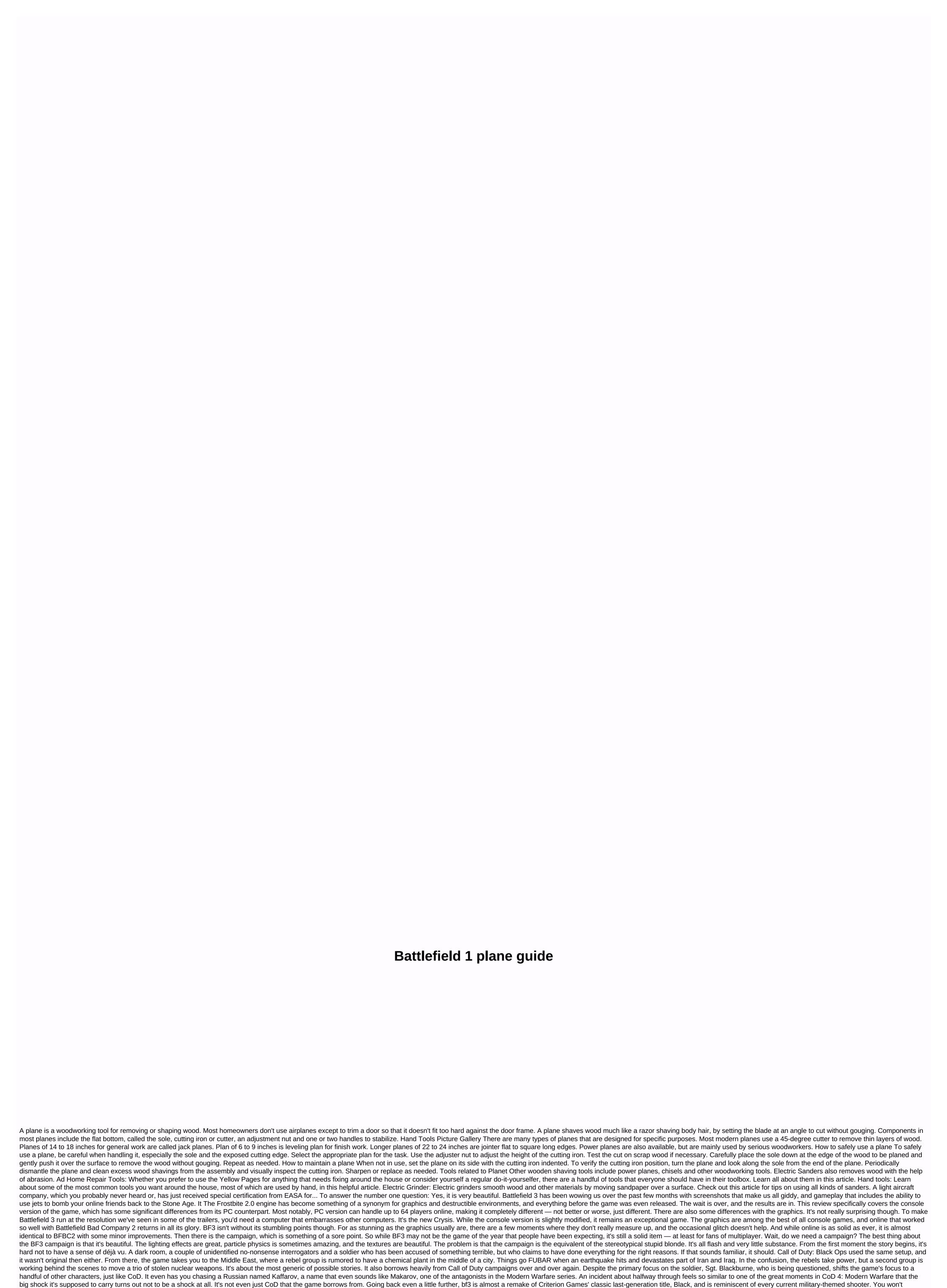
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discover a single original level in the BF3 campaign. It looks amazing sometimes, but never original. All that said, the campaign is still fun to play for a few hours. The levels are linear and the missions, while sometimes vague in their goals, are solved by following an icon through and through. The enemy All can offer a challenge, thought. Sometimes a ridiculous challenge. It basically has two settings: Mutant and emo. When they're superhuman at their best, enemies seem to almost have mutant powers that allow them to run to cover 50 feet away, and still hit you straight in the head to kill you with a single shot. Even if you're quieter than a fart in a church, breaking protection for even for a second, even if the enemy is nowhere near you, can lead to being popped. On the other hand, sometimes the enemies will simply stand there, happy to embrace death. The later moments, however, are rare.

