EVERY VERSION OF
Sid Meier's
CIVILIZATION
COMPARED

CIVILIZATION CIVILIZATION II CIVILIZATION III

SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION IV SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION V

CIVILIZATION VI

by Christian Cawley

Every Version of Sid Meier's Civilization Compared

Written by Christian Cawley

Published June 2017.

Read the original article here: **http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/every-version-civilization-compared/**

This ebook is the intellectual property of MakeUseOf. It must only be published in its original form. Using parts or republishing altered parts of this ebook is prohibited without permission from **MakeUseOf.com**.

Table of contents

Sid Meier's *Civilization* 4X game series seems as though it has been around forever. Amazingly, there was a time when it didn't exist! But since its launch in the 1990s, the game series has gone from strength to strength, advancing graphically and introducing new game concepts and features.

Now into its sixth desktop incarnation, along with several console and mobile spin-offs, we take a look at every version of *Civilization* and examine how the series has evolved.

The Ultimate 4X Game

You might call it a strategy game. Early reviews even referred to the original *Civilization* as a "god game." Whatever. The aim is winning, and you do this by eXploring, eXpanding, eXploiting, and eXterminating. (The 4X moniker was first coined by Computer Gaming World's Alan Emrich, in a preview of the first *Master of Orion* game back in 1993. He went on to give the game a rating of XXXX.)

Typically, 4X games have the following game concepts:

- Research and technology

- Combat

- Peaceful victory conditions

- Strategic complexity

- Long gameplay sessions

These traits are typical of the *Civilization* series too, despite its reinventions over the years.

Developers have released **many other 4X games** across the history of computer gaming, before and after *Civilization*. However, Sid Meier's game has long-since epitomized the genre, selling 31 million copies on the way. Let's find out just how it has changed.

Sid Meier's Civilization (1991)

Sid Meier's Civilization launched to little fanfare. Meier was already established as a designer of intriguing games (such as *Railroad Tycoon* and *Silent Service*), but the subject matter and low-fidelity graphics failed to enthuse casual gamers. However, there was something addictive about forging your own empire across the ages, and despite the tabletop gaming square counters, a legend was born.

Watch the YouTube video here: **Civilization 1 - Intro Movie**

Visually, *Civilization* is basic, even by contemporary standards. The maps are simplistic: cities represent names and population figures in squares. Geographic features suffer from graphical limits of the game engine, which resembles that of *Railroad Tycoon*. Viewing the city screen, you can manage resources and specialists, build improvements, wonders and units… but the magic is that it doesn't need to be beautiful. Just functional. And the sound is really a bunch of beeps and whirs, even on the Amiga version.

Spread Your Empire

Building settler units to spread your empire as far and as wide as possible is the secret to success here. Negotiating with rival leaders is never simple, and without military might on your side you'll be hard-pushed to get your own way unless trading technology. But the conversations are simple, as are the tactics of the AI. It tends to win by cheating.

There are several ways to win *Civilization*. While conquest is enjoyable, winning the space race by building and launching a ship to Alpha Centauri is perhaps the most satisfying.

Watch the YouTube video here: **Let's Play Civilization 1 - Classic Civ! (Part 1)**

Back at the beginning, *Civilization* hid its magic away behind plain graphics. It still managed to sell 850,000 copies, which is likely what prompted the release of *Civilization II*. On the way, however, was 1995's *CivNet*, an online multiplayer version of the game. This also included a local hotseat mode, a feature still included in *Civilization VI*'s multiplayer options.

How to Play Civilization Today

While the game's visuals have dated incredibly since 1991, it remains fully playable. To enjoy it again after all these years, you'll need to **install DOSBox on your PC**. We don't advise using a disk image downloaded from the web — you should use your own if possible. But if this is the best option, you'll find one on most retro gaming emulation sites.

Sid Meier's Civilization was last released as part of a compilation box set, *Civilization Chronicles*, in 2006. If you're running Windows XP, Vista, or 7 and have this box set, you can run the original *Civilization* without DOSBox.

Civilization II (1996)

Developed by Brian Reynolds, *Civilization II* introduced a raft of new features which may not have appeared if *CivNet* was not MicroProse's priority release. First released in 1996 on Windows and Mac, it was later re-released in 2002 with compatibility for Windows 2000 and Windows XP.

