

Getting Started With osu! Standard

While you technically don't need an account to play the game, [downloading the game and making an account](#) is highly recommended. Watch the video in the download section too! Some of the content in this post assumes you have an account, so please make one if you don't have one!

My word is not law. This post is my attempt at creating a guide to starting the game. Subjectivity is implied.

osu! Law

PLEASE understand these things before we proceed. Compromising any of these puts you at risk for getting your account restricted.

- One account per player. Do not make another account. Ever.
- Do not share your account with other players. One account per player. Do not share your account. Ever.
- Do not cheat. Do not use autoclickers, aim assists, or anything that could be reasonably assumed to be cheating.
- It's spelled 'osu!'. Not Osu, not Osu!, and definitely not OSU. Say it with me: osu!

My word is not law, but don't take it from me, take it from the game's development and support team if you want to see for yourself.

- [Help Centre](#)
- [Rules \(Complete\)](#)

Also, some people worry about osu! being detected by their antivirus software. If you downloaded it from the official website, don't worry. It's a false positive.

! Bonus Information !

If you see this throughout the post, feel free to skip it. It may contain some useful information, but I have denoted it as lower importance if you just want to fly through this already lengthy post.

My friend [Sam](#) got me into this game on September 30th, 2016 and since then I have continued to find ways to enjoy it and love it, and maybe I can help you do the same.

At the end of these sections you'll see this banner below.

! End of Bonus Information !

Clicking Your First Circle

Play the tutorial for a quick and basic primer on the gameplay. Something worth mentioning is that **you don't necessarily have to click with your mouse/aiming device - you can also use the keyboard**, whose default keys for clicking are Z and X. [Here](#) you can view the keyboard bindings; [the](#)

[most important for osu! are the top two, Left Click and Right Click](#). See what feels best! Generally people play with their index and middle or index and ring fingers. What feels comfortable may change over time, and that's okay. Always listen to your body and adapt accordingly.

If you don't care about recommended settings, you may stop here.

Settings

You can access the settings at any time by pressing **Ctrl+O**.

- [set Frame Limiter to Unlimited \(gameplay\) or Optimal](#)

People report different performance levels across these two, but they should be the only options you really consider for a smooth gameplay experience. Setting a frame limiter or VSync can result in visual choppiness which can make for a less pleasant gameplay experience, but more importantly, the game's polling rate is tied to its refresh rate. Therefore, limiting the refresh rate also limits the polling rate, which directly affects gameplay (negatively).

If your PC seems to perform poorly with the Unlimited (gameplay) setting, try setting it to Optimal. If it performs fine with Unlimited (gameplay), probably stick to that.

Other things that affect your display such as f.lux (while it dims your screen) can cause performance issues as well. Investigate those if you suspect they are negatively impacting your performance.

- [Screen Layout](#)

Enable **Fullscreen mode**. Without it, the game has increased input lag. If you want to play on a smaller resolution, that's fine! With **Render at native resolution** enabled, it will surround the game window with black while running it in fullscreen mode to circumvent input lag.

- [Background dim](#)

Background dim is effectively the "opacity" of a magical large black sheet over the beatmap background. Many people set this to 100%, which means that the playfield is effectively reduced to gameplay elements only. You can clean it up even more with **Shift+Tab** and **Tab** which removes HUD elements like health bar and accuracy, as well as the scoreboard on the side, respectively.

If you like a background on a specific beatmap, [you can always change settings on a beatmap-by-beatmap basis](#). Access this banner by moving your cursor to the bottom of the screen at the beginning of the beatmap or during a pause (**Esc**).

There are also bubbles here to toggle custom settings. It's worth mentioning that "beatmap skin" and "beatmap hitsounds" are programmable specifically by the mapper, and so if you enter a beatmap and are hearing different hitsounds (the sounds that play when you interact with objects in-game) or the skin is different (circles/sliders etc. look different than usual), you can disable these by checking the appropriate bubbles.

- [Input Settings](#)

From what I gather, it's generally agreed to keep **Sensitivity** at 1x and to adjust your input device (mouse, trackpad, tablet, etc.) sensitivity/area externally, especially for tablets. If you do choose to

adjust it though, it is as simple as clicking and dragging the circle along the line, adjustable in intervals of 0.01 with the arrow keys if you hover the cursor over it.

