

# Nintendo 3-D handheld goes on sale in Japan

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Nine-year-old Natsumi Miyasaka shows off Nintendo's newest computer game console, Nintendo 3DS, at retail store Big Camera in central Tokyo, Saturday, Feb. 26 , 2011. The Nintendo 3DS, offering glasses-free 3-D images, has gone on sale in Japan, ahead of a global rollout, and analysts say it promises to be the world's first 3-D mass-market product. (AP Photo/Koji Sasahara)

(AP) -- Nintendo's latest game machine, offering glasses-free 3-D images, went on sale in Japan on Saturday ahead of a global rollout, and analysts say it promises to be the world's first 3-D mass-market product.

"I'm so excited," said 9-year-old Natsumi Miyasaka, clutching her brand new blue 3DS portable that her father bought for her.

Lines formed outside Tokyo electronics stores, although they weren't as long as some previous gadget launches, as [Nintendo](http://www.nintendo.com) offered purchase

reservations in advance.

The Nintendo 3DS, which costs 25,000 yen (\$300) in Japan, goes on sale in Europe on March 25 for 250 euros, and arrives in the U.S. on March 27 for \$250.

Kyoto-based Nintendo Co. is banking on the 3-D technology as sales momentum gradually fades for earlier hits such as the [Wii](#) home console and predecessor DS models.

Nintendo expects to sell 4 million of the 3DS machines through the end of March - 1.5 million in Japan and the rest overseas. The company is expected to have no problems meeting that target.

"It is the most comprehensive handheld [gaming device](#) from Nintendo to date, with high-quality graphics and online features," said Hiroshi Kamide, an analyst with J.P. Morgan in Tokyo. "I believe the 3DS will be the first mass-market 3-D device."

While 3-D technology for TVs has created a buzz, and 3-D camcorders are also gaining some attention, such products have not sold in big numbers so far, making for a tiny fraction of overall TV and camcorder sales. So selling 4 million 3DS machines in a month would be significant for a 3-D product.

The 3DS looks much like older DS machines, and has two panels. The top panel shows 3-D imagery, giving players an illusion of virtual reality, such as a puppy licking the screen from inside the machine. The bottom screen is a touch panel.

The device also comes with three cameras, and allows the user to take 3-D photos. It doesn't require the special glasses needed for 3-D theater movies or 3-D game consoles like rival Sony Corp.'s PlayStation 3. They

also don't require 3-D TV sets.

Sony is promising a new handheld code-named NGP later this year, but has yet to give pricing and the machine does not offer 3-D gaming.

On the downside are growing fears about the health effects of too much 3-D. Some people have gotten sick by watching 3-D movies or playing 3-D games.

Nintendo has issued a warning that the 3DS could harm the eyesight of children 6 or younger, recommending they play in 2-D. It also says users should stop playing if they become tired or start to feel ill.

Although more game software is expected to be ready by the Europe and U.S. launch dates, only eight games were ready for the Japan launch. But the machine comes with several built-in games and other features.

Such drawbacks didn't faze Toyohisa Ishihara, a 43-year-old engineer, who stood in line for two hours to get his 3DS.

"The images seem to pop out. There is a sense of a world spreading beyond," he said. "I can't wait to play it."

Compared to Westerners, Japanese are expected to use 3DS for networking, creating avatars, listening to music and other lifestyle enjoyment, rather than just for games - partly because of their long daily train commutes.

"The 3DS is moving in on the territory typically held by Apple products," said Ricardo Torres, editor-in-chief of GameSpot, an online gaming review site. "I expect Nintendo to sell 3DS as fast as they can get them into stores."

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