

= Half @-@ Life ( video game ) =

Half @-@ Life ( stylized as H?LF @-@ LIFE ) is a science fiction first @-@ person shooter video game developed by Valve L.L.C. , released in 1998 by Sierra Studios for Microsoft Windows . It was Valve L.L.C. ' s debut product and the first in the Half @-@ Life series . Players assume the role of Dr. Gordon Freeman , who must fight his way out of a secret research facility after a teleportation experiment goes disastrously wrong , fighting enemies and solving puzzles .

Unlike many other games at the time , Half @-@ Life features no cutscenes ; the player has uninterrupted control of Freeman , and the story is told through scripted sequences seen through his eyes . Valve L.L.C. co @-@ founder Gabe Newell said the team had wanted to create an immersive world rather than a " shooting gallery " . The game 's engine , GoldSrc , is a heavily modified version of the Quake engine licensed from id Software .

Half @-@ Life received acclaim for its graphics , realistic gameplay , and seamless narrative . It won over fifty PC " Game of the Year " awards and is often considered one of the greatest games of all time . It influenced first @-@ person shooters for years after its release ; according to IGN , the history of the genre " breaks down pretty cleanly into pre @-@ Half @-@ Life and post @-@ Half @-@ Life eras . "

Half @-@ Life had sold eight million copies by November 16 , 2004 , and 9 @.@ 3 million copies by December 2008 . It was ported to the PlayStation 2 in 2001 , and OS X and Linux in 2013 . It was followed in 2004 by a sequel , Half @-@ Life 2 .

= = Gameplay = =

Half @-@ Life is a first @-@ person shooter that requires the player to perform combat tasks and puzzle solving to advance through the game . Unlike most of its peers at the time , Half @-@ Life used scripted sequences , such as a Vortigaunt ramming down a door , to advance major plot points . Compared to most first @-@ person shooters of the time , which relied on cut @-@ scene intermissions to detail their plotlines , Half @-@ Life 's story is told entirely by means of scripted sequences , keeping the player in control of the first @-@ person viewpoint . In line with this , the game has no cut @-@ scenes , and the player rarely loses the ability to control Gordon , who never speaks and is never actually seen in the game ; the player sees " through his eyes " for the entire length of the game . Half @-@ Life has no " levels " ; it instead divides the game by chapters , whose titles flash on the screen as the player moves through the game . Progress through the world is continuous , except for short pauses for loading .

The game regularly integrates puzzles , such as navigating a maze of conveyor belts , or using nearby boxes to build a small staircase to the next area the player must travel to . Some puzzles involve using the environment to kill an enemy , like turning on a steam valve to spray hot steam at their enemies . There are few " bosses " in the conventional sense , where the player defeats a superior opponent by direct confrontation . Instead , such organisms occasionally define chapters , and the player is generally expected to use the terrain , rather than firepower , to kill the " boss " . Late in the game , the player receives a " long jump module " for the HEV suit , which allows the player to increase the horizontal distance and speed of jumps by crouching before jumping . The player must rely on this ability to navigate various platformer @-@ style jumping puzzles in Xen toward the end of the game .

For the most part the player battles through the game alone , but is occasionally assisted by non @-@ player characters ; specifically security guards and scientists who help the player , the former who will fight alongside and both who can assist in reaching new areas and impart relevant plot information . A wide array of enemies populate the game including parasites of Xen such as headcrabs , bullsquids , headcrab zombies and Vortigaunts . The player also faces human opponents , in particular Hazardous Environment Combat Unit ( HECU ) Marines and black ops assassins who are dispatched to contain the extra @-@ dimensional threats and silence all witnesses .

The iconic weapon of Half @-@ Life is the crowbar . The game also features numerous

conventional weapons , such as the Glock 17 pistol ( with the HD pack enabled , it resembles a Beretta ) , Franchi SPAS @-@ 12 shotgun ( with the HD pack enabled , the stock is folded up ) , MP5 submachine gun with an attached M203 grenade launcher ( with the HD pack enabled , it resembles an M4 Carbine ) , Colt Python .357 Magnum revolver , and rocket launcher as well as unusual weapons ranging from a crossbow to weapons from Xen and genetically engineered weapons such as an organic homing gun and flesh @-@ eating parasites called " Snarks " . Two experimental weapons , the tau cannon ( nicknamed the Gauss gun ) and the Gluon Gun , are built by the scientists in the facility and are acquired by the player late in the game .

