



dropleaf

Follow



HOME | ARCHIVE | DROPLEAF HOME



rachel

Follow

Head of Community at dropleaf

Jun 1, 2016 · 4 min read

## Review: Dungeon Souls

So, okay. I'd never played a roguelike dungeon crawler before *Dungeon Souls*. I'm glad *Dungeon Souls* was my introduction to the genre, because the game (developed by Lamina Studios, currently in beta) seems to be doing a lot right.

For those who aren't aware, as I wasn't: roguelike games are named for *Rogue*, a very old-school dungeon crawler from the mid-70s. The hallmarks of *Rogue*, which continue to define the genre to this day, are procedurally-generated levels (game maps are randomly generated, so you never get the same map

~~twice, and permanent death as in when you die you die all items~~



Next story

Apple's New iPhones Are Simp...

hardcore mode, but back in the day, it was just how you played; uphill both ways in the snow. Roguelikes have a long and interesting history, which you can read about on their [ridiculously detailed Wikipedia page](#).



One of *Dungeon Souls'* bosses, an Ice Golem (Lamina Studios)

With the rise of more accessible tools to create games, roguelikes are experiencing a bit of a renaissance, and *Dungeon Souls* is riding that wave, as a love letter to some of the genre's greats. With this new generation of roguelikes we're seeing some innovations that come from modern gaming, and in my opinion (and [Extra Credits](#), if you doubt a n00b's perspective), make the genre a lot more accessible and rewarding. For instance, permadeath is still very much a thing in the genre, but *Dungeon Souls* and its contemporaries have added a few aspects that persist even after your demise at the hands of 50 8-bit skeletons. In the case of *Dungeon Souls*, you earn passive skills as a reward for continually playing with a character, so it behooves you to learn the intricacies of each character class.

At *Dungeon Souls'* core is a very well-done roguelike, or hell, dungeon crawler period. And I'm well aware that one person's "complaint" about roguelikes ("I



died like a million times before I even made it to level 2!" "I have no idea what's happening!") is another person's purity standard for an intentionally-difficult genre. Still, there's a difference between intentional and ultimately-rewarding frustration, and frustration caused by confusion, poor controls, or bad level design. *Dungeon Souls* has a whole bunch of the former, but being in beta, still has some of the latter, and in my opinion some refinements to make before it reaches its full (and awesome) potential.

For example, story elements are still being added, so currently you're not sure why you are being resurrected(!) to fight through dungeons, or why the Big Bad is the Big Bad. I know from talking to the rad folks at Lamina that some framing is on the way. As far as gameplay, the controls are still a bit byzantine. Enemies can attack you from offscreen, so currently the ranged characters have a huge advantage over the melee characters. Basically, *Dungeon Souls* seems to be at the stage where there are many many small tweaks needed to perfect a really solid game. Each one will get the game a little closer to an awesomely polished roguelike that will capture fans of the genre as much as it did a newcomer like me. (Hilariously, I hit a bug where, when trying to shoot my cat off my keyboard, I somehow opened the keybinding menu and bound two actions to the same key. It rendered the game totally unplayable, and meant I couldn't get back to the keybinding menu to fix it! Damn cat!)



The Dark Dungeons level—a great example of the game's rad retro style. (Lamina Studios)

The really great thing about Lamina Studios, though, as I learned from talking to April Poland, their Project Manager: they really take community suggestions to heart. They're extremely active in soliciting suggestions and hearing feedback from their very supportive fans. April told me they're adding a co-op mode soon, which I think will do a ton to balance the fact that currently the ranged characters are so advantaged. They're also making nice quality of life tweaks, like giving the bosses new voice talent. April even let me know some secrets regarding the identity of the Big Bad (simply referred to as 'Her'), but I'll let you find out on your own!

Bottom line: this was a great baby's first roguelike for me, and if you're a seasoned fan of the genre, there's still a lot to like. And it's only getting more polished all the time! [Give it a go!](#)

From a quick cheer to a standing ovation, clap to show how much you enjoyed this story.



rachel

Head of Community at  
dropleaf

Follow



dropleaf Blog

Indie Gaming and the  
folks who love it, from  
dropleaf.io

Follow



Top on Medium

**7 Things You Need To Stop Doing  
To Be More Productive, Backed B...**



CamMi Pham  
11 min read

85K |



Top on Medium

**Focus and Deep Work — Your  
Secret Weapons to Becoming a...**



Bar Franek  
9 min read

13.9K |



Top on Medium

**Why reading 100 books a year  
won't make you successful**



Aytekin Tank  
8 min read

14.5K |

#### Responses



Be the first to write a response...