

# Video game industry shoots for momentum at E3 show

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Virtual reality, streaming play and titles tailored for smartphones are expected to generate buzz at the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) video game extravaganza kicking off in Los Angeles.

While blockbuster games being readied for console play will once again be stars at the show, the industry and its premier annual trade event are adapting to lifestyles that have evolved beyond lone play on consoles.

"Evolution is going to be one of the big themes at E3 this year," said Scott Steinberg, a trend expert for consulting firm TechSavvy Global ahead of the show which officially opens Tuesday.

"Gaming is really becoming a shared experience; a spectator event."

Amazon-owned Twitch, a popular online platform for watching [video game](#) play as spectator sport, will be live streaming E3 happenings again this year as part of a partnership with event organizers at the Entertainment Software Association.

Alphabet-owned video sharing platform YouTube meanwhile will be streaming E3 coverage online at [gaming.youtube.com/e3](http://gaming.youtube.com/e3).

"For more than a few gamers, E3 is the must-see gaming event of the year, an annual moment that defines the industry (and our collective wallets) for the coming 12 months," YouTube said in a release.

Facebook, Yahoo, and Xbox have also gotten into the game when it comes to play, or chatter about it, being broadcast online as spectator sport.

## Console kings

Still, industry heavyweights are not giving up consoles which have long ruled the lucrative sector.

"I think you are going to see a number of major players make some surprise announcements, and hardware makers try to sustain momentum," Steinberg said.

Sony heads into E3 as a market leader, having sold more than 40 million PlayStation 4 consoles since they launched in late 2013.

While Microsoft has not released current sales figures for its Xbox One console that debuted in the market at nearly the same time, industry estimates are that they are roughly half those of PS4.

"It is encouraging to see such a healthy install base of the Xbox One and PS4, which currently have 43 percent higher cumulative unit sales than their predecessors at the same point in their life-cycles," said NPD Group analyst Liam Callahan.

Microsoft is expected to unveil an updated console at E3, perhaps a slimmed-down Xbox One at a lower price to tempt buyers.

The Financial Times on Friday reported that Sony is working on a PS4 model offering ultra-high definition graphics and computing power that can handle [virtual reality](#) experiences but will not unveil it at E3.

Given that PS4 and Xbox One are in their third year on the market, and

the Nintendo Wii U is in its fourth year, console makers should be out to fuel interest with big new games and enhanced features, according to analysts.

## **Virtual gets real**

Virtual reality games will be spotlighted at E3, where demonstrations of content for Facebook-owned Oculus Rift headgear are once again expected to draw crowds.

In the wings may be expanded collaboration between Xbox and Oculus on virtual reality.

Sony is expected to show off what its coming PlayStation VR gear can do, and hopes are that the company will provide details regarding price and release date.

HTC will have "demo bays" where people can try games tailored for its Vive virtual reality gear.

Mobile games promised to ramp their presence at E3, with an army of small studios promising to show off creations tailored for play on tablets or smartphones.

Meanwhile, major console game publishers including Activision Blizzard and Electronic Arts have put out word they will sit out the E3 show floor this year.

Nintendo will once again forgo a live E3 press event and, instead stream an online presentation focused on a new "Legend of Zelda" game for its Wii U console that has failed to gain traction in the market since its release in late 2012.

E3 remains a "tent pole" event for the video game industry even as smart televisions, set-top boxes, Chrome plug-ins, Fire sticks and other devices for streaming content from the Internet to screens put pressure on consoles to prove their worth.

"Consoles will play increasingly specialized roles in the landscape," analyst Steinberg said.

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