Dark Souls

Platform: PC (Windows 7 only)
DRM: Steamworks (Steam) & Games For Windows Live
Digital Distributor: Steam

Developer: FromSoftware
Publisher: Namco Bandai

RYG's VERDICT

54% BARGAIN BIN MATERIAL
64% and below

1a. Product Info

Note: Dark Souls (PC) will require third party mods in order to correct the graphical and controller settings as the Windows Port is still released unpatched.

Note: Namco Bandai are considering options to remove Games For Windows Live (GFWL) before the July 2014 deadline.

Looking at how much information is provided on Dark Souls on the Steam site prior and on release.

- ✓ Dark Souls released globally on 24.08.2012
- ✓ Minimum and recommended specs provided
- ✓ Advised Steamworks (Steam) and GFWL DRM was to be used for Dark Souls
- ✓ Advised how Steam and GFWL DRM would activate Dark Souls
- ✓ Manual and Readme found on steampowered.com
- ✓ EULA, Privacy Policy and TOS fully accessible on steampowered.com
- ✓ All game-related information can be found on steampowered.com

- ✗ Dark Souls released after the sale of its console version
- ✗ Available only on Windows
- ✗ No demo

1b. Digital Dwnld

Note: Backing up Steam games "offline" can be found via. PCGamingWiki.

Note: Refer to Section 3, *Billing, Payment & Other Subcriptions* in respect to pre-order refunds for users living in the EU

Note: Difference in prices for Dark Souls can be found via. Steam Apps Database.

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

- ✓ Available worldwide through steampowered.com
- ✓ Minimum and recommended specs provided
- ✓ Advised Steamworks (Steam) and GFWL DRM was to be used for Dark Souls
- ✓ Advised how Steam and GFWL DRM would activate Dark Souls
- ✓ Free and unlimited access and downloads after purchase
- ✓ Can backup purchased games "offline" (e.g. external or optical drives)
- ✓ Refunds offered for pre-orders (EU ONLY!)
- ✓ Can access personal data
- ✓ Can terminate account or request to terminate account

- ✗ Dark Souls is priced inconsistently across global regions
- ✗ Download / Client Manager is required, including for gameplay
- ✗ User account creation is required
- ✗ No refunds or exchanges for purchased games
- ✗ 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 Steam TOS breaches made against them
- ✘ Can't review and question changes made to Steam TOS
- ✘ Past purchases voided after refusing to accept Steam TOS

2. Privacy Policy

Note: 1,507 words found within Steam's Privacy Policy.

See Also: Relevant Sections: *Collection of Information, Personally Identifiable Information* and *Use of Personally Identifiable Information.*

Note: Privacy Policy was retrieved January 2014; Effective Date of Steam's Privacy Policy prior to this evaluation was August 2012.

Looking at Dark Souls's Privacy Policy through Steam

- ✓ Privacy Policy found on steampowered.com
- ✓ Policy applies to Steam Client, Steamworks DRM and Dark Souls
- ✓ Easy to read, understand and is worded with clear consistency
- ✓ Users visibly notified of any changes made to the Policy
- ✓ "Personally-identifiable" and "non-personally identifiable" info are defined
- ✓ Policy specifies what's are collected before and during gameplay
- ✓ Info is stored in the US
- ✓ Data centres are 100% safe and secure
- ✓ Info is used solely for improving Steam's services only!
- ✓ Visible opt-in / opt-out process
- ✓ Users can access and modify their user account
- ✓ Users can modify their user account
- ✓ Users can validate the info they've provided
- ✓ Can request to have their data removed
- ✓ Can review and query changes made to the Privacy Policy

- ✘ Third parties not identified
- ✘ Users have limited control over their Steam account
- ✘ Users must accept ALL changes before playing Dark Souls

3a. EULA (GAME)

Looking at Dark Souls's EULA from FromSoftware.

- ✓ EULA / TOS wasn't found / wasn't required.

3b. EULA (STEAM)

Note: 6,946 Words found in Steam's EULA.

EULA has been updated to July 2013.

Looking at Steam Subscriber's Agreement through Steam.

- ✓ EULA / TOS is found on steampowered.com
- ✓ EULA / TOS covers Steam DRM
- ✓ Terms and conditions for Steam DRM are clearly defined
- ✓ Can back-up copies of Steam Client
- ✓ Permitted to create free "mods" of Valve's Source Code Engine
- ✓ Won't blacklist specific background services or software
- ✓ Termination process is clear and transparent

- ✘ Difficult to read and understand
- ✘ Drafted to only abide by the laws of US in the state of California
- ✘ Users not visibly notified of any changes made to the EULA / TOS

- ✗ Can't review and query changes made to the EULA / TOS
- ✗ Circumvention of Steam DRM prohibited
- ✗ Monitoring services / software are required to use Steam
- ✗ Cover waived against any unforeseeable damages, disruptions of service
- ✗ Arbitration process isn't freely-provided and requested by Valve
- ✗ Legal action is waived

See Also: Section 12, *Dispute Resolution / Binding Arbitration / Class Action Waiver*

4. Setup / Install

Looking at how Dark Souls is installed on Windows PCs only.

