

Nintendo gives 2nd glimpse of Wii U game machine

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The new WiiU console is seen during a demonstration at the 2012 International CES tradeshow, Tuesday, Jan. 10, 2012, in Las Vegas. (AP Photo/Julie Jacobson)

Nintendo Co.'s upcoming Wii U game console will come with a controller that has a big, touch-enabled screen. At first glance, that seems like an obstacle to the kind of casual multiplayer gaming that made the first Wii console such a breakout hit.

But in demonstrations Tuesday, the company emphasized that the Wii U will work with the cheaper, stick-like Wii controllers as well, making family multiplayer games feasible.

The Japanese company is giving some journalists hands-on time with the console on the sidelines of the International [Consumer Electronics Show](#),

which started Tuesday in Las Vegas.

It's the second time the U.S. media is getting a glimpse of the device, which was first shown in June. Nintendo said the device will go on sale after the next [Electronic Entertainment Expo](#) gaming trade show in Los Angeles in June.

Nintendo went against [conventional wisdom](#) with the original Wii in 2006. The quirky, cheap game console relied not on high-end graphics and complex buttons to lure in [hardcore players](#), but on simple motion controls to lure in everyone.

Although the company successfully courted [casual gamers](#) with the Wii, it is now facing increased competition from Apple Inc.'s iPhone and other devices that offer simple games. It had hoped to win new gamers through a 3-D handheld device. But sales were slow, and Nintendo slashed prices on the 3DS within six months.

The Wii U will be sold as a bundle with one touch-screen controller, which is almost as big as the [game console](#) itself. Nintendo hasn't said what the package or an extra controller will cost. Touch screens are expensive, often accounting for nearly half of the cost of a phone or a [tablet computer](#).

Nintendo's demonstrations reveal that the [touch-screen](#) controller is designed to work with older controllers. For example, in one of Nintendo's demonstration games, four players with Wii remotes chase a fifth, who uses the touch controller. The fifth player uses the screen on the controller to guide his movements, which are thus kept secret from the other players. The other players keep track of their own movements on the TV screen.

In another demonstration game, two players with Wii remotes

collaborate to fight a third, who zooms around in a spaceship, controlled through the touch controller.

The integration of the older remotes and the touch controller goes even further. The existing Wii console is able to keep track of where the old-style Wii remotes are with the help of a "sensor bar" that attaches to the TV set. That's how the Wii remote can be used to "point" to things on the screen. The new Wii U controller has its own sensor bar, so the Wii U can figure out where a Wii remote is in relation to the controller, not just the TV set.

This sounds complicated, but it enables simple, unexpected forms of game play. For instance, Nintendo showed in a video how the Wii U controller could be placed on the floor for a golf game. The screen of the controller shows a teed-up golf ball. Swinging a Wii remote like a golf club above the controller gets the ball flying.

While the ability to use older remotes will appeal to consumers, supporting multiple remotes could pose a challenge for game developers, who might decide to drop support for older hardware. To make things more complicated, there are two versions of the [Wii](#) remote, with differing motion-sensing abilities, and an accessory "Nunchuck" [controller](#).

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