Usually AI is ridiculous and can strike you with deadly accuracy through clouds of smoke and rubble. In the end, the campaign is fun to play, if you can ignore the cliché and unoriginal history. It's not a bad distraction for seven or eight hours, but obviously not what DICE focused on. Bow before Frostbite

2.0, pitiful people Now, there's no doubt that the BF3 and Frostbite 2.0 engine drives it looks better on PC. That said, it also looks pretty amazing on consoles. The world looks incredible at times, and you could argue that BF3 is the prettiest game out there today — but you'd still have to argue that. While things like dust and lighting are consistently shock and respect inspiring, some bugs keep popping up to mar experience. Characters will disappear through walls and reappear, doors won't open for you, but your AI teammates will go right through them causing you to reboot, trees will fall and cause the graphics to be shared, and the sound effects will sometimes cut out — but these glitches are minor and rare, and it would be fair to call them nitpicking. BF3 looks great in almost everything it shows, but it sometimes lacks detail. The best head-to-head graphics comparison on the console is probably Crysis 2. In that game, New York is in ruins, and everywhere you see there are reminders that: ripped posters, fallen street signs, things that show there was life there until recently. It just gives a touch of authenticity and character. BF3 doesn't have to be lived-in feeling. There are plenty of piles of rubble that look good, but the environments also feel at times. Again, however, this is a matter of the best console graphics are a huge highlight. Even if not every single thing can be destroyed, you can waste hours destroying the things that are. It adds a level of strategy to the game as well, as you can now turn environments against enemies. It was possible in BFBC2 as well, but it was developed in BF3. If someone is hiding behind a concrete barrier, you know what to do – it should only take a few shots to get to the enemy. Rockets are also a great boon to enemies hiding in a building? Destroy the building. It shows them. The particle effects also change the way you play. If you hide behind a wall, and that wall is destroyed, the dust will make it difficult to see for a moment. Lighting is also key, because standing in direct light can make it harder to see inside dark windows. Keeping the sun to your back while playing online will be a great tactic. Taking action online While the campaign is forgettable, the real game is to find online. To put that in perspective, many people can play the campaign and spend eight hours or so on it then done with it. There will be a lot of people playing multiplayer for hundreds of hours. Before we get into the competitive multiplayer, it is worth noting that it is not all there is. A new addition to the franchise is the introduction of a handful of co-op challenges for you and a friend. These missions are separate from the locations you will have seen in the campaign. They serve as a good distraction, but with only six offers, they don't offer much. That's what multiplayer is all about. If you played Battlefield Bad Company 2, then you'll be right at home — the setup is the same, from the game modes to the weapon loads. Both Rush and Conquest return, and a Team Deathmatch has been introduced into the mix. The four classes are all back as well: Assault, Support, Recon and Engineer, and each class has a primary weapon, a secondary, two gadgets unique to the class, and a specialization option, which is essentially an ability perk. In terms of gameplay, it is identical to BFBC2. In fact, if there was any criticism to be leveled on online multiplayer, it is that there were not enough changes. But if it's not broken, don't fix it. It's hard not to compare BF3's online to CoD's, but they are really fundamentally different in several ways. BF3 is about the freedom to approach a scenario however you want. If you want to snipe, there are plenty of options. If you prefer to jump in a tank, you can do it. And of course, then there are jets. As well as is a bit tricky to fly, but once you get used to them, they are an incredible tool on the battlefield. The console version limits the number of available jets so you won't see too many squadrons, but getting into a dogfight or strafing the enemies on the ground is a blast-at least until a stinger missile hits you. There are many ways to take out a jet, so there is a good balance to the games. The maps are huge and offer many ways to approach them. Some of the new locations are a sight to behold and they move well, but others feel almost identical to BFBC2. It's easy to get the feeling that you've been there before as you travel through yet another pier filled with metal containers, or a construction site. The game does a better job of breaking the massive maps into sections though. When you play Rush, each new area feels like a new area, where in BFBC2 it could feel like just more of the same. BF3 maps offer a lot of variety, they look great, but they will also feel strangely familiar. Maybe it's a good thing. A welcome addition to the competition side is the ability to choose exactly the server you want. You can customize your search options and choose where you want to go, what type of map, the region the server is in and also the number of people in each game. For console fans, this is a nice addition. The weapons have also seen a necessary upgrade, and you can now add three attachments to each weapon. You unlock them by getting kills with every weapon, as you expect. Once you've done that, you can add scopes, mortars, grips, and several other options. While unlockables may not have radically changed from BFBC2, there are plenty of new options to use, and the amount of things to get your hands on means you can keep coming back for a while. If you liked BFBC2, you will like BF3. There haven't been too many changes (not counting the technological changes, as there are plenty), but there wasn't really much need to redo gameplay. It may not win over CoD fans who prefer the smaller, more frenetic games in that series, but Battlefield fans probably won't miss them. Conclusion Battlefield 3 is a technical achievement for a console game, with more of the series love. The campaign, however, is a cliché mess, full of borrowed plots and uninspired level design. It's fun for a bit, but quickly forgettable. But the campaign is a footnote. The online game is where the game will really shine, although it hasn't changed much from previous iterations. The classes are the same, loadouts are very similar, and several of the maps feel like BFBC2 maps with new graphics and a new skin, but it all still works and offers one of the best online games around for consoles. There are already DLCs once also, so the support is definitely there. Battlefield 3 was obviously conceived as a PC game at first, but the developers have done a great job porting over a technical juggernaut. This is where the game really shines — the technical side. It's a highlight for this generation of consoles, and despite some minor patches, the frostbite 2.0 engine has made its case for being the main engine of the next wave of first-person shooters. A technically impressive offering, Battlefield 3 is a game that campaign fans can skip, but fans of online style should definitely sign up for. Rating: 8.5 out of 10 (This game has been reviewed on Xbox 360 on a copy from EA) Editors recommendations recommendations

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