

Summary

Animal Crossing New Horizons is the latest entry in a series of home-decorating games from Nintendo.

Items



The core mechanic in Animal Crossing is the ability to place and move objects in the world. Each item in the game can be placed into the world, or removed from it, through player action. This mechanic is used to decorate your island to your own preferences, and build relationships with NPC characters by giving them gifts of items which they will like.

Items can be found out in the world, purchased in shops, and traded among players and NPCs alike. Everything the player does in the game has a goal of generating an item as a result, with items existing at different rarities, or at different times of the year, based on a real calendar.

Items have multiple appearances for their different states. Some items will appear in the inventory as they appear in the world. Decorative items, however, will appear in the inventory as a leaf icon, and can appear in the world as either a leaf icon or as their decor object appearance, depending on how they are placed.



Items in your inventory come with options for their use. In the above image you see the standard options for most items: Hold. Drop Item. Place Item.

Hold - Hold items are tools you use to interact with the world around you. These could be shovels, axes, step ladders, vaulting poles, or etc.

Put Away - Put Away is the opposite of Hold, it will remove a tool from your hand.

Drop Item - Drop Item removes the item from your inventory and puts it into the world as a non-permanent item object, represented in the same way as represented in the inventory

Place Item - Place Item is only present on those items which can be placed into the world as a decorative object. These items appear as a leaf in inventory.

Eat 1 - Eat is an option present on food items which can be consumed to gain some benefit, such as eating fruit to make your next axe swing stronger

Grab 1 - Grab is an inventory management option for stacked items, you can break their stack for the sake of inventory organization.

Plant 1 - Plant is for items which can be placed into the ground. This option appears while standing next to a hole created by a shovel.

Bury In Hole - Bury is for items which can be placed into the ground, but for which this won't result in growing a plant.

Time



The time system in Animal Crossing uses real world time data taken from your console's clock. Things in the game will change based on time of day, with certain items (like bugs or fish) only spawning at particular times.

The time system also extends to time of year, with the date being harvested from your console as well as the clock. Seasons are reflected in-game and one of your first choices to make is whether you are in the northern or southern hemisphere, which determines which months are summer and which are winter. Just as with time of day, certain items will only be available at certain times of the year.

There are also many festivals and events that happen only on one day, sometimes with a lead up event building anticipation.

Villagers and NPCs also operate on this time system, with each new character appearing on your island resetting an internal count of days that determine when the next new character will appear. Whether the character is a merchant NPC, event NPC, or potential villager, they will be affected by different hidden timers.

Villagers



In Animal Crossing, you live among a group of quirky animal villagers. Your village gets a maximum of 10 villagers total. 2 of those villagers start off on your island from the very start, moving in at the same time as you do. 3 more villagers will show up after you reach the milestone of being able to build proper houses, first for yourself, then your existing villagers, and finally for 3 new arrivals. After that, new villagers can be found in your island's campsite, a structure which exists only for this purpose. You can also find villagers on randomly-generated islands you visit via seaplane.

Villager Recruiting

Villagers found on a distant island will prompt the player to invite them to the player's island automatically, simply finding these villagers is all you need to do to get them as part of your village. Villagers found in the campsite will require you play a simple game with them before unlocking the ability to recruit them. This game is a game of choosing a random card, and is won entirely through RNG.

When you reach the maximum number of villagers, recruiting can only be done after a villager moves out. Villagers will have a chance to move out that increases based on the frequency of player interaction, and amount of time they've lived on the island. Once a villager offers to leave, the player must agree to this, and at that point they will be "in boxes", meaning that their belongings will be packed up for 1 day before they move. In-boxes villagers can be persuaded to stay, should players change their mind, or recruited by other players who visit the island via internet connection.

Villager Appearance

Animal villagers are hand-crafted. There are over 200 possible villagers you can recruit, each with its own personality traits, likes, dislikes, etc. Every villager gets assigned a hand-picked list of traits and those traits determine which pool of dialogue is chosen when you speak to them, what clothes they like to wear, what you'll see the villagers doing at any given time of the day, and other various aspects. While these traits are hand-chosen, they are chosen from a small pool, and the game relies on combining many small pools to create a large web of unique-feeling characters resulting from small variances.