Note: Installing games through Steam to a different folder and drive can be done by altering the Steam shortcut to add "-dev" (via. RPS)

- ✓ 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 an ADSL2+ Connection

Note: It is advised to install Games For Windows Live as a standalone process prior to in-stalling and playing Dark Souls.

- ✗ Third party software (such as Windows Live-related services) is required
- ✗ No installation logs of files and registry keys
- ✗ Extra GWFL DRM files found in /System32/

5. Updates / Patching

Looking at how Dark Souls is patched prior and after gameplay.

Note: Dark Souls (PC) will require third party mods in order to correct the graphical and con-troller settings as the Windows Port is still released unpatched.

- ✓ Can play the game unpatched

- ✗ No plans to sunset Steam DRM or GFWL DRM as yet

6. DRM & Activation

Looking at Steam DRM in relation to Dark Souls and its effects on Windows PCs only.

Note: It is recommended that (new) users should install and update Steam first before install-ing Dark Souls.

Note: Dark Souls will be connect-ed to the following servers: Valve (Highwinds Networks, Telia.Net, Kaia Networks, QWest Commu-nications, Limelight Networks, Level 3 Communications, Com-cast & WA Internet Exchange), Microsoft (Microsoft Hosting, XboxLive, GFWL) and Verisign.

Note: Users can create a local profile in respect to GFWL only.

See Also: How to play Dark Souls in offline mode.

- ✓ Won't interfere with currently-executing background services or software
- ✓ Firewall and AV settings aren't modified or required to be modified
- ✓ Users are aware and advised on how Dark Souls will be activated
- ✓ Unlimited online activations to any one PC
- ✓ Can play single-player game offline
- ✓ Unlimited hardware activations
- ✓ Unlimited installations
- ✓ Support and troubleshooting process provided

- ✗ No instructions provided on the activation process
- ✗ Can't verify the safety and reliability of the activation process
- ✗ No offline option
- ✗ A non-transferrable user account is required
- ✗ A secondary user account is required (GFWL) to play Dark Souls
- ✗ Game is locked to two specific accounts after activation
- ✗ Steam and GFWL DRM are implemented
- ✗ Activating the game isn't simple and hassle-free

7. Gameplay Experience

Looking at the gameplay aspects of Dark Souls and how it interacts with PC Windows.

✓ Can play on minimum specs
✓ Can play a backup copy of the game
✓ Can play with console controller
✓ Can play offline
✓ Can play without connectivity issues on an ADSL connection
✓ Won't interfere with services and background software
✓ Will resume at the last checkpoint

✖ Can only play on a fixed 720 pixel resolution
✖ Dark Souls was "ideally" set up to play on an Xbox 360 controller
✖ Can only play full screen mode only
✖ Will "phone home" (in relation to GFWL only)
✖ Will encounter some errors in relation to setting Dark Souls for gameplay
✖ Can only play on one PC at a time per game / account
✖ Can't modify savegame and/or ini file
✖ GFWL DRM and monitoring services will operate during and after gameplay

Note: It is advised to set up Dark Souls as per PCGamingWiki's notes in order to properly play the game on PCs. This includes setting up the visual effects as well as the mouse/keyboard configurations, which was poorly configured during the porting process.

8. PC Checkup

Looking at whether Dark Souls 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
✓ System configuration files remain unaltered

✖ Encountered some errors in setting up Dark Souls without third-party mods
✖ GFWL & Windows Live were added to start-up without permission
✖ GFWL & Windows Live remained operational after shutting down Dark Souls

9. Removal Uninstall

Looking at how clean, efficient and effective the removal process is for Dark Souls (How much legacy material is there after the removal of Dark Souls?)

✓ Knowledgebase provided at Steam to remove all Steam files and registry keys
✓ Knowledgebase in removing game + DRM files is easy to understand

✖ Will need to uninstall the game via. Control Panel
✖ Some GFWL files and registry keys related to Steam and the game remain

Note: Steam does offer an option to manually remove all Steam-related files. It does work and will remove any remaining files and keys after uninstallation of Dark Souls

10. Customer Support

- ✓ Customer service / support found in one place at steampowered.com
- ✓ Steam's forum is easy to use and navigate
- ✓ Searching on Steam's forum is direct and quick
- ✓ Info is easy to read and understand

RYG's VERDICT

54%

BARGAIN BIN MATERIAL	SHOWS PROMISE & POTENTIAL	WORTH SUPPORTING
64% and below	**Between 65% and 84%**	**85% and above**

Dark Souls is both absorbing and challenging to play. Many of the best qualities of Dark Souls was best delivered through the modding community that persisted for fans of the game. However, the absence of these mods have made Dark Souls a trying experience in setting it up (and even playing it on a keyboard / mouse configuration). In addition to this is the uncertain future of the game in relation to Namco Bandai's yes/no/maybe stance on alternative DRM options once GFWL ends on 01.07.2014.

Colophon

This analysis of Dark Souls 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. Dark Souls was bought with RYG funds through Steam.

Disclaimer

These analyses are only a guide and represent RYG's perspective into Dark Souls 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 Dark Souls and hope you continue to support our work.