



While the leak of a 20-year old console's framework may not have the biggest impact on the Xbox brand as it is today, it could still become an invaluable tool to hackers who've long struggled to emulate the complicated architecture of Microsoft's first system.

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## What Exactly IS A Console's Source Code?



The source code of a video game console is a list of readable instructions and rules developed by the system's architects that is compiled into something that the hardware can read and execute. To put it more simply, it's the DNA of a console that holds all the information necessary for the operating system to function properly and for games to run as originally intended. Once the source code is compiled into machine code, much of the information that makes it understandable to programmers is lost in translation and difficult to recover from the finished product.

## Why These Leaks Matter For Emulation



The importance of a console's source code in recreating its original runtime environment is why so much spotlight has been given to the recent leaks for many of Nintendo's classic consoles, including the Nintendo 64, GameCube, Wii and 3DS. Understanding how a console fundamentally works is absolutely crucial for emulation and allows dedicated programmers to reverse engineer the information and improve the performance of these emulators drastically, allowing them to play games on a PC as smoothly as if it were the console itself.

For example, the leak of the Nintendo 64's source code led to hackers porting *Super Mario 64* to PC and getting it to run natively. This allowed players to change the game's resolution, implement mods and install texture packs as if it were a brand new Steam game and not a 24-year old cartridge-based title for the N64. We've also seen unused Pokémon designs mined from the source code of *Pokémon Gold and Silver* and the resurfacing of the unreleased Spaceworld '99 demo. The possibilities presented by these

leaks are only limited to the imaginations of those with the skills to put them to use, and we'll surely see even more ambitious uses of them in the coming months and years.

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## How The Xbox's Source Code Could Be Utilized



With the leak of the original Xbox's source code, its struggling emulation community could finally have the tools it needs to properly recreate the unique architecture of Microsoft's first console. The Xbox has proven itself to be an incredibly difficult piece of hardware to emulate, and only a handful of games can currently be played on PC in various incomplete states. With the source code suddenly becoming available, hackers could advance the state of Xbox emulation by leaps and bounds.

This means that hundreds of games from the system's expansive library could suddenly become playable on PC as if they were running on the original hardware, including many titles that will never

see backwards compatibility on current consoles due to licensing issues and other legal roadblocks. It's an important step towards the preservation of video games and could lead to us finally being able to play classic Xbox titles like *Jet Set Radio Future* again and in glorious high definition without having to dig a decades-old console out of storage.

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#### About The Author

Odel Rawda is a writer, video editor, and gamer living in Syracuse, New York. He graduated from Hofstra University in 2011 with a B.A. in Film Studies and Creative Writing, and has been producing video game and...

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