today's phones can actually emulate Nintendo 64 and Playstation 2 games. The Xperia Play, however, being from 2011 is limited in which of these games it can actually run well, due to its limited specs. Of course, it's perfect for emulators for NES, SNES, Sega Genesis, Game Boy Advance, and Game Boy Color games.

It's a blast to take a look at this part of gaming history that I don't remember all that well; believe it or not, I didn't own a smartphone until 2013 when I purchased my Samsung Galaxy S4. Yeah, I was really late to the party, and all things considered, I wish I'd started with one of these Xperia Play phones.

As for Lady Decade, I highly recommend her channel, as well as her husband's, [Top Hat Gaming Man](#). They are stay-at-home parents who are raising their two sons with making gaming history documentaries on these channels as their career. I love supporting these kinds of people for their independent spirit and entrepreneurship.

*Do you have any gaming YouTube channels you enjoy, especially those who cover obscure gaming consoles and video games? We'd love to hear about them.*