Introducing a top-down, isometric view, *Civilization II* brought with it the engineer units (allowing you to focus settler units on city creation), and the Fundamentalism government type. It also introduced new concepts such as firepower and hit points for combat (although randomization of the calculation would make it possible for an archer to defeat a tank on occasion!) and new units such as stealth bombers. *Civ II* also enabled the player to configure shareable scenarios, such as this World War II theater.

Watch the YouTube video here: **Civilization II: World War II Scenario 1940-1943**

Civilization II briefly caused interest online in 2012 when a Redditor shared details of a 10-year game in which humanity was engaged in **a 1,700-year war**.

This demonstrates how *Civ II* is more addictive than the original. But despite this, perhaps the most enduring new feature in *Civilization II* was the multimedia aspect, accessed throughout the game by leaving the CD-ROM in the drive. While this enhanced the in-game help (at this stage known as the Civilopedia), it was perhaps best realized via the introduction of the High Council.

Watch the YouTube video here: **Civilization 2 -- minister of culture and luxury**

These clips featured actors portraying advisers in military, economics, technology, diplomacy, and happiness. They're garbed in various costumes depending on the era of the game you're playing, with their mood and advice reflecting your performance. The Elvis Presley-impersonating Happiness adviser is one of the greatest moments in the *Civilization* series.

Civilization: Call to Power

Behind the scenes, the world of *Civilization* was getting complicated around the time of *Civilization II*. One of the results was confusion over the ownership of the series name. As such, Activision was able to license the name for *Civilization: Call to Power* in 1999. While similar to *Civilization II*, the game lacks atmosphere and is not part of the series. A sequel, *Call to Power II*, was released in 2000.

How to Play Civilization II Today

Civilization II remains the benchmark by which 4X games compare themselves. If you want to see what the fuss is all about, you could get a flavor of it by tracking down and **installing the cross-platform *FreeCiv***. This is an open-source clone of *Civilization* which is largely based on *Civilization II*.

Alternatively, you could track down a copy (it was released on CD-ROM) and install it on your computer the old-fashioned way. Windows 7 users should be able to run it in compatibility mode, but the same isn't true for Windows 10, sadly. Instead, you may need to rely on a **virtual machine** running Windows XP in order to enjoy *Civilization II* and its spin-offs.

Civilization III (2001)

The third official installment in the series introduced yet more new game concepts, and revised the graphics further. Although a popular release (**it even had a board game spinoff**), *Civilization III* suffered from launching too close to other titles. Players weren't yet done with 1999's *Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri* (an amazing and addictive space-based sequel to the *Civ* series, **available on GOG**, in which you must colonize a planet) and the *Civilization II* licensed spinoffs.

It was with *Civilization III* that the game introduced concepts such as national identity and culture. Now a staple of the *Civ* series, culture is a useful way to gain territory through peaceful means, by "flipping" other culture's cities into your own empire. Meanwhile, national identity gives citizens a memory of the empire into which they were born. This can cause a risk of unrest when conquering enemy cities, which will continue until the citizens are integrated.

Watch the YouTube video here: **Let's Play Civilization III Complete - France - Episode I**

Civilization III also introduced Small Wonders — sites like Wall Street or The Pentagon — which are not impervious to destruction during conquest like full Wonders. These are essentially high-bonus city improvements.

Combat also evolved in *Civilization III*, notably with the introduction of Great Leaders. These can appear when an elite unit wins a battle, although it depends on chance. Players can use Great Leaders to create an army, in which several units can be grouped together.

With the introduction of culture, *Civilization III* has five victory conditions:

- **Conquest** — Yours is the last civilization standing.

- **Domination** — You control two-thirds of the planet.

- **Cultural** — Successful assimilation of other civilizations.

- **Diplomatic** — You are elected head of the United Nations.

- **Space Race** — Be the first to launch a completed Spaceship to Alpha Centauri.

How You Can Play Civilization III Today

You have three options for playing *Civilization III* today. The simplest is to **buy it from Steam for just $5**. This will ensure that the game installs and runs without any issues. You'll also find *Civilization III* **on GOG** and Amazon.

Alternatively, if you own the original CD-ROM, you can try installing it as normal and then running with **Windows compatibility mode**. Note that this is not guaranteed to work, and results seem to differ from one computer to another.

Finally, you could **install Windows 7 or 8 in a virtual machine** and install *Civ III* in the VM. This isn't ideal, but should avoid any of the display issues that you might encounter with compatibility mode.

