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## Zoom games to play with friends

At this point during the ever so lengthy coronavirus pandemic, you’ve probably played a multitude of online games with your friends during your virtual gatherings. Games like Heads Up, Cards Against Humanity, Scattergories, and Charades have all been adapted to fit our online lifestyles, but if you’re looking for something a bit more refreshing and lively, try playing Codenames on Zoom.Using a bit more brain power than other virtual games, Codenames is the game where you and the other players are divided into two competing spy teams with one person on each team holding the title of Spymaster. A set of 25 “codenames” are set out in a 5x5 grid and your goal as Spymaster is to communicate with the other members of your team using only one related word to hint at which codenames in the grid belong to your team. Be careful, though. Some of the codenames belong to the other team, while others belong to “innocent bystanders,” and another belongs to the secret assassin that everyone is trying to avoid. There is also a double agent card as one member of any team can use to trick others during gameplay. The game is played in rounds where you can only progress to the next when you’ve only successfully guessed your team’s codenames. You win by being the first to contact all of your team members with the correct codenames. There’s a couple ways you can play Codenames at your next virtual hangout. The first is by using the Codenames online website that provides complete gameplay or you can kick it old school by setting up your own cards and rigging your cellphone or spare camera so that your Zoom guests can also see the game grid.Czech Games CodenamesAmazonHow To Play Codenames On ZoomBefore the online version of Codenames came to be, many had already cracked the code to figure out how to play the game on Zoom using your laptop and your cellphone’s camera (you’ll either need to take a picture of the card layout or use Zoom on your phone to let your guests view). In order to do this, you’ll also need to own your own copy of Codenames. A few things to remember on how to play using this method:- Lay out the 5x5 card grid on a flat surface.- Rig your cell phone to either keep the camera focused on the cards or to take a picture of the layout to then send to all the players.- Decide who will be the Spymaster and who will be Field Operatives for each team.- The four lights around the game board will decide who goes first based on the “key card.”- The Spymaster then chooses one word that can relate to either one or more codenames in the grid. This number indicates the amount of guesses your team has within their turn (i.e. if you have a card that says “marriage,” and you have two cards that relate to marriage you could say “Ring, 2”)- Teammates then use their Zoom windows to discuss which words they think match with the given codename.- The round is over and passed to the next team if the other team incorrectly guesses any of their wordsThe game is complete once one team has correctly guessed all of their team’s words on the grid.Codenames is usually played in person, but with quarantine becoming a regular part of our lives, there is now a complete online version of the game that you and your friends can connect to play within your own browsers from home.If you don’t own Codenames (or don’t want to go through the trouble of rigging up another camera), you can always play online. Here’s how:- Go to Codenames online and select the ‘CREATE ROOM’ button.- Choose the language.- Send the given URL to your guests.- Decide who will be the Spymaster and who will be Field Operatives for each team.- The game will automatically decide which team begins first.- The Spymaster chooses one word that can relate to either one or more codenames in the grid. Type the chosen word and the number of cards within the grid it can match with. This number indicates the number of guesses your team has within their turn (i.e. if you have a card that says “marriage,” and you have two cards that relate to marriage you could say “Ring, 2”)- Teammates can then use their Zoom windows to discuss which words they think match with the given codename.- The round is over and passed to the next team if the other team incorrectly guesses any of their wordsThe game is complete once one team has correctly guessed all of their team’s words on the grid.If you’re looking for an entertaining game that will keep your Zoom guests on their toes, give Codenames a try and let out their inner spy. Nothing is better than playing games with friends, though it’s not always possible to get a group together physically to play. Sure, you can play many games online while talking to friends in party chat, but there’s something special about being able to see who you’re talking to. That’s where Zoom comes in, giving you the ability to set up a virtual meeting with up to 100 members over the internet. Pretty much any multiplayer game works well with Zoom, but some stand out above the rest. Although there are a lot of excellent co-op and multiplayer games available, for this list, we prioritized games that are easy to learn, focusing primarily on tabletop games and tabletop-like