

Online Video Game Rentals-How do They Work?

Tired of going to the video store with the kids to rent those ever-popular video games? Many new services have cropped up in the last few years that make this parental ritual, and the late fees that go along with it, a thing of the past.

Going online to rent a video game is a great way to eliminate another errand and keep the kids happy. You never have to go any further than your mailbox, and you can keep the games until the kids are tired of them or beat them (whichever comes first).

Several services like Gamefly, Numbthumb and RentZero have begun serving this lucrative market, and the number of companies joining them is growing monthly. The concept is simple and convenient.

The services work more like a subscription than a video rental store. You select several games (up to 50 at Gamefly) that you would like to rent sometime in the future. These are placed in a lineup, or queue, that you will receive. Then, you'll consult the kids and see how many at a time they want to receive. With this information, you'll choose the subscription plan that you want. You can choose to receive one, two or three games at a time, with monthly fees that depend on the number selected. Most range from about \$15.00 per month to \$35.00 per month.

Your service will send the game(s) out to you along with prepaid envelopes for their return. They'll arrive in your mailbox and you'll need to carry them into the house. That's it! No arguments at the video store, no chasing kids up and down the halls, no "out of stock" problems.

Once the kids (or significant other) has enjoyed the game, you simply drop it into the postage paid envelope and put it in a mailbox. When the company receives it, they send out the next game on the list. You keep the game as long as you want.

The queue is flexible as well. Game selection can be updated on the internet, and changes to the list take effect right away. The kids can make as many modifications as they want.

All of the plans have options to purchase a game that the kids just can't seem to get enough of, and most charge pre-played game prices. However, most folks seem to enjoy trying as many games as possible each month, and you can always re-queue a game that you love.

Turnaround time is a factor, so consider where the game rental company is located. The closer you are to the mailing center, the sooner they'll receive your returns and you'll get your new games. Most of the plans average about 6-7 days from the time you mail your game back to when the new one is received, but that means you could try 4 games a month for each game subscription you get.

If you don't like investing hundreds of dollars on games that you haven't tried, or if you're just too lazy to trudge to the video store each week, online video game rental services may be for you.

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