

Why a No Damage Run of The Last of Us Part II Remastered Is the Ultimate Test of Skill

There is a quiet tension that settles over you when you decide to attempt a no damage run in The Last of Us Part II Remastered. I have logged hundreds of hours in Naughty Dog's brutal sequel, but nothing quite compares to the focused dread of knowing that a single scratch will end your progress. In the speedrunning community, this challenge sits alongside the no-hit run as a pinnacle of precision, but it demands something different: not just speed, but an almost obsessive control over every encounter.

I first attempted this on a cold winter weekend, booting up my PlayStation 5 with a fresh save file on Grounded difficulty. The game had just received its PS5 Pro enhancement, and I wanted to see if the 4K HDR visuals would make the experience more immersive or just more punishing. Spoiler: it was both. The improved lighting made every shadow a hiding spot, and the HDR highlights on blood and glass made every mistake more vivid. But I am getting ahead of myself.



What Makes a No Damage Run Different from a No-Hit Run

At first glance, a [no damage run](#) and a no-hit run sound like the same thing. In practice, they diverge significantly. A no-hit run typically forbids any contact with enemy attacks, traps, or environmental hazards. A no damage run, at least as the community defines it for *The Last of Us Part II Remastered*, allows for some leeway: you can be grazed by a bullet or clipped by a melee swing as long as your health bar does not actually deplete. The distinction matters because it changes how you approach combat mechanics. You are not looking for perfection in the sense of never being touched; you are looking for perfection in the sense of never being punished.

That subtle difference opens up strategies that a strict no-hit run would never permit. For example, you can intentionally trigger an enemy's attack animation to bait them into a position where you can land a stealth kill, even if their swing passes through your character model without registering damage. It is a form of manipulation that relies on the game's collision detection and your understanding of its internal logic. It also makes the run far more replayable, because you are constantly testing the boundaries of what the game considers damage.

Grounded Difficulty and the Art of Stealth Gameplay

Grounded difficulty is the default setting for any serious attempt at a no damage run. The game's survival horror elements become front and center when a single bullet can kill you, and resources are scarce. On Grounded, your listen mode range is reduced, enemy AI is more alert, and they flank aggressively. This is where the stealth gameplay truly shines. I spent an entire evening just on the section in Seattle where Ellie and Dina navigate the open world of the downtown area. Every alley, every overgrown storefront, every pile of rubble became a puzzle.

I learned to read patrol routes like a chess board. The Clicker, that iconic fungal infection, is not just a narrative device; in the gameplay, it becomes a tool for distraction. Tossing a bottle to draw a guard away from a door, then slipping past while they investigate, is the bread and butter of any no damage run. But on Grounded, you cannot afford to be seen even for a second, because a single shout from an alerted enemy will bring reinforcements that can corner you. I found myself using the photo mode to scout ahead, marking enemy positions and planning a path before moving. That is not something the game teaches you, but it is something you learn when failure costs you an hour of progress.



Combat Mechanics and the Psychology of Restraint

The combat mechanics in *The Last of Us Part II Remastered* are deep and satisfying, but a no damage run forces you to use them sparingly. You will often have the option to engage in a firefight, but doing so almost guarantees taking damage. So you learn to prioritize avoidance over aggression. I remember a moment in the hospital with Abby, where I had to navigate a room full of infected. My instinct was to use a pipe bomb to clear them out, but the explosion radius was too unpredictable. Instead, I waited. I waited for the Clicker to finish its patrol, then I slipped through a window and crawled under a bed. It felt cowardly, but it was the right call.

That kind of restraint is the core mental challenge. You have to suppress the part of you that wants to blast through enemies with style and instead embrace a methodical, almost boring approach. The reward is the satisfaction of seeing the end credits roll with a clean health bar. It is a different kind of adrenaline rush, one that comes from discipline rather than aggression.

Collectibles and the Completionist's Dilemma

One of the more surprising aspects of a no damage run is how it interacts with the game's collectibles. *The Last of Us Part II Remastered* is filled with artifacts, trading cards, and notes that flesh out the world. If you are attempting a pure speedrun, you ignore them. But a no damage run often coexists with a desire to collect everything, because you are already moving slowly and methodically. I found myself picking up every artifact I could, partly because the pause gave me time to plan my next move, and partly because I wanted the run to be definitive.

The collectibles also serve as a natural pacing mechanism. They force you to stop and look around, which in turn helps you spot environmental hazards that could end your run. A tripwire, a broken window, a patch of glass you did not notice. The open world of Seattle rewards careful exploration, and the collectibles are the breadcrumbs that guide you through it.

