

Speedrunners Chase the Perfect No Damage Run

The concept of a no damage run has become one of the most sought-after achievements in the speedrunning community. It represents a run where the player completes a game without taking a single point of damage from any source, whether from enemies, environmental hazards, or self-inflicted mistakes. For many games, especially those with complex combat systems or tight platforming sections, a no damage run is the pinnacle of precision and memorization.

Speedrunning as a discipline has evolved far beyond simply finishing a game quickly. Subcategories now include categories like any%, 100%, glitchless, and tool-assisted speedruns. Among these, the no damage run stands apart because it demands not only speed but also flawless execution. One mistake, even a minor one, forces the runner to restart from the beginning. This makes the achievement rare and highly respected within the community.

The appeal of a [no damage run](#) lies in its purity. Unlike glitch-heavy runs that exploit unintended mechanics to skip large sections of a game, a no damage run typically requires the player to engage with every intended obstacle perfectly. This does not mean glitches are absent, but the focus remains on avoiding harm rather than bypassing content. For viewers, watching a no damage run can be as tense as a high-stakes sports match, with every jump and dodge carrying potential consequences.

Why No Damage Runs Matter

No damage runs serve as a benchmark for game mastery. When a runner achieves a no damage run of a notoriously difficult game, it sets a new standard for what is considered possible. Other runners then study the route, the timing, and the strategies used, often leading to refinements that push the boundaries further. This cycle of improvement is central to the speedrunning community.

Games that are particularly suited to no damage runs tend to have clear damage states, consistent hitboxes, and predictable enemy patterns. Classic examples include many platformers, action games, and shooters from the 1990s and 2000s. More modern games with procedural generation or unpredictable AI can make a no damage run significantly harder, sometimes to the point of being considered impractical without heavy luck manipulation.

The no damage run also intersects with other speedrunning categories. Some runners attempt a no damage run as part of a larger challenge, such as a no-hit run of an entire game series. Others focus on individual levels or bosses, creating shorter runs that are easier to optimize but still require near-perfect play.

Techniques and Strategies

Executing a no damage run requires a combination of skills. Route planning is essential: the runner must know every enemy placement, every trap, and every safe spot. Memorizing the exact timing of enemy attacks and environmental hazards allows the runner to navigate through danger without hesitation. In many games, the optimal route for a no damage run differs from the route for a standard speedrun, because skipping certain enemies or items might reduce risk even if it adds time.

Practice is intensive. Runners often spend dozens or hundreds of hours on a single game before attempting a no damage run publicly. They practice sections in isolation, learn to read enemy tells, and develop muscle memory for precise movements. Some runners use tools like save states or practice roms to drill specific segments without having to replay the entire game each time.

Mental endurance is another factor. A no damage run can last anywhere from a few minutes to over an hour, depending on the game. The longer the run, the more opportunities for a mistake. Maintaining focus for that duration is difficult, and many runners report that fatigue is one of the biggest obstacles. Some use breathing techniques or take short breaks between attempts to stay sharp.

Community resources play a role as well. Runners share strategies, create tutorial videos, and provide feedback on each other's runs. This collaborative environment accelerates the development of new techniques and helps newcomers learn the ropes. For many, the no damage run is as much about community achievement as personal accomplishment.

Notable Examples and Records

Several games have become famous for their no damage run challenges. The Souls series, including Dark Souls and Sekiro, has a dedicated subset of runners who attempt no damage runs of entire playthroughs. These runs are notoriously difficult due to the games' punishing combat and lengthy campaigns. Another example is the Mega Man X series, where no damage runs of individual stages are a common benchmark for skill.

In the platforming genre, games like Super Mario World and Celeste have produced some of the most celebrated no damage runs. These games require precise timing and pixel-perfect jumps, making any damage taken a significant setback. The speedrunning community maintains leaderboards for many of these games, with separate categories for no damage runs to distinguish them from standard playthroughs.

Some runners have achieved no damage runs of entire game series, completing multiple games back-to-back without taking damage in any of them. These marathon runs are rare and

often require months of preparation. They demonstrate not only skill but also deep knowledge of each game's mechanics and level design.

Challenges and Controversies

Not everyone agrees on what constitutes a no damage run. Some definitions exclude damage that is healed or absorbed by temporary invincibility frames, while others count any reduction in health as a failure. The community often debates these edge cases, especially in games where damage is unavoidable or where certain damage types are intended to be taken as part of the narrative.

Another issue is the use of glitches. While some no damage runs allow glitches that do not cause damage, others ban glitches entirely, requiring the runner to play the game as intended. This has led to the creation of subcategories like glitchless no damage run, which combine the restrictions of both categories. The choice of rules affects the difficulty and the strategies available, and runners often gravitate toward the ruleset that best suits their skills and preferences.

Tool-assisted speedruns, or TAS, also raise questions. A TAS no damage run is created by repeatedly recording inputs and selecting the best sequence, often with the help of emulation tools that allow frame-by-frame control. While these runs are impressive from a technical standpoint, they are not considered legitimate by many human runners because they remove the element of human error. Most leaderboards separate TAS runs from human runs to maintain fairness.

Despite these debates, the no damage run remains a respected category. It pushes runners to improve their skills and provides viewers with some of the most thrilling content in the speedrunning world. Each new record inspires others to attempt the same feat, driving the community forward.

The no damage run will likely continue to evolve as new games are released and new techniques are discovered. It represents a pure test of skill and patience, and its appeal shows no sign of fading.