

Conquering The Last of Us Part II Remastered: Why an ng+ No Damage Run Tests Everything You Know

There is a point in every serious playthrough of The Last of Us Part II Remastered where you realize the game is not just testing your reflexes. It is testing your patience, your memory, and your willingness to fail. I hit that point about three hours into a Grounded+ run, crouched behind a counter in the supermarket in Seattle, listening to the patrol patterns of WLF soldiers I had already killed twice before. I was trying to do something I had never attempted: a full ng+ no damage run, with all collectibles, chronological mode on, and every upgrade maxed out from the start.

Let me be clear. This is not a casual challenge. It is a self-imposed discipline that forces you to relearn combat, stealth, and even the way you move through spaces. And it is exactly the kind of thing that makes The Last of Us Part II Remastered stand out as one of the most demanding and rewarding games on the PlayStation 5.

The Grounded+ Reality Check

Most players who finish the game on moderate difficulty think they know what the game asks of you. You learn to listen for clickers, you get decent at dodging the Seraphites, and you figure out which bottle to throw to split up a patrol. Then you try Grounded+. The difference is not just higher damage numbers. It is a different game entirely. Enemies flank aggressively, they communicate with each other, and they notice your mistakes in ways that feel almost human. On Grounded+, even a single bullet from a pistol can end a run if you are not fully healed.

Now add the condition that you cannot take any damage. Not one hit. Not a scratch from a melee attack, not a grazing bullet, not a stumble off a ledge that costs you health. That is the core of an [ng+ no damage](#) run. You carry over all your upgrades from a previous save, so Ellie and Abby both have maximum weapon upgrades, fully upgraded skill trees, and every tool Naughty Dog put in the game. You have the best possible gear from the first frame. But you are still one mistake from restarting the entire encounter.

Why New Game Plus Changes the Equation

Starting a no damage run from a fresh save is a different beast. You have no silenced weapons, no upgraded holster, no extra health. On ng+, you have everything. That sounds like an advantage, and it is, but it also changes the risk calculus. With maximum upgrades, your weapons hit harder and your stealth kills are faster, but the game does not lower its difficulty to match your gear. Enemies still see you just as easily, and they still punish hesitation. The

difference is that you now have more options, and more options mean more ways to make the wrong choice.

I have done this run several times now, and I still get caught off guard by how much the game rewards patience. The first time I tried an ng+ no damage attempt, I rushed through the early Seattle sections because I felt overpowered. I had the fully upgraded hunting pistol, the assault rifle with a silencer, and every crafting recipe unlocked. I thought I could just shoot my way through. I was wrong. The moment I fired an unsuppressed shot, three enemies converged on my position from angles I did not expect. I took a hit from a pipe. Run over.

Stealth, Crafting, and the Absence of Checkpoints

One of the things that makes a no damage run so tense is that checkpoints do not help you in the same way. On a normal Grounded+ run, you can die ten times in a room and eventually brute force your way through by learning exact patrol paths. On a no damage run, if you get hit, you restart the whole encounter. That means you cannot afford to rely on trial and error in the usual sense. You have to plan each engagement as if it is the only one that matters, because in a way it is.

Stealth becomes your primary language. The game gives you tall grass, shadows, and vertical space, and you learn to use them as verbs. Crouch-walking through the weed-choked streets of Seattle, I found myself paying attention to details I had never noticed before. The way a dog sniffs the air before it alerts. The angle of a flashlight beam that tells you exactly when a guard will turn. The sound of a distant conversation that gives you a five-second window to move. These are the things you internalize when you cannot afford a single mistake.

Crafting also takes on new importance. In a normal playthrough, you might hoard materials for the big fights. In an ng+ no damage run, you craft constantly. Smoke bombs become a way to break line of sight when you are about to be spotted. Stun bombs let you close distance without taking fire. Health kits are almost irrelevant because you cannot afford to get hit at all, but you still craft them because the game checks your inventory and you never know when a stray bottle might break your rhythm. Every resource is a tool for avoidance, not recovery.

The Collectibles Paradox

Adding the requirement to collect everything in chronological mode makes the run even more interesting. Chronological mode means you play through the game in story order, switching between Ellie and Abby at the moments the narrative dictates, rather than in the free-roaming chapter select style. This locks you into a specific path through Seattle and its surrounding areas. You cannot skip ahead to an easier section and come back later. You have to find every artifact, every trading card, every note, while also staying alive and undamaged.

