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By the year 2183, mankind has mastered the ability to travel throughout the galaxy at faster-than-light speeds, bringing them in contact with a host of alien races. Now humanity struggles to find its place in the greater galactic community.

As Commander Shepard of the Systems Alliance Military, aboard the spacecraft Normandy, you represent humanity's first and last line of defense against the strange wonders of a vast and often dangerous galaxy. Your actions and decisions will determine the fate of the human race…and shape the future of an entire galaxy.

CHARACTER CREATION

At the Main Menu, select START NEW CAREER. You enter the Mission Computer database and begin to reconstruct your profile to confirm your identity.

You have two options when initially creating your character:

- Play as the default Commander Shepard and choose a first name.
- Create a custom character, in which you control every detail.

CUSTOM CHARACTER CREATION

Start by selecting a gender and entering a first name for Commander Shepard.

Next, choose your custom character's early history: Earthborn, Colonist, or Spacer. This choice represents the first of many that affect how characters will react to you during gameplay.

Select a Psychological Profile: Ruthless, War Hero, or Sole Survivor.

Select your character class. If you select the default setting, your character is a Soldier.

CLASSES

There are six base classes, with variable strength in up to three areas for the player and two squad members. Some classes concentrate all their strength in one skill area; others divide it between two areas to balance tactics.

Combat skills deal maximum damage to enemies. Tech skills allow decrypting security systems and weakening enemy weapons. Biotic skills enable brain impulses to manipulate the physical world.

SOLDIER – COMBAT SPECIALIST

The Soldier is a tough warrior, able to deal with a range of combat situations. The Soldier gets improved health, has the widest selection of weapons, and is eventually able to wear heavy armor. Gameplay focus is on getting into the thick of the fight, picking the right weapon for tactical situations, and outlasting opponents.

ENGINEER – TECH SPECIALIST

The Engineer is a tech specialist, able to quickly and easily manipulate the environment with specific skills. Gameplay focus is on shaping the battlefield during combat, healing the party, and debuffing enemies (disabling weapons and lowering shields).

ADEPT – BIOTIC SPECIALIST

The Adept is the ultimate biotic, able to affect the physical world with the power of the mind. They can use biotics to violently manipulate objects in the environment, including nearby enemy targets. Gameplay focus is on disabling and debuffing enemies while dealing massive amounts of damage.

INFILTRATOR – COMBAT/TECH

The Infiltrator is a tech-savvy warrior, able to win battles by quickly disabling and killing enemies. Gameplay focus is on unlocking alternate routes, gaining access to good equipment, and obtaining an advantageous position over enemies in combat.

VANGUARD – BIOTIC/COMBAT

The Vanguard is a powerful combatant, able to combine the offensive powers of the Adept and the Soldier. They have access to various weapons and armor, as well as biotic powers. Gameplay focus is on taking down enemies with quick and brutal force.

SENTINEL – BIOTIC/TECH

The Sentinel is the most flexible class, able to combine tech and biotics to manipulate the environment, disable and attack enemies, or defend the party. Gameplay focus is on protecting the party using kinetic barriers and healing it with advanced medical training.

FACIAL CUSTOMIZATION

Use the Facial Customization screen to create a unique face for your character. You can customize the entire face or focus on a specific area, such as eyes or nose. Use the sliders in each section to adjust a range of facial details. Select FINALIZE to accept the face you created.

CONVERSATION

The cinematic, choice-based dialogue in *Mass Effect™* lets you fine-tune your character and story using the conversation wheel at the bottom of the screen.

Choices on the wheel's left let you explore a conversation in-depth, while choices on the right tend to move the conversation to completion.

The top of the wheel typically corresponds to the Paragon path, where your character makes selfless, cooperative decisions. The bottom of the wheel generally corresponds to the Renegade path, where your character is more aggressive and hostile.

When you spend Talent Points on Charm and Intimidate talents, new options appear on the wheel's left that may help conversation outcomes later. Charm options appear in blue text. Intimidate options appear in red. (See *Talents* on p. 25 to learn more.)