For mouse players, it is important to **enable Raw input**. This helps circumvent any mouse acceleration, which can cause inconsistency with aiming problems.

For tablet players, finding a way to disable Windows Ink is also recommended as it can cause a variety of issues with osu! If you play on tablet however, it is important to **disable Raw input**, as it can cause problems. Some tablets do not function properly with Raw input enabled; if your cursor is stuck in the top left corner of the screen, make sure this setting is disabled.

- [Detail Settings](#)

All of these are worth experimenting with yourself. To answer some common questions, **Hit lighting** is what causes small colourful dots to appear under clicked objects, and **Combo bursts** are the source of the anime girl that pops out of the side of the screen during your gameplay from time to time.

As a rule of thumb, disabling any of these improves performance. If the game is running slowly for you, try disabling some of these. **Background video** and **Storyboards** are the most intensive, even if they only affect certain beatmaps.

- [Volume Settings](#)

Master volume determines the volume level of everything in the client. **Music** volume determines the volume level of music that plays in the client. **Hitsound** volume determines the volume of hitsounds, which are the clicks, whistles, claps, etc. that you hear every time you hit an object in osu! (or break a combo of 20+). It also affects general UI sounds.

People generally agree that hitsounds are important as they allow the player to understand which sounds in the song are being followed within the beatmap. Adjusting this may change from beatmap to beatmap, but generally you can find a good standard to use. Adjusting it is the same process as adjusting sensitivity.

There is no golden rule for how to set these. As long as you can hear both the music and the hitsounds comfortably, that's great.

You can access the volume settings at any point in time by using the scroll function on your mouse wheel, tablet pen, etc. at the main menu or during gameplay. Holding down **Alt** on Windows while scrolling brings it up anywhere else, and I would imagine **Cmd** on Mac, but I can't test it. You can place your cursor over any of the three circular volume wheels to adjust that setting specifically (by default it affects the master volume).

- [Seasonal backgrounds](#)

This is a newer "issue". By default nowadays, I believe that the osu! client displays seasonal backgrounds which are usually anime girls doing seasonal things. Some people are all for it, some indifferent, and some really dislike it. It seems relatively polarizing though, so I figured it was worth mentioning. Don't worry about the other stuff in the screenshot.

These backgrounds are chosen based on themed community fanart [contests](#) which you can see posted on the main website.

- **Offset** (and why you *probably* shouldn't touch it yet)

You are encouraged **NOT** to touch this if you are new to the game unless you are **ABSOLUTELY SURE** that your music not synchronized with your gameplay no matter which beatmap you play. This is because new players often lack rhythm sense in the beginning, but misattribute it to improper offset, causing problems later down the line if they continue to play.

[Universal offset](#) is used to change when the music plays in a beatmap. If you notice that the music and the beatmap seem noticeably out-of-sync no matter which beatmap you play, the fix is pretty easy. If the music is too early (the objects appear late), make your universal offset **later (positive)**. If the music is too late (the objects appear early), make your universal offset **earlier (negative)**.

Oms should be fine for the overwhelming majority of players though.

Once again, you are encouraged **NOT** to mess with this unless you are **ABSOLUTELY SURE** that your client is not synchronized with your hardware. I am only including it here because it can be a problem for some people in rare cases, and it's a frequently asked question.

! Bonus Information !

Local offset can only be adjusted in a beatmap, and moves the objects in that specific beatmap only. Therefore, if the music in the beatmap is early, you want to make the local offset earlier (- key), and if the music in the beatmap is late, you want to make the local offset later (+ key). These can be adjusted in 1ms intervals by holding down Alt while pressing either key.

! End of Bonus Information !

If you don't care about customizing your visual and gameplay experience, you may stop here.

Customizing Your Experience

While there isn't really anything wrong with the default skin, many players prefer other skins for a variety of reasons. You can head over to [r/osuskins](#) or the [osuskins website](#) to find new ones for yourself; downloading a skin is as simple as downloading the skin file (.osk) and opening it with the osu! client! [From there, you can access it and any others from a drop down menu.](#)

Enabling **Ignore all beatmaps skins** ensures that your gameplay experience always uses the skin you've chosen, including the colours of the hit circles. Enabling **Use skin's sound samples** ensures that the sounds that play while interacting with objects is always drawing from the sound files in your selected skin. This overrides any beatmap-specific settings that a mapper may have set, such as custom skins or custom hitsounds. Enabling them results in a more consistent gameply experience, while disabling them allows you to experience some beatmaps in a more unique and special way.

