

Top 10 3D games right now - plus what you need to play them

[Tony Sarno](#) | 07 December 2010, 9:02 AM (1 day 2 hours ago.)

With *Call of Duty: Black Ops* built for 3D, the list of 3D-enabled games has reached a respectable number. So which ones are the best and what gear do you need to play them?



Avatar the movie hurled 3D into the public consciousness, but the true impact of 3D is being felt in gaming, where you're not just watching a stereoscopic world, you're totally immersed in it. Watching Avatar at the cinema was cool, but putting on the NVIDIA 3D glasses and firing up our ASUS 3D monitor to play *Need for Speed: Shift* in 3D was mind-blowing. It was the "wow" moment, the kind you get when a new, disruptive technology shows up to suddenly change the way things are done.

But although the technology pieces for 3D started appearing early in 2009, it's only now that the content is finally catching up. The list of games that are not just "converted" to 3D but designed from the ground up to work with it has grown to the point where the investment in the requisite 3D hardware can be considered worthwhile.

Here is a list of the top 10 3D-enabled games and the gear you'll need to play them. Be warned though - what comes through loud and clear from user feedback and our trawling of 3D gamer forums is that getting the games to work perfectly on your PC will require a bit of tweaking, and in many cases, you'll have to turn the frame rate down and anti-aliasing off, as well as making any number of adjustments until your system can cope with the extra load of running in 3D.

THE TOP 10 3D-ENABLED GAMES

This top 10 is based on own experiences with 3D games in the labs, general user feedback on the web and NVIDIA's own ratings. NVIDIA is important here because it provides the only complete 3D solution for PCs, a kit called NVIDIA 3D Vision (explained at bottom of the story). It maintains a page in which it [classifies the games](#) by how well they exploit 3D, however not all our picks and user favourites agree with NVIDIA's ratings. Many of the favourite 3D games don't get the "NVIDIA 3D Vision Ready" label that says they are perfect showcases of NVIDIA's 3D kit. That's because they have other 3D qualities that users love.

1. BATTLEFIELD BAD COMPANY 2



This is far and away the top 3D game right now because it works on all levels. BBC2 becomes much more visceral in 3D, creating an extraordinary sense of immersion in the battle. You can feel the action, experience the explosions, and your gun looks like a real 3D object. On a technical level, BB2 is also superior because of the attention to detail, the most obvious being the way it refocuses close objects such as your gun when you shift your gaze back from distant objects, overcoming the problem of having perfect depth of field in the distance but out-of-focus stuff close up. Like many of the 3D games, however, BBC2 in 3D may require you to tone the settings to play it smoothly. Some BBC2 players also report they find it hard to adjust to 3D in gameplay.

2. TOMB RAIDER UNDERWORLD



This game is not in NVIDIA's top list of new-generation 3D games, but the excellent reviews from users are just relentless and it can't be anything but number two in our Top 10 list based purely on user praise. There is no doubt the three dimensional mystical landscapes and underworld are captivating, but our suspicion is that having a 3D babe as its major character is a significant driver of the praise from the young men who play this.

3. METRO 2033 – THE LAST REFUGE



This is state-of-the-art 3D atmospherics. No game gives you a better sense of immersion into scary, claustrophobic interiors than Metro 2033, nor make your heart jump as much when a monster leaps out at you. If you just want to find out how 3D can envelop you, this is *the* game. It uses every technology at its disposal to generate realism, such as 3D, PhysX, Phong tessellation and direct compute. But some things have to give, and you may have to turn down the graphics settings to enjoy it in 3D.

4. BATMAN ARKHAM ASYLUM



Batman just does 3D superbly. It's often the game used by vendors selling 3D hardware so that gives you an idea of how polished it is in three dimensions. It's a cliché, but people and objects in it just seem to leap out of the screen.

5. MAFIA 2



What do you need to get right for a game about the Mafia? The suits! These Italian-American guys like to dress in expensive suits, so Mafia II uses a special "Apex Clothing Module" from the PhysX Developer Toolset to bring you the Mafiosi's fabrics in astonishing realistic fabric. The theme carries through to explosions as well, as things blow up with

super realism, each bit of shrapnel behaving as you'd expect it in a real explosion – unpredictably. In all, a graphical stunner.

6. JUST CAUSE 2



This game is a standout for its amazingly realistic landscape, particularly the way the water and light behave. That's because it's the first game to use NVIDIA's CUDA technology to the fullest, particularly when rendering water – where you see incredibly realistic micro ripples and fine grained reflections. CUDA is also used for creating high quality depth of field effects. Just Cause 2 is so nice you don't want to ruin it with the need to kill and blow up things. As one forum user says: "Sometimes I prefer just driving around watching the scenery, rather than blowing up everything."

