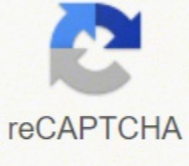




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Best sound settings for astro a20

© 1996-2014. Amazon.com, Inc. or its affiliates Image not available forColour: To view this video download Flash Player The Astro A20 Gen 2 wireless headset has a strange kind of awkward elegance to it. On the one hand, its minimalistic design, ease of use, and sound quality make it a joy to use. But on the other, poor design decisions and virtually non-existent instructions can make it as frustrating as it is useful. Take for instance the 2-inch USB transmitter, which can seem like a bit much when it's protruding from the front of a desktop computer, console system, or side of a laptop. However, it's completely plug and play, and provides a strong wireless signal that can penetrate multiple walls. It also helps that the headset itself maintains Astro's signature style, with earcups that slide up and down and a long, flexible directional boom mic. At the same time, the Astro Gaming's dedication to minimalism goes to such an extreme that it almost makes this relatively straightforward headset difficult to use. Turning up the Astro A20 Gen 2 wireless gaming headset Plugging in the A20 for the first time is easy enough to figure out. The transmitter has a single button that pairs it with the headset when you turn it on. No drivers are required, so you're ready to jump into a game, play music, or watch a movie straight from there. The A20 headset is also compatible with either an Xbox One or PlayStation 4 depending on the model, indicated by the color scheme, which makes it easy to quickly switch from PC/Mac gaming to using a console. The Astro A20 can be easily switched between PC and console platforms. The headband is a bit squarish for my taste compared to some of Astro's other headsets. Its soft plastic cushion contrasts with the fabric earcups, but it's flexible enough to be worn comfortably. At the same time, the super-soft ear cushions allow room for wide glasses and maintained strong sound isolation without getting too hot. Combined with the 15-hour integrated lithium-ion battery and 49-foot range, I could listen to music and play games for the better part of the day without realizing that I was still wearing the 11-ounce headset. As for audio performance, the 40mm neodymium drivers completely deliver near true-to-life sound. At times, it was difficult to tell whether I was listening with the A20 or my desktop speakers. The sound can be further enhanced using the built-in equalizer preset button and software-based spatial audio such as Windows Sonic and Dolby Atmos. The A20 also has an independent volume knob, which means that adjusting the volume through Windows doesn't do anything. This can take a bit of getting used to, especially if you're accustomed to using volume controls on your keyboard. But the benefit is that you get consistent loudness when you switch between devices. So, the A20 makes a strong first impression, but it doesn't take long before its flaws start to show. User unfriendly design Problems begin almost right out of the box, starting with the quick start guide that seems custom made to offer as little guidance as possible. There's almost no text to coincide with the sparse illustrations, which probably means that Astro realizes that most people tend to throw out the instructions without reading them anyway. But it also makes things like the equalizer button, which is located on the right ear cup, a complete mystery. There's practically no way to figure out that the three EQ presets include the Astro all-around gaming mode, a PRO mode that boosts the mids and highs for pro gaming and optimized spatial audio, and a neutral Studio mode for movies and music except by toying around with it and guessing what the bleeps mean. The EQ button is also inconveniently placed. I've accidentally pressed it on more than one occasion while putting the A20 on or taking it off. When changing the EQ settings by feel, I would usually end up pressing the more prominent power button and wonder why nothing was happening. Figuring out what all the buttons do is part of the user experience. Similarly, the voice balance buttons - which are located above and below the volume knob of the Xbox / PC version - are fantastically easy to overlook. Pressing them changes the game sound and voice communications mix to emphasize one while tuning down the other. However, figuring out their functions and what the different tones mean takes way more guesswork and online research than it should. Perhaps the worst oversight is that the A20 Gen 2 doesn't work with the Astro Command Center software, which limits your EQ tuning to the three built-in presets. And you can forget about firmware updates. There's also no obvious battery level indicator, which means more guesswork. However, you can pretty much tell when the battery is running low when static steadily creeps into the sound. It can be confused with connection interference at first, but it eventually gets so bad that it becomes an obvious cry for help, prompting you to plug in the USB-C cable. Incidentally, I would have loved the ability to set the headset's automatic shutdown timer past five minutes. It might be a minor issue, but having the headset turn off on me while it's still on my head just because I took a short break from playing to check my email adds to the list of annoyances. Clearing out the noise Fortunately, after the breaking-in period, the Astro A20 Gen 2 ends up being an excellent gaming headset. The flip-to-mute boom mic picked up my voice nicely while minimizing the background noise, even while someone was watching television nearby as I was playing an online game. The relatively long USB transmitter seems like an accident waiting to happen, but it provides a strong and far-reaching signal. There are still some aspects that bother me. Chief among them is the poorly placed equalizer button and the rather long transmitter, which is just waiting for someone to bump into it. I'm not a huge fan of the boxy look, which is underscored by square-shaped earcups. But there's no denying that the Astro A20 Gen 2 provides superb sound for games, music, and movies. Once you have all the settings locked in, you can sit back and go on an all-day gaming marathon. With its strong signal and range, I didn't even have to take it off when grabbing my food delivery from my doorstep. The exceptional wireless audio performance trumps just about all the usability issues. I wouldn't call the A20 one of my favorite headsets from Astro, but it certainly does an excellent job of immersing you in games. Ultimately, that's all that matters. ASTRO debuted its first A20 (Gen 1) wireless headset three years ago as a mid-tier alternative to the pricier A50. As the gaming industry prepared for the launch of the current gen consoles (PS5 and Series X), so, too, did ASTRO; this past October they launched the Gen 2 version of the A20 wireless headset, which touts a couple new features over the Gen 1 while still maintaining that mid-tier