



## **Fortnite Review - Build yourself up to tear them down**

by Michael Higham on Apr 9, 2018 09:00 AM

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For a game that was long in development as a cooperative horde-based shooter, the conspicuous and relatively quick addition of battle royale to Fortnite seemed to be a move to capitalize on a trend. However, its seemingly simple building system and loose shooting mechanics not only set it apart from other games built on the same premise, but work extremely well to make a uniquely chaotic and surprisingly deep deathmatch experience.

Everything about Fortnite's presentation emits a lighthearted tone. You start a match by jumping out of a party bus held up by balloons that flies across the game's massive map. Weapons, ammo, and health items litter its silly-named cities, all using alliteration--Tomato Town, Moisty Mire, Tilted Towers, to name a few. Even enemies don't really die; they're teleported away after getting knocked out. Valuable loot is found inside pinatas called supply llamas, for crying out loud. Players throw up basic structures formed out of thin air and firearms brightly express their trajectory. But don't let that first impression fool you; the further you get into a match, the more you see how Fortnite's gameplay elements have to be used in clever and complex ways to emerge victorious.

Unique to Fortnite is a streamlined building system comprised of four components: walls, ramps, floors, and roofs. These are constructed with three different types of materials that you either mine with a pickaxe or scavenge across the map; wood, stone, and metal each have their own properties in terms of durability and build speed. You can further modify structures to have windows and doors. It seems convoluted, but thanks to snappy grid-based layouts and the intuitive control scheme, getting the hang of building isn't much of a hurdle.

At first glance, it's as if Fortnite's original Save The World mode had its mechanics haphazardly dropped into the 100-player last-person-standing premise. But this is the foundation that makes for a myriad of tactical possibilities, like creating a sky-high staircase to climb a mountain to get the higher ground or swiftly fabricating your own cover as you run across an open field to close in on opponents. Literally, bridging the gap between mountains can turn long-range shootouts into close-quarters brawls. Fortnite's dynamic building system always gives you the opportunity to improvise, even when you think your back is against the wall.

While construction is imperative for victory, so is destruction. Every object in the world of Fortnite can be destroyed. Even as players create their own formidable defense, no one is ever safe for long in battle. A well-placed rocket or remote explosive can quickly dismantle a large, complex fort; if a multi-story tower doesn't have a strong foundation, blasting it from underneath will bring those up high back down to earth. Even a subtle tactic like breaking down a single wall and throwing up a ramp to infiltrate in an imposing fort can prove just as effective.

Enemy engagement still carries the risk you expect from games of this ilk by nature of having one life per match and the relatively quick time-to-kill. Even after downing a Chug Jug for full health and shield, well-placed shots from a legendary or epic weapon will make short work of anyone. However, the brisk pace at which matches move trades unnerving tension for a higher frequency of action. Yet, as with any battle royale game, looting for resources sits at the core of matches and eats up much of

your time. The system in place for loot and resource gathering is efficient, but it grows tiresome after consecutive matches as swinging the pickaxe at trees and houses for necessary materials grows increasingly repetitive.

Another area in which Fortnite is a bit thin is in its map design, a shortcoming that's twofold. The sprawling lone map features a variety of cute, thematic areas: Its metropolis of Tilted Towers and suburbs of Pleasant Park contrast the swamps of Moisty Mire and the countryside of Anarchy Acres. Regardless, there's a feeling many of the map's landmarks lack sophistication in physical layouts and density in loot placement. To its credit, the map's verticality brings the best out in your construction abilities, but city centers like Tomato Town have little to work with when two squads land in the area. A slightly more intricate town like Snobby Shores is sometimes devoid of useful items. It'd be easier to overlook this if you didn't have to trek across to a nearby town on foot that's likely to have been looted, but such is the case.

While there are several moving parts in the game's ecosystem, Fortnite's biggest accomplishment is in how it seamlessly merges a number of simple mechanics to create a distinguishable battle royale game. What looks to be a straightforward building system steadily escalates to an elaborate display of tactical prowess. As the saying goes: It's easy to learn, hard to master. Although a few shortcomings in the map design eventually surface and fatigue in looting can set in, Fortnite rarely fails at challenging you in unexpected ways, resulting in something more than just another typical last-person-standing shooter.