

Halo Infinite's Grappleshot helps make the familiar feel new

I wasn't ready to start sneaking around a Banished warship in my first few minutes in *Halo Infinite's* campaign, but there I was facing down an army of Grunts, Jackals, Brutes, and Elites. The initial thrill of the classic *Halo* music and the familiarity of the enemies was a nostalgia overload for a good few minutes, but after it all wore off I noticed the new Grappleshot. Oh, boy.

I first played *Halo* 20 years ago, and while the combination of grenades, melees, and an assortment of weapons and vehicles still remains today, the Grappleshot is an entirely new addition that transforms the campaign mode. It's an ideal companion that left me excited and wanting to upgrade it fully during my first few hours of the campaign.



Just Grappleshot Jackal shields to kill them easily.

You're introduced to the Grappleshot in the early missions in *Halo Infinite*, as you fight your way outside toward the open areas of the Zeta Halo that the Banished enemies have taken over. The first level is incredibly vertical, and it acts like a subtle training mode to gently nudge you into mastering the Grappleshot.

While you can run, jump, and shoot enemies freely without it, zip lining toward a Brute and punching them in the face is incredibly satisfying. If Jackal's shields are annoying, just Grappleshot the shield to force them to lower it. It's also great for instantly figuring out those "How do I get up there?" moments, where you can just aim and transport yourself

to areas that would be impossible to get to otherwise.

I've been playing around with the Grappleshot for months during the *Halo Infinite* multiplayer previews, and I was impressed with its mobility there, but it has unlimited uses in the campaign. That means it really comes into its own. You can use it to navigate around quicker or to propel yourself toward an enemy, and it can also be used to retrieve items like guns or fusion coils. There's only a short cooldown in the campaign mode, so the possibilities for speed running are going to be endless. I can't wait to witness what talented players manage to accomplish here.



One part of the Zeta Halo.

The dark and eerie areas in the first few missions of *Halo Infinite* where you're first introduced to the Grappleshot are what you'd expect from classic *Halo*. There's a clear storyline and structure, and plenty of Banished enemies to eliminate. If you're new to the franchise, the story itself takes place 18 months after the events of *Halo 5*, but the story and adventures really start to expand once you first venture outside onto the Zeta Halo.

It's here where *Halo Infinite* really sets itself apart from *Halo* games that have come before it. It still maintains a very *Halo: Combat Evolved* look and feel, but you can freely explore the Zeta Halo, and it's filled with items to discover, high-value targets to eliminate, outposts to conquer, and of course areas of the main storyline to complete.



The Zeta Halo surface.

While it certainly looks and feels like an open-world *Halo* game at first glance, 343 Industries limits the areas of Zeta Halo you can explore until you've progressed and unlocked new areas. It's difficult to tell right now exactly how big this map will be, but you can pan around and get a sense that there's plenty to unlock. It certainly sounds vast, and I had to spend a few minutes simply standing still and appreciating the subtle audio of the environment and animals that surrounded me.

You can also earn armor upgrades, improve your Grappleshot abilities, and much more here. I only experienced a few upgrades during my initial preview of *Halo Infinite*, but there are upgrades to stun grappled enemies for several seconds, reduce the Grappleshot cooldown by 40 percent, deliver a shockwave blast when holding melee while you grapple, and even increase the radius of the shockwave blast. I can't wait to unlock all of these options and see how truly powerful the Grappleshot can be.



The Grappleshot upgrades look promising.

While you can explore the Halo Zeta surface and discover occasional skirmishes and battles, the first main campaign mission here is to infiltrate a huge tower that houses a Banished boss. It's a dark, steam-filled location that really demonstrates just how good *Halo Infinite* looks running on the Xbox Series X, with lighting that requires you to activate a light on Master Chief's helmet.

Out of all the initial missions in *Halo Infinite*, I enjoyed this one the most and it left me wanting more. The boss battle introduces you to the threat sensor, a projectile you can use to track enemies through walls and terrain. The threat sensor is particularly useful against enemies that like to cloak and hide away, and you'll find high-value targets out in the Halo Zeta that do exactly that.



Halo Infinite starts out dark, eerie, and steam-filled.

You can choose to equip the threat sensor when you need it in place of the Grappleshot, and I'm curious to see how the campaign progresses to unlock extra equipment and abilities. The progression system works through Spartan Cores, which can be found throughout the main campaign missions or across Zeta Halo.

Once you unlock more vehicles, you can also summon them freely from outposts that you've secured. You have to battle Banished forces to capture outposts, following their six-month occupation of the Ring. These outposts reveal new Banished structures, extra high-value targets, and you can use them to rally UNSC Marines who are willing to accompany you on missions and defeat enemies. If you rescue marines out in the field or capture Banished bases, you'll also earn Valor – a resource that lets you unlock new weapons, vehicles, and more.

I've only played the first few hours of *Halo Infinite* so far, and it already feels like there are many hours ahead of me. The Weapon, a new AI that bares a striking resemblance to Cortana, is introduced early on, and the fate of Master Chief and Cortana's role in the story are still very much up in the

air after just a few hours of gameplay. We'll have a full review of *Halo Infinite* next month, where we'll find out just how big Zeta Halo is and discover the secrets hidden within it.

Halo Infinite already feels like a familiar but different kind of *Halo*, and one that fans are going to enjoy exploring.

<https://www.theverge.com/2021/11/19/22789035/halo-infinite-campaign-preview>