experiences. In short, you don’t need a gaming computer to get started with our picks. In fact, you can play some games with a user-friendly console like the Nintendo Switch! More Zoom guides Super Mario Party The classic competitive Nintendo game is back for the Switch, this time with Super Mario Party. Many had expressed their disappointment with a handful of the previous entries, so when Super Mario Party returned to a classic formula — featuring four-player competitive minigames — fans were pleasantly surprised. Super Mario Party is, of course, playable with friends locally, but it also works well online, giving you a selection of the minigames to play over the internet. The highlight is Online Mariothon mode, which features a series of random minigames for you and other players to participate in — competing to gain the highest score. It’s a ton of fun and easy to understand, making this a top choice for playing over Zoom. Jackbox Jackbox games are unintentionally perfect for Zoom. Instead of separate game instances for all of your Zoom friends, Jackbox only needs one copy running. Once your group has chosen a game, everyone will receive a URL and code. From there, your friends can use their phones to play, and you can stream your screen to them. As for which Jackbox game to play, take your pick. You can go for the \$100 bundle that includes nearly everything or pick up one of the tailored Party Packs for around \$25. Although some games are better than others, there are no truly bad Jackbox games. If you’re a newbie, we recommend sticking with one of the You Don’t Know Jack games, as well as Quplash and Drawful. Among Us The free-to-play social game that swept the internet did so for a reason. Among Us is as easy to pick up and play as a game like this could be. The basic idea is that you and your friends are crewmates on a base or ship, but one or more people are randomly selected to be the imposters. The crew’s job is to complete repair tasks, while the imposters try and murder them without getting caught. Whenever a body is discovered, or someone suspects another of being an imposter, a meeting is called where you all argue and deliberate on who you think the imposters are. Votes are cast and the person voted on the most is removed from that round, innocent or not. The game is over when either the imposters are caught, they kill the crew, or the crew completes all their tasks. What makes it such a fun Zoom game is how everyone will be trying to read and catch others in lies to expose them, or frame them, as imposters. Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes Steel Crate Games Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes is a VR superstar that just so happens to work great over Zoom. One player will take the role of the bomb defuser, while the others are experts. Experts read from a bomb defusal manual, instructing the defuser on how to do next. The key is that the experts can’t see the bomb. In practice, this setup is perfect for Zoom. One player owns Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes, while the others read the bomb defusal manual online. If anything, playing over Zoom enhances the experience, as your group of experts struggles to communicate how to disarm the bomb in time. Overcooked Overcooked is a cute cooking game that’s all about teamwork. You and three other players play as chefs who must put out high-quality food under increasingly strenuous conditions. The majority of the game revolves around “taking this there” and “putting that over there.” As the difficulty ramps up, though, you’ll have to find out how to traverse the kitchen effectively, put out fires, and deal with the demands of customers. It’s not a very demanding game, so most computers can run it (it’s available on console, too). However, everyone will need to own a copy to get in on the fun. Overcooked is a great choice if your Zoom group is already on board with buying games and playing their own local instance. If not, stick with one of the above options. Tabletop Simulator When it comes to value for your dollar, it doesn’t get better than Tabletop Simulator. It’s a virtual tabletop that allows you to build any game you want. The base package comes with 15 games, including puzzles, poker, chess, and dominoes. However, you can play different games either by creating them yourself or finding a mod online. If you normally run a game night, Tabletop Simulator is a must-own. Because of its open-ended nature, you’re free to add your own house rules and play whatever game you want in the way your group sees fit. There’s a long list of official expansions, too, that add games like Zombicide, Scythe, and The Captain is Dead. Besiege Besiege has been around for a long time, though it was only officially released earlier this year. It’s a physics-based building game where your job is to construct the deadliest medieval siege vessel that you can. You spend some time building your weapon of destruction, then unleash it on the map to cause the most mayhem possible. There’s a single-player campaign, but Besiege is best played with friends. There are two ways you can approach your Zoom call. The first is to load or create a level and see who can rack up the most points. The second, and