2016

Pokémon Go

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App Review

App Name: Pokémon Go
Developer: Niantic, Inc.
Reviewer: Shelly Darrington
Version/Update: 0.33.0
Category: Game
Platforms Available: Apple, Android
Device Used: Android Moto X
Interest Level: Primary, Intermediate, Young Adult
Rating: Excellent

Review

Pokémon Go is a location-based app by Niantic released for Android and iOS model phones. It is a game in which the user catches, trains, and battles with Pokémon. Pokémon, or "pocket monsters," were first seen in games developed for the Nintendo Game Boy, but quickly grew in popularity, leading to a card game, an anime, and many more games since. *Pokémon Go* is the newest release of the franchise, and is very different from everything that came before it. The game mechanics make it possible for Pokémon to become a bigger part of everyday life. Using your phone's GPS, the app takes you on an adventure in catching Pokémon, visiting Pokéstops, and hitting gyms to battle. This is not a game that can be played sitting in the same place. You have to go out and find Pokémon to catch. The Pokéstops and gyms are fixed locations, usually points of interest on a map such as libraries or historical sites. The app tells you what Pokémon are in your vicinity, and it's up to you to find them and catch them. You can get all sorts of gear and goodies from Pokéstops like Pokéballs or lures to attract Pokémon to you. You can also trade in your Pokémon for candies, and once you get enough candy, you can evolve your Pokémon to a higher level. *Pokémon Go* is marketed as an interactive, massive game that uses your real life surroundings to create your gameplay.

Pokémon Go is still very new, so there are definitely bugs to work out, but overall the app is a massive success. Making the game location-based made real world exploration more appealing, and after its release, many people were out and about searching for more Pokémon. This leads to a lot more social interaction, as well as being a healthy hobby for players. *Pokémon Go* even lets you hatch eggs based on how far you've walked, the higher distance eggs holding rarer Pokémon. However, one of the main problems with the game is how closely it is linked to existing maps. This gives a distinct advantage to players living in urban areas, as they have access to many more Pokéstops, gyms, and Pokémon. In addition, the battle aspect of the game is perhaps the weakest. Battles take place at gyms. Gyms are held by one of three teams within the game and players from that team can add their Pokémon to the gym lineup. However, battle is not real-time and battling is less about skill than high powered Pokémon. You can only battle with other trainers at gyms, so this limits the interactions between players. Battling with wild Pokémon also doesn't exist, as catching them only consists of throwing Pokéballs. Since the game is new, it seems likely that Niantic will release periodic updates that hopefully address these issues. *Pokémon Go* does require an account, but the app itself is free to play. It does require internet connection and GPS to operate, so be aware that this app will use cell data when in use. Despite any drawbacks, the game is a great way to get outside and get some exercise and meet new people, and can be fun for all ages.

*In-App purchases are available.