

Every classic Half-Life game is now free on Steam

Enlarge / Completely free... for now.

Valve / Sam Machkovech

reader comments

66 with 45 posters participating, including story author

Share this story

As Valve gears up for the launch of its first official *Half-Life* game in 13 years, the developer has given fans a big freebie to tide them over while they wait for March 2020: every previous official *Half-Life* game for free.

On Tuesday, Valve announced that both *Half-Life* and *Half-Life 2*, and each expansion pack and episode published directly by the game maker, would be free for all Steam users for a limited time. As of press time, this offer appears to be a temporary unlock of the games until the VR-only adventure game *Half-Life Alyx* launches in roughly two months; the games' free availability will likely expire after *HL:A* launches. Click the announcement link to check out the eligible game selection (though it doesn't link to the eligible *HL1* expansion packs, which you can find here).

Fans may very well want to connect the plot dots between the biggest *Half-Life* adventures ahead of *HL:A*'s launch. Valve has announced that the new VR-only game is a "prequel" that takes place between the events of *Half-Life 1* and *Half-Life 2*, while its developers have suggested in interviews that the new game is "the next part" of the series. Hence, you may want to brush

up on every tidbit, should the new game contain any continuation of what was left unfinished in *Half-Life 2: Episode 2*. (Reminder: *HL:A* is *not* free as part of this promotion. The new game *does* come for free with the purchase of *any* part of the Valve Index VR system.)

As part of Tuesday's announcement, Valve also confirmed that its developers will take part in a *Half-Life: Alyx* Q&A at Reddit on Wednesday, January 22, starting at noon ET.

Since the games, and their connected expansions, have been available for so long, this promotion may be moot for many Steam users. Valve has frequently discounted the ever-living dickens out of its most classic series, with each of the series' disparate releases plummeting to \$1 each during various sales. But if you missed those sales, or the series' PC-gaming heyday, it's hard to beat the low, low price of "free." (And if you've never owned a *Half-Life* game before, check out the endless rabbit hole of amazing, community-developed mods for both games that you can download and enjoy for free.)

Valve's free-to-play history mostly revolves around games that function as an online service. *Dota 2* launched in 2013 as an inherently free-to-play game, while popular online shooters *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* and *Team Fortress 2* eventually received free-to-play updates. This week's *Half-Life* giveaway doesn't appear to come with any new free-to-play marketplace tweaks, which is probably for the best.

This giveaway is also a reminder that Valve can't claim to be the most generous game-download marketplace of the past year. The rise of Epic Games Store as a launcher and marketplace throughout 2019 hinged in no small part on Epic's weekly giveaways of free, well-reviewed video games.
<https://arstechnica.com/?p=1646413>