Select your response to play it in a cinematic style. As soon as the conversation wheel appears, you can select your response. Your character speaks the line at the dramatically appropriate time. Press ✕ to interrupt or skip a line of dialogue.
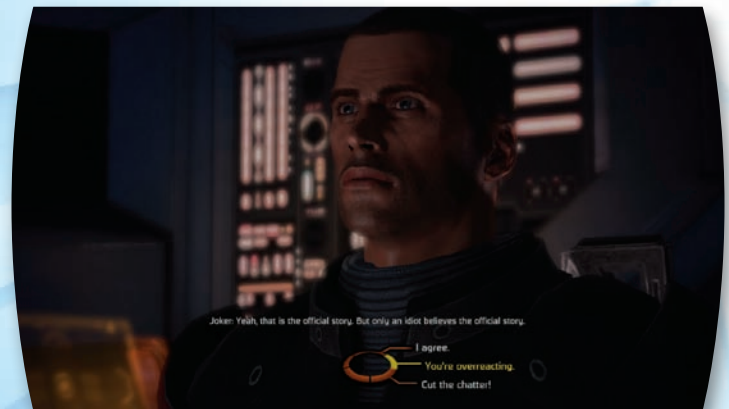
NON-COMBAT HUD

As you progress through the game, you gain XP (experience points) by exploring new areas and engaging other characters in conversation.

When you can interact with something or someone in the world, the blue focus symbol forms a circle inside it. Press Ⓐ to interact.
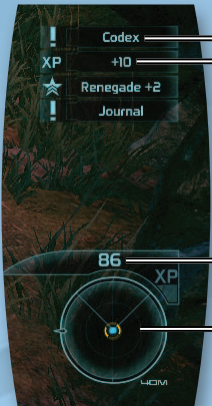
Selection Bar

Focus Symbol

The screen briefly displays your XP. The Squad screen of the Mission Computer also shows the XP gained. (See *Squad Data* on p. 20 to learn more.)

New Mission Computer entry
XP Gained

Total XP

Mini-map

MISSION COMPUTER

Press ⏵ to bring up the Mission Computer display. Highlight your choice and press Ⓐ to select it. When an area receives an update it flashes on the display.

The Mission Computer lets you access game details for:

Equipment	View currently equipped weapons, armor, and other items, along with options for equipping new items.
Options	Set gameplay, controller, graphics, sound, and other options from here. Many of these options will affect gameplay difficulty and your visual experience; be sure to look at all the choices.
Map	View your current location and points of interest.
Save	Saves your game in its current state and location.
Squad	View stats for you and your squad members.
Load	Loads your saved and automatically saved games from here.
Journal	View current and recent tasks.
Codex	Learn all about the *Mass Effect* universe.
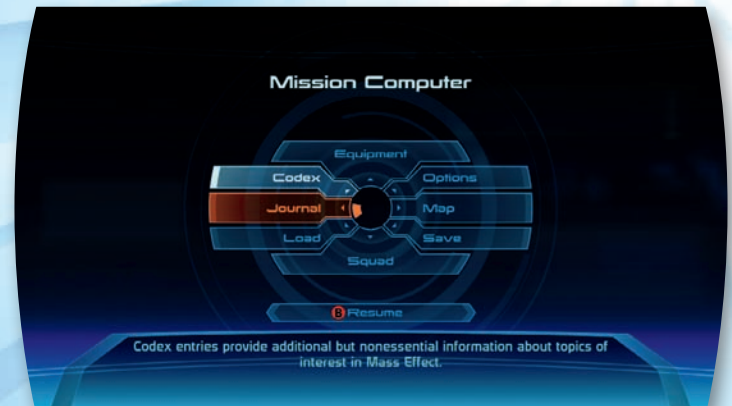
COMBAT

Mass Effect's combat system allows for precise control and considered decision-making. To draw your weapon, press ⊗ or 🔲, and to holster it, press Ⓑ.

To switch the weapon, hold 🔘 to open the Weapon Wheel. To use a special power, hold 🔘 to browse the Power Wheel. Navigate each wheel with ⓛ, select a weapon or power, and then release 🔘 and 🔘 respectively to make your decisions and return to the game. (See *Combat Details* on p. 14 to learn more.)

