

ONCE MORE UNTO THE BREACH, DEAR FRIENDS, ONCE MORE

# Fallout 4

**Fallout 4** is a bewildering achievement of gaming excellence. Never before have we played a game so full of flaws that we absolutely adored. Despite performance issues, the usual Bethesda serving of bugs and glitches and outdated graphics, it took all our strength of will to tear away from the game to write this review.

After the initial announcement back in June, we weren't sure what to think of *Fallout 4*. The presentation was interesting, but we weren't sure if it was going to be the game we had all been waiting for. After *Fallout New Vegas*, the bar on what we expected from our post-apocalyptic adventure games had really been raised. While *Fallout 3* was a great game, the original developers of the series, Obsidian Entertainment, gave us a truly memorable how-to-post-apocalypse which reminded us of the early games in the series with their deep characters, truly game shaping choices and depth of lore that just wasn't there in Bethesda's last entry.

First let's look at the big changes to the format, the most notable of which is the decision to have a voiced lead character. It feels like a lot of inspiration was taken from *Mass Effect* in regards to the system, with mixed results. You are given four dialogue options which are very vague about what your character will actually say, and which seem to be largely irrelevant anyway, with different dialogue options often leading to the same response. It feels like the dialogue system has been greatly defined by the limitations of consoles, something we feel echoes across the entire game experience.

This was a risky move, as one of the great strengths of Bethesda's games is their blank canvas characters, allowing the player to completely shape their character. While character customisation has only improved since the past, you are limited to one of two voices, male or female, with no variation therein. This is understandable, with a reported 111,000 lines of dialogue recorded, but may break immersion for those looking to role play non-standard characters. Something else we noticed is the loss of a feature from previous games where putting no points into intelligence made your character incapable of speech, something hardcore fans may mourn.

Disappointing dialogue system aside, there have been some other pretty significant changes in the wasteland. Combat has received a nice refresh, with a far more responsive shooting experience, massively helped by the in depth weapon upgrade system which allows you to change the appearance as well as add various features to almost every weapon you come across. Melee still feels a bit simplistic, but this feels more like a limitation of the engine than an oversight. The changes to V.A.T.S. such as a manual critical hit system with which you charge your CRIT bar to unleash a devastating attack is a great addition, letting you keep a trick up your sleeve for when the going gets tough.

Speaking of combat, power armour has received a massive overhaul, behaving more like a vehicle

## DETAILS

FORMAT: PC  
OTHER FORMATS: PlayStation 4, Xbox One  
ORIGIN: USA  
PUBLISHER: Bethesda Softworks  
DEVELOPER: Bethesda Game Studios  
PRICE: £39.99  
RELEASE: Out Now  
PLAYERS: 1  
ONLINE REVIEWED: N/A



Above: As well as new areas to explore, the weather system has received some interesting updates such as radioactive storms. Also notice the alternative HUD, part of the set of changes made to power armour.



than equipable armour, requiring you to get into it to take advantage of the bonuses it provides. Our one criticism is how quickly you acquire your first suit, somewhat cheapening the experience.

The game feels much more focused on combat than it ever has before, with a much faster pace and frequency than previous titles. As Interplay founder Brian Fargo (2015) states "One of the edicts from the original *Fallout* was that you could solve every problem either by brute force, by trying to charm them or by trying to sneak your way around," he says. "So take those three options and apply them to every possible scenario, I think that was a core tenet from a design perspective of what *Fallout* was supposed to be." The changes to the formula have certainly not discarded this ethos, however it is more tempting than ever to take the bloody path to victory. That said, the game is still hugely enjoyable if you want to keep to the shadows. There's nothing new in this respect, so expect the usual AI behaviour we all know from games like *Skyrim* and a lockpicking system taken directly from it. Hacking has not changed so no surprises there, it's still a useful skill in the commonwealth.

Above: One of the biggest changes to the golden formula, the crafting system really affects how you treat loot throughout the Commonwealth. Loot hoarders beware.

Right: Veterans of the series will instantly recognise the V.A.T.S. system from previous titles, however the change from frozen time to slow time really affects gameplay, giving a sense of tension to what used to be a safe haven for those unwilling to hone their reflexes in the wastes.

## ALMOST TOO MUCH TO DO

Right: Post apocalyptic Boston makes for an interesting change of pace from the vast expanses of the wasteland, the tight spaces inspire a very different style of play.