Villager Personality

Animal villagers come with one of a set of personalities that determine several things about them, such as whether they get along with other villagers, how they speak, what hobbies they enjoy, etc. You can find a detailed breakdown and discussion of all these stats here:

[Animal Crossing: New Horizons Personalities & Hobbies of Every Villager.](#)

This all boils down to the following personality traits:

8 personality types (Normal, Lazy, Sisterly, Snooty, Cranky, Jock, Peppy, Smug)

6 hobby types (Education, Fashion, Fitness, Music, Nature, Playing)

Hidden subtype A and B, which decides which of 2 hidden dialogue options the character will choose, allowing characters with otherwise identical personalities to feel unique.

Social value determines wave animation and the likelihood of certain interactions

Style Preference determines what clothing types a character will wear

Style Preference 2 determines a secondary clothing preference

Color preference determines which colors a character likes, which affects a number of things

Color preference 2 determines a secondary color preference

Decorating



A major aspect of Animal Crossing is the ability to decorate your island. The entire concept of items in this game exists to feed back into decorating your island, your home, and your self.

As mentioned earlier, any item in the game can be placed into the world either as a representative icon as you see in your inventory or as a decorative item in its own right. Once an item has been placed, the player may rotate it and push it into exactly the position they prefer.

The game will eventually give the player a rating based on their decorating. This value seems to primarily be interested in number of items present around the island, rather than any artistic judgement of the arrangement of those items. This decor rating is something that's required for unlocking different aspects of the game, such as the final home expansion upgrades.

DIY and Recipes



Crafting in Animal Crossing is kept relatively simple. You approach a workbench and open a menu for crafting, which lists all the recipes you know on individual cards with their required materials on the right of the screen. You choose which item to make and if you have the materials necessary, you may create that item immediately.

On choosing to craft an item, you are shown a short animation of your character working, and another of your character presenting that item, at which point you may re-enter the menu to make something else. There is no concession in the game for crafting large quantities.

Some items can also be customized. Certain types of items come with multiple color variants that you can choose when choosing to craft that item. Some of these color variants also include spaces for custom patterns which use the images created with the Custom Design feature of the nook phone.

Players can also create their own custom clothing, but this is done via the nook phone Custom Design menu, not through the crafting bench. Custom clothing does not require any materials to craft.

Terraforming



At the end of the game, the final unlock is the ability to terraform your island's physical shape. Terraforming includes the ability to create new water tiles, or build up new cliffs. You can also remove existing tiles of any kind, replacing them as you please.



Terraforming acts like the use of any other item, requiring you to open the menu and select which object you would like to place.

Player Homes



Player homes come with a central living room and 5 add-on rooms that can be purchased through Tom Nook via a loan. New loan can be taken only after previous loans have been paid in full.

These 5 rooms are empty and can be decorated as the player sees fit, with any floor tiles, wallpapers, or other items of any kind.

The player's home exists as a storage unit, and a place for them to spawn at the start of each day, or after dying due to a spider or scorpion. Home storage exists as a place for players to keep the various items they've collected in a menu where it won't get in the way. Items can be deposited into this storage space from the normal inventory or taken from storage and placed into normal inventory for travel.

Home storage never changes throughout the game. It is available from the moment the player has a home, and can be used forever without need for upgrades.

Loans



The goal of Animal Crossing is to pay off the loans Tom Nook gives you when you begin the game. Your quest is to generate enough money to eventually have the Bells, the game's currency, to pay him back for providing you with a home at the start.

Loans serve as the game's marker of progress. The first loan is for a basic tent setup on the island. This loan is technically for the plane ticket to the island you call home, and is paid for in Nook Miles, a secondary currency in the game primarily used to purchase tickets to special, distant islands. All subsequent loans are in bells, and they increase in value as you go, the first home loan being 98,000 bells, and the final home expansion being 5,746,000 bells. All of these loans are paid off at an ATM set up inside Tom Nook's city hall building. This ATM also gives access to a small shop of daily items.

At the end of the game, you can also purchase loans for things other than your home. Island infrastructural elements, such as ramps or bridges, require a loan. These loans are paid on the construction site through an NPC which exists only for this purpose. Bridges and ramps will appear as construction sites until their loan is paid, at which point they will transform into their final, usable form at the start of the next day.

Turnips



The primary method of paying off loans in Animal Crossing is through the use of Sow Joan's Stalk Market. Every Sunday a roaming NPC named Daisy Mae will be present on your island until noon. If you speak to her, she will sell you turnips for 80-120 bells per stack of 10 turnips.