ADVANCING LEVELS

LEVEL UP

You and your squad can advance levels by accumulating XP, which you gain by overcoming enemies, using certain skills, and completing missions.

There is a single pool of XP for your entire squad. All squad actions feed into it, and all squad members level up at the same time, including those back on the Normandy and not part of the active squad.

LEVEL-UP BENEFITS

When your character advances to a new level, you:

- Gain health. You can increase this amount through talents.
- Gain Talent Points. You can spend these points at any time to increase your rank.

AUTO LEVEL AND UNDO TALENT POINTS

Select the Auto Level Up option to automatically distribute your Talent Points.

After spending Talent Points, you can select UNDO TALENT POINTS to undo your choices.

GALAXY MAP

The Galaxy Map is located in the center of the Normandy's command deck. To access it, ascend the deck, and select the holographic galaxy image. There are four levels to the map, each with varying degrees of detail for galactic navigation.

Select any location to travel to it. Press ⊗ to zoom out from your current view. Press Ⓑ to exit the Galaxy Map.
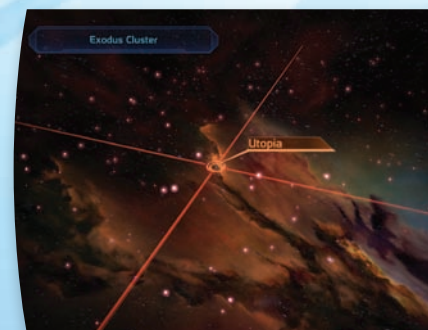
GALAXY LEVEL

Shows a top-down view of the galaxy and star clusters connected by mass relays.

CLUSTER LEVEL

Shows the star systems you can explore and lists the planetary bodies you can travel to in each system, including planets, asteroid fields, and artificial structures, like space stations.

SYSTEM LEVEL

Shows a detailed view of a selected star system, with data on the star and the planetary bodies you can explore.

PLANETARY LEVEL

Shows detailed features of the planetary body or object you are orbiting, including data and applicable plot elements.

Elements of the HUD (heads-up display) include:

Target Reticle — Targets objects in your environment. Enemies are highlighted in red, friendly objects in blue. Combat hazards are highlighted in orange.

Party Status Bar — Shows real-time status for squad health and shields. Also shows your squad's movement status.

Radar — Shows enemies that are in target range. Also shows map pins from the in-game map.

Selection Bar — Displays name of highlighted object.

The combat system offers fine-tuned control of movements, decisions, and camera position. Core features include:

Targeting — Move 🕹 to move the targeting reticle. Abilities and weapons fire go to the center of your reticle.

Target Assist — A Target Assist icon highlights the enemy nearest the reticle. Spend Talent Points on your weapons to increase their accuracy.

Accuracy — Sustained weapons fire reduces accuracy over time. However, the more training you have on a weapon, the longer your accuracy remains.

Accuracy is reduced through:

- Recoil – Weapons fire produces a recoil effect that reduces targeting accuracy.
- Fatigue – Sprinting eventually causes exhaustion. (Move 🕹 and hold Ⓐ sprint or to storm an enemy.)

WEAPON WHEEL

Hold 🔘 to open the Weapon Wheel. This pauses the game and allows you to select a different weapon for you or your squadmates. While this wheel is open, move 🕹 to highlight a weapon and press Ⓐ to equip it. Release 🔘 to close the Weapon Wheel and return to the game.

POWER WHEEL

Hold ⏺ to open the Power Wheel. This pauses the game and allows you to access the powers available for you and your squadmates. While this wheel is open, move 🕹 to highlight a power, and then press Ⓨ for more information on the power, Ⓐ to use the power on the targeted location, or Ⓧ to map the power for quick use. Release ⏺ to close the Power Wheel and return to the game.

MAPPING ABILITIES

When you press Ⓧ while highlighting one of Shepard's powers in the Power Wheel, that power is mapped to ⏺. You can then perform that power by simply tapping ⏺ (as long as the power is charged and ready to use).

