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Clash of Clans



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Returning to the clan

Product: Clash of Clans | **Developer:** Supercell | **Format:** iPhone | **Genre:** Strategy, Tower defence | **Players:** 1 | **Networking:** wireless (network) | **Version:** Europe

by [Peter Willington](#)

This is a freemium game review, in which we usually give our impressions immediately after booting a game up, again after three days, and finally after seven days. However, Clash of Clans has been out for months, and I've been playing for a good long while, so I'm going to be doing things a bit different this time round...



Clash of Clans hit the App Store in its full 1.7 release on June 13th 2012, after spending some time in closed beta.

I was introduced to the game by my main man [Jon Jordan](#) through the Pocket Gamer Podcast a few months later, after hearing about his love of the game, and the staggering amount of money he'd ploughed into the freemium title.

I've always been interested in freemium games, and I've sunk more than my fair share of time in them. But by the time I played Clash of Clans I'd become frustrated with the falling common to many freemium world-building titles: there's very little skill or strategy involved in success.

One small step for barbarian man

To me, Clash of Clans represents a tentative but significant step towards changing this, though it's a step that few take the time to recognise. See, Clash of Clans asks you to be good at the game as well as patient, and for that it deserves recognition.

Clans asks you to build a village and populate it with everything the warring tribe you're leading might need. A town hall for leadership, a gold mine for money, an army camp to hold your warriors, an Elixir collector to gather up this additional resource from the ether - pretty soon you've got plenty of architectural work to be getting on with.

As you build and expand your small camp into a burgeoning fortress you unlock more building types, but never enough to weigh you down with choices. Hit a high enough level and you can take over the Clan Castle, allowing you to forge allegiances with other players, upgrade your barracks, and create different types of unit.

There are more than enough types of unit to unlock, but not enough for any of them to seem perfunctory on the battlefield.

It's in the battles that you first appreciate the necessity for skill. The first few battles with the AI are easy-peasy. Simply build enough Barbarians to overrun the Goblin hideout, and watch them take it apart.

Then you're given access to archer units, and you're thinking, "well, this is easy, I'm storming through these."

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Brick by brick

Then you run up against an enemy barricade with a few cannons and a big chunky wall, and you're done for. Your hand-to-hand units can't tear the wall down fast enough, and your archers are too busy plundering resources to notice that they're being fired on by cannons.

So you upgrade your Barracks and after a while you have Giants and Wall Breakers. Now you can smash through those same walls with a well-placed bomb, and your Giants are dismantling cannons with ease.

The game builds like this, requiring more and more sophisticated units, asking you to strategise and really think about which elements you should focus on building within your camp.

Next you'll find that having overwhelming numbers just isn't going to cut it - you'll need to specifically think where and when you'll deploy troops, and how they're going to interact with the enemy camps.

Lots of cannons guarding an entrance? You'll want an aerial unit to rain fire from above. Bomb traps lying in wait around the back? Go through the walls at the side.

There's even narrative justification for these systems of play, should you need it. You're wrangling a riotous clan, of course you don't have complete control over all your troops, but you can give general orders as their chief.

This, of course, is all training for when you first get raided by another real-life player. The first time you see your base wiped out, you'll watch the replay to see how it happened, rebuild, and perhaps shore up certain areas of your base. Then it's time to train troops and go show them who's boss.

Coming home

The pressure to continue formulating better defences or more deadly forms of attack keeps you coming back, and the well-calibrated match-making system ensure you'll never grow too frustrated or bored.

It's not a perfect game, of course - hence the Gold Award and not the Platinum. But the issues are few and far between.

Occasionally, the game will mistake you scrolling across your camp as you wanting to move a building, which can be a pain. And it's quick to boot, but seems to reset the loading process whenever you return to the iPhone's home screen and then jump back in.

It was never the best-looking game. It's not ugly by any means, but the presentation is all isometric 2D and the number of frames of animation could have been a little higher.

And perhaps it takes slightly longer than desirable to buildings to go up. It's not excessive, and it gives you time to walk away and think about how you want to move forward, but when you just want to get on and execute on your strategies it can be a pain.

But these are minor gripes. *Clash of Clans* is a superb game, freemium or otherwise, with more nuance than most give it credit for. That's why it's passed the test of time since its launch and still has an active community devotedly constructing elaborate fortresses in the hope of becoming invincible.

So go and grab it. It's free, it's easy to get into, and it's a superb example of how freemium should work.

That's our experience of the game, what's yours been? Let us and the rest of the Pocket Gamer Community know by leaving us a comment in the box below.



POCKETGAMER
Clash of Clans



Peter Willington | 18 December 2012

Those looking for an opportunity to build a world, while destroying someone else's, will find Clash of Clans a very appealing package with surprisingly deep layers of strategy to dig through



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