= = Synopsis = =

= = = Setting = = =

Most of the game is set in a remote desert area of New Mexico in the Black Mesa Research Facility , a fictional complex that bears many similarities to both the Los Alamos National Laboratory and Area 51 , at some point during the 2000s . The game 's protagonist is the theoretical physicist Gordon Freeman , who holds a Ph.D. from MIT . Freeman becomes one of the survivors of an experiment at Black Mesa that goes horribly wrong , when an unexpected " resonance cascade " ? a fictitious phenomenon ? rips dimensional seams , devastating the facility . Aliens from another dimension known as Xen subsequently enter the facility through these dimensional seams ( an event known as the " Black Mesa incident " ) .

As Freeman tries to make his way out of the ruined facility , he soon discovers that he is caught between two sides : the hostile aliens and the Hazardous Environment Combat Unit , a U.S. Marine Corps special operations unit dispatched to cover up the incident by eliminating the organisms , as well as Dr. Freeman and the other surviving Black Mesa personnel to keep them from talking . Throughout the game , a mysterious figure known ( but not actually referred to in @-@ game ) as the " G @-@ Man " regularly appears , and seems to be monitoring Freeman 's progress . Ultimately , Freeman uses the cooperation of surviving scientists and security officers to work his way towards the mysterious " Lambda Complex " of Black Mesa ( signified with the Greek " ? " character ) , where a team of survivors teleport him to the alien world Xen to kill the Nihilanth , the gigantic entity keeping Xen 's side of the dimensional rift open .

The game 's plot was originally inspired by the video games Doom and Quake ( both PC games produced by id Software ) , Stephen King 's short story / novella The Mist , and an episode of The Outer Limits called " The Borderland " . It was later developed by Valve 's in @-@ house writer and author , Marc Laidlaw , who wrote the books Dad 's Nuke and The 37th Mandala .

= = = Plot = = =

Dr. Gordon Freeman arrives late for work at 8 : 47 am in the Black Mesa Research Facility , using the advanced Black Mesa train system that leads through the facility . He arrives at the Anomalous Materials Lab , his work place , and is informed by the security officer that the scientists have a special experiment today , so he goes to the locker room and puts on the hazard suit . He goes to the lab 's lower levels , arriving at the Anti @-@ Mass Chamber , where he is instructed that the specimen to be used that day is the rarest and also the most unstable specimen the lab has ever worked with . He is tasked with pushing the specimen into the scanning beam of the Anti @-@ Mass Spectrometer for analysis . However , as soon as the specimen enters the beam , the spectrometer explodes , creating a sudden catastrophe called a " resonance cascade " , and opening a portal between Earth and a dimension called Xen . Freeman is apparently teleported to an alien planet and catches glimpses of various alien lifeforms , including a circle of Vortigaunts , shortly before blacking out .

Freeman awakens in the ruined test chamber and surveys the destroyed lab , strewn with the bodies of scientists and security personnel . Finding survivors , Freeman learns that communication

to the outside is completely cut and is encouraged to head to the surface for help because of the protection afforded by his suit . His journey consists of sidestepping Black Mesa 's structural damage and defending himself against hostile Xen creatures , such as the parasitic headcrab which attaches itself to a human host before enslaving it . Other survivors claim a rescue team has been dispatched , only to discover that the Hazardous Environment Combat Unit sent in is killing both the organisms and the personnel there as part of a government cover @-@ up of the catastrophe .

Freeman fights the Marines before reaching the surface of Black Mesa , where he learns that scientists from the Lambda Complex may have the means to resolve the problems created by the cascade . Gordon travels to the other end of the facility to assist them . However , Gordon encounters several hurdles throughout the facility , such as reactivating a rocket engine test facility to destroy a giant creature of three tentacles , using an aged railway system in order to get to and launch a crucial satellite rocket , and fighting a group of Black Ops soldiers , before he is captured by Marines and dumped in a garbage compactor . Gordon escapes and makes his way to an older part of the facility where he discovers an extensive collection of specimens collected from Xen , long before the resonance cascade .

