

## The Sims 2 & MySims: Bigger (Worlds), Better (Options), Cuter (Sims)

The Sims, believe it or not, is the most successful PC game of all time (Park, Adams). Being one of the millions of players of the original game, I have decided to come back for a second slice of the Sims pie. It's been four years since I've played The Sims, but after reading several reviews of The Sims 2 & MySims, I'm psyched to play the second and third installments.

Perhaps it's the irresistible draw of "playing God," or the narcissistic pleasure of creating a digital self. In any case, The Sims has drawn a huge fanbase, as illustrated through the thousands of players on the online community everyday (The Sims 2). Where the first Sims left some players feeling frustrated, The Sims 2 offers retribution in the forms of improved graphics and a world of new interactions between sims and their environment (Adams). While the premise of the game has not changed—create virtual households with autonomous "sims" and move them into a neighborhood of other sims—The Sims 2 has a number of crucial differences. First and foremost, sims are no longer immortal; they have six stages of life from "baby" to "elder" and eventually pass away (Wikipedia). Sims will also have the ability to pass on their genes to their progeny, a delight for matchmakers crafting relationships between friends, celebs, and even aliens. Second, the amount of customization for sims and their environments has significantly increased. Players will be able to fine tune the look of their sims, as well as create their own neighborhoods. Lastly, The Sims 2 introduces the concept of aspirations, wants and fears. Collecting "aspiration points" will enhance and even extend sims' lives, while realizing fears will put sims into a temporary state of insanity (Park). The aspiration system lends some direction to the overall game play, however some players have

noted that having specific goals is “almost a distraction to having fun” (Adams). These improvements should allow for a much more satisfying and diverse game play compared to the original Sims.

Although I could easily complete all of my 70 hours playing The Sims 2, I will also attempt to try MySims, the soon-to-be released title for Nintendo Wii. This will be the first installment of the game not developed by Maxis; EA Games is the primary developer, hence there will be a marked difference between MySims and previous installments. From the looks of the preview, MySims will be much more goal-driven, with the overall objective of reviving a rundown town. Customization is a major theme in the game, as players are encouraged to build their own houses, furnishings, and more with the “Build-a-Thing” tool (Parish). The player’s sim receives tasks that require him/her to hunt for “essences” rather than take care of personal needs (Tyan); this element of the game gives it an almost action-adventure flavor. The graphics are decidedly cutesy and anime-like, and the sims are in the same style as Miis. I will pay special attention to the difference in game play between The Sims 2 and MySims, especially since the former is for PC, while the latter is a console game. Previous spinoffs of The Sims for consoles have not been very well received (GameStop Employee), so it will be interesting to see the response for MySims.

As previously mentioned, the online community for The Sims 2 is well established, with a large following of players looking to improve their games through downloadable content, cheats, and tips. I hope participation in these communities will also enhance my game play experience, and I will be noting the different takes on the game by community members. One can only speculate what kind of online community MySims will inspire, but I think it will be

quite different from The Sims 2 community, simply based on the target audience and objective of the game.

By devoting 70+ hours to The Sims 2 and MySims, I hope to gain a better understanding of what makes The Sims series so successful, and the different takes on the game by players. I look forward to making a digital mini-me and a cast of my favorite friends, enemies, and celebs. Who knows, maybe you'll make a guest appearance too. See you in Sim-land!

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