That creates a tension between efficiency and thoroughness. The fastest way to clear a room is often to sneak through without touching anything. But collectibles are not always placed in safe locations. Some are in the middle of patrol routes. Some are behind destructible doors that make noise when you break them open. A few are in areas where the only way to reach them is to climb through a window that puts you directly in an enemy's sightline. You have to decide whether the artifact is worth the risk of restarting the entire chapter.



For me, the answer was always yes. Not because I needed the in-game rewards, but because the challenge of the run is about doing everything, not just surviving. If I skipped a collectible, I felt like I had failed the spirit of the run even if I took no damage. So I learned the exact timing for every risky grab. I memorized which windows you can climb through without alerting anyone. I found that one trading card in the hospital that sits on a gurney next to a sleeping Clicker, and I learned to grab it during the half-second the Clicker turns its head. That is the level of detail the run demands.

The Human Cost: Ellie and Abby

Playing through The Last of Us Part II Remastered on this level of difficulty also changes how you relate to the characters. Ellie and Abby both have distinct movement styles and weapon preferences, and the game does not let you ignore those differences. Ellie is faster, more agile, and her stealth animations are quicker. Abby is heavier, stronger, and her melee attacks are devastating, but she is also louder and slower in cover. In an ng+ no damage run, you learn to play to each character's strengths because the margin for error is so thin.

I remember the section where you play as Abby in the forest near the stadium. The environment is dense, enemies are scattered, and there is a lot of vertical movement. With Abby's slower pace, I had to rely on her brute force approach to clear rooms quickly, using the environment to funnel enemies into tight spaces where I could take them out with the bow. One wrong step and a Seraphite with a bat could clip me. The tension was palpable, and it made the narrative moments afterward feel earned in a way they do not on lower difficulties.

Accessibility, Permadeath, and Photo Mode

Naughty Dog included extensive accessibility options in this remaster, and they are worth mentioning because they change the terms of a run like this. You can toggle aim assist, adjust enemy awareness, and even slow down the game speed. For a purist ng+ no damage run, most players turn those off. But the options exist, and they make the game accessible to players who might otherwise never attempt this kind of challenge. That is good design.

Permadeath mode is a separate beast. If you activate permadeath on top of everything else, one hit means you lose the entire save file. I have not attempted that. The no damage run with checkpoints is already punishing enough. Permadeath turns it into a weeks-long project where one slip at hour twenty means starting over from the very beginning. Some players love that. I respect it, but I prefer the version where I can restart an encounter without losing every collectible I already found.

And then there is photo mode. It might seem odd to mention photo mode in the context of a challenge run, but after you clear a particularly hard encounter without taking damage, there is a moment of relief that makes you want to capture the scene. The lighting in the Seattle rain, the way the blood pools on the concrete, the expression on Ellie's face as she reloads. Photo mode is a reward for surviving, and it works beautifully on the PlayStation 5 with 4K ultra gameplay visuals. The game is gorgeous, and taking a screenshot after a hard-won victory feels like signing your name on the moment.

What the HBO Adaptation Gets Right

The HBO adaptation has brought a lot of new players to the series, and some of them are curious about the higher difficulty levels. If you have watched the show and you are thinking about trying Grounded+, I would say start with a normal ng+ run first. Learn the levels, learn the enemy placements, and then attempt the no damage condition. The show captures the emotional weight of the story, but the game captures the physical weight of every decision. That is something you can only feel with a controller in your hands.

Final Thoughts on the Run

An ng+ no damage run of The Last of Us Part II Remastered is not for everyone. It is frustrating, time-consuming, and at times it feels impossible. But it is also one of the most satisfying challenges I have ever completed in a game. It taught me to read enemy AI in ways I never had before. It forced me to use every tool in the game, from the crafted stun bombs to the precise timing of a dodge roll. And it gave me a new appreciation for the work Naughty Dog put into the level design. Every room is a puzzle, and you are the solution.

If you are on the PlayStation 5 and you have the patience, give it a try. Load up your completed save, turn on chronological mode, and set the condition that you will not take a single point of damage. Then see how far you get. You might surprise yourself.