

R4i Save Dongle Review

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This is my first product review and hopefully its informative for everyone.

- I received the R4i Save Dongle in the mail about 2-3 weeks after being selected to review it. The packaging it arrived in wasn't too bad and was in a sturdy red box well protected. Nothing else arrived besides the dongle so no drivers but on the back it shows you where you can download the latest drivers and also where you can upload your game saves for other players to enjoy. The dongle itself is built very well and made of a harder plastic. I tried pressing onto the plastic shaped dome and doesn't feel cheap at all. Has the Save Dongle logo printed on top and next to that is an LED for reading/writing activity. On the side there is an upgrade button which seems a little hard to press but any pointed object can help you with that.

- I went to the site listed on the back of the box and located a few files for the Save Dongle. Weren't too hard to find and included drivers, savedongle manager, firmware uploader, and savetool. The drivers werent really drivers at all, mostly .net framework in case you have trouble running the dongle. I plugged in the dongle directly without using anything from the drivers. My PC is already fully updated so there was no need to install anything and also using the dongle on Windows 7 64bit. I then ran the manager (R4i SaveDongle v1.1) and it detected the dongle right away showing "The Firmware version is 1.0" and "No Card Detected! Please Insert Card" but that's normal since I don't have a game inserted yet.

- Now to test the save extraction. Will be backing up saves from the 6 titles that i own. Inserting games isn't hard but they should label which side games go in so some don't go jamming in a game the wrong side. Also it isn't spring loaded but that's not a problem at all because the game sticks out enough to pull out easily. Slight crunching noise when insert a game in, was a bit worried about the thin plastic strips on the game cart but everything looked good. When running the manager, you only have two options, PC to Card and Card to PC so its very easy to figure out how to extract/transfer saves.

Game Testing: Save Extraction (3DS titles only, the manager detected card type as: 3ds and game info: Unknown)

-Pilotwings; save extraction took about 18 seconds and filesize is 128kb. (after pulling out savedongle, gave a reading data error, should be normal as i didn't safely eject the usb device from within windows)

-Cave Story 3D; save extraction took about 50 seconds and filesize is 512kb. (I just noticed there is no safe way to unplug the device from within windows like a usb flash drive, also no error when unplugging save dongle with Cave Story 3D like there was with Pilotwings.)

-Mario Kart 7; save extraction took about 52 seconds and filesize is 512kb. (Gave error when pulling dongle out "Read data from device fail" but this shouldn't alert anyone since the save has already been extracted.)

- Ocarina of Time; save extraction took about 17 seconds and filesize is 128kb. (You can get an idea of reading speeds now. Also if you don't want any errors, you can close the manager after a read and then pull dongle out but the warning messages don't bother me)
- Dead or Alive Dimensions; also a 128kb and same time of 17 seconds.
- Super Mario 3D Land; also a 128kb and same time of 17 seconds.

Game Testing: Inserting Save

-Ocarina of Time; Inserting save took about 45 seconds. I used a save from "www.r4i-sdhc.com" which had both original and master quest save. I tried Ocarina of Time in my 3DS but the game said the save was corrupted (due to encryption) so it did not work at all. I recopied my backup save and it worked flawlessly.

- Ocarina of Time was the only game I tested because most of the saves are for Europe titles and the entire save area at "www.r4i-sdhc.com" is still growing. I don't know much about save encryption so I don't know how long it'll be until we can use other players saves due to the encryption. I doubt the average user knows how to edit saves to allow cheating/modifications, maybe make a gui like the manager but for save editing? This is a great device and the only issues seem to be software side which can easily be fixed in the future.

Final Thoughts:

Pros on Dongle:

- Small dongle, easy to carry, sturdy!
- Great for personal backup of saves
- Easy to use (Extracting and injecting saves)
- Transfer speeds aren't too bad.
- Easy to insert/remove game carts.

Cons on Dongle:

- Unknown game file on 3DS titles.
- Editing of saves (difficult for the average user)
- Cant use other saves due to encryption (not the dongles fault)
- Some error messages when removing carts (windows problem, not dongle, doesn't affect saves at all)

My Final Rating: 9/10