Skins affect everything from hitsounds to menu appearance.

Here are links to a couple of skins that you might want to check out to change up how your game looks.

- [Minimalist 2.0](#)
- [New Retro Wave](#)
- [Wintherest](#)

- [YUGEN](#)

From here, we move on to the core of the game.

Beatmaps

Navigate to the beatmaps section of the website; you can see this at the [top of the page](#).

From there, you can navigate the beatmap listing by changing some [basic search settings](#). I would recommend changing the Mode to **osu!**, and leaving the Categories section as **Has Leaderboard**. You can change the Explicit Content feature at your own discretion.

If you have any songs or artists in mind, search them in the search bar! Thanks to the community, there are beatmaps available for a huge variety of songs.

If nothing appears, that doesn't mean there are no beatmaps of whatever you're looking for. If you change the Categories section to **Any**, you will also search for beatmaps that do not have a leaderboard.

You can download beatmaps from here by hovering over them and [clicking this icon](#)!

! Bonus Information !

However, this comes with caveats. Beatmaps without leaderboards may be incomplete, improperly timed (the objects are not synchronized properly to the music), have exceedingly poor audio quality, or more. Beatmaps with leaderboards generally do not have these issues outside of older beatmaps during the infancy of the game's life. But there are some really great beatmaps without leaderboards too!

While searching for beatmaps, some useful search filters to type into the search bar are:

- stars
- length

Using stars<4 for example will only return beatmaps that are lower than 4.00* difficulty. Using length>120 will only return beatmaps that are longer than 120 seconds (length searches must be specified in seconds).

! End of Bonus Information !

Anatomy of a Beatmap Page

This is the beatmap page for [Highscore](#). From here I will highlight a few different sections (ignore anything you don't see on your end; they are likely the result of a browser extension I'm running called [osuplus](#)).

To download it, click the Download button and open the .osu file. That's it!

[REFERENCE IMAGE](#)

In the top left are the beatmap's difficulties, as well as the number of plays and favourites that the set has. From left to right, top to bottom, the difficulties go from low (top left) to high (bottom right).

Generally speaking, the progression is:

- Easy
- Normal
- Hard
- Insane
- Extra
- Extreme

Most beatmaps only have between 1-5 difficulties. [Others have more.](#)

In the bottom left is some information about the beatmap and how to download it. You can see the song title (Highscore), the artist (Panda Eyes & Teminite), and occasionally a banner that says Featured Artist.

"Mapped by" indicates the user who uploaded the beatmap package to the website. Not every difficulty in a set is made by them, though. Sometimes there are guest difficulties, indicated by something like "Username's Hard" as the beatmap difficulty name. There are also collaboration difficulties, where multiple users have mapped different parts of a single difficulty.

On the right, you can see the status of it (Ranked) and listen to a preview with the play button. There is also information on the length of the beatmap (4:01), the tempo/BPM (110), the number of circles (273), and the number of sliders (402). Circle Size (CS in the client) is the size of the circles in the beatmap (higher=smaller; think difficulty, not actual size), HP Drain (HP in the client) is the rate that you lose HP for mistakes, Accuracy (OD in the client) is how tight the timing is for hitting an object perfectly, Approach Rate (AR in the client) is the rate at which objects appear (higher AR means they appear more quickly). All of these settings have a maximum of 10.

Star rating is the algorithmically calculated difficulty of the beatmap, and effectively has no upper limit.

Don't worry too much about user rating. It's a fickle stat.

! Bonus Information !

Some difficulties names like [Hyper] (somewhere between Hard and Insane) or [Another] (anywhere along the spectrum of Insane to Extra) are also used. Custom difficulty names may be reserved for the highest difficulty of a beatmap (e.g. Highscore's highest difficulty is called [Game Over]), and some use a different naming system so long as it's intuitive (e.g. [Bronze/Silver/Gold/Diamond](#)).

[Featured Artists](#) are officially partnered with osu! in some capacity, approving the use of a number of songs (some of which are made specifically for osu!). If you ever want to get into making beatmaps, songs on the Featured Artists page are already timed properly for you to get started!

! End of Bonus Information !

If you want to be done reading, you may stop here.

