

Google offers free Stadia game access during pandemic

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Google is offering its Stadia online game service for free during the pandemic

Google on Wednesday made its Stadia online video game service free to provide an escape for those hunkered down at home because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Launched late last year, Stadia is crafted to let people access console-quality games as easily as they do email on an array of internet-linked devices.

"Keeping social distance is vital, but staying home for long periods can be difficult and feel isolating," Stadia vice president Phil Harrison said in an online post.

"Video games can be a valuable way to socialize with friends and family when you're stuck at home."

Google is offering [free access](#) to Stadia for two months. Availability was expected to be rolled out to 14 countries by the end of this week.

Those who sign up to the service will be able to play nine games, including a "Destiny" collection, and have the option to buy other titles, according to Harrison.

"With increased demand due to more people at home during this time, we're taking a responsible approach to [internet traffic](#)," Harrison said.

Stadia already adjusts the [game](#) streaming load based on internet capabilities where players live, but is working on scaling back graphics resolution to lighten the data load online.

"The vast majority of people on a desktop or laptop won't notice a significant drop in gameplay quality," Harrison said, warning that Stadia tech support might be impeded due to Google staff working from home during the pandemic.

Google seeking to disrupt the [video game](#) world with Stadia, has not disclosed how many fans the service has attracted since its November launch.

Google sells kits that contain a Stadia controller and a pendant-shaped Chromecast Ultra wireless connection device that plugs into television sets.

Stadia games are also playable using Google Chrome web browser software on computers and with Google-made Pixel smartphones from the second-generation onward.

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