Elden Ring

Elden Ring[a] is a 2022 action role-playing game developed by FromSoftware and published by Bandai Namco Entertainment. It was directed by Hidetaka Miyazaki with worldbuilding provided by the fantasy writer George R. R. Martin. It was released for PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Windows, Xbox One, and Xbox Series X/S on February 25.

In Elden Ring, players control a customizable player character on a journey to repair the Elden Ring and become the new Elden Lord. The game is presented through a third-person perspective, with players freely roaming its interactive open world. Gameplay elements include combat using several types of weapons and magic spells, horseback riding, and crafting.

FromSoftware wanted to create an open-world game with gameplay similar to their existing Dark Souls series, intending Elden Ring to act as an evolution of Dark Souls. Miyazaki admired Martin's work and hoped his contributions would produce a more accessible narrative than FromSoftware's previous games. Elden Ring received critical acclaim for its gameplay systems, exploration, and setting, with some criticism of its technical performance and its difficulty. By July 2022, the game had sold more than 16.6 million copies.

Gameplay

Elden Ring is an action role-playing game played in a third person perspective, with gameplay focusing on combat and exploration; it features elements similar to those found in other games developed by FromSoftware, such as the Dark Souls series, Bloodborne, and Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice. Set in an open world, players are allowed to freely explore the Lands Between and its six main areas; These locations range from Limgrave, an area featuring grassy plains and ancient ruins, to Caelid, a wasteland home to undead monsters.[1] Open world areas are explorable using the character's mount, Torrent, as the primary mode of transportation, along with the ability to fast travel outside of combat. Throughout the game, players encounter non-player characters (NPCs) and enemies alike, including the demigods who rule each main area and serve as the game's main bosses.[2][3] Aside from open world areas, Elden Ring also features hidden dungeons, such as catacombs, tunnels, and caves where players can fight bosses and gather helpful items.[4]

The player chooses a character class at the start of the game, which determines the spells and equipment that they start out with.[5] Combat with enemies can be within melee range, or from a distance using ranged weapons or spells. Attacks from enemies can be blocked using shields or avoided by dodging. Spells in Elden Ring allow the player to enhance their own weapons, fight enemies from afar, or restore lost hit points. The player can memorize a limited amount of spells, which can be cast using a staff or Sacred Seal item.[6][7] Weapons in Elden Ring can be improved using Ashes of War, obtainable items that grant weapons new capabilities. Ashes of War can be applied to or removed from weapons, and each Ash adds a Weapon Art, a special ability that can be used during combat.[8] Aside from direct combat, stealth mechanics can be used to avoid enemies entirely, or allow for the targeting of foes with critical hits while hidden.[9][10]

Checkpoints called Sites of Grace are located throughout the game's areas, which act as places where the character can increase their statistics, change memorized spells, swap Ashes of War, or travel using the fast travel mechanic. Upon death, players respawn at the last Site of Grace where they rested; they may also choose to respawn at Stakes of Marika if they died close by.[8][11][12][13] To increase their statistics at Sites of Grace, the player must spend runes, an in-game currency acquired by defeating enemies.[14] Runes can also be used to buy items and improve weapons and armor. Dying in Elden Ring will cause the player to lose all collected runes at the location of death, and if the player dies again before retrieving the runes, they will be lost forever.[15]

The game contains crafting mechanics, which require materials in order to create items. To craft a certain item, the player must have the item's crafting recipe. Recipes can be found inside collectables called Cookbooks, which are scattered throughout the world. Materials can be collected by defeating enemies, exploring the game's world, or by trading with merchant NPCs. Crafted items range from poison darts, exploding pots, and consumables that temporarily increase the player's strength in combat.[16][17] Similar to the Dark Souls games, the player can summon friendly NPCs called spirits to fight enemies.[18] Each type of summonable spirit requires its equivalent Spirit Ash for summoning; different types of Spirit Ashes can be discovered as the player explores the game world. Spirits can only be summoned near structures called Rebirth Monuments, which are primarily found in large areas and inside boss fight arenas.[19]

Elden Ring has a multiplayer system that allows players to be summoned for both cooperative and player versus player (PvP) play over the Internet.[20] Cooperative play involves the placing of a Summon Sign on the ground, which causes the sign to appear in front of online players. If another player interacts with the sign, they are transported into the game area of whoever placed it down. Cooperative players remain in the same world until the boss of the area is defeated, or until a summoned player dies and is sent back to their home world. PvP combat involves using a Summon Sign to directly challenge another player to a duel, or using an item called the Bloody Finger to invade the worlds of others.[21][22]

Synopsis

Premise

Elden Ring takes place in the Lands Between, a fictional landmass ruled over by several demigods. It was previously ruled over by the immortal Queen Marika, who acted as keeper of the Elden Ring, a powerful force that manifested as the physical concept of order. When Marika eventually shattered the Elden Ring and disappeared, her demigod children began warring over pieces of the Ring in an event called the Shattering. Each demigod possesses a shard of the Ring called a Great Rune, which corrupts them with power. In the game, the player character is a Tarnished, one of a group of exiles from the Lands Between who are summoned back after the Shattering. As one of the Tarnished, the player must traverse the realm to repair the Elden Ring and become the Elden Lord.

Plot

Early on in their journey to repair the Elden Ring, the Tarnished encounters a Maiden named Melina. As the Tarnished is Maidenless, Melina offers to act as their Maiden, granting them the ability to turn runes into strength, as well as giving the Tarnished her steed Torrent. She does this under the condition that the Tarnished brings her to the Erdtree, the home of the Elden Ring. Melina later takes the Tarnished to the Roundtable Hold, a gathering place for other Tarnished seeking to repair the Elden Ring. The Tarnished is instructed by the Hold's benefactor, the Two Fingers, to collect the Great Runes and bring them to the Erdtree, where they can be used to repair the Elden Ring.

The Tarnished proceeds to journey into the Lands Between, investigating its various locales and defeating the demigods. The Tarnished soon recovers enough Great Runes so that the Two Fingers allows them to battle Morgott the Grace-Given, the demigod guarding the Erdtree. As he dies, Morgott claims that the Erdtree will not allow anyone to enter it, making the Elden Ring irreparable. The Tarnished confirms this when they approach the Erdtree and find the interior blocked by a wall of thorns. Melina then arrives and advises that they journey to find the Flame of Ruin, which they can use to set the Erdtree on fire and burn away the thorns. The Tarnished is then free to journey towards the Flame of Ruin, or can search for a way to harness the equally powerful Frenzied Flame.

Upon obtaining the Flame of Ruin, if the Tarnished did not gain the power of the Frenzied Flame, then Melina will take the Flame of Ruin and sacrifice herself to set the Erdtree on fire. If the Tarnished gained the power of the Frenzied Flame, then Melina will abandon the Tarnished, forcing them to use the Frenzied Flame to set the Erdtree on fire. Regardless, the Tarnished is transported to the ruined city of Farum Azula while the Erdtree burns. After defeating Maliketh the Black Blade and using his Rune of Death to fuel the fire, the Tarnished is returned to the foot of the scorched Erdtree. Inside, they fight the reanimated remains of Queen Marika's consort Radagon, as well as the guardian of the tree, the Elden Beast. After both are vanquished, the Tarnished gains access to Marika's shattered corpse, which contains the remains of the Elden Ring. Depending on the Tarnished's actions throughout the game, six different endings can then be achieved, ranging from the Tarnished becoming the Elden Lord, to allowing the Elden Ring to be destroyed by Ranni the Witch, or using the Frenzied Flame to destroy the Lands Between.