Playstyle

I'm going to keep this as brief as I can; **playstyle is preference**. If you want to play with a tablet and keyboard, or solo mouse, or a Dreamcast controller, you do you. There are incredible players that use a huge variety of input devices. There is no magical sensitivity, DPI, tablet area, touch screen, or keyboard switch that will suddenly boost you to a higher plane of circle clicking. Your playstyle is almost certainly not what is holding you back at any point, so you might as well play what you find comfortable and fun.

If you don't care about some basic, subjective beginner advice, you may stop here.

Advice For Past Me (and new players in general)

This is just some advice I would have given myself when I had just started and was looking to improve (and some things I think I did well). This is not a guide on how to get top 100 or anything like that. Simply a collection of habits I wish I had been more conscious of earlier, and nothing more.

When I say "new", I'm imagining a player with little to no experience with the game. Let's say less than 40h of play time.

- **ENJOY!**

Seriously. Especially for newer players, you will improve simply by playing the game. Just play the game, and have fun. This honestly applies to all levels of play, but is especially relevant to the players that are brand new, where the initial improvement curve will be very sharp.

- **Reach the results screen!**

Reach the results screen and reach it often. Retrying the same beatmap(s) over and over limits the different patterns, rhythms, etc. you're exposed to. Plus it proves you can pass the beatmap, which means it probably isn't too difficult to be productive.

- **Play a variety of beatmaps!**

Different music, different difficulties, just different stuff. It helps expose you to more patterns, and find some cool music too.

- **Focus on your accuracy!**

It's a rhythm game. High accuracy is good. Rhythm games aren't algebra tests; when I say high accuracy, I'm generally talking 98.00%+.

Good accuracy is a sign of good fundamentals. Look and listen. Do not neglect this.

- **Appreciate your progress!**

Watch your old replays, beat your old scores, do whatever. While your current goal line is perpetually out-of-reach, you owe it to yourself to know that you have crossed many of your old ones. So long as you believe you can improve, you can.

If you don't want to read my personal musings on the next headings, you may stop here.

Miscellaneous Sections

Some words that you may enjoy reading but are wholly unnecessary to downloading/setting up the game.

Difficulty Progression

Most of this doesn't matter to you if you're new, but it's something that would have been reassuring to know when I was a new player.

In my experience, the four star range (4.xx*) or so is where beatmaps and subsequently the game begins to open up more. Most Easy, Normal, and to a lesser extent Hard beatmaps look and play similarly to other beatmaps in the same difficulty category. But Insane difficulties (which generally coincide with the four star range) can look and play radically different from one another by comparison.

This is just to let you know that yes, it's normal for this range to be a less smooth progression thanks to the greater variety of styles from beatmap to beatmap. From here, progression becomes much more variable in general thanks to higher difficulties affording themselves to a wider spectrum of possible design philosophies.

While this is true of all star ratings, especially past the five star difficulty (5.xx*) is where beatmap difficulty can become especially inconsistent. There are lots of different elements of difficulty in this game, but that might not be apparent until the four or five star range. Track and field has a lot of different events despite all of them belonging to the same sport. Even if two athletes are "equally good", they can have wildly different specializations and skillsets.

Star rating can only do so much; what one person finds easy, another might find hard. To round off the track and field comparison: until around the four star range, you're generally competing in the same events from beatmap to beatmap. After that, you might realize that while you're pretty good at the 1600m, your 100m is sorely lacking. Or you've never actually competed in the javelin throw. Luckily, just like track and field athletes, you can choose what to specialize in whatever you want. Or you can try to become a powerful all-rounder; the choice is yours.

Skill progression in this game can appear complicated at some points early on. By the time you're reaching four, five, and especially six star beatmaps though, hopefully you intuitively understand what I've said above. I've only chosen to include this because I was not very intelligent, and was a bit confused as to why the four star range seemed so much harder. As long as you're enjoying the game though, you're doing great. That is the most important progression.

Maintaining a Positive Relationship With The Game

At the end of the day, playing osu! isn't exactly anybody's job. If you put food on the table by double timing anime openings, then I guess this doesn't apply to you. But for the rest of us, osu! is a hobby; a game that is supposed to be fun. If it's frustrating you or really souring your day, close it and take a step back. You can always play tomorrow, right? If you're getting frustrated over and over and over again, take a week break, a month break, a season break, a year break, quit entirely—do not compromise your happiness for a hobby.

