

The Dex Files

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Sujet de l'article : Dexdrive

Fed up with dodgy controller paks? Not enough space to save you game? Introducing the infinite memory card...

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THE DEX FILES

SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

Fed up with dodgy controller paks? Not enough space to save your game? Introducing the infinite memory card...

How many times have you switched on your favourite game, hoping to continue where you left off, only to be greeted with the dreaded "controller pak damaged" message? If you've ever played *Turok 2*, *ISS64*, *Snowboard Kids*, *WWF Warzone* or a whole host of others with a third-party controller pak, chances are it will have been a fairly regular occurrence.

In our experience the only consistently reliable pak is the official Nintendo version. Goes without saying, really. Unfortunately it's also the smallest and most expensive, so if you want to keep your *ISS '98* teams and save your place in *Turok 2* you'll have to splash out another £15. And if you then want to start a Superbowl challenge in

Quarterback Club 99, you'll have to break open the piggy bank once more. The same goes for *Snowboard Kids*, *NBA Courtside*, *Mario Kart*, and all the other games that use up the best part of an entire controller pak for one save. If only someone could figure out a

reliable way to 'back up' an official pak...

Enter InterAct with the strangely monikered DexDrive. Plug it into the serial

port of a Windows PC, install the software that comes with it, and you can turn your computer's hard drive into an effectively unlimited archive for all your N64 controller pak saves. Plugging a controller pak into the dinky little DexDrive unit brings up an on-screen menu showing all of the saves currently residing on it. Copy them into a folder on the PC, click on the 'reformat' button, and you've emptied the pak's memory without losing any of your precious data.

In fact we'd go as far as to say that a PC makes a considerably better repository for game saves than a controller pak. You can add notes and comments to each file, so you know exactly what each one does – different *Mario Kart* course ghosts, for example. Filling your empty controller pak with a fresh save only takes a few seconds, and you can mix and match different save files, or copy one pak to another.

Best of all though, the save files can be sent to anyone else with a PC and a DexDrive, anywhere in the world in a matter of seconds. Even if you don't know anyone else with the right gear, InterAct certainly do, and their website at www.dexchange.net is where DexDrive users meet to swap save files.



As easy as 1-2-3 (4-5)

Step 1

Log on to www.dexchange.net and go to the N64 downloads page. Select the game you want to cheat at from the ones available on the list.



Step 2

All the information you need is here, including exactly where the saved game will take you and what it contains. Downloading a save takes just a couple of seconds.

Dexscape

So Internet gaming has come to the N64 somewhat ahead of schedule. Or at least, a sort of Internet gaming. By swapping saved games with people over the net you could, for example, compete against the *Mario Kart* ghost of the Mexican national Royal Raceway champion. Or you could take on the weirdest creations of the Alaskan WWF Warzone Appreciation Society.

Why bother? Well it's a big world out there, and wouldn't you like to know just how close to being truly The Best you really are. Some kind of international league competition in any game would let you know where you stand and just how much practice you need to catch up.

The only meeting place for Internet N64 gamers we've found so far is on dexchange.net's discussion board, which is worth a look if only to sample life on the dark side of the gene pool (America). Decipher their strange Yankee abuse of the Queen's English and you might just find a few e-mail "homies" to swap "dope saves" and "fly ghosts" with, bro. Yo.



On-cart saves



Can't get all the cheats? DexDrive combines with Game Shark to make it simple.



Many new games these days, including all of Nintendo's in-house titles, don't use the controller pak at all, opting instead to use a more reliable built in memory chip such as an EEPROM. Luckily the DexDrive can cope with this in conjunction with the Game Shark device (Action Replay over here), which allows you to hack into a cartridge's memory and download it onto a controller pak.

Consequently, games such as *Diddy Kong Racing* and *Lylat Wars* aren't quite as tamper-proof as they used to be. Can't get all the cheats in

GoldenEye? There's a DexDrive save just for you. Missing the last couple of gold medals in *Pilotwings*? Now you can cheat like you've never cheated before.

Support

If games companies decide to get in on the act, we'll be seeing a lot more than just game saves and cheats flying around the Internet. EA Sports have already decided to produce Dex files with extra teams and track data for some of their top-selling titles, and Acclaim are looking into the possibility of releasing limited edition customised wrestlers for their WWF games.

If the DexDrive really takes off it's inevitable that one developer or another will include a more advanced form of Dex compatibility. As soon as



interest in a game begins to wane and sales drop off, the publisher could post game saves on their website to unlock extra features. It all depends on how many PC-owning N64 gamers are prepared to splash out on the necessary hardware.

You'll only ever need one controller pak.



IMPORTING

The only way to get your hands on a DexDrive at the moment, at least until importers in this country start shipping them over in bulk, is to buy one directly from the States. Be careful though, because there are certain hidden costs to look out for. The retail price of the thing is a mere \$40 (around £25), but once delivery and import tax are taken into account the final total is likely to be pushing the £50 mark. The easiest way to buy is on the Internet with a credit card. Check out www.ebworld.com

CLONING

No sooner had the DexDrive proved to be a success in the States than the first Dex-alikes were announced from other manufacturers, including the multi-purpose Xploder from X-Gear and a Dex-compatible device from Mad Catz. We'll certainly see at least one of them in the UK, assuming InterAct's lawyers fail to prevent their release. The Xploder sounds like the most interesting one, since it includes a built-in Action Replay-style device as a bonus.



Step 3

Plug a controller pak into the DexDrive, load up the Dexplorer software (PC only at the moment) and peruse the on-screen menus.



Step 4

Copying the save you want to use is as easy as dragging the file from the right hand window into the left. The saves are even annotated so you can tell them apart easily.



Step 5

That's all there is to it. Simple. And you can use the same program to copy your own save files off your controller pak and e-mail them around the world.