Reaching the surface once more , Gordon finds a warzone . Despite calling for reinforcements , the Marines are being overwhelmed by the aliens . Scaling cliffs and navigating destroyed buildings , Gordon reaches safety underground . The Marines begin to pull out of Black Mesa and airstrikes begin . Meanwhile , Gordon goes through underground water channels as aliens pick off the remaining Marines . He arrives at the Lambda Complex , where scientists developed the teleportation technology that allowed travel to Xen in the first place . After meeting the remaining personnel , Gordon is told the satellite he launched failed to reverse the effects of the resonance cascade because an immensely powerful being on the other side of the rift is keeping it open . Gordon must therefore kill this being to stop the Xenian invasion and the scientists activate the teleporter to send Gordon to Xen .

Entering the borderworld Xen , Gordon encounters organisms that had been brought into Black Mesa , as well as the remains of HEV @-@ wearing researchers that came before him . He fights his way through Gonarch , the huge egg laying headcrab , an alien camp and arrives at a massive alien factory , which is creating the Alien Grunt soldiers . After fighting his way through levitating creatures , he finds a giant portal and enters it . In a vast cave , Gordon confronts the Nihilanth , the entity maintaining the rift , and destroys it . The Nihilanth dies in an explosion , knocking Gordon unconscious .

Freeman awakens , stripped of his weapons , to find the G @-@ Man , who has been watching over Gordon throughout . The G @-@ Man praises Freeman 's actions in Xen . He explains that his " employers " , believing that Freeman has potential , have authorized him to offer Freeman a job . The player is then given a choice . If the offer is accepted , Freeman is congratulated by the G @-@ Man and placed into stasis . If he refuses , he is teleported to a map full of enemies , and the game ends .

= = Development = =

Valve , based in Kirkland , Washington , was founded in 1996 by former Microsoft employees Mike Harrington and Gabe Newell . For its first product , Valve settled on a concept for a horror 3D action game using the Quake engine licensed from id Software . Valve eventually modified 70 % of the engine 's code , adding skeletal animation and Direct3D support .

According to designer Harry Teasley , id Software 's 1993 first @-@ person shooter Doom was a major influence , and the team wanted Half @-@ Life to " scare you like Doom did " . Newell said that " Half @-@ Life in many ways was a reactionary response to the trivialization of the experience of the first @-@ person genre . Many of us had fallen in love with videogames because of the phenomenological possibilities of the field , and felt like the industry was reducing the experiences to least common denominators rather than exploring those possibilities . Our hope was that building worlds and characters would be more compelling than building shooting galleries . "

The team had early difficulties with level design ; in desperation , they eventually built a single level

including every weapon , enemy , scripted event , and idea they had so far conceived . This level inspired the studio to continue development .

The project had the working title Quiver , after the Arrowhead military base from Stephen King 's novella The Mist , an early inspiration for the game . The name Half @-@ Life was chosen because it was evocative of the theme , not clichéd , and had a corresponding visual symbol : the Greek letter  $\lambda$  ( lower @-@ case lambda ) , which represents the decay constant in the half @-@ life equation .

Valve struggled to find a publisher , as many believed the game was too ambitious for a first @-@ time developer . Sierra On @-@ Line signed Valve for a one @-@ game deal as it was interested in making a 3D action game , especially one based on the Quake engine . Valve first showed Half @-@ Life in early 1997 ; it was a success at Electronic Entertainment Expo that year , where Valve demonstrated the game 's animation and artificial intelligence . At E3 1998 it was given Game Critics Awards for " Best PC Game " and " Best Action Game " .

In August 1997 , Valve hired science fiction author Marc Laidlaw to work on characters and level design . The soundtrack was composed by Kelly Bailey . Half @-@ Life was originally planned for release in late 1997 , to compete with Quake II , but Valve decided the game needed significant revision . The studio completely reworked the game 's artificial intelligence and levels in the year leading up to its release . The release date was delayed several times in 1998 before the game was finally released in November of that year . A few days prior to the release the developers discovered an error in the source code . Developers fixed the error by adding corrections into a single line of the source code .

