

Ace Attorney's spinoffs are great mysteries, if you can deal with their minigames

Capcom's *Ace Attorney Investigations Collection*, the spinoffs to the popular if wildly legally inaccurate *Ace Attorney* series, are finally out. The two-game collection includes a long-awaited gift for *Ace Attorney* diehards: the official Western release of *Ace Attorney Investigations 2: Prosecutor's Gambit*. And though *Investigations* suffers from gameplay issues that run counter to the spirit of the overall series, the characters and story make the collection a must-have for any *Ace Attorney* fan.

Though there are two games in the collection, I'm going to focus exclusively on *Ace Attorney Investigations 2: Prosecutor's Gambit*. Despite getting a Japanese release on the DS in 2011, the game never officially made it to the West until now. *Prosecutor's Gambit* puts you in the cravat of prosecutor Miles Edgeworth, Phoenix Wright's childhood friend, opposing counsel, and, if you subscribe to certain parts of the fandom, longtime lover. (Not me, though, I'm firmly a Gumshoe / Edgeworth girlie.)

The game plays similarly to *Ace Attorney*. Somebody gets murdered, somebody innocent gets accused, and Edgeworth must investigate crime scenes for clues. Once the necessary information has been gathered, Edgeworth interrogates people, pointing out contradictions in their testimony with evidence to eventually determine someone's guilt or innocence.

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In *Prosecutor's Gambit*, the characters are wonderfully colorful, and it's always a treat to watch them fall apart whenever Edgeworth discovers their lies. I often visited the game's bonus content just to rewatch all the outrageous, "Oh no, I've been found out!" animations.

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Because *Ace Attorney Investigations* is a spinoff series, you don't need any knowledge of the main games to understand what's going on. But if you do, oh man, are you rewarded. I was geeking out playing a case that has a massive – and I mean *massive* – impact not only on the events of the first *Ace Attorney* game but also on Miles Edgeworth's entire reason for being.

Though the game's story and characters are just as charming as they are in the main series, *Prosecutor's Gambit* sets itself apart with its unique gameplay features, both of which are a bit lacking. New in *Prosecutor's Gambit* are the Mind Chess and Logic minigames. The Logic game requires putting together two pieces of information found during an investigation to create new clues. During an investigation at a prison, Edgeworth learns that a critical piece of evidence – a key – has gone missing. He also knows that a metal detector went off in the vicinity of the prison's alligator enclosure. (Listen, in any *Ace Attorney* game, things can get very... *quirky*.) You very literally smash those two pieces of information together to deduce that the alligator swallowed the key. Armed with new information, the game can progress.

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Completing Logic games is exceedingly easy, demanding none of

the deductive puzzle-solving skills that make *Ace Attorney* games so enjoyable. They're so simple that they're actually a waste of time. It's as though the developers needed to add something to make this game distinct from the main series but couldn't figure out anything interesting, so they came up with what is essentially evidence gathering with superfluous steps.

Mind Chess, however, suffers from the exact opposite problem. It's a worthwhile gameplay addition, but the logic required to beat it is completely impenetrable. In Mind Chess, a subject has a piece of information they don't want to give up, and Edgeworth must pick from a rotating selection of dialogue options to wear them down until they spill the beans.

The problem with Mind Chess is that, unlike anywhere else in the game, you're not using evidence to pick apart false statements. Rather, you're trying to read and respond to an opponent's... *vibes*? If you pick a dialogue option that doesn't jive with your opponent's emotions, you fail. The game does try to help you out with clues. In one case, Edgeworth notes that a mentally weak opponent will clam up if I pick aggressive options, so when they inevitably got all weepy on me, I correctly remained silent. However, those clues didn't work in every situation, leaving me floundering. I lost that game of Mind Chess because I once again stayed quiet when that weepy opponent got even more weepy.

The great thing about both *Ace Attorney* series is that I'm rewarded for being thorough. I feel like a genius when I catch someone in a lie because I took the time to learn everything about every piece of evidence, which often involves noticing the tiniest or most cleverly obscured detail. And when I'm wrong, it's not difficult to revisit my case files to find what I missed.