Upon acquiring turnips, you must store them somewhere until they can be sold for a profit. Turnips will rot after 1 week, so each time you invest in them, you are incentivized to find a way to sell them.

Selling turnips happens at Nook's Market, where the proprietors will offer you two different turnip prices each day, one price before noon and another price after noon. Prices follow a predetermined algorithm with a number of possible patterns. These patterns can be predicted with a math formula and many [fan sites](#) exist to help players understand this formula and predict results.

Nook's Cranny



Purchasing items in Animal Crossing is primarily done at Nook's Cranny, where players can find a selection of items for purchase. There are several ways to purchase items at this store. There is a cabinet of items where you can purchase things like tools, seeds for planting, wallpapers, floor tiles, etc. Items in this cabinet can be purchased repeatedly. In the main shop floor, you can find two different areas. The small table is for items which can be purchased as often as you like, and which are generally cheaper in value. The larger show floor space is reserved for larger, more expensive items, of which the player can only purchase one copy per day. If you purchase one of these larger items, it will be replaced with a "Sold" sign until the stock refreshes the next day and it is replaced by something new.

This shop is open until 10pm at night, and it has a static list of items each day. That stock refreshes with a new, random selection when the shop opens again at 9am. Each day's stock will be a random selection from all possible items in the game, so checking back in daily is the only way to find many items, and there is no way to reserve an item if you don't have the money to pay for it when it appears.

Nook's Cranny is run by two raccoons who, when spoken to, will offer to purchase your turnips from you at a value detailed in the Turnips section of this document.

Nook's Cranny doesn't exist on your island at the start, but unlocks after a set number of days has passed. It later upgrades itself after another set number of days.

Able Sisters



There is a second shop available to players after a bit of time has passed. This shop is entirely devoted to clothing and comes stocked with a similar subset of the game's whole list of clothing, much like what is found in Nook's Cranny. At the center of the store will be 6 items selected randomly by the game. On the left will be a display set of two complete outfits as a suggestion of what to wear. At the far back of the shop is a wall space dedicated to showing off custom designs made by the player.

On the right of the Able's shop is a fitting room. Inside the fitting room will be all the items found on the show floor, as well as variants in different colors or patterns. There will also be some few items not found on the show floor at all, meaning that the fitting room is clearly the best way to shop. The fitting room also lets you preview what the clothes will look like on your character.

Able Sisters unlocks after interacting with Mabel 3 times. Mabel will show up on your island as a roaming NPC, selling a small list of clothes items. Because her appearance random, it can take quite some time for the player to unlock the clothing shop.

Roaming NPCs



Roaming NPCs will visit your island intermittently while playing Animal Crossing. These NPCs usually offer new items of some highly-specific variety. For example, you can buy rugs and wallpapers at Nook's Cranny, but Saharah will appear and offer much rarer varieties that cannot be found any other way.

Roaming NPCs operate on a hidden timer and some specific rule set unique to the character. For instance, Pascal will only show up after you've caught a Scallop while diving, but only if all his other criteria are also met.

Only 1 roaming NPC can be present on your island at a time, so if you have multiple triggers set and ready, the game will use its own logic to prioritize who appears and when.

Players are guaranteed to be visited by Kicks, Leif, or Saharah 3 days of the week, with the other 2 days of the week reserved for CJ, Gulliver, Flick, Label, and Redd. Sundays will always feature Daisy Mae, and Celeste will only appear at night during a meteor shower.

Dodo Airlines



Dodo Airlines is the online interface of the game, enabling travel to other islands (both those owned by other players, and those randomly generated for exploration and harvesting). Dodo airlines is also where you go to open your island up to visitors, whether they be visiting friends or random strangers.

Dodo Codes are a unique address used to identify your island to other players. Only those people who are on your friends list, or who have your dodo code, can visit your island. Dodo codes are static as long as your island is left open to visitors, but if you close your island, you must generate a new dodo code next time.

Nook Miles Tickets can be exchanged at the Dodo Airlines desk in order to visit a randomly-generated island for the sake of harvesting the materials there.

Dodo Airlines is also where you go to visit a friend's island. You must ask to visit a friend, and then you will get a list of friends who have islands currently open for visitors, or the option to input a dodo code instead.

