

Reading 3

Skills:

- Details
- Author's purpose
- Make inferences
- Vocabulary in context

Getting started: Do you pay for any online entertainment service? Which one?

AMAZON'S LUNA CLOUD GAMING SERVICE: THE CABLE OF VIDEO GAMES



Amazon has revealed its new cloud gaming service, officially called Luna. This makes it an immediate competitor to Google's Stadia, Microsoft's xCloud, Sony's PlayStation Now, and a number of other services from major game publishers ready to stream video games over the internet. Amazon's Marc Whitten, the company's vice president of entertainment devices and services, clarified one of the most

vital questions around Luna: what's the business model? Based on the information we could get, this looks like the cable of video games, **for better or for worse**.

Whitten says that Luna won't follow the Stadia model, which is free but requires users to pay for individual games to stream on the platform. It's also not following the xCloud model, which is included into Microsoft's Xbox Game Pass subscription. Instead, Luna will offer individual "channels" for partner publishers, which works similarly to Amazon Prime, which lets subscribers add individual TV streaming service subscriptions all included into one monthly payment managed by Amazon. These channels will be priced differently and will come with differences in benefits and restrictions.

The service will launch soon with just two channels to start. The first channel will be called Luna Plus. Like Stadia Pro, it offers 4K streaming and unlimited hours of play, but it also offers access to dozens of games all for \$5.99 a month. It's not clear what that game list looks like apart from the confirmed titles, including Resident Evil 7 and Control, but the model already gives Luna an advantage over Stadia by not requiring subscribers to pay for most of the titles they want to play. In fact, it doesn't appear that Luna will let users pay for any games at all.

The second channel will belong to major game publisher Ubisoft, which is offering the same as Luna Plus (although Ubisoft is restricting users to one stream per account instead of the two allowed on Amazon's channel) and presumably access to most, if not all, of the company's **vast** library, which offers more than 100 games. Amazon hasn't informed what the Ubisoft channel will cost, but the price may be higher than Luna Plus and closer to UPlay Plus, the \$14.99 subscription service Ubisoft introduced last year.

"You'll see other channels over time," Whitten says. "Game publishers are pretty excited about the idea." It's unclear how companies with competing cloud priorities, like Microsoft and Sony, will be treated. However, it is believed that Electronic Arts' subscription could arrive on Luna. In general, Luna's format sounds like a lucrative format for cloud gaming, mostly because it's structured similarly to the current streaming TV landscape. Just like Netflix or Amazon Prime, Luna Plus will give you access to the games Amazon can acquire in exchange for its monthly fee.

Meanwhile, if you want to pay for additional games from other publishers, you'll buy access to that publisher's Luna channel, just as you would subscribe to HBO or Netflix separately through the Amazon Channels platform. The whole thing feels a lot like a basic cable package with **add-ons** you _____ for separately.

Cloud gaming is still in its infancy, of course, and every major player is experimenting with the business model to find out what is better, especially when the new generation of consoles are going to be released soon. With the introduction of Luna and Amazon's channel-based approach, we can see another gamble on how the future of game distribution will be structured. Although this time, Amazon is following a successful model they have incorporated in their TV service. **Whether** that's a clever move will depend on whether consumers see enough benefit in Luna and what it has to offer to add yet more fees to the ever-growing list of monthly subscriptions.

**Adapted from: <https://www.theverge.com/2020/9/24/21454901/amazon-luna-cloud-gaming-streaming-service-cable-video-games>*

Glossary:

- **Add-ons:** An extra part that is added, for example, to a system.

Answer the following questions:

1. Why does the author include the phrase **for better or for worse** at the end of paragraph 1?
 - a. To indicate that Luna is a really bad idea.
 - b. To clarify Luna is the best TV cable service.
 - c. To express Luna can bring advantages and disadvantages.
 - d. To suggest that streaming video games is the business of the future.

2. Which platform model is similar to Luna's?
 - a. None
 - b. xCloud
 - c. Amazon prime
 - d. Xbox Game Pass

3. What can be inferred about Stadia in paragraph 3?
 - a. Subscribers must pay for all the games.
 - b. Subscribers don't have to pay any extra fee.
 - c. Subscribers don't pay anything as the platform is free.
 - d. Subscribers must pay for the majority of the games.
4. The word **vast** in paragraph 4 is closest in meaning to
 - a. big
 - b. infinite
 - c. intense
 - d. limited
5. What does the author think about the possible success of Luna?
 - a. He/she thinks Luna won't make any money.
 - b. The position of the author is unclear.
 - c. Luna will be destroyed by the competition.
 - d. He/she believes it might be profitable.
6. What word can you insert in the gap in paragraph 6?
 - a. rent
 - b. pay
 - c. buy
 - d. earn
7. How does the author feel about cloud gaming?
 - a. He/she believes this model doesn't have any future.
 - b. He/she insists Luna is the best choice for any gamer.
 - c. He/she thinks people are evaluating what their best option is.
 - d. He/she expresses cloud gaming cannot compete about video game consoles.
8. The word **whether** in paragraph 7 is closest in meaning to
 - a. if
 - b. while
 - c. when
 - d. although

What do you think?

How much would you be willing to pay for a video game service if it gives you access to thousands and thousands of games?