SQUAD ORDERS

Use ✛ to issue squad orders in the field:

- ▪ Press ⬆ to send your squad to the location you targeted.
- ▪ Press ⬇ to order them to take cover.
- ▪ Press ➡ to order them to attack a specific enemy.
- ▪ Press ⬅ to order them to rally to your position, then follow you.

WEAPONS

PISTOLS

Pistols are highly accurate, have little recoil, and are easy to use when moving. They are effective at a variety of ranges, but inflict limited damage. Soldier, Engineer, Adept, Vanguard, and Infiltrator classes can train with pistols.

SHOTGUNS

Shotguns have a slow rate of fire and high recoil, but inflict massive damage to multiple targets when fired at close range. Soldier and Vanguard classes can train with shotguns.

ASSAULT RIFLES

Assault rifles are the standard armament of most Soldiers, offering a good balance between firepower, range, and accuracy. Only the Soldier class can train with assault rifles.

SNIPER RIFLES

Sniper rifles have a long range, are highly accurate, and inflict significant damage. They have a limited rate of fire, however, and are practically useless at close range. Only Soldier and Infiltrator classes can train with sniper rifles.

GRENADES

Disk-shaped Alliance grenades can glide long distances and also latch onto targets or flat surfaces to be remotely detonated. Only you, as Commander Shepard, can use grenades.

Press 🔘 to throw a grenade, and then press 🔘 again to detonate. A grenade will automatically explode after 10 seconds if you don't detonate it.

ARMOR

LIGHT ARMOR

Light armor offers a basic level of protection from enemy attacks and minimizes the movement penalties that affect weapon accuracy. All classes can wear light armor.

MEDIUM ARMOR

Medium armor offers an increased level of protection, but also increases the movement penalties that affect weapon accuracy. Soldiers can wear medium armor from the start, while Vanguard and Infiltrator classes can train to wear it.

HEAVY ARMOR

Heavy armor offers the highest level of protection from enemy fire, but also has the highest movement penalties affecting weapon accuracy. Only specially trained frontline Soldiers can wear it. No class can wear heavy armor at the start, but the Soldier class can train to wear it.

Equipment types include:

- Armor
- Assault rifles
- Bio-amps
- Grenades
- Omni-tools
- Pistols
- Shotguns
- Sniper rifles

UPGRADES

Upgrades enhance and customize equipment, letting you increase damage, boost shields, and more. You can only upgrade the following equipment types: armor, weapons, ammo, and grenades.

Each equipment piece has very specific upgrade slots. For example, the ammo slot on a weapon can only be upgraded with an ammo upgrade.

To upgrade equipment, access the Mission Computer, and then select EQUIPMENT. Choose the piece to upgrade from the lower right selection belt, and then press ❌ to view the Upgrade screen.

To upgrade ammo, select the applicable weapon, and then choose the ammo upgrade (no ammo icon means no upgrade is available). Press Ⓐ to confirm your upgrade and exit.

BIO-AMPS

Biotics can strengthen their power in specific disciplines by using amps (amplifiers). These specially designed devices often come in the form of small electronic attachments that are worn on a biotic's ear or the back of their head.

OMNI-TOOLS

Omni-tools are multipurpose diagnostic and manufacturing tools used for a variety of battlefield tasks, such as hacking, decryption, or repair.

RESOURCES

CONTAINERS

Containers are found on every planet and often hold valuable equipment and resources. Containers look like metal footlockers or cargo crates. You cannot place items in them.

OMNI-GEL

Technological materials that can be salvaged from the environment are called omni-gel. Use it with the omni-tool to do electrical or decryption work. You can also use omni-gel to repair the Mako, your vehicle.

CREDITS

Credits are the primary monetary unit in the *Mass Effect* universe.

MEDI-GEL

Medi-gel (medical gel) heals various wounds and ailments. You acquire it through looting or NPCs (non-player characters). You can also purchase an increase in your medi-gel capacity in some shops. Press Ⓨ to deploy First Aid.