Visiting Friends



ACNH allows up to 7 people to visit an island at a time. As long as your island's airport is open, anyone on your friends list, or with your current Dodo code, can visit at any time. Visiting players will pause the game of everyone on the island they are visiting, and a UI element will appear while the game pauses, announcing the new arrival.

Visiting friends can serve a number of purposes, including facilitating trade or giving other people access to your island's resources. Since shops in Animal Crossing only offer a small subset of their inventory on any given day, visiting other islands will expand your buying options, and is the primary motive for travel, aside from social visits. In this vein, turnip prices are also unique per island, so if your friend has a high turnip price, you'll want to visit them to sell for the most profit.

Visiting players can also each apply a watering bonus to flowers, meaning that you can get rarer flowers more quickly by inviting friends to help water them. Island events, such as meteor showers, also can be unique per island, as can any other roaming NPCs.

Many players have also developed [their own games](#) to play while friends are over.

Mystery Island Tours



Mystery Islands are procedurally generated land where you can harvest materials without consequence. These islands are blank slate islands which will come with things you otherwise are unable to access, such as fruit types that don't occur in your home.

Mystery Islands come in a few different types, each focusing on a particular resource. For example, bamboo islands are the only way to find bamboo seeds. Other examples are islands where a particular resource is plentiful, like fish, or where all rocks are full of coins. Still others will be full of dangerous creatures, such as spiders which can be captured and sold for large amounts of bells.

Villagers can be found on these mystery islands as well, spawning randomly and standing around waiting for the player to approach.

Death



While Animal Crossing doesn't otherwise have a health system, or any form of combat, there are Spiders and Scorpions in the game which menace the player. If either of these creatures gets within range of the player, they will attack. If struck, the player is instantly killed and respawns back at their house (or at the sea plane, if they're on a mystery island).

Spiders and Scorpions both move much faster than the player and will chase them relentlessly until captured or successful in attacking their victim.

Spiders are worth 8000 bells, an amount that's far more than any other single item in the game, making their capture worth the effort involved. Capture strategies usually involve digging holes to set up a capture zone, since players can leap over holes while spiders cannot. Spiders also respond to fast motion within a radius, so it's possible to slowly walk up to them and capture them before they react.

Wasps can be spawned when you chop down a tree. If stung by a wasp, your eye will swell and you'll need medicine to recover. If you are stung a second time before taking medicine, you'll die and respawn as if attacked by a spider. Wasps are worth significantly less than spiders at 2500.

Museum



The Museum is one of the first buildings you create in Animal Crossing New Horizons, and serves as your repository for all the game's collection mechanics. The Museum has three wings, each devoted to a particular type of collection.

Bugs - bugs are collected on all the land areas in the game, largely centered around the plants of the animal crossing world. Bugs will be attracted to particular types of plant, and even to particular plants in particular states. For example, ants can only be found on turnips that have gone rotten, and Rosalia Batesi Beetles will only spawn between May and September and only on a tree stump created by a player chopping a tree.

Fish - fish are collected in the oceans and rivers of the game. The shape and size of the body of water determines what type of fish will be present there, with a level of specificity up to "will only spawn at the mouths of rivers as they reach the ocean".

Fossils - Fossils are much less particular in their spawning, and can be found anywhere under the ground. The game will spawn a set number each day, and they are denoted by a small light shining from a ground tile, which you must dig to reveal the fossil.

Redd/Artwork - a later patch added an art museum to the game, and the artwork for this can only be found via a roaming NPC who runs a shop. This shop is full of fake artwork, and the player must identify fake from real in order to fill their museum. Fake art can still be used as decorative items in the world, they just can't be added to the museum collection.

Gardening



There are certain plants the player may grow on their island. These plants appear in the form of seeds in the shop, or via roaming NPCs, and can be cultivated by using a watering can tool. Plants will grow on their own, but will flower more quickly if watered. Watering can also be done by the rain, if there is a storm, or by other players visiting the island.

Fruit - Each island will generate with 1 type of fruit, from a list of 5 possible. These fruits can be eaten to make the player's next axe swing or mining pick strike destroy its target in 1 swing (down from the usual 3). Fruits can also be sold at Nook's Cranny for a large amount of money, and fruit collecting is usually a primary source of income for much of the early game. Non-native fruit will also sell for notably more than the 1 native fruit you start with. This is incentive to visit other islands and harvest fruit there, which you can then plant back home to grow your own orchard to generate bells.

