BG: Enhanced Edition

An RYG Analysis

Platform: PC (Windows 7 only)
DRM: Beamdog
Digital Distributor: Beamdog

Developer: Overhaul Games
Publisher: Atari Interactive / Beamdog

RYG's VERDICT

60% **BARGAIN BIN MATERIAL**
64% and below

1a. Product Info

Looking at how much information is provided on Baldur's Gate: Enhanced Edition on its website prior and on release.

- ✓ Baldur's Gate: Enhanced Edition released globally on 28.11.2012
- ✓ Base game and day-one DLCs sold as one package
- ✓ Minimum and recommended specs provided
- ✓ Advised Beamdog DRM was to be used for BG: Enhanced Edition
- ✓ Advised how Beamdog DRM would activate BG: Enhanced Edition
- ✓ Manual and Readme provided via. baldursgate.com
- ✓ EULA, Privacy Policy and TOS fully accessible on beamdog.com
- ✓ All game-related information can be found on beamdog.com

- ✗ Available only on Windows and MacOS
- ✗ No Demo

1b. Digital Dwnld

Looking at Beamdog as a digital distributing service for PC games.

Note: Beamdog will require an online activation per installation if users opt out of using their client manager. Activation limits are unlimited.

- ✓ Baldur's Gate: Enhanced Edition sold at one, global price
- ✓ Available worldwide through beamdog.com
- ✓ Client Manager is optional and not required for gameplay
- ✓ Minimum and recommended specs provided
- ✓ Advised Beamdog DRM was to be used for BG: Enhanced Edition
- ✓ Advised how Beamdog DRM would activate BG: Enhanced Edition
- ✓ Free and unlimited access and downloads after purchase
- ✓ Refunds and/or exchanges offered for purchased games
- ✓ Can access personal data
- ✓ Can terminate account or request to terminate account

See Also: Beamdog's promise to remove any time-based expiries on games purchased in the event of a permanent shutdown of Beamdog.

- ✗ User account creation is required
- ✗ Offline backup option not provided (games backed up via. Beamdog's servers)
- ✗ Warranties waived (excluding physical merchantability warranties)
- ✗ Cover waived against any unforeseeable damages, disruptions of service

- ✗ Account termination voids past purchases and licenses to play them
- ✗ Consumers prevented from disputing and validating Beamdog TOS breaches
- ✗ Can't review and question changes made to Beamdog TOS
- ✗ Past purchases voided after refusing to accept Beamdog TOS

2. Privacy Policy

Note: 661 words found within Beamdog's Privacy Policy.

Looking at Beamdog's Privacy Policy through Beamdog

- ✓ Privacy Policy found on beamdog.com
- ✓ Policy applies to BG: Enhanced Edition and Beamdog
- ✓ Easy to read, understand and is worded with clear consistency
- ✓ "Personally-identifiable" & "non-personally identifiable" info are clearly defined
- ✓ Policy specifies (non) personable data collected before gameplay
- ✓ Data centres are 100% safe and secure
- ✓ Info is used solely for payment transactions, product usage and updates
- ✓ Users can access their Beamdog user account
- ✓ Users can modify their Beamdog user account
- ✓ Users have full control over their Beamdog user account

Note: Purchases made via. Beamdog will simply make a payment transaction and will not provide users with a final confirmation or notice of what's purchased and/or what info was inputted.

Note: Privacy Policy was retrieved April 2013.

- ✗ Users not visibly notified of any changes made to the Policy
- ✗ Not advised where the info is specifically stored
- ✗ Third parties not identified
- ✗ Opt-in / opt-out process not provided
- ✗ Users can't validate what they've provided prior to purchase of Baldur's Gate
- ✗ User data is retained by Beamdog for an extended period of time
- ✗ Can't review and query changes made to the Privacy Policy
- ✗ Users must accept ALL changes made to the Policy before playing Baldur's Gate

3. EULA TOS

Note: 1,085 words found in Baldur's Gate's EULA.

Looking at Baldur's Gate: Enhanced Edition's EULA from Beamdog

- ✓ EULA / TOS is found on beamdog.com
- ✓ EULA / TOS covers Baldur's Gate, Beamdog and its DRM
- ✓ Easy to read, understand and is worded with clear consistency
- ✓ Refunds and/or exchanges offered for purchased games
- ✓ Terms and conditions for Beamdog DRM are clearly defined
- ✓ Can opt-out of any monitoring services / software
- ✓ Won't blacklist specific background services or software
- ✓ Users can initiate legal action if the arbitration process fails
- ✓ Users can criticise or provide criticism about the game without reprisals

Note: Using the Beamdog Client is optional.

- ✗ Drafted to only abide by the laws of Canada
- ✗ Users not visibly notified of any changes made to the EULA / TOS
- ✗ Can't review and query changes made to the EULA / TOS
- ✗ License to play the game only provided
- ✗ Circumvention of Beamdog prohibited
- ✗ Offline back-ups aren't permitted
- ✗ Baldur's Gate 's source code isn't to be modified or reverse-engineered
- ✗ Not permitted to create "mods"

Note: Downloading games via. Beamdog goes through either a small installer or through the Beamdog client.

- ✖ Warranties waived (excluding physical merchantability warranties)
- ✖ Cover waived against any unforeseeable damages, disruptions of service
- ✖ Termination process dictated by Beamdog

4. Setup / Install

Looking at how Baldur's Gate: Enhanced Edition is installed on Windows PCs only.

