

GameBox for iOS

Your retro game library, on an iPhone or an iPad

Quick Start Guide

Version 0.12 (build 12) · Experimental

From the download to your first game

This is an experimental version. GameBox for iOS is an early port of DroidGameBox, made to see how far the Mac GameBox emulators go on an iPhone and an iPad. It is not on the App Store, it is not signed, it has been tried on only a few devices, and it has rough edges and bugs. Do not rely on it: keep your own copies of your games and of anything you save.

macgamebox.com

What GameBox for iOS is

GameBox for iOS keeps your retro games in one library, with box art, descriptions and favourites, and plays them with emulators built into the app: 60 systems, from the Atari 2600 and the NES to the Saturn, the Neo Geo and the arcade boards of Capcom, Sega and Namco. It looks and works like DroidGameBox, the Android version, and it uses the emulators of GameBox for the Mac. It plays in either way up, with touch controls on the screen or a game controller.

It contains no games and no BIOS files. You bring your own.

You need

- An iPhone or iPad with iOS 17.0 or later. (We have run it on an iPhone 15 Pro Max with iOS 27 and in the iOS Simulator on an iPhone and an iPad; no other device has been tried.)
- A Mac to copy your games across (or the Files app on the device itself).
- A way to install an unsigned app: a sideloading tool such as AltStore or Sideloadly, which signs it with your own Apple ID. GameBox for iOS is not on the App Store.
- Your own games, as files, and the BIOS files of the systems that need them (the manual lists them).

1. Install the app

1. Unzip the download. It holds the app, **GameBox-0.12.ipa**, and these two guides.
2. The app is **not signed**. Give it to a sideloading tool (AltStore, Sideloadly or another that signs an IPA with your Apple ID) and let the tool install it on your device, by cable or over Wi-Fi, following that tool's own instructions. We have not tried every tool.
3. On the device, turn on **Developer Mode**: Settings › Privacy & Security › Developer Mode. iOS asks you to restart.
4. If iOS asks you to trust the developer: Settings › General › VPN & Device Management, your Apple ID, Trust.
5. Open **GameBox**.

With a free Apple ID an app signed for your own device stops opening after **seven days**; sign and install it again (AltStore can do that for you while its computer is on the same Wi-Fi). A paid Apple Developer Program membership lasts a year. If a tool gives the app another identifier, iOS treats it as another app, with folders of its own: copy your games into it again.

2. Put your games and BIOS files in

GameBox looks in two folders in its own storage: **ROMs**, with a folder for each system inside it, and **bios**. The folders are named as **ES-DE** names them: `ROMs/nes`, `ROMs/snes`, `ROMs/megadrive` and so on. (The manual has the whole list.)

1. On your Mac, connect the iPhone or iPad with a cable, open **Finder** and choose the device in the sidebar.
2. Click the **Files** tab. GameBox is in the list.
3. Drag your **ROMs** folder, and your **bios** folder if you have one, onto GameBox. A big library takes a while to copy.
4. You can also copy with the Files app on the device (On My iPhone, GameBox), or have GameBox read a folder you already have, on iCloud Drive, a USB drive or an SD card: Settings › ROM folder › Choose

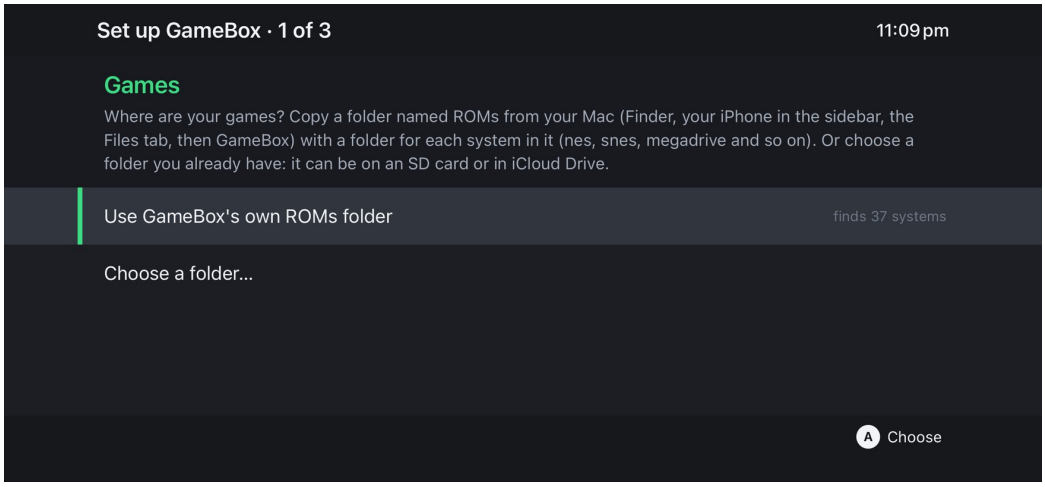
Folder.