our favorite, is to pit two players against each other, having the siege vehicles duke it out in an open arena. Mysterium Mysterium is Clue for the 21st century. Although it’s normally a tabletop game, there’s a Steam version for only \$7, while the tabletop version goes for around \$50. Like Clue, players will need to uncover the details of a murder, namely the identity of the murderer, the weapon they used, and the location. However, one player assumes the role of a ghost, who must guide the psychic investigators towards the correct answer. The ghost can’t speak, though, simply offering clues to other players in the form of Vision Cards. These abstract pieces of art can provide hints, but it’s up to the investigator to uncover the truth. Scythe: Digital Edition Scythe is an excellent tabletop game, but it’s not as easy to pick up and play. If Catan is too much for your group to handle, Scythe will be a nightmare. Still, if you and your group are up for learning the rules and spending \$20 for the Steam port, it’s one of the best games to play over Zoom. It’s a strategy game that’s all about territory control. You play as the leader of one of five factions in Europa, a 1920s version of Europe that was ravaged after World War I. You’ll control fierce mechs as you battle for resources and control over critical game spaces. Be careful, though; being aggressive isn’t always the best route to victory. Midnight Midnight is a secret-role game like One Night Werewolf. You can play with between five and eight players, so it’s perfect for large Zoom calls. It’s also free-to-play, and the rules are dead simple, so you shouldn’t have too much trouble getting your group on board. At the beginning of a round, each player is randomly assigned a role, either a Hacker or an Agent. There are five nodes, and your job is to secure or hack a node based on your role. Whichever team makes it to three first wins. However, the team leader for whatever round you’re in, which rotates each round, chooses only three players to secure or hack a node, forcing hackers to keep their identity a secret as they can. Cards Against Humanity Although we’re including Cards Against Humanity, this entry is really a shout-out to playingcards.io. The site has a range of games, including crazy eights, checkers, and go fish. However, it recently launched Remote Insensitivity, which is an adaptation of Cards Against Humanity for your browser. It’s dead simple to get set up on Zoom, too. The leader goes to the site and starts a game. Once they do, they’ll receive a room code to share with the other players. They go to the site, enter the code, and you’re off to the races. Human Fall Flat Human Fall Flat is the perfect game for hanging out with your friends digitally. It has some loose “solve the puzzle, reach the exit” type — but it’s mostly a physics sandbox for you and your friends to play around in. The fact that Human Fall Flat is physics-based is what sells the experience. You can interact with everything in the environment, allowing you to solve puzzles and traverse the landscape in any way your group sees fit. Maybe you’ll get thrown into a catapult and launch across the map, or use boxes and barrels to construct an excuse for a bridge. Funny and charming in equal measures, Human Fall Flat is an easy-going game to play over Zoom. Clubhouse Games: 51 Worldwide Classics If you’re looking for a well-rounded and diverse collection of board games, look no further than Clubhouse Games: 51 Worldwide Classics for the Nintendo Switch. As its name suggests, it features a collection of 51 of the most popular games, like checkers, billiards, backgammon, and chess. While it emphasizes local play, you can join your friends online in four-player multiplayer, which is made even better with Zoom. The great thing about this collection is that it offers games that most people are likely familiar with, but it also features odd entries that are sure to spice things up, like Toy Boxing. Better yet is the Guest Pass that’s available for free, including Four-in-a-Row, Dominoes, President, and Slot Cars, all of which can be played online with those who own the base game (or the Guest Pass). Editors’ Recommendations From visiting your friend’s island in Animal Crossing: New Horizons to teaming up with them to shoot down wasteland baddies in Borderlands 3, the best games to play with friends online offer hours of fun across PC, Xbox Series X, PlayStation 5, and more. Even miles apart, video games allow friends to play, compete, or even just hang out virtually. There are games you can play over Zoom — our list of the best Jackbox games will help there — but we wanted to focus this list less on party games and on games that are best experienced with a few pals. We have competitive and cooperative game options below and some that strike a balance between the two (such as Among Us). It doesn’t matter what kind of games you or your friends are into — our list has a little something for everyone. Further reading All cross-play games Best free MMORPGs Best co-op games Among Us Available on: PC, iOS, Android Although Among Us has been out for nearly two years, it only hit its stride a few weeks ago. From drawing around 100 players every day, Among Us now draws