## THE UGLY TRUTH

While it can't be denied that *Fallout 4* is a serious game to be reckoned with, its greatest downfall is also blindingly obvious. Bethesda opted to use the same engine that they used for *Skyrim*, which the astute among you may have noticed is based on the Gamebryo engine which was used to power titles such as *Morrowind* and *Oblivion* reaching as far back as 2002. While it has seen many changes since then, this is still a very outdated engine. Feargus Urquhart (2015), Obsidian CEO comments "For RPG's it's all about the next adventure, it's not necessarily about a reimagining of technology or anything like that" While he has a point, it would still be nice to get an upgrade.

On to the main attraction, we're happy to say they did it guys, gone are the two dimensional factions of the capital wasteland and the lifeless uninspired affair that was *Fallout 3*'s story. The main story centres around the Sole Survivor, beginning before the Great War with one of the most engaging openings of any game in recent memory. The glimpse of a pre-war world is a welcome one if a little short. You quickly end up in a vault in which not everything is as it seems. Without giving too much away, you end up in the wasteland 200 years later with finding your son on your mind. We quickly lost track of this however as we got caught up in the affairs of the wasteland, it becomes relevant again later on in the game. The game poses some really difficult moral choices in a way we didn't expect going in, with even the "bad guys" being something of a grey area when all is said and done. A cast of genuinely compelling characters prevent the game from growing stale at any point and lend heaps of personality to the game. The new faction lends itself to the lore, which you will find throughout the wasteland in every

nook and cranny of this rich world. In fact those with an eidetic memory may remember a brief encounter with them in *Fallout 3*. Another new addition to the wasteland is the new settlement building system. You can choose to ignore it, or dive in and create your ultimate base, the choice is completely yours. This really gives every little bit of loot in the game some value, as the scrap that you can't use for crafting can be used for building. It's a great addition, but it feels underdeveloped and a little rushed, but it's a nice feature nonetheless.

Where this game truly shines is in the side quests and random events and encounters. The sheer amount of things to do is overwhelming, the vast map being packed with great content. It actually makes it difficult to play the main story at times, as there are so many things to distract you along the way to objectives.

Other great touches we loved include the legendary enemy system, in which you will randomly encounter a legendary variant of an enemy. Aside from being tougher to kill, they drop unique weapons which makes the combat in the game incredibly rewarding, even when not working towards any specific objective. These unique weapons are awesome and we grew attached to them very quickly, and often changed our fighting style to use new ones which kept the combat fresh and interesting throughout the game.

This game has so much replay value it beggars belief, and with the modding community already churning out mods everyday, we can see our adventures in the commonwealth continuing for years to come. Sure the dialogue system could do with a lot of work, and the graphics feel very "last gen", but we stopped caring very quickly. This game has a real charm that sucks you in and holds you there fiercely. It could have so easily been a 7 out of 10, but the attention to detail and general cohesive feel of the game pushes it beyond that.

This game really gives us hope for future Bethesda titles, especially if they give the Elder Scrolls series this treatment. We went in to this review slightly skeptical that we would be able to see past the outdated elements of the engine and graphics, and instead we were blown away. While we would like to see it updated, we can't take away from what Bethesda managed to pull off with it. Well worth every penny of the price.



## FAQS

**Q. HAS LEVELLING CHANGED SINCE NEW VEGAS?**  
Yes. *Fallout 4* comes with an all new leveling and perk system. Whenever you level up you'll be given a perk point you can use to upgrade a SPECIAL stat or spend it on a perk, which can be unlocked with enough points in the relevant trait.  
**Q. WILL I MEET ANY CHARACTER FROM ANY OF THE OTHER GAMES?**  
No. While there were rumors flying around that Three Dog would be making an appearance, this turned out not to be the case. That said, news of the capital wasteland definitely reaches the commonwealth, so keep an ear out for that.  
**Q. CAN I KEEP PLAYING AFTER I FINISH THE MAIN STORY?**  
Yes. And a good thing too, as you'll still have most of the game to play. The true wealth of this game is its sheer amount of things to do. Hurray for replay value.

## ENHANCED

### IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

**COMPLEXITY:** One of our biggest gripes with *Fallout 3* was the somewhat one dimensional portrayal of factions in the wastes. It seems Bethesda have learned from the success of *New Vegas* and given each faction much more depth, with internal conflicts and even self doubt being portrayed in the new game.

## VERDICT

A BEWILDERING MASTERPIECE

gamer mag scored 9 for  
**Fallout 4**  
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