System	Folder name(s) in ROMs	Files it takes
Atari 2600	atari2600	a26, bin, zip
Capcom CPS-2	cps2	zip
Commodore 64	c64, commodore64	crt, d64, d71, d81, g64, m3u, p00, prg, t64, tap, x64, zip
Commodore Amiga	amiga, amiga500, amiga600, amigademos	adf, adz, ccd, chd, cue, dms, fdi, hdf, hdz, ipf, iso, lha, m3u, mds, nrg, rp9, uae, zip
NEC PC Engine	pcengine	ccd, chd, cue, img, iso, m3u, pce, sgx, toc, zip
Nintendo Entertainment System	famicom, fds, nes	fds, nes, unf, unif, zip
Game Boy	gb	gb, zip
Super Nintendo	sfc, snes, superfamicom	fig, sfc, smc, swc, zip
Game Boy Color	gbc	gb, gbc, zip
Game Boy Advance	gba	gba, zip
Neo Geo	neogeo	zip
Sega Master System	mastersystem, sms	sms, zip
Sega Mega Drive	genesis, megadrive	bin, gen, md, smd, zip
Sega Game Gear	gamegear	68k, bin, bms, chd, col, cue, gen, gg, iso, m3u, md, mdx, rom, sg, sgd, smd, sms, zip

Zip and 7z files work as they are; so do the disc formats listed for each system in the manual.

3. The first start

A start-up wizard asks three things: where your games are (use GameBox's own ROMs folder, which says how many systems it finds, or choose another), where your BIOS files are (or Later), and a note about pictures. Then **Start**. GameBox scans your folder, and in the background fetches box art, descriptions and system photos from libretro and ScreenScraper. That needs the internet and takes a while on a big library: the top of the screen says how many games are still to go.



The start-up wizard.

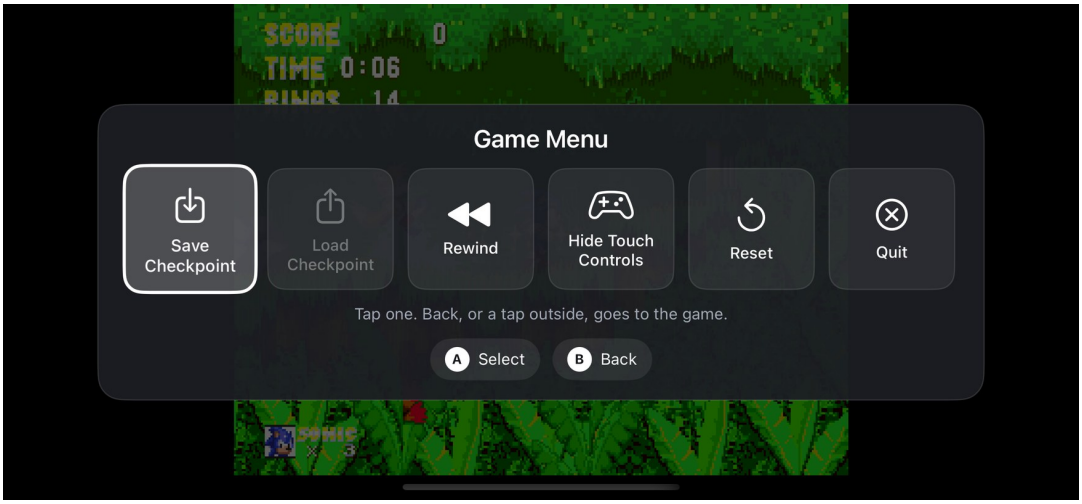
4. Play

The system screen shows a tile for each system that has games. Tap one to open its games; tap a game to choose it and tap it again (or press A on a controller) to play. **Y**, the Theme button on the bar at the bottom, changes how the screen looks, and the choice is kept. **X** makes a game a favourite; **Start**, or a long press, offers the rest.



The system screen as Cover Flow, one of its ten looks.

In a game, the controls of the machine are on the screen: a D-pad and its buttons, shaped for each system. The **Menu** button at the top opens the **game menu**:



The game menu, over a game that is paused.

- **Save Checkpoint** and **Load Checkpoint**: a saved moment, with a picture of it, that you can come back to.
- **Rewind**: back to an earlier moment (one is kept every fifteen seconds).
- **Hide Touch Controls** (and Show): for a controller, or for a clean picture.
- **Reset** and **Quit**. Back, or a tap outside the menu, returns to the game.

A game controller works too: any that iOS supports through its GameController framework (we have not tried every model).

5. If something is not right

- **A system is missing.** Check that its folder is named as in the manual, then Settings › ROM folder › Look for Games Again.
- **A game does not start, or the picture is black.** It may need a BIOS: Settings › BIOS files shows what each system needs and what GameBox has found.
- **It runs slowly or the sound crackles.** Close other apps. Turn off Enhanced 3D (Settings), which draws the Model 2 and System 22 arcade games at several times their own resolution.
- **The app will not open after a week.** That is the free Apple ID: sign and install it again.
- **You found a bug.** This is an experimental version, and bugs are expected: write to bhprojects.help@gmail.com and say what you were doing, which device and which version of iOS.

The manual (GameBox-iOS-Manual.pdf) describes everything: every setting, every system, every BIOS file.