Civilization IV (2005)

After three main versions of the game, you could view *Civilization IV* as little more than an update of *Civilization III*. With similar win conditions and game concepts, *Civ IV* nevertheless is worth playing thanks to a brand-new game engine and the addition of stable multiplayer.

In *Civilization IV* the adoption of a specific government type was abandoned, in favor of a set of civics. These are essentially policies, similar to the government concept of *Alpha Centauri*, but also include economy types and religion.

Watch the YouTube video here: **Civ 4 - Rome - Let's Play - Part 1**

Previous versions of the game had viewed religion as nothing more than happiness and the Fundamentalist government type. But it is in *Civilization IV* that the impact of religion on human civilization (for example, Judeo-Christian on Western Civilization) comes to the fore. Religions are "unlocked" thanks to reaching particular technologies, and then allow players to adopt them.

Seven religions are featured in the game: Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Taoism. This adds a new dimension to the game, with these faiths spread by missionary units and trade routes. Meanwhile, you can declare state religions, which offer bonuses in happiness, production, and other aspects of the game.

A New Game Engine

The new game engine for *Civilization IV* introduced a fresh aspect to gameplay. In the original trilogy of games, the city view screen was the only way to change the default view of the game. But with *Civ IV*, the game gave players a first chance to really zoom in and see what was happening. This view would display city improvements and wonders, such as pyramids and city walls.

However, the main city view, a sort of aerial representation showing which tiles were being worked, was also still present in the game. Meanwhile, landscape improvements began to change for the first time. In particular, roads and rail would no longer be crisscrossed in every single **tile** of the game area.

Can You Play Civilization IV on Your Current PC?

Civilization IV, its *Warlords* expansion pack, and the *Civilization IV: Colonization* spinoff game (a remake of the 1994 game by Sid Meier, which deals with the colonization of the Americas) are all **available via Steam**, and will run on macOS. The main game is just $10, while the expansion is around $5. *Civilization IV: Colonization* is also $10. (*Sid Meier's Colonization* is also available on Steam for $5, though if you have the original, it should run in DOSBox.)

Civ IV is also available to download on Amazon.

To run an old copy of the *Civilization IV* DVD on Windows, you'll need to find a way around the SafeDisc copy protection, which is no longer supported in Windows 10. In short, the disc (and others from the same era) will no longer run.

To overcome this, you have two options:

1. Email *Civilization IV* publisher 2K Games. They will require you to forward the CD key, and in return will provide you with a Steam key to unlock the game.

2. Download and install some patch and DLL files to **force the game to work**. This can be time consuming and potentially lead to the removal of vital files if you get it wrong, so tread carefully!

Interestingly, the *Civilization IV Complete* compilation pack does not feature any DRM/copy protection, so these issues will not affect owners of this release.

Civilization Revolution (2008)

A sideways step for the game, *Civilization Revolution* (and its sequel), was the first taste of *Civilization* for many console and mobile gamers. It also gave long-time fans the chance to put Civ in their pockets and play wherever they chose.

Civilization Revolution was released on PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, Nintendo DS, iOS, and Windows Phone (**notably not Android**) between 2008–2012. A sequel followed in 2014 for iOS and Android, although in many ways this was an update to the original. An expanded PlayStation Vita version of *Revolution 2* launched in 2016.

Watch the YouTube video here: **Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution Xbox 360 Gameplay**

What's it all about? Briefly, *Civilization Revolution* is a simplified version of the modern game, more akin to the original *Civ* or its immediate sequel, but with updated (cartoony) graphics.

The result is a fun and engaging game that you shouldn't take too seriously. You could argue that the game relies too heavily on barbarian-type units early on, but combat is simplified and there is more to gain from exploration. Rather than being an intense gaming experience, *Civilization Revolution* is just **good casual gaming fun**.

Civilization V (2010)

The fifth game in the main series introduced a new gameplay feature that had a massive impact on how the franchise would continue. Previously, square tiles were used to demarcate a map space. Here, hexagonal tiles were introduced. This prevents the stacking of units into single tiles or narrow areas, pushing military units wider. In short, *Civilization V* represents a **completely new strategic challenge**.

And the changes don't stop there.

Watch the YouTube video here: **Sid Meier's Civilization V Launch Trailer**

This game features touch support for tablet devices, along with vastly improved graphics. The developers reworked the entire approach to the AI: it now operates on four levels and creates enemy leaders that differ slightly in their tactics in each game. Thus, in many ways, *Civilization V* is a completely different game. It certainly ramps up the expectations for the 4X genre. And this is before we consider the expanding selection of leaders and civilizations to choose from.