nearly 200,000 each day. Among Us is a simple social deduction game for 4-10 players. In it, you play as a crewmember with a list of tasks to complete. So, the goal is simple enough: Complete your tasks, and your team wins. However, there’s at least one imposter among the group (you can have more imposters if you want). Imposters can kill crewmembers and sabotage various systems on the ship, keeping crewmembers from completing their tasks. To make matters worse, players can only talk amongst themselves if they report a dead body or call an emergency meeting to vote someone off the ship. Among Us is endless fun, and it’s free on iOS and Android. The Stream version isn’t free, but at \$5, it might as well be. Monster Hunter: World Available on: PS5, Xbox Series X, PC, PS4, Xbox One Monster Hunter: World goes a long way in making Capcom’s long-running franchise accessible. Still, the grind is real in World. Although the loop of hunting monsters and upgrading your gear is addicting on its own, it’s much better with a group of friends. And because of World’s accessibility, it’s easy for a series veteran to take a newcomer out and show them the ropes. Monster Hunter: World offers hundreds of hours of fun with friends, and with the Iceborne expansion, even more. If you’re a Game Pass subscriber, you don’t have to buy Monster Hunter: World, either. It ranks among the best games on Xbox Game Pass. Read our Monster Hunter: World review Borderlands 3 Available on: PS5, Xbox Series X, Xbox One, PS4, PC, Stadia The ultimate looter-shooter, Borderlands 3 is an even bigger and deeper game than its predecessors, with multiple planets to explore and several classes that each use their own special abilities. It’s completely playable in single-player mode, but bringing along a friend online makes every mission more engaging and opens up strategic opportunities in battle. As one player draws fire, the other can ambush enemies who aren’t expecting an attack. With the loot system of Borderlands 3 that lets each player have their own drops instead of sharing them, there won’t be any arguments afterward, either. Plus, there are a whole lot of guns. Outriders Available on: PS4, Xbox One, PC If you’re more into looting and shooting from a third-person perspective, then the new surprise hit Outriders might be exactly what you and some friends are looking for. You and up to two other friends can team up as several classes, each with their own suite of powers and abilities, to mow down waves of enemies with extremely satisfying weaponry. The story mode is fairly weak, but if you just tune that out, you and your pals can have a fantastic time blasting your way through the levels, collecting new weapons and armor, and leveling up your very fun-to-use powers. A positive, or perhaps negative depending on what you’re looking for, is that Outriders isn’t intended to be an endless live service game where you always have more to grind for. There is an end to the story, and while there are endgame-level things to hunt and grind for beyond that, you won’t have to dedicate your entire life just to this one game if you want to see it all. Read our full Outriders review Minecraft Available on: PS5, Xbox Series X, Xbox One, PS4, PC, Switch, iOS, Android Why work on building a dream home in Minecraft alone when a friend can help craft more quickly? Minecraft features cross-play between nearly every supported system because of its Bedrock update. This includes Nintendo Switch, PS4, Xbox, PC, and even mobile devices, meaning players can enjoy the game with their friends regardless of which system they’re on. The only exceptions are legacy platforms like Xbox 360 and PS3, which do not support cross-play. Provided players don’t get bored, there is essentially no end in Minecraft, making it a perfect choice for hunkering down when people can’t leave their homes for weeks on end. Animal Crossing: New Horizons Available on: Switch Animal Crossing: New Horizons is a Nintendo Switch exclusive, and that means putting up with the console’s archaic friend code system to invite friends to an island. Once that’s done, however, it’s a joyous experience of appreciating the mundane. Visit friends’ houses to admire their paintings and interior decorating, then venture outside and catch bugs and fish. There isn’t a set goal, but that’s what makes the series so special. Hanging out with friends and discovering secrets is its own reward, and text chat lets players easily communicate with each other without having to use the Nintendo Switch Online app. That said, Animal Crossing: New Horizons does have chat support through the app. Read our full Animal Crossing: New Horizons review Call of Duty: Warzone Available on: PS5, Xbox Series X, Xbox One, PS4, PC Call of Duty: Warzone is a completely free-to-play battle royale game set in 2019’s Modern Warfare universe. It supports cross-platform multiplayer across PS4, Xbox One, and PC. Unlike the smaller Black Ops 4 mode Blackout, Call of Duty: Warzone doesn’t require another game to run, and it launched with 150-player battles. Friends can team up in trios and fight to the death against other squads with a mix of first-person shooting and vehicular combat. The unique Gulag system even lets killed players come back