

Cracking down on crime, one fist fight at a time

New Xbox 360 game swaps game missions and levels for a free world—that is, one filled with unruly gangs and awesome stunts

Crackdown

Xbox 360
Realtime Worlds
Microsoft Game Studios
Rated M for Mature
On sale now

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If I have one excuse as to why I didn't accomplish nearly enough homework over Reading Week, it's because I was sick for a great deal of it. However, rather than attempt any semblance of productivity in my weakened state, I instead opted to jump between skyscrapers, toss drug dealers into rivers and occasionally kick innocent bystanders clear through their cars. All in all, it was a pretty good week.

Crackdown is the latest open-world sandbox game to grace the Xbox 360. Akin to the *Grand Theft Auto* series, *Crackdown* drops players into a sprawling futuristic urban environment.

But unlike *GTA*, you take control of a genetically engineered super-cop and are tasked with cleaning up the crime-riddled city by any means necessary. Also, unlike many of its predecessors, *Crackdown* is as addictive as the drug found in its name.

Rather than simply forcing players to progress through the game via the completion of assigned missions, the game emphasizes vast amounts of independent exploration and very non-linear game play. The city is divided into three sections, each ruled by a different gang. Every gang has a unique set of leaders that you need to take down to liberate the city, but how, when and in what order is left completely up to the player.

This is definitely for the best, as *Crackdown* introduces a large role-playing feature that forces players to increase their skills before barging into a gang's headquarters. This is accomplished in a few ways: defeating your foes either via firearms or

fisticuffs, performing exemplary driving maneuvers or collecting "Agility Orbs" that are peppered throughout the city's skyline.

Levelling up your character also constantly increases the fun factor of the game. As you increase your strength, you'll be able to lift heavier objects to toss around at enemies. The point when you can pick up a car—occupants and all—and hurl it at a pack of gang members is oddly satisfying.

But what players will spend the most time doing is tracking down the "Agility Orbs" that increase their running speed or determine how far and high they can jump. When you can clear a 100-foot gap with no trepidation not only makes traversing the city easy, but often induces fits of glee as your tiny on-screen persona hurdles through the air.

Crackdown's main draw, however, rests in just how open it is. Want to get onto the roof of a 20-story



building and jump between its neighbours? Go for it. Want to steal a truck and drive straight into the mountains? Godspeed. Want to screw around for hours just exploring every nook and cranny of the local refinery? Fine. That paper isn't due for two days anyways.

While the story portion of *Crackdown* won't take most gamers a long time to complete, the openness of the city and the wealth of achievements to accomplish will keep them jumping between buildings and driving cars of bridges for hours after the game is over.

Lighting in his eyes

Poor Harry. He's standing all alone in the rain on the Quidditch pitch, shivering and yearning for warmth. But if you look closely, he's giving you sex eyes. He wants you to provide him with warmth.

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