

Mastering No Damage Gameplay in The Last of Us Part II Remastered

There is a particular kind of satisfaction that comes from playing a game so cleanly that you never see the red screen of death. Not just because you survived, but because you did it without taking a single hit. That is the promise of no damage gameplay. It is a discipline that demands patience, map knowledge, and a willingness to fail over and over until you learn exactly when to move and when to stay still. When I first attempted this in The Last of Us Part II Remastered, I thought I understood the combat. I was wrong.

This article is not a guide that tells you every enemy position. It is a look at the mindset and practical strategies behind a no damage run on Grounded difficulty, using the remastered version on PlayStation 5. Whether you are chasing a speedrun time or just want to prove to yourself that you can do it, the principles are the same. You need to treat every encounter as a puzzle, not a fight.



Why No Damage Gameplay Matters

In most action games, taking damage is expected. You trade hits, heal, and move on. But [no damage gameplay](#) changes the rules entirely. It forces you to respect every enemy, every noise, every line of sight. In The Last of Us Part II Remastered, that respect is earned through repetition. One stray bullet from a Seraphite patrol in Seattle can end a run that took hours. The pressure is real.

The game itself is designed to punish mistakes. Enemies flank, they communicate, they react to your last known position. On Grounded difficulty, their damage output is brutal. A single melee hit from a runner can kill you outright if you are not at full health. That is why a no damage run is not just about being good at aiming. It is about controlling the flow of combat so that you are never in a position where you have to take a risk.

Naughty Dog built a world that feels alive, and that aliveness works against you. Dogs track your scent. Clickers hear a whisper. The infected burst through doors at unpredictable moments. The only way to survive without taking damage is to treat every step as a decision. That is the heart of the challenge.

Building the Right Mindset

Before you can execute a no damage run, you have to accept that you will fail. A lot. I spent two weeks just on the first encounter in Seattle, the one where Ellie and Dina walk through the overgrown suburb. It sounds ridiculous, but it taught me something important. The game gives you tools, but it does not tell you how to combine them. You have to discover that yourself.

Resource management becomes central. You cannot afford to waste ammunition on bodies you could have sneaked past. Every bottle, every brick, every arrow matters. In a standard playthrough, you might use a shotgun shell to kill a dog. In a no damage gameplay run, you learn to use a bottle to distract the dog, then slip past while it investigates. The difference is planning ahead by three moves.

Stealth mechanics are your best friend. The Last of Us Part II Remastered gives you tall grass, shadows, and the ability to go prone. Use all of them. Crawl under cars. Hide inside dumpsters. Wait. Patience is not passive; it is an active skill. I found that if I waited five extra seconds before moving, the patrol patterns shifted and a gap opened that was not there before. Those five seconds felt like an eternity, but they saved my run more times than I can count.

Combat Strategy for a Hitless Run

A hitless run is a subset of no damage gameplay. The difference is subtle but real. In a no damage run, you can technically take a hit if you heal fast enough, but in a hitless run, any hit ends it. That is what I aimed for, and it changed how I approached every fight.

The first rule is: do not get into fair fights. If you are trading blows, you are doing it wrong. Use the environment. Lure enemies into trip mines. Shoot the gas canisters near a group. Let the infected fight the WLF patrols; then clean up whoever is left. The game is designed to let you manipulate the battlefield, and in a no damage run, you need to exploit every advantage.

Abby and Ellie play differently. Abby is stronger, more direct. Her melee attacks can stagger enemies, but she is also a bigger target. Ellie is smaller, faster, and better with stealth. In my runs, I found that Ellie's sections were easier to complete without damage because I could hide more effectively. Abby's sections forced me to use brute force, which meant I had to be more precise with my timing. Knowing which character you are playing and adjusting your strategy is essential.

One specific technique that helped me was using the listen mode sparingly. It slows time, but it also drains your focus meter. Instead, I learned to rely on audio cues. The crunch of gravel. The rustle of a curtain. The game's HDR presentation on a good screen makes the shadows deep, but audio is where the real information lives. Playing with good headphones on PlayStation 5 makes a massive difference.

Collectibles and the No Damage Run

Adding collectibles to a no damage run is where things get complicated. In a normal speedrun, you skip everything that is not mandatory. But in an all-collectibles run, you have to go into every room, check every drawer, and risk detection every time. It is a different kind of challenge.



The trick is to plan a route that collects everything without backtracking. For example, in the Seattle day 1 section for Ellie, there is a trading card in a coffee shop that requires you to go through a kitchen with a clicker inside. The obvious path triggers the enemy. The smarter path involves breaking a window from outside, grabbing the card, and leaving before the clicker finishes its patrol loop. That is the kind of micro-optimization you need.

I found it helpful to split the game into segments. Each segment has a set of collectibles and a safe point. I would practice each segment separately until I could complete it without damage and with all collectibles. Then I would stitch the segments together. It took dozens of attempts per segment, but the payoff was worth it.

The Role of Accessibility Options and No Return Mode

The Last of Us Part II Remastered includes a wealth of accessibility options. For a no damage run, some of these can be useful without feeling like cheating. For example, you can increase the size of the reticle, which helps with precision aiming. You can also adjust the audio cues for stealth. I used the option that highlights enemies through walls, but only briefly, so I still had to rely on memory and timing.

No Return mode, the roguelike mode added in the remaster, is a fantastic training ground. The randomized encounters force you to adapt quickly. I spent hours in No Return mode practicing combat strategy without the pressure of a full run. It taught me to read enemy types faster and to use different weapons effectively. If you are serious about a no damage gameplay run, start there. It will save you time on the main campaign.

Sony and Naughty Dog deserve credit for making a game that supports this level of mastery. The 4K resolution and HDR make the world beautiful, but it is the underlying systems that make replaying it worthwhile. Every encounter has multiple solutions, and finding the one that keeps you safe without damage is a puzzle worth solving.

Practical Tips for Your First No Damage Run

- Start with the easier sections. The prologue and the Jackson flashbacks are good warm-ups. Do not attempt the Rat King or the hospital on your first try.
- Save often, but do not rely on saves to fix mistakes. If you take damage, restart the encounter. That builds discipline.
- Use the environment more than your weapons. Bricks, bottles, and environmental hazards are reusable. Ammo is not.
- Learn the patrol loops by watching them for a full cycle before acting. Most enemies follow a pattern that leaves a window of about six seconds.

- When you fail, take a break. Frustration leads to sloppy play. I lost count of how many runs I threw away because I was impatient after a death.

These tips came from my own experience and from watching other players who have completed similar challenges. There is a community of players who share their no damage gameplay videos, and studying them is one of the best ways to improve. Pay attention to their positioning, not just their shots.

The Reward of Clean Play

Completing a no damage run of The Last of Us Part II Remastered on Grounded difficulty feels like earning a black belt in video games. It is not about showing off. It is about proving to yourself that you can master a system that is designed to break you. The game is hard even on normal settings. Doing it without taking a single hit is a testament to focus and learning.

I remember the moment I finished my first full run. It was 3 AM. The final cutscene played, and I just sat there, exhausted and happy. The game had not beaten me. I had beaten it on its own terms. That is the magic of no damage gameplay. It turns a game you love into a conversation between you and the developer. Every enemy placement, every sound cue, every collectible location becomes part of a language you learn to speak fluently.

If you are thinking about trying it, my advice is simple. Start small. Pick one encounter and practice until you can do it blindfolded. Then move to the next. Before you know it, you will have a run that is clean, complete, and yours.