to life, giving their teammates motivation to keep fighting to their very last breath. Read our Call of Duty: Warzone review Gears 5 Available on: Xbox Series X, Xbox One, PC Another great shooter option for Xbox Series X, Xbox One, and PC players, you can play Gears 5 entirely with a friend. The campaign is cooperative with support for up to two others, and the new Escape mode is only playable cooperatively. Alongside these is Horde mode, which is best played cooperatively for a fighting chance against waves of the Swarm, and there is a beefy competitive multiplayer option for those who want to fight with — or against — their pals. Gears 5 also includes local cooperative play if you’re looking for some couch co-op action. Read our full Gears 5 review Forza Horizon 4 Available on: Xbox Series X, Xbox One, PC Forza Horizon 4 includes the same “Drivatar” A.I. system used by its predecessors, but it’s even better in online cooperative modes. The transition is seamless, with friends all driving on the same map where they can run into each other, and they can easily join up to compete in the same racing events without exiting to another player’s session. Forza Horizon 4 features a huge number of races, collectibles, and stunts, and exploring its take on the English countryside is an absolute joy. Racing friends from one end of the map to the other only makes it better. Read our full Forza Horizon 4 review Sea of Thieves Available on: Xbox Series X, Xbox One, PC Sea of Thieves isn’t just better with friends playing online — it’s almost impossible to play without them. Rare’s pirate game includes a small boat for anyone sailing alone, but it really requires a crew of at least three or four people to command the larger vessels and have a chance against other ships. Calling out enemy locations over a chat headset and coordinating to reposition sails and cannons is a blast, especially when players send their friends soaring through the air onto another squad’s deck to attack them directly. Sea of Thieves sees Rare back to its old, weird self, and that is a good thing. Read our full Sea of Thieves review Tom Clancy’s The Division 2 Available on: Xbox One, PS4, PC, Stadia Available for only a few dollars at this point, Tom Clancy’s The Division 2 is an excellent shared-world shooter that friends can play together in its entirety. That includes the campaign missions, which take agents into several sections of Washington, D.C. Separate cooperative side missions are also available, and when players have had their fill of fighting grunts in standard missions or raids, they can venture together into the Dark Zone to fight against other agents. Teamwork and cooperation are particularly important here in Tom Clancy’s The Division 2, as valuable gear is on the line and can be lost to another squad in an instant. Read our full The Division 2 review Fortnite Available on: PS5, Xbox Series X, Xbox One, PS4, Switch, PC, Android Fortnite is a great choice for online gaming with friends, as its battle royale mode supports cross-play across everything from Nintendo Switch to Android phones. Epic Games’ take on the genre is colorful and less gory than some of its competitors, and its building component makes it perfect for creative players tired of hiding in a bush or behind a rock. New events and gear are also added in Fortnite on a regular basis, ensuring friends will have new content to experience together for as long as they want to keep playing. Read our full Fortnite review Overwatch Available on: Xbox One, PS4, Switch PC Blizzard’s hero shooter ranks among the top multiplayer games ever created, and when you’re playing with friends and communicating through voice chat, it gets even better. You and your allies can coordinate with each other, selecting the perfect characters for each setting and announcing enemies’ positions as they approach or secure an objective. The good news is that all of the additional maps and characters added since launch are available for free. And not only that, but they are open and free to everyone. So, even if your friend doesn’t have the game, they can still play with you if you do. You can find Overwatch available on PC and all consoles — including Nintendo Switch. You’ll be shocked at how many incredible heroes you can choose, and we assure you that the game will still feel new even months after starting to play. Read our full Overwatch review Minecraft Dungeons Xbox Game Studios Available on: Xbox One, PS4, Switch, PC We could put most action RPGs into this category, and it’d make just as much sense. But Minecraft Dungeons has a couple of things going for it that put it ahead of the rest. For one thing, it’s available on Game Pass, so you can team up with friends and play together, as long as one person in the group has a PC or Xbox One. More notable, however, is the simple and easy to comprehend gameplay. The hack-and-slash genre is not without complication, and games like Path of Exile highlight how far nuts and bolts such as character creation can go. Minecraft Dungeons is elementary and offers plenty of unique loot while consistently concentrating on important things like hacking and slashing. Editors’ Recommendations

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