A notable player named rrtuyi (pronounced "roo-roo-chee", or /r̥uːt̪ɕi/ for the IPA nerds) put it best: pls enjoy game.

Summary and Conclusion

Setting up osu! is simple, but going a step deeper than downloading and installing the game can be a bit confusing. While this is a daunting post to send to somebody who just wants to play along to their favourite anime opening, hopefully you as the messenger can help guide them to whatever might help them here.

Anything I have chosen not to include is something I believe is not essential. Please leave (serious) comments about anything you disagree with or believe I've left out; your comments will help supplement this post!

I love this community, and I would love to see it continue to grow. Hopefully this helps service that goal.

FAQ

Hardware

- **I heard tablets are better than mice for osu!, is this true?**

Players have always been able to find success with mouse in osu!'s history, but many players prefer tablet due to absolute positioning. Meaning, the position of your cursor in-game is fixed to the location of your pen on your tablet. Players that have tried both usually stick to tablet, but some do prefer using a mouse.

- **How should I configure my mouse, then?**

Your Windows mouse settings should be [6/11 pointer speed and "enhanced pointer precision off"](#), with Raw Input on.

- **I've heard different perspectives on what DPI is best, what setting is optimal?**

There is no "best DPI" because DPI settings are largely personal preference, however anything over 2000 DPI is not very popular. The lower the DPI you can manage, the less precise your hand movements have to be (there is a larger margin for error). However, some people find low DPIs fatiguing or simply don't have enough desk room. Players generally gravitate towards a DPI anywhere between 600-2000, but ultimately you should pick what's most comfortable for you.

- **All of these mouse settings have me a bit confused, tl;dr?**

Windows settings: 6/11 mouse pointer speed, "Enhanced Pointer Precision" = off
osu! settings: raw input = on
Adjust your mouse's DPI to suit your needs, recommended 600-2000 DPI.

- **How about tablet? What area should I use?**

Like mouse, area settings are generally personal preference. Spend some time finding out what works best for your device, grip, etc.

- **I've been considering buying a mechanical keyboard, what should I know before I make the purchase?**
Refer to this [guide](#). Something you also need to keep in mind is the "n"-key rollover the keyboard has, this is a measure of how many individual keystrokes can be registered simultaneously. I would be careful buying a keyboard that has less than 4 key rollover, or you may encounter issues in some cases (such as when playing osu!mania).
- **On tablet, my cursor gets stuck in the top left corner of my screen whenever I open osu!, what's going on?**
It's likely that you have raw input enabled in osu!, disable it and see if that solves the problem.

In-game

- **Why do I not have a perfect combo if I never broke combo?**
This can happen when your cursor doesn't follow a slider all the way to the end, or you release your key too soon. People often refer to these as dropped slider ends.
- **I achieved a full combo on a map and got high accuracy, but I still got an A rank, why?**
It's likely that you had too many 50s. Refer to [osu!'s wiki](#) for a more in-depth answer on how your letter grade is calculated.
- **What is the bar at the bottom of the screen?**
This is called the hit error bar and it can be toggled at options > score meter type > Hit Error. It shows you how fast (left side) or how slow (right side) you are tapping in relation to the music's beat (white vertical line).
- **Should I hover with my pen or should I drag it?**
Both ways work. Dragging offers higher stability, whereas hovering reduces friction (and thus doesn't wear out your tablet's surface).
- **I am left-handed. Which hand should I be using to aim?**
Personal preference. There are plenty of left-handed players; some of which use their left hand to aim, and others who use their right hand to aim with. Choose whatever you are most comfortable with.
- **Why did I lose pp?**
This happens when you do a worse play pp-wise, but better score-wise than your previous record on a given mod combination.
Sometimes it may be caused by pp balance updates. osu! typically releases a news post before this happens, so keep an eye out for these on the home page & welcome screen!
- **I didn't lose pp, why did I lose ranks?**
This often happens as a result of your rank updating in between sessions. Since your last submitted play, it's possible that a couple of players gained pp, and passed you in rank.
- **Where did my scores go on the website?**
You have selected a different game mode on the website. Click any of [these buttons](#) in the top right to return to the correct game mode display.
- **How do I get rid of this ugly graph in the bottom right corner of my screen?**
Shift+F11 will disable it.