Valve released two demos for Half @-@ Life . The first , Half @-@ Life : Day One , contained the first fifth of the game , and was distributed with certain graphic cards . The second demo , Half @-@ Life : Uplink , was released on February 12 , 1999 , featuring heavily revised variations of levels cut during Half @-@ Life 's development phase .

== Ports ==

Half @-@ Life was ported to the PlayStation 2 by Gearbox Software and released in 2001 . This version of the game had a significant overhaul in terms of both character models , weapons , and more advanced and extended levels and general map geometry , incorporated from work on a planned Dreamcast version . Also added in is a head @-@ to @-@ head play and a co @-@ op expansion called Half @-@ Life : Decay that allowed players to play as the two women scientists Dr. Cross and Dr. Green at Black Mesa . Another interesting feature allowed players to use a USB mouse and keyboard , a feature previously unused on the platform .

A version for Mac OS , ported by Logicware , was announced but never released . Captivation Digital Laboratories , Inc. was slated to develop a port to the Dreamcast , to be released near the end of 2000 . The Dreamcast version revamped the graphics of the game with double the polygon count of the original models . Like Opposing Force for PC and Decay for PlayStation 2 , the Dreamcast version was set to have its own exclusive expansion , Blue Shift . However , after many delays , the Dreamcast version was cancelled in June 2001 due to " changing market conditions " . The Blue Shift expansion was then preserved and ported over to become Half @-@ Life 's second expansion for PC .

That year Sierra On @-@ Line showed its PlayStation 2 port at E3 2001 . This version was released in North America in late October of the same year , followed by a European release just a month later . Around the same time , Half @-@ Life : Blue Shift , which was intended to be the Dreamcast @-@ exclusive side story , was eventually released on Windows as the second Half @-@ life Expansion Pack . It featured the " High Definition Pack " , upgraded models originally in the Dreamcast version , which overhauled the graphics of the original Half @-@ Life and Opposing Force as well .

On January 29 , 2013 , Valve released beta versions of ports for OS X and Linux , and finalized them on February 14 , 2013 .

= = Expansions and sequels = =

= = = Expansions = = =

Two expansion packs by outside developer Gearbox Software have been released for the PC version : Half @-@ Life : Opposing Force ( 1999 ) and Half @-@ Life : Blue Shift ( 2001 ) . The former returns the player to Black Mesa during the events of Half @-@ Life 's storyline , but this time from the perspective of Adrian Shephard , one of the Marines in the Hazardous Environment Combat Unit sent to cover up evidence of the incident . It introduced several new weapons , new non @-@ player characters , both friendly and hostile and new , previously unseen areas of the facility . The expansion is shorter than Half @-@ Life , having 11 chapters to the original 's 19 .

Blue Shift returns the player to Half @-@ Life 's Black Mesa timeline once more , this time as Barney Calhoun , one of the facility 's security guards . The expansion was originally developed as a bonus mission for the cancelled Dreamcast version . Blue Shift came with the High Definition Pack , that gave the player the option to update the look of Half @-@ Life , Opposing Force , and the new Blue Shift content . Blue Shift had relatively little new content compared to Opposing Force : aside from a few variations on existing models , all content was already present in the original Half @-@ Life .

Half @-@ Life : Decay was another expansion by Gearbox , released only as an extra with the PlayStation 2 version of Half @-@ Life . The add @-@ on featured cooperative gameplay in which two players could solve puzzles or fight against the many foes in the Half @-@ Life universe .

In 2000 , a compilation pack titled the Half @-@ Life : Platinum Pack was released , including ( with their respective manuals ) Half @-@ Life , Counter @-@ Strike , Team Fortress Classic , Half @-@ Life : Opposing Force . In 2002 , the pack was re @-@ released under the new titles Half @-@ Life Platinum Collection and Half @-@ Life : Generation . These new iterations also included the Half @-@ Life : Blue Shift expansion pack ; though if registered on Steam , Day of Defeat , as well as Ricochet and Deathmatch Classic were also included . In 2005 , Half @-@ Life 1 : Anthology was released , containing Steam @-@ only versions of the following games on a single DVD : Half @-@ Life , Half @-@ Life : Opposing Force , Half @-@ Life : Blue Shift , and Team Fortress Classic .