pricing. The new A20 uses a USB dongle instead of the transmitter box from Gen 1 and it's instantly compatible with the PlayStation 5 and Xbox Series X; the Gen 1 requires either a firmware update or a new adapter depending on the console. Aside from that, it's largely still the same quality product. The audio is a little better as it uses the newer "ASTRO Audio v2" for sound balancing, the 15 hour battery life holds up (and then some), it maintains a fairly stable connection within the 15-meter guaranteed range, and the headset itself is ok to wear for short periods. It's also available at a slightly lower price compared to the original (\$119 vs \$139), but there are some definite drawbacks. I will admit that I am not the most discerning person when it comes to the headset I use. As long as it's comfortable and the audio isn't tinny, muddled, or otherwise terrible, I'm content. I've used a HyperX Stinger wired headset for the past 3 years, and an ASTRO A40 with a MixAmp for 3 years before that. I typically only change headsets out when needed, but I was interested in trying the A20 as I liked the A40 previously and I've been looking to switch to a wireless headset (the demands of a 3 year old makes being attached to anything rather problematic). From an audio perspective, I really like how sounds are richer and warmer to my ears compared to the HyperX Stinger. I played a lot of Destiny 2 and Fuser on the PC, and some Yakuza games on the PlayStation 4, and each time I was impressed by how much better the game music sounded or how much easier it was to pick up on subtle sounds, like the various street noises of Kamurocho. The A20 also has three built-in EQ settings (same as Gen 1: ASTRO, Pro, Studio) to emphasize highs, mids, and bass depending on what you're listening to or doing. I always like a good, thumpy bass so I tended to default to the "ASTRO" EQ setting, but "Studio" worked well when I was just listening to music. It's worth noting, though, that while the Gen 1 A20 was compatible with the ASTRO Command Center software so you could do some customization to these EQ settings, Gen 2 isn't and ASTRO has stated they have no plans of adding that functionality as "customisation [sic] on the GEN 1 product was very minimal" and "it didn't have as much functionality as our higher-end tournament products." I never had the Gen 1 A20 so it's not a feature I particularly miss, but just a fair heads up if you're considering the upgrade. Aside from the equalizer presets, there are also "Voice" and "Game" buttons situated above and below (respectively) the volume dial on the A20. These can be pressed to incrementally prioritize voice chat over game audio, or held down to shift in one direction faster. This is a fairly standard feature on many of the mid-range headsets and one that I missed having for co-op gaming so I could quiet party chat when I hit a cutscene or voiced dialogue. The swivel-arm mic on the A20 sounds fine, too, when put up against the HyperX Stinger; both are a little "tinny," which I've come to expect from headset mics, and both feature an auto-mute when you flip the mic up. I will say, though, that I like the way the HyperX Stinger handles this feature better. There's an audible and physical click on the Stinger when you swing the mic up and down, letting you know when you're muted or not. The A20 mic, on the other hand, has just a little bit of resistance when it's swung to the top of the headset, so it doesn't feel as sure when you're muting yourself. On the comfort side of things, the A20 features cloth ear cushions that are more breathable than foam, even if there is some sound bleeding as a result. While the A20 feels better around my ears it's also heavier than the HyperX Stinger, which I felt after about an hour and half of wear. It uses a rubber headband instead of a foam one, too. I didn't feel much of a difference between the two materials, but this is definitely one of those cases where your personal comfort mileage will vary. Additionally, the overall frame is fairly rigid and the ear cups only have about 1.5" of adjustment between their highest and lowest setting. As a result, the A20 doesn't feel as accommodating to different head sizes. I was initially fine with the headset at its max size adjustment, but after those 90 minutes of use I wanted to shift it up a bit higher on my head. I was feeling some pressure from the weight and in order to reduce it, I figured I'd shift the A20 to the top of my head. While I could get it up there it pulled on my ears some and, unfortunately, didn't do much to relieve that pressure I was feeling. As a result, I just stopped playing for a while until it went away (about an hour later). My gaming time is limited these days so this particular issue, for me, is likely only to come up on those rare weekends when I can spend a whole afternoon or evening playing; but knowing this, I won't be reaching for the A20 when I do have that time as that uncomfortable pressure will bring it all to an end. There are a handful of smaller issues with the A20, as well. The included USB transmitter seems to default to the console connection whenever it's hooked up to the PC, regardless if you actually connected to a console or not. This means that you'll need to press the tiny button on it to switch it to PC mode any time you unplug it and plug it back in, or even just power your system off and on. Depending on where/how accessible your USB ports are on your computer, it gets annoying after awhile having to reach past cables to get it switched to the right mode. I also experienced some initial issues getting my system to recognize the USB transmitter and then, once it did, getting the transmitter to pair up with the headset; for some reason it wouldn't switch from the PS4 mode to the PC mode. I'll admit that this may have had more to do with my system than the product itself, however, something I do put on ASTRO is the fact that the included "manual" is a sheet of paper with a few pictures on it. No troubleshooting steps or additional info if you are having issues. Finally, the buttons on the headset are all clumped together on the right side of the headset. I'm sure that over time I'd develop the muscle memory to know where the equalizer vs power button were, but more than once I found myself pressing the wrong one. It seems like they could have moved the volume and "Voice"/"Game" buttons to the other side and put a little more space between everything. I was really hoping the new A20 would be my new headset for the next few years as I was immediately pleased with the sound quality and, initially, with how comfortable they were. However, the more I used them, the more I noticed big things (the weight/discomfort) and little things (the USB transmitter and buttons) that drove me back to the HyperX Stinger. I'll still be using the A20 with both my PS4 and PC when I want to be able to get up and go quickly, or when I want a little better audio experience, but they won't be my go-to for the next couple years.

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