- ✓ Custom installation options are provided
- ✓ All files are installed within folders designated by users
- ✓ Currently-executing background services won't interfere with installation
- ✓ Error-free installation
- ✓ Installation completed within 30 minutes (on a Broadband connection)

- ✖ No installation logs of files and registry keys
- ✖ Beamdog DRM files are found within the /AppData/Local/ folders

5. Updates / Patching

Looking at how Baldur's Gate: Enhanced Edition is patched prior and after gameplay.

- ✓ No other DRM files or registry keys are installed
- ✓ Details of patches provided via Beamdog's Client or via. Game Launcher
- ✓ Users can be advised of game patch's availability

- ✖ Requires ALL automatic patches to play BG: Enhanced Edition
- ✖ Patches only installed via. automatic updates
- ✖ No installation logs of files and registry keys
- ✖ Rollback option not provided
- ✖ No plans to sunset Beamdog DRM

6. DRM & Activation

Looking at Beamdog DRM in relation to Baldur's Gate: Enhanced Edition and its effects on Windows PCs only.

- ✓ Won't interfere with currently-executing background services or software
- ✓ Firewall and AV settings aren't modified or required to be modified
- ✓ Username, password and email are only required
- ✓ Unlimited online activations to any one PC
- ✓ Can play single-player game offline
- ✓ Only Beamdog DRM is implemented
- ✓ Unlimited hardware activations
- ✓ Unlimited installations
- ✓ Support and troubleshooting process provided
- ✓ Activation is simple and hassle-free

- ✖ No instructions provided on the activation process
- ✖ Can't verify the safety and reliability of the activation process
- ✖ A non-transferrable user account is required
- ✖ Game is locked to specific account after activation

7. Gameplay Experience

Note: (Local) savegame files and Configuration files are found under the My Documents\Baldur's Gate - Enhanced Edition\save folder.

Note: The original Baldur's Gate (much like this version) was designed for mouse/keyboard play only.

Looking at the gameplay aspects of Baldur's Gate: Enhanced Edition and how it interacts with PC Windows.

- ✓ Can play on minimum specs
- ✓ Disc not required for gameplay
- ✓ Suitable options to modify video settings
- ✓ Can play in windowed mode
- ✓ Can play offline
- ✓ Won't "phone home"
- ✓ Can play without connectivity issues on an ADSL connection
- ✓ Can play error-free for more than 5hrs
- ✓ Won't interfere with services and background software
- ✓ Will resume at the last checkpoint
- ✓ Can modify savegame and/or ini file
- ✓ No DRM or monitoring services running in the background

- ✘ Requires original copy to play Baldur's Gate: Enhanced Edition
- ✘ Only playable on mouse and keyboard
- ✘ Can only play on one PC at a time per game / account

8. PC Checkup

Looking at whether Baldur's Gate will modify certain PC settings without users permission / consent.

- ✓ PC clean after scanning for viruses
- ✓ PC clean after scanning for malware and spyware
- ✓ PC clean after scanning for rootkits
- ✓ HOSTS wasn't modified
- ✓ Played Baldur's Gate without major errors
- ✓ Start-up settings remain unaltered
- ✓ No DRM / monitoring services running in the background after shutting down
- ✓ System configuration files remain unaltered

9. Removal Uninstall

Note: Removing remaining Beamdog Files can be done via. /AppData/Local/ folders; Registry keys can be found via. Regedit through a simple search of Beamdog.

Looking at how clean, efficient and effective the removal process is for Baldur's Gate (How much legacy material is there after the removal of Baldur's Gate?)

- ✓ Backup savegames prompt provided / Savegames retained

- ✘ Will need to uninstall the game via. Control Panel
- ✘ Beamdog files (from /AppData/Local) and registry keys remain

10. Customer Support

Looking at the customer support side of Baldur's Gate through Beamdog's Forums and Zendesk.

- ✘ Customer service / support is spread out at their forums and zendesk.com
- ✘ Searching on both sites is difficult to find
- ✘ Customer service takes more than 24 hours to respond

RYG's VERDICT

60%

BARGAIN BIN MATERIAL

64% and below

SHOWS PROMISE & POTENTIAL

Between 65% and 84%

WORTH SUPPORTING

85% and above

There are (better) alternatives to buying and playing Baldur's Gate (namely through GOG and DRM-Free for half the price, along with a simple search of free mods). However, this analysis was more about Beamdog than Baldur's Gate and, as such, they do have some nifty services, like "just download and play" without installations, optional use of their game client and offline play. Unfortunately, it's a distribution service that's hard to adopt (based on their current catalogue of games and their "absent" support service) and, in comparison to the likes of GOG and even Steam, it will leave files and registry keys behind after a full removal (just like any other DRM service to date).

Colophon

This analysis of Baldur's Gate was compiled by Lisa and Martin Pham. Typeface used is ITC Stone Sans. RYG thanks Anna Henriksson, Josh Bush, Ethan Lee, Adam Ames and David Hatch for their insights and suggestions in the design of this analysis. Baldur's Gate was bought with RYG funds through Beamdog.

Disclaimer

These analyses are only a guide and represent RYG's perspective into Baldur's Gate as a product. We believe everyone should perform their own research and reach their own conclusions. This is one view of many. Again, we thank you for taking the time to read our analysis of Baldur's Gate and hope you continue to support our work.