= = = Sequels = = =

The sequel , Half @-@ Life 2 , was merely a rumor until it was finally revealed at E3 in May 2003 , which ignited a firestorm of hype surrounding the game . The player again takes the role of Gordon Freeman , this time 20 years after the Black Mesa incident in the dystopic Eastern European " City 17 " where he must fight as part of a rebellion against an alien regime . After a series of controversies and delays , Half @-@ Life 2 was released on November 16 , 2004 .

On June 1 , 2006 Half @-@ Life 2 : Episode One was released . It was announced as part of a trilogy of episodes , of which the second was released on October 10 , 2007 , as part of The Orange Box . No third episode in the Half @-@ Life 2 trilogy was released .

= = = Remakes = = =

To experience firsthand the processes mod @-@ makers would have to go through with the new engine , Valve ported Half @-@ Life ( dubbed Half @-@ Life : Source ) and Counter @-@ Strike to their new Source engine . Half @-@ Life : Source is a straight port , lacking any new content or the Blue Shift High Definition pack . However , it does take advantage of vertex and pixel shaders for more realistic water effects , as well as Half @-@ Life 2 's realistic physics engine . They also added several other features from Half @-@ Life 2 , including improved dynamic lightmaps , vertex maps , ragdolls , and a shadowmap system with cleaner , higher resolution , specular texture and normal maps , as well as utilization of the render @-@ to @-@ texture soft shadows found in Half @-@ Life 2 's Source engine , along with 3D skybox replacements in place of the old 16 @-@ bit color

prerendered bitmap skies . The Half @-@ Life port possesses many of the Source engine 's graphical strengths as well as control weaknesses that have been noted in the Source engine . Later updates added field of view options , support for OS X and Linux , an optional high @-@ definition texture pack , among other improvements . Half @-@ Life : Source is available with special editions of Half @-@ Life 2 , or separately on Steam .

Half @-@ Life : Source has been criticized for not fully utilizing many of the features of the Source engine found in Half @-@ Life 2 , as it still uses textures and models from the original game . In response to this , a third @-@ party mod remake called Black Mesa was developed . The first part of the Black Mesa modification was released on September 14 , 2012 , with the second promised to be coming later .

On June 10 , 2005 Valve announced through their Steam update news service an upcoming port of Half @-@ Life Deathmatch , the multiplayer portion of the original game , much in the same fashion as the earlier released Half @-@ Life : Source . No exact release date was given , simply the words " In the coming weeks ... " On July 2 , 2005 Half @-@ Life Deathmatch : Source was released .

= = = Third @-@ party mods = = =

From its release in 1998 , Half @-@ Life saw fervent support from independent game developers , due in no small part to support and encouragement from Valve Software . Worldcraft , the level @-@ design tool used during the game 's development , was included with the game software . Printed materials accompanying the game indicated Worldcraft 's eventual release as a retail product , but these plans never materialized . Valve also released a software development kit , enabling developers to modify the game and create mods . Both tools were significantly updated with the release of the version 1 @.@ 1 @.@ 0 @.@ 0 patch . Many supporting tools ( including texture editors , model editors , and rival level editors like the multiple engine editor QuArK ) were either created or updated to work with Half @-@ Life .

The Half @-@ Life software development kit served as the development base for many multiplayer mods , including the Valve @-@ developed Team Fortress Classic and Deathmatch Classic ( an updated version of Quake ) . Other mods such as Counter @-@ Strike and Day of Defeat ( DOD ) began life as the work of independent developers ( self @-@ termed " modders " ) who later received aid from Valve . Other multiplayer mods include Action Half @-@ Life , Firearms , Science and Industry , The Specialists , Pirates , Vikings and Knights , Natural Selection and Sven Co @-@ op .