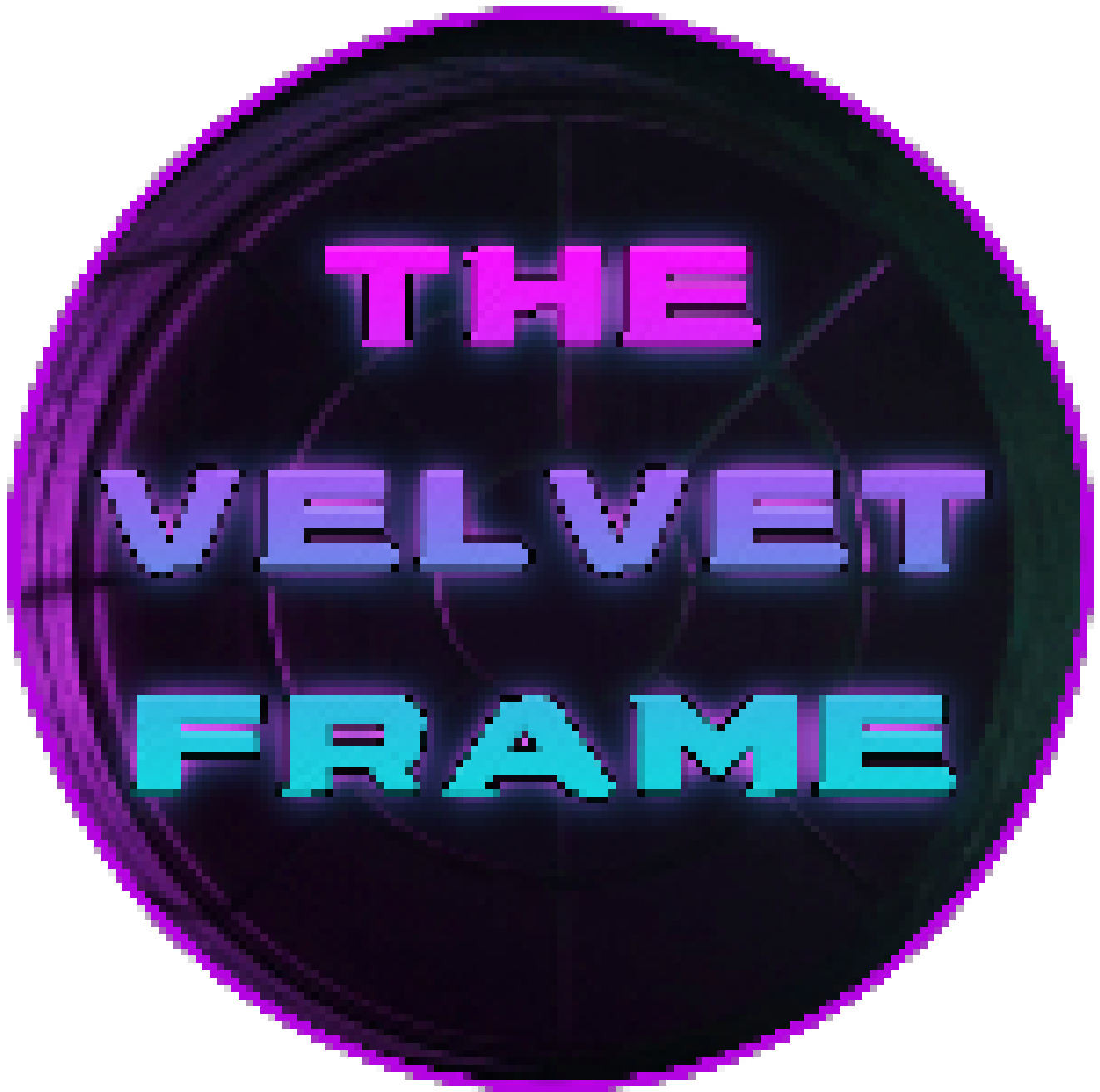
The Role of Accessibility Options and Difficulty Modifiers

Naughty Dog has included extensive accessibility options in *The Last of Us Part II Remastered*, and they are worth discussing in the context of a no damage run. Some purists insist on playing with no assists, but the game allows you to adjust things like enemy awareness, player health, and even toggle infinite ammo. For a no damage run, the most common modification is to increase your health regeneration rate while keeping damage at one-hit-kill levels. This does not make the run easier, because you still die in one hit, but it reduces the downtime between attempts.

I used the accessibility options to enable auto-pickup for items, which saved me from having to mash buttons while an enemy was approaching. It is a small change, but it kept my hands free for the controller. I also turned on the high contrast display mode for a few sections, which helped me spot enemies in the dark corridors of the hospital. These are not cheats; they are tools that let you focus on the challenge itself rather than the interface.

Equipment and Mindset for a Successful Run

If you are planning your own no damage run, here are a few practical tips I have picked up.



- Play on a PS5 Pro if you can. The 4K HDR output makes it easier to spot enemies in shadows, and the faster load times mean less waiting after a death.
- Map out your route in advance using a guide or your own notes. Mark every encounter where damage is likely and plan an alternative path.
- Use stealth gameplay as your default. Only engage in combat when you have a clear advantage, like a silenced pistol and a dark room.
- Save frequently, but do not rely on saves to bail you out. The discipline of a no damage run comes from respecting each life.
- Take breaks. The mental fatigue of maintaining focus for a full playthrough is real. I found that playing in two-hour sessions gave me better results than marathon runs.

Why This Challenge Matters

The Last of Us Part II Remastered is a game about consequences. Every action has a reaction, and the story of Ellie and Abby is built on the weight of choices. A no damage run mirrors that theme on a mechanical level. It asks you to be careful, to think before you act, and to accept that sometimes the best course is to do nothing at all. It is not just a test of reflexes; it is a test of patience and humility.

I have seen players complete the game on Grounded difficulty without ever firing a single shot in combat, using only stealth gameplay and evasion. That is a beautiful expression of the game's design. It shows that the combat mechanics are not just about violence; they are about choice. You can choose to be a ghost, and the game supports that choice.

In the end, a no damage run is not for everyone. It requires a level of commitment that borders on obsession. But if you have ever wanted to truly master The Last of Us Part II Remastered, if you have ever wanted to feel like you are moving through the world as Ellie or Abby with absolute control, it is the closest you can get. And when you finally see that clean health bar at the end of the journey, you will know it was worth every reset.