

Depth and Breadth

Elden Ring



SOURCE: Elden Ring Official Website

Overview

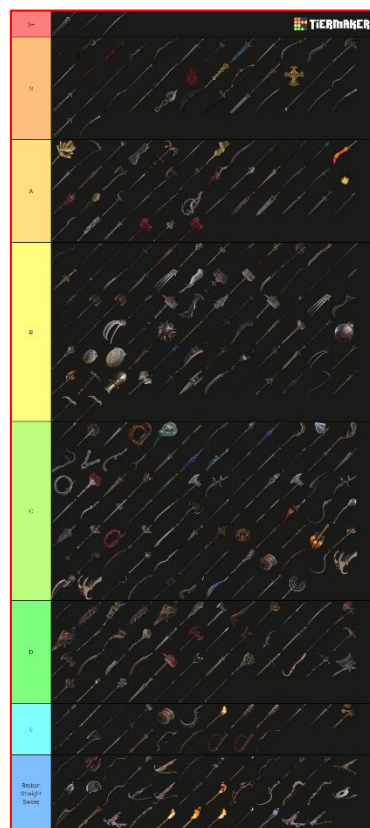
“Elden Ring” is an action-RPG videogame developed by FromSoftware and released in 2022. This document discusses the depth and breadth of the game’s mechanics, comparing positive and negative experiences generated by how these two aspects are balanced in “Elden Ring”.

Weapons

The combat is an essential component of “Elden Ring” and its genre, representing the main activity performed by players during the game.

Weapons are offensive equipment for playable characters capable of inflicting damages to the player’s targets in combat. The breadth of this mechanic is found in the 308 weapons featured in the game, each one with a different combination of appearance, move sets and stats.

Thanks to the breadth of the weapons system, players’ curiosity is stimulated every time a new equipment of this kind is found in their gameplay. Some players may appreciate a specific weapon for its aesthetic and alignment with their character’s roleplay, while others may be enthusiastic about a weapon’s performance in PvP combat.



A player's Tier list of Elden Ring's weapons - source: [reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com)

Not all weapons in the game, however, represent meaningful choices. An average “Elden Ring” player would often find themselves discarding most of the weapons found during the gameplay, perceiving them as inferior to a more effective alternative.

However, the meaningful choices the player can make in terms of weapons remain many. Depending on the player's character build, they might find one weapon more useful than another, just as at different times in the game, one weapon might be particularly more significant than a generally more effective one. This implies that the depth of "Elden Ring"'s weapon system is balanced with its breadth, allowing both variety and meaningful choices to the player.

Bosses

Bosses are powerful enemies in "Elden Ring" and a key element in Fromsoftware's games. They are the game's main opponents, characterised by unique narrative backgrounds and aesthetics, as well as unique fighting styles and weaknesses.

"Elden Ring" differs from the other products of the same studio due to its extension, that of an open world game. This extension is found in the number and size of explorable areas, as well as in the number of general enemies and bosses.



Elden Ring Boss enemy examples - source: gaminggorilla.com

The breadth of the boss fight system can be deduced from the approximately 150 such fights present in the game.

Most of the game's boss fights are designed to be unique, both in terms of the enemies faced (usually unique during the player's first full experience), and the strategies the player must develop in order to overcome these challenges.

These differences in the design of the various fights are a source of meaningful choices for players, which determine in their number the depth of this system.

The design of “Elden Ring” aims to balance the great breadth of the boss fight system with an equal variety of meaningful choices and thus, in this context, uniqueness of challenges. However, the game suffers from the presence of duplicate challenges or reused enemies, which are perceived negatively by players, especially by the audience that is passionate about the genre. Players who are fond of the game's narrative background, for instance, find inconsistencies in the reasons why certain opponents appear together, or why they appear identical in characteristics that should instead be unique to a particular character even though they have different names.

Facing the same boss enemy repeatedly becomes unappealing to players, in an experience that can be negatively perceived since the depth of this mechanic, however strong, is not balanced with the breadth the game aims for to fulfil the requirements of the open world genre.

Conclusion

“Elden Ring” is a game whose systems have a large degree of breadth, a fundamental requirement of the open world category in which the product is classified. At a design level, the attention that has been dedicated to obtaining the most elaborate depth of the mechanics is evident in the game, being however not always sufficient to balance its breadth.