Numerous single player mods have also been created , like USS Darkstar ( 1999 , a futuristic action @-@ adventure on board a zoological research spaceship ) , The Xeno Project 1 and 2 ( 1999 ? 2005 , a two @-@ part mod starting in Xen and again including spaceships ) , Edge of Darkness ( 2000 , which features some unused Half @-@ Life models ) , Half @-@ Life : Absolute Redemption ( 2000 , which brings back Gordon Freeman for four additional episodes and another encounter with the G @-@ Man ) , They Hunger ( 2000 ? 2001 , a survival horror total conversion trilogy involving zombies ) , Poke646 ( 2001 , a follow @-@ up to the original Half @-@ Life story with improved graphics ) , Someplace Else ( 2002 , Side story to the original Half @-@ Life ) , and Heart of Evil ( 2003 , Vietnam war with zombies ) .

Some Half @-@ Life modifications eventually landed on retail shelves . Counter @-@ Strike was the most successful , having been released in six different editions : as a standalone product ( 2000 ) , as part of the Platinum Pack ( 2000 ) , as an Xbox version ( 2003 ) , as a single player spin @-@ off called Counter @-@ Strike : Condition Zero ( 2004 ) , Counter @-@ Strike : Source , which runs on Half @-@ Life 2 's Source engine , and the newest addition Counter @-@ Strike : Global Offensive , also running on the Source engine . Team Fortress Classic , Day of Defeat , Gunman Chronicles ( 2000 , a futuristic Western movie @-@ style total conversion with emphasis on its single player mode ) and Sven Co @-@ op were also released as stand @-@ alone products .

Black Mesa , a fan @-@ made remake of Half @-@ Life utilising the Source engine , began development in 2005 , and was released as a free download on September 14 , 2012 . The free 2007 Source SDK base is needed to run the game . It has been confirmed that Black Mesa will be

distributed via Steam ; the remake was among the first ten titles whose release on the platform was approved using Valve 's crowdvoting service Steam Greenlight .

= = Reception and legacy = =

Half @-@ Life 's public reception was overwhelmingly positive in terms of reviews , acclaim and sales . As of November 16 , 2004 , eight million copies of the game had been sold , by 2008 9 @.@ 3 million copies had been sold at retail . The game has won over 50 Game of the Year awards .

Half @-@ Life was universally acclaimed , earning an overall score of 96 out of 100 on aggregate review website Metacritic . Computer Gaming World 's Jeff Green said that the game " is not just one of the best games of the year . It 's one of the best games of any year , an instant classic that is miles better than any of its immediate competition , and - in its single @-@ player form - is the best shooter since the original Doom " . IGN described it as " a tour de force in game design , the definitive single player game in a first person shooter " . IGN has also respected the game as one of the most influential video games . GameSpot claimed that it was the " closest thing to a revolutionary step the genre has ever taken " . GameSpot inducted Half @-@ Life into their " Greatest Games of All Time " list in May 2007 . In 2004 , GameSpy held a Title Fight , in which readers voted on what they thought was the " greatest game of all time " , and Half @-@ Life was the overall winner of the survey . In the November 1999 , October 2001 , and April 2005 issues of PC Gamer , Half @-@ Life was named " Best Game of All Time " / " Best PC Game Ever " .

The immersive gaming experience and interactive environment was cited by several reviewers as being revolutionary . Allgame said " It isn 't everyday that you come across a game that totally revolutionizes an entire genre , but Half @-@ Life has done just that " . Hot Games commented on the realism of the game , and how the environment " all adds up to a totally immersive gaming experience that makes everything else look quite shoddy in comparison " . Gamers Depot found the game engaging , stating that they have " yet to play a more immersive game period " .

Despite the praise that the game has received , there have also been some complaints . The Electric Playground said that Half @-@ Life was an " immersive and engaging entertainment experience " , but said that this only lasted for the first half of the game , explaining that the game " peaked too soon " .

Guinness World Records awarded Half @-@ Life with the world record for Best @-@ Selling First @-@ Person Shooter of All Time ( PC ) in the Guinness World Records : Gamer 's Edition 2008 .

A short film based upon Half @-@ Life entitled Half @-@ Life : Uplink , was developed by Cruise Control , a British marketing agency , and was released on March 15 , 1999 . However , Sierra withdrew it from circulation , after itself and Valve had failed to resolve licensing issues with Cruise Control over the film . The critical reception of the film was very poor . The plot of the film was that a journalist infiltrates the Black Mesa Research Facility , trying to discover what has happened there .