XCOM: Enemy Unknown

An RYG Analysis

Platform: PC (Windows 7 only)
DRM: Steamworks (Steam)
Digital Distributor: PHYSICAL COPY ONLY!

Developer: Firaxis Games
Publisher: 2K Games / Take-Two Games

RYG's VERDICT

62%

BARGAIN BIN MATERIAL
64% and below

1. Product Info

Looking at how much information is provided on XCOM: Enemy Unknown on its website prior and on release.

- ✓ XCOM released simultaneously with its console version
- ✓ Minimum and recommended specs provided
- ✓ Demo provided via. steampowered.com
- ✓ Advised Steamworks (Steam) DRM was to be used for XCOM
- ✓ Advised how Steam DRM would activate the game through XCOM
- ✓ Manual and Readme provided with XCOM
- ✓ EULA and Privacy Policy fully accessible on steampowered.com & 2K games
- ✓ All game-related information can be found on steampowered.com

- ✗ XCOM (for WIN) released with different global dates
- ✗ Available only on Windows
- ✗ Base game sold as multiple "editions" with varying selections of day-one DLCs

2. Privacy Policy

*Looking at Steam's Privacy Policy through **Valve (Steam)***

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*.

- ✓ Privacy Policy found on steampowered.com
- ✓ Policy applies to Steam Client, Steamworks DRM and XCOM
- ✓ 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 to the Policy before playing XCOM

3a. EULA (GAME)

Note: 2,998 words found in XCOM's EULA.

Note: Steam's Subscriber's Agreement (EULA / TOS) is evaluated as a separate section 3b. EULA (STEAM)

Looking at XCOM: Enemy Unknown's EULA from 2K Games / Take-Two Interactive.

✓ EULA / TOS is found on 2K games
✓ EULA / TOS covers XCOM and Steam DRM
✓ Can replace damaged copies with a free, replacement copy
✓ Terms and conditions for Steam DRM are clearly defined
✓ Users can initiate legal action if the arbitration process fails
✓ Users can criticise or provide criticism about the game without reprisals

✗ Difficult to read, understand and is inconsistently worded
✗ Drafted to only abide by the laws of the US in the state of NY
✗ 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
✗ No refunds or exchanges for purchased games
✗ Circumvention of Steam DRM prohibited
✗ Back-ups aren't permitted
✗ XCOM's source code isn't to be modified or reverse-engineered
✗ Not permitted to create "mods"
✗ Monitoring services / software are required to play XCOM
✗ Warranties waived (excluding physical merchantability warranties)
✗ Cover waived against any unforeseeable damages, disruptions of service
✗ Termination process dictated by 2K Games.

Note: Limited warranties, waivers of liability and indemnity are commonly found within many software EULAs and TOSs

3b. EULA (STEAM)

Note: 6,286 Words found in Steam's EULA.

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

4. Setup / Install

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

Looking at how XCOM: Enemy Unknown is installed on Windows PCs only.

✓ Custom installation options are provided
✓ All files are installed within folders designated by users
✓ Steam DRM files installed within folders designated by users
✓ Currently-executing background services won't interfere with installation
✓ Error-free installation

✖ No installation logs of files and registry keys
✖ Installation completed beyond 60 minutes

5. Updates / Patching

Looking at how XCOM: Enemy Unknown is patched prior and after gameplay.

✓ No other DRM files or registry keys are installed
✓ Users can be advised of game patch's availability via. steampowered.com

Note: There is a ~1.8Gb update that will occur straight after the installation of XCOM.

✖ Automatic updates are mandatory
✖ Day-one patch required
✖ Requires ALL patches to play XCOM
✖ Patches only installed via. automatic updates
✖ Details of patches not provided
✖ No installation logs of files and registry keys
✖ Rollback option not provided
✖ No plans to sunset Steam DRM

6. DRM & Activation

Note: It is recommended that (new) users should install and update Steam first before installing XCOM.

Note: XCOM will only be connected to the following servers: Level 3 Communications, QWest Communications, Highwinds Networks, Valve and Verisign.

Looking at Steamworks (Steam) DRM in relation to XCOM: Enemy Unknown 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
✓ Users are aware and advised on how XCOM will be activated
✓ Username, password and email are only required
✓ Unlimited online activations to any one PC
✓ Can play single-player game offline
✓ Only Steam 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

Looking at the gameplay aspects of XCOM: Enemy Unknown and how it interacts with PC Windows.

See Also: PCGamingWiki's page on XCOM, which includes a range of customisation / tweaks.

Note: (Local) savegame and configuration files found in / My Games/XCOM - Enemy Unknown/.

Please refer to PCGamingWiki for further info on Savegame issues.

- ✓ Can play on minimum specs
- ✓ Can play a backup copy of the game
- ✓ Disc not required for gameplay
- ✓ Suitable options to modify video settings
- ✓ Can remap keyboard/mouse keys only
- ✓ Can play with console controller
- ✓ Can play in windowed mode
- ✓ Won't "phone home"
- ✓ Can play offline
- ✓ 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

- ✗ Can only play on one PC at a time per game / account
- ✗ DRM and monitoring services will operate during and after gameplay

8. PC Checkup

Looking at whether XCOM: Enemy Unknown 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 XCOM 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

Looking at how clean, efficient and effective the removal process is for XCOM: Enemy Unknown (How much legacy material is there after the removal of XCOM: Enemy Unknown?)

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 XCOM.

- ✓ Will need to uninstall the game via. Control Panel
- ✓ Knowledgebase provided at Steam to remove all Steam files and registry keys
- ✓ Knowledgebase in removing game + DRM files is easy to understand

- ✗ Some registry keys related to Steam remain

10. Customer Support

Looking at the customer support side of XCOM: Enemy Unknown through 2K Games.

- ✓ Customer service / support found in one place at support.2k.com
- ✓ support.2k.com is easy to use and navigate
- ✓ Searching on support.2k.com is direct and quick
- ✓ Info is easy to read and understand

RYG's VERDICT

62%

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

Our assessment of XCOM: Enemy Unknown is almost akin to our assessment of Bio-Shock Infinite. There are a few niggles here and there (For instance, release dates and Standard EULA). But it is a positive thing for 2K Games to release another AAA game via. Steam, in spite of its many flaws.

Colophon

This analysis of XCOM: Enemy Unknown 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. XCOM: Enemy Unknown was bought with RYG funds through EB Games.

Disclaimer

These analyses are only a guide and represent RYG's perspective into XCOM: Enemy Unknown 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 XCOM: Enemy Unknown and hope you continue to support our work.