Flowers - Flowers are a decorative item with a built-in tech tree of sorts. Flowers have a chance to create a bud when there are at least 2 plants nearby, and this bud will use a combination of traits from its parent flowers. Combining flowers will yield new color varieties, and this combination mechanic is the only way to access rare flower colors, such as purple, blue, or gold. For more information about the specifics of the flower progression, check [here](#).

Resident Services



Resident Services is where Tom Nook is found in the game. It's also the eventual home of Isabelle, one of the series' most iconic characters, once you progress to the point where Tom Nook splits tasks so that he manages the building and expansion aspects, while Isabelle handles matters of personal preference (such as customizing your island's flag, or complaining about a villager in hopes of removing them). The whole space is a glorified UI hidden behind conversation.

Inside Resident Services is a desk where Nook, and eventually Isabelle, offer options such as taking out a loan or changing your island's theme song. To the side of this is an ATM machine where you keep your money in the game. This ATM also hosts a small shop of a specific subset of items that you can only buy here.

Events

There is a space outside Resident Services set aside by the game for events and roaming NPCs. This space is flat and empty and is a place used by the villagers for specific interactions (such as group singing) while no events are present. When an event happens, such as the easter holiday event, this square is taken over by a Roaming NPC and associated decorations. This space will serve as the hub for these event characters, and you'll end up frequently returning here while collecting whatever items you need to participate in said event.

NookPhone



The Nook Phone is the in-game UI, giving players access to a number of systems including a Camera, a list of collectables to find, DIY crafting, a map of their island, etc.

Camera - The in-game camera allows you to position a frame to take photos using the game's various filters and effects, as well as giving you more specific control over camera position

Nook Miles - Nook Miles are a type of currency unlocked by completing achievements, and this button gives you access to the list that you have already achieved, and hints for the rest.

Critterpedia - Critterpedia is the list of bugs, fish, and etc. that you have found out in the world. The critterpedia lists when the creature can be found and also gives a bit of scientific information about that creature, as well as a detailed set of illustrations of the real thing.

DIY Recipes - DIY is animal crossing's crafting system, allowing players to browse recipes for decorative items of every kind in the game. These recipes will need a crafting bench to create.

Custom Designs - Custom designs are textures that can be applied to certain objects. This button in the menu allows you to create a new design, or look at existing ones. It also allows you to find new designs via the internet. In this menu is a list of clothing items that can be customized as well. Customized clothing is created for free in this menu, and a physical item can be generated which can be worn. These custom clothing items are limited to a specific number of patterns, but cost nothing to create.

Map - The map is just a larger version of their island map with more detail than the minimap that is on-screen at all times during normal gameplay

Passport - Passport allows players to change the image and descriptive info seen when a player visits another player's island.

Call Resident - Call resident allows players sharing an island to play multiplayer together using 2 joycon controllers turned sideways. This feature is a Quality of Life feature because only one island can exist per console, and additional players must share a space.

Rescue Service - Rescue service will save you if you get stuck somewhere while editing your island. This costs 100 nook miles to use.

Island Designer - Island designer is the terraforming system of the game, which must be enabled or disabled here before it can be used.

Nook Shopping - The nook shopping app lets players purchase a small selection of items similar to those found at the ATM in resident services. This feature is unlocked after purchasing 100 items from that ATM

Best Friends List - Friends list of other players, specific to ACNH, this list allows you to see who is online and who has their gates open for visitors without having to go to the airport.

Chat Log - Multiplayer ACNH features a chat functionality which is archived [here](#).

Mail and Gifts



Outside of each players' home is a mailbox. The mailbox is attached to the home, and can be visually customized, but not removed.

On occasion, the villagers or the game will send the player mail. This mail comes in the form of a letter, and offers a quick, pleasant message to make players feel more connected to their villagers, or the game as a whole. Periodic markers of progression also appear in the form of letters from "Mom" which is a character that exists only in these letters. Letters from Mom always include a gift, and that gift is always a decorative item, usually unique to Mom.

Villagers will also send the player gifts from time to time, and always with a message attached. These items and messages are randomized, but based on the personality of the villager, and your level of mutual friendship.

Players may also write letters to other players, and attach items to those letters. This serves as a way to transfer items easily between players without the need for an island visit.

You may also choose to gift an item to another player while purchasing it, and it will be sent to their mailbox