

From Switch to Klask: What's a Grandparent To Do?

"Papa, do you want to play Mario Cart on my Switch 2?"

Those words from our six-year-old grandson Jack were spoken more than once in the days I spent with family in Minneapolis. Fresh from the holidays, this season has given me a lot to ponder as I engage fully in the present while keeping one eye on the future.

Growing up in the 1960s and 70s, my family did not own electronic games—unless you count the electronic football game that featured tiny players vibrating on a metal field while the ball carrier toted a folded paper football toward the end zone. It was charming in its own way, but hardly immersive. My friend Greg, however, had the new Atari Pong system. While I don't remember playing it much (we were far too busy playing ball at the school playground down the street), we were fascinated by the simple blip bouncing back and forth as we moved our paddles to keep it in play. At the time, it felt like the height of technological progress.

Fast forward more than fifty years to the holiday season of 2025.

"Switch 2."

Just saying the name sounds futuristic. Racing cars selected from a stable of sleek options. Choosing characters from a deep roster of racers. Speeding through courses filled with obstacles—mud patches, ponds, barriers—and strategically placed balloons that rewarded precision and timing. The screen pulsed with color, motion, and sound. As the cigarette commercials of the 1970s (what are those?) reminded us, "you've come a long way, baby!"

Yet this old grandparent held his own, even winning a couple of races. Who would have thought?

But the most striking contrast came when we put down the Switch controllers and opened a gift Jack received from Santa: a game called Klask.

Klask is about as low-tech as you will find in today's gaming world. Originating in Denmark (the country, not the northeastern Wisconsin community!), it is a fast-paced magnetic game often described as a hybrid of air hockey and foosball. Played on a wooden board with two deep goal holes, Klask uses no screens, no software updates, and no batteries. Each player controls a striker by moving a magnet beneath the board. Three small white magnets—aptly nicknamed "biscuits"—sit in the middle of the field as hazards. Collect two biscuits and you lose a point. Sink the orange ball into your opponent's goal, and you score.

The rules are simple. The learning curve is short. The fun is immediate.

When compared to Switch 2, Klask feels almost quaint. And yet, once the game began, something remarkable happened. The room filled with laughter. Players leaned in. Grandparents, parents, and children made eye contact, teased each other, celebrated improbable goals, and groaned at self-inflicted biscuit disasters. No one checked a screen. No one asked what came next. Everyone was fully present.

Which raises an interesting question: what is the common denominator between these two seemingly polar opposite games?

The answer is simple—competition and fun.

Both games demand skill, quick thinking, and hand-eye coordination. Both invite challenge and reward persistence. And perhaps most importantly, both create moments of shared joy. The technology may differ dramatically, but the human impulse to play remains unchanged.

That realization makes me wonder about the future. What will gaming look like as we move deeper into the 21st century? Will systems like Switch 2 continue to evolve into fully immersive virtual worlds, demanding ever greater dexterity, speed, and cognitive agility? Or will games like Klask remind us of the enduring appeal of simplicity—wood, magnets, laughter, and face-to-face competition?

The answer, I suspect, is not one or the other, but both.

Technology will continue to advance. Screens will become sharper, games more complex, and experiences more immersive. At the same time, there will always be a place for games that pull us away from the digital and back toward one another. Games that fit on a table. Games that invite conversation. Games that don't need an update to work.

One thing I know for certain is this: during these holiday, games—both high-tech and low-tech—created moments of laughter and wholesome fun. They bridged generations. They leveled the playing field. And they reminded this grandparent that sometimes the best way to engage with the future is to sit down, pick up a controller or a magnet, and simply play.

After all, whether it's Mario Kart or Klask, the real win isn't crossing the finish line first—it's enjoying the people sitting across from you.