

Minecraft Now Has One Unified Launcher On PC

Minecraft is finally making its debut today on Xbox Game Pass for PC, with both its original Java version and the Windows 10/11 Bedrock Edition hitting the service through a new unified Minecraft Launcher. It's two Minecrafts for one price because, well, that's how the Game Pass subscription service works. And in the future, that will be how Minecraft works generally.

Program manager Gama Aguilar-Gamez has talked us through how Mojang wants to eliminate confusion over choices between editions for PC players. "You want Minecraft? Cool. Buy Minecraft and you get both," he explains.

As of today, players who download Minecraft through Xbox Game Pass for PC will play through the unified Minecraft Launcher that handles both the Java and Bedrock Editions. "It's one of the first steps into having that launcher go from what used to be the Java launcher to The Minecraft Launcher," Aguilar-Gamez says.
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"We want to make it so that when our players say 'Hey I want to play Minecraft' that there isn't the confusion or the difficult choice of figuring out which version of Minecraft they need when they're thinking about it for the PC."

You will still have to figure out whether Java or Bedrock edition is the one you actually want to play, based on which features you care about-whether it's Minecraft mods or cross-play with other systems. What you won't have to reckon with is potentially spending money on the wrong version. When Mojang rolls out the Minecraft PC Bundle (opens in new tab), both versions of the game will be included for one price, meaning you'll only ever have to pay for Minecraft once. For players that already own one version of the game, you'll gain access to the other version for free.

"We're trying to not encourage people to buy both versions," Aguilar-Gamez says. "If you really want both, try out Xbox Game Pass for PC and just hold tight for a little bit."

Previously, Minecraft PC players used the Minecraft Launcher to play Minecraft Java and the spinoff game Minecraft Dungeons, while Minecraft Bedrock was launched as a standalone application. As of today, your current Minecraft Launcher will prompt you to upgrade to an improved launcher version from the Xbox store (opens in new tab).

The process was a bit fiddly for me, but I was able to download the new Windows application launcher by selecting "Minecraft for Windows + Launcher" as my edition on either the Microsoft Store or Xbox PC application. I did also need to migrate my Mojang account to a

Microsoft account. However, a Minecraft Java owner on our team wasn't able to claim a download to the new launcher yet, even after migrating to a Microsoft account. Despite Mojang's efforts, there may be a bit of confusion for players during the initial transition to the unified launcher.

Update: There is now a free "Minecraft Launcher" edition available to download on the Microsoft Store (opens in new tab). Mojang says that it can be downloaded by anyone, but you'll need to either outright own the version you want to play or be a Game Pass subscriber.

Mojang is hoping that current Minecraft players will hardly notice the difference once they actually have the new launcher installed. It doesn't affect the location of your Minecraft save data, so I was immediately able to continue playing the same worlds and use the texture packs I had been previously. Aguilar-Gamez says that Bedrock players will also still have the ability to launch the game directly without going through the launcher, if they'd like.

My immediate concern about a unified launcher was that this might in some way stifle Minecraft Java capabilities that PC players are attached to. Aguilar-Gamez says that features like individual version installations aren't affected and third-party launchers will continue to work as well. "We were super super careful about making sure that we were not impacting anything," he says.

"Once we get past this initial release stabilization, we have plans to make that launcher truly feel like it's Minecraft and not just a utility to launch games," Aguilar-Gamez adds, though Mojang isn't ready to give those plans away just yet. The other detail it can't share yet is just how far in the future the Minecraft PC Bundle will be available outside of Game Pass.