City-states are also introduced into the game for the first time (the "One City Challenge" of a single-city empire notwithstanding). These can offer bonuses, and if allied to in the *Brave New World* expansion, deliver additional delegates in the World Congress.

Revised Victory Conditions

Tweaks to the victory conditions in *Civilization V* make for additional differences. The space race victory requires scientific dominance, while the diplomatic victory can be achieved thanks to support from other nations and city-states. Cultural victory requires completion of the Utopia project, while domination requires that you conquer all original capitals. If no civilization is dominant by 2050, the game decides the winner based on points.

Civilization V also offers an enhanced set of game options. You can disable victory conditions, for instance, or configure other options for a specific type of game. This is particularly useful when determining a scenario — *Civ V* offers the **best multiplayer experience of the series to date**.

How to Play Civilization V Today

You'll find *Civilization V* (and its 2014 space-colony based successor *Civilization: Beyond Earth*) **on Steam**. You should also be able to find physical copies on Amazon and other game suppliers.

Civilization V and its expansions/spinoffs will run on Windows and macOS, and for the first time, Linux. **This is thanks to Steam**.

Civilization VI (2016)

In 2016, the latest version of *Civilization* to date launched. As with previous sequels, *Civilization VI* builds on its immediate predecessor. The result is an almost-new experience with improved touchscreen support, superb new graphics, and a more developed AI. Meanwhile, winning the game is all the more challenging.

While *Civilization V* brought an end to unit stacking, *Civ VI* introduced an even more strategy-changing development. This time around, city unstacking means that city improvements are made in the **tile** around the city center, which must be developed as compartmentalized districts. For instance, you might have a military district, or an industrial one. Into these, improvements such as barracks and workshops are then built.

Placement of the districts is critical to successful city development, not to mention bonuses. You'll also find some benefit from their geographical placement; for instance, a campus district (for library, university, and related improvements) gets a greater scientific bonus if placed near a jungle. Our **Civilization VI victory tips and tricks** will help you get your head around the changes.

Interestingly, *Sim City*-style zoning was planned for the original *Civilization*, but abandoned when it appeared to complicate game play.

Two Research Trees!

Meanwhile, the technology tree sees its greatest revision yet, and is split into two. For technological advances, the new active research system manages the development of new discoveries. Discoveries or resources can contribute to scientific advancements. Meanwhile, a lack of those resources can reduce your development in certain areas. For instance, a landlocked civilization would struggle with technologies requiring access to water.

The other arm of research comes in the shape of civics. This feature feeds directly into a revised policies feature, which you employ to run your civilization. As technological research is based on science points per turn, so civics are based on your civilization's accumulation of culture.

There's also a more developed religious dimension to gameplay in *Civilization VI*. Although with a second dimension of units (designed to spread religion) this can prove distracting.

Here's a look at *Civilization VI* in action:

Watch the YouTube video here: **Let's Play: Civilization 6**

Another notable development in *Civilization VI* is the choice of world leaders and their respective civilizations. This means you'll find new bonuses, reworked leaders, an d new agendas. Some of these are hidden, and can only be uncovered via espionage.

The result is a game which takes the original 1991 idea and upgrades it with a quarter-century's worth of graphical improvements, gameplay enhancements, and politico-philosophical game concepts.

Playing Civilization VI on Your PC

You can find *Civ VI* for macOS, Windows 10, and Linux **on Steam**. Other online retailers are also offering *Civilization VI* and its digital deluxe edition, plus it's also sold in brick-and-mortar game retailers.

Comparing Civilization Throughout the Years

With six main games, a console side-step, and several spinoffs, board games, and expansion packs, the *Civilization* series has proved itself as intensely addictive as it is long-lasting. And no doubt, those two aspects are connected.

What we can see here is an astonishing evolution in video gaming that is almost unparalleled. A game kickstarted by one man, Sid Meier, has evolved thanks to the input of designers Brian Reynolds, Soren Johnson, and Jon Shafer. From the top-down, square-tiled nostalgia of the original to the hexagonal, high-definition, multi-faceted AI of *Civilization VI*, observing the game's 25-plus years is like examining the evolution of a line of cars, aircraft, or even a family tree.

In short, it is as fascinating as the game is intense, addictive, and yes, long-lasting.

Are you a Civilization fan? Which is your favorite version? What was your greatest ever game? Tell us in the comments below!

Read more stories like this at