

## GestureWorks' Gameplay Virtual Controller (Video).

Windows 8 tablets, with the exception of Razer Edge, aren't ideal for gaming. The majority of PC games are designed with a keyboard, mouse or a gamepad. While Civilization V and some other games have multitouch controls that are perfect for Surface Pro enthusiasts, most games can't be played without peripherals. The solution? Find middlemen.

GestureWorks Gameplay promises to ease tablet owners' mobile gaming woes by creating a virtual interface that mimics mouse and keyboard inputs. The software lets users build multitouch controllers that can be customized using virtual joysticks and d'pads as well as buttons, buttons and swipe gestures that can be mappable. It's an interesting proposition, especially when you consider the efforts Android and iOS gamers put in to avoid using touchscreens. We met with the company to take a brief look at beta versions of the application.

GestureWorks CEO Jim Spadaccini greeted us with the ThinkPad Helix. His son was also there, playing through Castle Crashers on his Windows 8 device. The lower edge of Spadaccini's tablet was covered with an electronic directional pad and small numbers of buttons. They were layered on the game as native controls. The experience of playing with them was simple and enjoyable but Spadaccini slowed us from jumping into a game -first, he wanted show us how to set them up.

Gameplay's menu is easy to navigate. It splits its main screen into profiles which can be downloaded, as well as a list of layouts stored locally. I'm Here The community currently has more than 50 profiles available to download, however editing or creating a new one is easy. Spadaccini hit the edit icon on Castle Crashers to pull up an identical layout to the one on his son's slate. From here we were able to add, relocate or resize buttons with only a few taps. You can map buttons to any keyboard input or mouse input. A virtual joystick can also be added for control of the cursor. There's also an option for gestures that allows users to translate commands into flicks, swipes or pinches, and we were told motion control options will be added in the near future, opening the door for steering based on accelerometers for driving games. The profile can be saved on this page. If the player isn't satisfied with the layout, they can modify the layout in game.

After creating a profiles, users can link the layout to the program it was designed for, making it simple to launch a title simultaneously using its customized control setup. Launching Castle Crashers alongside our host's young son was easy to do by pressing a play button and the game's basic controls were well-suited to the touchscreen interface. Spadaccini described simple side-scrolling titles like Castle Crashers the program's "sweet spot," and indeed, they worked like a charm. Portal 2 and Borderlands 2 were a different story -- while GamePad provides a relatively simple access to all the game's main commands, managing them all using only our thumbs was a bit heavy. We encountered some issues with the virtual joypad, too it emulates a jittery mouse control rather than the real analog joystick input. Despite these glitches, we were able to overcome a few of GLaDOS's maniacal tests relatively easy, and

were told by GestureWorks that mouse emulation would improve prior to the final release.

Gameplay isn't perfect but it does seem to be a decent application. It fills an unmet need and lives up to its promises. The interface is intuitive and simple to use. While the gamepads with touchscreens can't replace a physical one but they do offer Windows 8 tablets with casual gaming capability that isn't possible without additional hardware. However there is one compatibility issue: it only works with games that run DirectX (that means no Minecraft, sorry kids!) GestureWorks Gameplay might be the best choice for you when you have an Windows 8 tablet and a Steam backlog. Check out the company's website to sign to the beta program, or just sit tight: the full version will be available on November 5th and costs \$14.99.