

Old Console, new Tricks How to get the most of your Xbox 360

There's plenty of fun in the Xbox 360, regardless of whether you're waiting for the Kinect-less Xbox One, or if you've already unpacked a new system. Microsoft will be capable of getting its new console in operation after some more software updates. But for now it's all about getting the most out of older equipment. Nearly nine years after the fact, here's how to make sure your Xbox 360 is aging gracefully.

Cancel your Xbox Live Subscription

You've probably heard that Microsoft is changing the way Xbox Live Gold works next month. If your Xbox 360 is more than a Netflix machine rather than a gaming portal and you're interested in saving money now. You'll receive a prorated reimbursement if you decide to cancel your Xbox Live subscription prior to August 31st. This FAQ provides more information.

Keep your Xbox Live subscription

But wait! But wait! It's not only about multiplayer gaming, apps like Netflix or Vudu. The best way to save money is to search for deals on the subscription itself. The normal price for Xbox Live Gold is \$10 per month or \$60 per Year. Keep an eye out for bargains from retailers like Best Buy, Amazon, eBay or even the Microsoft Store that reduce the entry cost by \$10 or \$20, or even \$25. Next, see this chart to see the benefits available to everyone and what still require Xbox Live Gold following June.

Protip: Check out our deals updates to get an early warning, or keep an eye on websites like CheapAssGamer, FatWallet or SlickDeals to know when sales are happening. Otherwise, make sure to double-check any new games you buy, as they frequently are or are available as bundles that cut down on the cost, or come with an evaluation card that will help you sate that weekend craving for some Halo.

Games with Gold

After Sony announced an Instant Game Collection in conjunction with PlayStation Plus that doles out free games every month, Microsoft responded by adding Games with Gold to its package. The Xbox 360 version will get the monthly freebies, however there is one major advantage over XB1 or PlayStation options: You get to keep your games. That's right, all you need to do is check every two months (on the 1st and 16th) and then start downloading of the game currently available and you'll be able to keep it for good even if you decide to end your subscription to Xbox Live Gold later. Minecraft servers The only issue is The only issue is that they have in the past included lesser-known games and older titles in comparison to

the competition. You can see the entire list of titles here. The games this month were Dust: An Elysian Tail and Saints Row: The Third In June, subscribers can pick up Dark Souls, Charlie Murder and Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition -- not a bad haul for zero extra cost.

Protip: There's an added benefit to Deals with Gold that adds an ongoing rotation of discounted games videos, DLC and more- check Major Nelson's blog for details on the current sale schedule and when.

Xbox 360 SmartGlass

In the years since the Xbox 360 launched, Microsoft introduced a new method to interact with the console that isn't limited to gamepads or remotes: your phone or tablet. The SmartGlass app, previously known as My Xbox Live, can manage games, apps and movies on the Xbox 360. It also allows you to search for content using Bing. The easiest method to use it is to use Xbox Live. It is much faster to send messages to your friends and check their Xbox Live status from the second screen than to use an add-on controller to the 360. The apps are free to download and are available on Android, iOS, Kindle Fire and Windows 8 and Windows Phone.

Protip: Get a full list of SmartGlass-enabled games, apps, and movies right here.

Clear your cache

Clearing the cache can sometimes solve problems with your Xbox 360 (glitch in the dashboard issue, sign-in issues, issues with specific games). Clearing the cache on the Xbox eliminates games that are downloaded temporarily updates. It won't affect your game files, system updates or any other files on your hard drive. After clearing, you'll be asked to download updates for your Xbox every time you log back connected to Xbox Live. To do it, just go to the Settings page, select a storage device (cache will be cleared across all devices) then press "Y," then select clear and click "Yes." It was that simple! So easy.

Xbox Live Arcade

Microsoft might have thrown indie games alongside the big boys on Xbox One, but on Xbox 360, there are likely to be a few lesser gems you haven't played yet. Over 600 games were pushed to XBLA since launch, including well-known hits like Braid, The Walking Dead, Castle Crashers, Limbo, 'Splosion Man , and Minecraft. Plus, they have demos, and probably only cost a few dollars to test. Unfortunately Microsoft's Destination: Arcade visual browser hasn't been updated since a brief beta test in 2010. however we recommend trying The Bridge, Bastion, N+, Super Meat Boy, Ascend: Hand of Kul and keeping your eyes peeled for new

titles coming out like AirMech Arena and Slender: The Arrival. Have you discovered some gems that we've missed? Drop us a line in the forums so that we can try them out.

[Image credit: momo_leif / Alamy]