

New entry in Fallout series feels familiar, vast, dynamic

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Fallout 4 is a quiet triumph.

While it rehashes much of its content from older games in the series and doesn't add too many original concepts, there is always something silently spectacular about Bethesda games. Content with being wholly itself and not pushing for an all-new feeling, Fallout 4's tagline, "Welcome Home," is a perfect fit. Its new world, the Commonwealth, feels like a comfortable return to the role playing franchise by Bethesda, the company who made Skyrim in 2011. The new additions to Fallout 4 such as the new voiced protagonist, weapon modification, and settlement building all add a layer of depth to the series that hasn't been there before.

Fallout 4 takes place in Boston and several other Massachusetts cities. The entire in-game area, dubbed The Commonwealth, hits the absolute perfect balance that open world games strive for. It is vast and detailed without feeling overwhelming.

At no point in my time with the game did I ever feel like the world was too big or unapproachable. Side quests pop up often enough to keep you busy, but it is never more than you can handle.

Every quest feels unique and compelling, save for the faction quests, such as those given by The Minutemen or The Brotherhood of Steel, which can become a little tiring. Overall, the story and quests live up to the Bethesda name.

The biggest change in Fallout 4 is the improved gunplay and combat engine. Whereas the previous entries in the Fallout series felt very slow and methodical, Fallout 4 feels



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much quicker and in the moment, more in the vein of a Call of Duty or Bioshock.

While many gamers were initially disappointed with this change, Fallout 4 is undeniably more enjoyable as a result.

Encounters with enemies are as difficult as in Fallout 3 and New Vegas, but the active combat makes users feel like more responsible for success and failures, instead of relying on numbers and percents. Gunplay is still more clunky than other shooters, and the VATS system remains helpful when in a pinch, but playing fast and loose with a pistol or rifle is a viable option for the first time in the series' history.

In my roughly 30 hours with Fallout 4, the thing I was most impressed with was the game's abundance of personality. Every character feels well rounded and unique, none more so than any of the game's thirteen companions.

From Dogmeat, a canine pal and first new friend, to Paladin Danse, a hardened soldier and good samaritan, or even Nick Valentine, the android private eye, each companion is entertaining and endearing, and the character specific quests they hand out when you have gotten close are some of the best.

Interactions with them are made more relatable and personal due to the new voice protagonist, a first for the series. In Fallout 4, your character has a voice and a personality. Players grow attached to their avatars and choices matter. The world feels alive and ever changing, thanks to the colorful characters that populate it.

Fallout 4 is, above all, sturdy and enduring. It realizes that its strength lies in familiarity, and embraces it. Playing the game really does feel like seeing an old friend you have not seen in years.

Players new and old will find things in Fallout 4 to love and attach to, and the hundred plus hours of content to keep them busy. This is one desolate wasteland you will be happy to call home.