SQUAD MEMBER INFORMATION

Select Squad on the Mission Computer to display information available on each squad member.

CURRENT LEVEL

As you gain experience, your current level reflects your advancement.

Whenever you gain enough experience to advance to a new level, you are granted Talent Points that you can spend to purchase higher ranks or additional talents.

HEALTH

Lists your current and maximum health levels. Health represents your ability to take damage in combat. When your health hits zero, you die. Your maximum health increases as you advance during gameplay.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Lists your current XP (experience points) and the total needed to advance to the next level.

PARAGON AND RENEGADE METERS

These meters track your choices throughout gameplay.

The Paragon meter increases when your choices are noble, cooperative, or self-sacrificing. Paragons achieve their goals by doing the right thing in the right way.

The Renegade meter increases when your choices are aggressive, selfish, or ruthless. Renegades achieve their goals by any means necessary.

TALENTS

Assigning points to talents lets you improve combat, tech, and biotics, as well as activate special abilities under each talent.

You and your squad can upgrade talents in the same way. (See *Talents* on p. 25 to learn more.)

SQUAD SELECTION

Use the Squad Selection screen to recruit a balanced squad based on the combat, tech, and biotic talents of each potential squad member.

Press ⟨⟩/⟨⟩ to move among available squad members. Press ✖ to select a member to add to your party. Press ⓨ to Examine Squad at any time and review your squad. When you are satisfied, press ⓐ to Accept Squad.

You can only choose squad members in two circumstances:

- When you first encounter a new potential squad member.
- When leaving the Normandy, where you can return to change squad members.

Choose your squad with care: when you leave the Normandy, you may not have an opportunity to change them until you return.

HOW TO NAVIGATE TO AN UNCHARTED WORLD

Missions throughout the Attican Traverse take you to uncharted worlds with mysterious anomalies. To discover the nature of these anomalies, you must travel to, land on, and explore these planets.

From the Galaxy Map, select the Cluster Navigation option, System Navigation option, and then Planetary Landings option.

After landing on a planet, explore its terrain in your Mako, which comes equipped with powerful sensors that detect alien enemies, technological anomalies, and resources.

Use your Mission Computer map on an uncharted world to discover what is nearby. Press ⓐ on the map to set a destination, which then displays as a flag on the in-game radar.

HOW TO LEAVE AN UNCHARTED WORLD

When you're ready to leave an uncharted world, and return to the Normandy, press ✖ while you are inside the Mako.

If you are on foot:

1. Press ▶ to call up the Mission Computer, and then select MAP.
2. Select the Return to Normandy option.

MAKO

The Mako is an infantry fighting vehicle (IFV), or rover. It carries you and your squad into battle, where it provides fire support and cover.

To get you and your squad into the Mako, walk close to it and then press Ⓐ.

To drive the Mako, move 🕹, and press Ⓐ to jump over rough terrain or dodge enemy fire.

Press 🔘 to zoom the gun camera, press 🔘 to fire the cannon, and press 🔘 to fire the machine gun.

To leave the Mako, find safe, stable ground, and then press Ⓑ. Be aware of the hazard level outside before departing, as you may only survive for a limited time in some hostile atmospheres.

The Vehicle HUD displays health and shield levels for squad members, and weapons and equipment status for the Mako.

HOW TO REPAIR THE MAKO

You can spend omni-gel to repair the Mako in the field by pressing Ⓨ. Before doing so, however, you must stop the Mako, remain in it, and cease weapons fire.

DECRYPTING

Some containers or doors are locked and can only be opened by overriding the security using the omni-tool and your decrypting talent. When you encounter a security device you have the option to use omni-gel or manual override.

Decryption uses the omni-tool to hack into the security mechanism and bypass the firewalls and scanners. When attempting to manually override the system, you must complete the operation within a set time.

While decrypting, the four face buttons appear onscreen. Press the proper button as instructed to unlock the object.

TALENTS

A talent is an area of expertise that can improve as you progress in the game. As you gain experience, you acquire Talent Points that you can spend to improve aspects of your character.

