

Hands-on with Halo: Reach: Forge World

By **kombo** - May 4, 2012

x Close Ad In *Halo 3*, Bungie introduced the Forge so that players could customize their multiplayer experience. It provided the tools necessary to adjust which items and weapons appeared on a map, where players spawned, what their objectives were, and more. On levels released as DLC post launched, creative players could even use pieces of geometry, like walls and ramps, to alter levels to an even greater degree.

Now, in *Halo: Reach*, the Forge has evolved into the expansive, humongous Forge World, and it will provide players with all the tools they'll need to create custom levels that, gameplay wise, should rival many of Bungie's own.

Like *Reach*'s other modes, the Forge has been completely fleshed out. Forging multiplayer maps in *Halo 3* was fun, and it helped extend the game's lifespan by allowing players to constantly add a stream of new content. Though there were features that were always lacking, later downloadable levels like Sandbox provided a blank slate and level-specific objects that could be used to create, from scratch, whatever geometry players wanted.

This idea, introduced later in the lifespan of *Halo 3*'s Forge, is at the heart of *Reach*'s Forge World. It's really just one gigantic multiplayer map, consisting of five different areas, each of which can be loaded separately or as one huge playground.

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The two things that separate Forge World from the old Forge are the new objects available for crafting levels and the new tools provided to players. The sheer number of building blocks, like ramps, rooms, walls, bases, and more, is astounding, and should allow players to create literally any type of level they can imagine. Though any of *Reach*'s multiplayer maps can be "Forged" on, only the five areas of Forge World will allow players to take advantage of all the objects in the full Forge arsenal.

All these things would be useless, however, if players didn't also have an advanced set of tools, features and options with which to tweak, position and otherwise tell every object how to behave. Thankfully, that's exactly what Bungie's provided. The most important of these is the option to tweak each object's physics, i.e., how that objects interacts with the world.

In the old Forge, letting go of a ramp in midair would cause it to realistically fall to the ground. In *Reach*, however, players have the option to "fix" objects in place, or allow them to "phase" with other objects. A fixed ramp will float, immovable, wherever players leave it. This is essential for building custom geometry. Even better, phased objects don't detect other objects when they're being edited, so that many objects can occupy the same physical space.

For example, two ramps in the phased state can be manually combined to make one larger ramp of whatever length players desire, whereas before, the two ramps would have to be placed on top of one another in a tricky, ineffective balancing act. Walls can be combined willy-nilly to create rooms of varying sizes and shapes, rocks can be phased halfway into the ground to give them unique sizes and angles, and more.

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The possibilities of these new tools and objects are literally endless, much more so than in *Halo 3*. In addition to the new set of building blocks, there are dozens of other objects, like decorations, soccer and golf balls (complete with a multiplayer-only golf club weapon and a tin cup to aim for), a rotating orb of golden light that kills any player that comes in contact with it, teleporters, every vehicle and weapon in the game, lights, flags, skulls, armor abilities, and more.

The behaviors of every object, from how often it will spawn to how many can exist on the map at any given time, are completely in players' control. Players also have new tools that make editing objects even easier, like snap rotation (to 15, 30, 45, or 90 degrees) and a "delete all of this object" option.

Player movement options are also present, allowing for increased or decreased gravity, player weight, and speed, as well as tweaks like whether players can pick up weapons and

infinite ammo. Within the first minute of booting up Forge World at Bungie's two-day preview even in San Francisco this week, I had given myself low weight, high speed and little gravity. Picking up the "evade" armor ability, I proceeded to use it to fly halfway across the map, which is saying a *lot*, considering how humongous Forge World is. The second time I tried, I hit a wall at incredibly high speed and was promptly informed that I had committed suicide.

There are even new tools for *Halo*'s always thriving machinima community to take advantage of, like special effects orbs that, when placed in a map, add visual effects like pen-and-ink, high saturation, a crackling, sepia, old film style, different colored filters, and more. Their effects can even be combined to make truly unique visual styles that will add flair to normal gameplay and machinima videos alike.

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The possibilities are mind boggling, especially given the expansive size of the Forge World itself, which includes the Blood Gulch-like area known as Hemorrhage. From day one, players will be creating giant towers, cramped mazes, floating arenas, and a million other unusual playgrounds to shoot one another other in.

It will no doubt only be a short matter of time before *Halo* favorites like High Ground and Lockout are recreated, though it will be even more exciting to see the original levels that the community will produce. There's no doubt in my mind that Bungie will continue to release more and more objects and maps for use in Forge World, and that *Reach* will have the most longevity of any *Halo* game yet.

Halo: Reach comes out September 14, and Bungie was kind enough to invite us out to sunny San Francisco to spend two full days exploring every aspect of the game. Keep an eye out for the rest of our coverage!

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kombo