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The Sims 3  
Electronic Arts

## [The Sims 3](#)

### *A complicated life*

There are a few certain things in life, like death and taxes. And, if you are a gamer, there's a third certainty: slap a The Sims label on a content disk and it will sell like crazy. The series has sold over 100 million copies (all products combined) and The Sims 2 got more expansion packs than I can count or remember. Electronic Arts, after a delay that angered some players, unleashed The Sims 3 on the gaming world. So far, I am both excited and underwhelmed. The game manages to perfectly simulate the banality of every day life most of the time but also offers moments when the insanity of the situations, involving ghosts, crazy Sims, broken appliances and house parties, can create moments worthy of the best TV sitcoms.

The basic structure of the Sims is still there and the soap opera-like lives they lead are still engaging. I like charming co-workers, getting good at cooking, the best computer within the first three days of play (is it just me or do all the games on the screen look like clones of real life Electronic Arts videogames?). The new locations are also attractive, as is the fact that you can bump on people on the street, while just walking about the city.

But I am also underwhelmed because some of the things that bugged me in previous Sims titles are still present and even made worse. Money seems to be a bit tighter, making the game feel somewhat limited initially, characters are a bit narrower in their life focus and time still seems to crawl at some points in the game.

That being said, the fun that any player takes out of The Sims 3 will likely depend on the enjoyment they had with the first Sims and Sims 2. If you have played any of them for more than 20 hours, you'll also like this one. If you have hated simulated life before, you'll not fall head over heels while blowing hearts for The Sims 3. Read on for a more detailed look at the experience. &nbsp;

&nbsp;     *E.T. phone home*  
   *Red head, red dress*

### Gameplay

This is an open world Sims game, which means that you can move around at leisure. The city (cities if you pick up Riverview for free by registering) are living and breathing and, more importantly, moving along with the character(s) that are controlled by the player. This means that they have priorities, wishes and necessities, which come into play. And it also means that the character Sim can move around, see the city, walk the streets and meet new persons. It feels great after being cooped up in a house or an apartment. The only thing that, thankfully, you leave your Sim do alone is getting on with his/her day job, although later you can even quit it and get money from home through various occupations.

But before you do anything, you need to design a Sim. And while the interface is well designed and all the choices make sense, the sheer variety is mind boggling. On the initial run, you will likely live all the cosmetic choices as they've been set up and only mess with the character possibilities or, as I did, you will create the most outlandish character possible (huge, green skinned, quirky clothes, shades). I bet once people take a close look, the web

and the Sims site will be flooded with lookalikes for all the major celebrities (imagine the headlines: Obama cooking dinner in his small home! Michael Jackson, late period, taking a shower! Will Wright fishing!).

Taking a look at the screenshots attached to this review will only offer a glimpse of what the editor can do and while some might complain that the range of outfits is limited, there are plenty of characters that can be put together from the pieces offered by Electronic Arts.

Once you've gotten a Sim, you get plopped down into the city and begin playing. As always, there are two modes: one which allows you to live the life of the Sim, and another where you can build and/or stylize your home. The various other places in the city that are not private homes, like the Stadium or the City Hall, can be used for certain activities, some of which you will be notified of, but are not simulated in full. What is simulated is walking around, talking to people on the street, having a garden, looking for rocks and seeds (which is a bit annoying and time consuming), engaging in a variety of anti social actions, kicking pink flamingos (which now fall down and need to be picked up to be kicked again) and doing all the stuff a human being can do, like writing a novel on the computer, playing videogames, taking a bath.

The nice thing about the characters is that they now have wishes to contend with. Lifetime wishes are generated when choosing perks for the Sim you are creating and usually involve something grandiose and hard to achieve, like becoming the boss of a crime syndicate or finding true love (often more than one time). Managing to achieve the goals they state gets the player quite a bundle of points that can be spent on perks. Smaller wishes pop up every day, sorta like missions, and the player can choose which ones to accept. Their rewards are smaller but they tend to add up.

One problem in The Sims 3 is time. And there are two sides to it. On the one hand, the characters take a long time for simple tasks, like getting out of bed. Making waffles for breakfast can take a whole hour, which is not right by any measurement. It's true that planning the afternoon based on when your Sim needs to go to the bathroom is no longer needed but still it takes time to do basic things and I always feel that I do a very limited number of things, besides working and sleeping, doing a Sims day. On the other hand, time tends to crawl to a halt when the Sim is sleeping or going to work (I can't yet make enough money from creative writing on my home computer). Even if you choose the highest time acceleration option, you still have to wait and, especially at night, it can get pretty annoying (even if you use the time to play the voyeur on the rest of the town). &nbsp;     *On the computer*

*A bed for one*

## Graphics and audio

The game looks good and the performance is impressive even on a computer that is pretty close to the minimum specs. On high end machines, you can play while also using folding@home in the background with no problems. Electronic Arts is not aiming for photo realism but it has made sure that those who use the social features that allow sharing for photos and videos have something to look at.

As far as the audio experience goes, The Sims 3 annoys by using elevator music and by over doing the whole "garbled speech" thing, which Sims use when addressing one another. The music sounds like a Sunday morning cartoon crossed with music you would use for a not too bright gag show. The voices can convey the overall feelings of the Sims, so you do not need to constantly watch the emotions appearing over their heads, but soon

you'd rather look out for visual clues rather than listen. I don't remember being so annoyed by the music in the previous installments, so maybe it's just me getting older and more easily aggravated. But Electronic Arts and Maxis should know that many of those who are likely to pick up The Sims 3 are those who liked making child care people run around bricked in cribs in the first Sims, people who have grown up and would like something playful while being enjoyable in the long term. I listened to some nice Prodigy while guiding my Sim through his artistic carrier. He is a painter.

## Multiplayer

The Sims 3 does not have real multiplayer but sports a whole range of social features allowing players to share things, from pictures to videos and more, with other gamers. Apparently, Electronic Arts and Maxis took a page from the Spore playbook and allowed content sharing to take place. All a player needs to do is to use The Sims 3 Launcher and take a look at all the options.

Everything from objects to Sim builds to houses, clothes and accessories can be shared through something called The Exchange. I would not be surprised if, in a future add-on, Electronic Arts allows players to drop in and out of the town of another player, with characters being able to interact and maybe even create a co operative family. After all, it's the logical step in the expansion of the interaction and sharing options available in The Sims 3.

## Conclusion

A big complaint about the game is that the loading screens at no point mention "Reticulating bladders," one of the signature phrases of the original game. It may sound trivial but this underscores one of the underlying issues with the current release. The developers have created a streamlined experience that makes use of recent technology to create a more believable world in which you can do pretty much everything you want when it comes to work, romance, house creation or other social interactions. But the originality of the first release has been somewhat lost. All the improvements are "more of the same," there's nothing that will make a veteran go "Yay!"

The execution is nearly flawless on The Sims 3 and the range of options bewildering. Once you get into it and discover how many trait combinations there are and how many goals you can accomplish, the game will surely become more addictive than The Sims 2 with all the expansions installed. Of course, more fun is set to come via downloadable content and via The Exchange service.

So, Electronic Arts has a new hit on its hands while gamers have a game that they will drive to the top of the PC charts for a long time to come. Just remember to play The Sims 3 more like a simulator of extreme life experiences, such as being certifiable crazy, homeless, completely unsocial, a serial monogamist, than like a straight game where you live a normal life.

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