The talents available to you and your squad are determined by the class selected in Character Creation. At activation phases, marked with icons on the talent, you unlock new abilities or other talents on the Squad screen.

COMBAT TALENTS

PISTOLS

Improves accuracy and damage when wielding pistols. Activates the Marksman ability that lets you fire more quickly and accurately for a short time.

SHOTGUN

Improves accuracy and damage when wielding shotguns. Activates the Carnage ability that lets you fire a huge blast from your shotgun that damages enemies.

ASSAULT RIFLES

Improves accuracy and damage when wielding assault rifles. Activates the Overkill ability that lets you fire your weapon in longer, more accurate bursts.

SNIPER RIFLES

Improves accuracy and damage when wielding sniper rifles. Activates the Assassination ability that increases the damage of your next sniper shot.

ARMOR

Improves the amount of damage your armor can absorb and may allow you to equip heavier armor, depending on your class. Activates the Shield Boost ability that restores your shields in combat.

ASSAULT TRAINING

Increases melee and weapons damage. Activates the Adrenaline Burst ability that resets the cooldown times on all your talents so that they can be used immediately.

FITNESS

Boosts your health, upping the maximum damage you can take before dying. Activates the Immunity ability that increases your damage protection for a short period of time.

SPECTRE TRAINING

Increases health, accuracy, and the effectiveness of all attacks and powers. Grants the Unity ability that lets you revive your squad members if they are injured in combat.

TECH TALENTS

DAMPING
Increases the explosion radius of your tech mines. It activates the Damping Field, which suppresses enemies' tech and biotic abilities in combat.

DECRYPTION
Lets you spend omni-gel to override security systems to open doors or containers. Ultimately, it activates Sabotage, which quickly disables enemy weapons in combat.

HACKING
Increases the recharge speed of your tech proximity mines. Ultimately, it activates AI (artificial intelligence) Hacking abilities, which let you control the AI of robotic enemies so they attack everyone around them, including each other.

ELECTRONICS
Increases shield strength and lets you bypass the security systems of some locked objects. It also activates use of Overload, which damages or disables enemy shields in combat.

BIOTIC TALENTS

THROW
Generates a biotic field that throws objects within range.

LIFT
Generates a biotic field that lifts objects into the air.

WARP
Generates a biotic field that slowly tears apart any object it hits, doing damage and temporarily reducing armor effectiveness.

SINGULARITY
Generates a biotic field that causes objects to fly and violently smash into each other.

BARRIER
Generates a biotic field that absorbs weapons fire.

STASIS
Generates a biotic field that surrounds and isolates any object it touches, preventing enemies from moving or attacking, but also blocking you from dealing them damage.

ADDITIONAL TALENTS

CHARM
Increases Charm options in conversation, and decreases the credits needed when purchasing items in stores.

INTIMIDATE
Increases Intimidate options in conversation, and increases credits gained when selling items in stores.

CLASS TALENTS
Certain talents are inherent to each character class.

SOLDIER
Improves health and health regeneration.

ENGINEER
Reduces recharge time of tech abilities and increases tech resistance.

ADEPT
Reduces recharge time of biotic abilities and increases biotic resistance.

INFILTRATOR
Increases damage delivered by tech mines and reduces overheating of sniper rifles and pistols.

SENTINEL
Reduces recharge time of tech and biotic abilities, increases damage and accuracy of pistols, and grants Marksman ability.

VANGUARD
Increases biotic resistance and damage of shotguns and pistols.

TALENT UPGRADE
You and your squad members have a list of talents representing each character's capabilities, strengths, and training. By spending Talent Points on these, certain aspects of the character become stronger and eventually open up new attacks, buffs, proficiencies, and skills.

TALENT POINTS
Use your Talent Points to purchase higher ranks.

Press ⊙ to go to the Mission Computer and then choose SQUAD. Highlight a talent and press Ⓐ to add ranks and ✕ to delete ranks.

SPECIALIZATION
Specialization boosts class-specific talents. After completing an optional Systems Alliance Military assignment, choose a specialization for your character, increasing the maximum Talent Points you can spend on class-specific talents.