7. NEED FOR SPEED: SHIFT



Racing simulations is the most competitive 3D category of all – probably because racing games benefit more from 3D than any others. Once you've raced in 3D you will never go back to 2D, and it's often said that many players find their times dramatically improve when moving to 3D because the environment is much closer to the real one they experience in their cars. There are many standout titles in this. Need for Speed – Shift, Flatout and Burnout Paradise are consistently praised - we couldn't really separate them but since we've actually played Need for Speed and been blown away by it (the "wow" moment) it gets the gong.

8. LOST PLANET 2



One of the next-generation 3D games with the works. Definitely one of NVIDIA's 3D Vision showcase games that feature not just 3D but DirectX 11 support, hardware tessellation, computer shader and so on . In short, you go to a totally immersive planet with amazing landscapes in which you fight to take control of the Thermal Energy that drives weapons.

9. AVATAR



Regardless of the movie, AVATAR the game is actually great in 3D, and many gamers still rate it as their favourite. Enough said. Watch the movie, enjoy the game.

10. CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS



The first Call of Duty game to be built for three dimensions. Black Ops in 3D probably deserves to be higher up this list, but right now it's too new, too untested for us to say it's totally up there. From what we've seen and early users are saying, it's incredibly promising. Like in Battlefield Bad Company 2, the depth of field makes you feel as if you're there, in battle. The lead cinematics animator on Call of Duty, Adam Rosas, reportedly said " We used 3D to give you better transitions and to work certain elements into the game. If you want an element of surprise, you can use this 3D technology to actually surprise a player, rather than just putting a flash on the screen. You can really implement 3D so that your peripheral vision will catch something and you'll look over there, where you can fully reveal what you want them to see. So 3D can be used to draw the player where the action is within a story. It's even a better visual cue than lighting, which games have used to send players in a certain direction."

We'd love to hear from readers who are playing Black Ops in 3D.

Other games

Not every game can make our Top 10, and no Top 10 is ever going to please everyone, but the following 3D games also have a strong following and lots of people praising them in forums. In other words, they're all great for 3D.

- Half Life 2
- F1 2010
- Far Cry 2
- Left 4 Dead
- Richard Burns Rally
- Sid Meier's Civilization 5
- Aion
- Stalker
- Bioshock
- Prototype
- Street Fighter IV
- Alien Breed
- Assassins Creed
- GRID

THE 3D GEAR TO PLAY THEM

To view games in 3D, you need a 120Hz monitor, the NVIDIA 3D Vision kit stereoscopic glasses and transmitter and an NVIDIA graphics card. AMD/ATI supposedly have a 3D solution called HD3D, which isn't really a package you buy but an ecosystem where you need the right ATI cards (5000 and 6000 series), choose from one of about 13 games that support 3D output and find supported monitors and third party stereoscopic glasses solutions. In other words, the NVIDIA 3D solution is real, the AMD/ATI solution will come together only if you go to a lot of trouble. Presumably they plan on fixing this.

1. YOU NEED A 120 Hz MONITOR



The ASUS VG236 120Hz 2ms display

Regardless of what 3D solution you use, you have to start with a monitor with a screen refresh rate of 120Hz. This is necessary because 3D needs the picture split into two image of 60Hz each, one for each eye. If you're not doing 3D, 120Hz is a great idea anyway, because it makes the gaming action a lot smoother. There's a few 120Hz monitors in the market, from companies such as BenQ, Samsung and ASUS. For 3D gaming, however, the VG236 from ASUS comes bundled with an NVIDIA 3D Vision kit (see next point) . This 32in widescreen full HD monitor with a 2ms response time is an exceptional monitor for gaming, and we're not the only one saying it. Google reviews of it and you'll see.

2. YOU NEED NVIDIA'S 3D VISION KIT



The NVIDIA 3D vision kit has packed into a box the essentials for 3D gaming: a pair 3D glasses and an infra-red transmitter box that communicates with the glasses and connects to the PC via USB, as well as, of course, accompanying drivers.



The 3D glasses from the NVIDIA 3D Vision kit are liquid crystal shuttered glasses -and don't look too bad as sunglasses either. Each lens flickers several times a second in sync with the alternating left and right image outputs of the monitor, so that left eye only sees the left image and the right eye the right image, thereby creating the 3D illusion.



The little pyramid -shaped infra-red transmitter to the glasses, which connects to the PC via USB. The NVIDIA 3D Vision kit is available in Australia for \$299.

3. YOU NEED A GRAPHICS CARD THAT SUPPORTS 3D VISION



And because the kit is provided by NVIDIA, it only works with NVIDIA cards. If you have an AMD/ATI card, you'll need to work with their HD3D solution. So before you get started on the road to 3D, you need to make sure you've got an NVIDIA card that's compatible with the NVIDIA 3D Vision kit for 3D gaming. NVIDIA provides a list [here](#).

We'd like to hear from readers who've been playing some of the 3D games above and can tell us some of their experiences and tribulations. We're assuming that there are people out there, somewhere, who've bought the 3D kit and actually play 3D games.

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