


Monday, February 18. 2008

My First Two Days Playing Eve Online

It's a lesser known trait of mine that I enjoy playing computer games, specifically strategy games for the PC. The only console I own is a Nintendo Wii - which is saying something since it's the first console I've owned since the Sega Genesis! So this weekend, with all the free time I have, a new broadband connection courtesy of Eircom (after replacing the crappy Netopia router they give you for free; free as in scrap metal), and a little trepidation, I joined Eve Online.

Eve Online is a MMOG set in space. There are approximately 5000 star systems, 200,000+ subscribers, and perhaps 18,000 to 45,000 players online at any one time. Since I was playing at the weekend for extended periods, I noticed the numbers peaked on my GMT clock each evening. The idea behind Eve Online is to enter the vastness of space and make a name for yourself either through combat, mining, trading, production or research. These are not however true alternatives since any player can train any skill imaginable given enough time. So the name of success is called specialisation, not class leveling...

All star systems have a security rating from 1.0 to 0.0. I spent all my time in 1.0 and 0.9 star systems. The word is that going anywhere with a 0.8 rating or less is not something a Rookie should consider for at least a few weeks. Going to 0.5 or lower could charitably be called suicide. Check out YouTube for a few videos of what happens to players who get cocky and impatient and run off to a 0.4 system to mine. It only takes a high skill player with a few missiles...

As for strategic and tactical gameplay - Eve Online rocks. It's a thinking man's dream game. You need to select skills, compare weapons and ammunition types, review Market conditions for the best regional prices (some stations can charge double the average price for items), get used to how ships scale and how to assess which you can take on (which is pretty much nothing since 1.0 sec systems are heavily overwatched by the local race's police forces and only suicides would attack you, or you them 


). Living in 1.0 space is quite safe and a more than a few corporations stay exclusively there. Even a few of the 0.0 Corporations maintain 1.0 sub-Corporations for you to join.

The game itself is beautifully rendered. Back in December CCP release the Trinity client was released which added an overall graphics update with high resolution textures. My PC was never taxed while running it. I have a pretty good gaming rig so I could easily run two clients at the same time (Eve also let's you play three characters on your single account). Th only niggle was collision detection on large objects like stations and planets. While it seems an odd flaw, I suspect it's a simple optimisation. The only annoyance it will serve is trying to reach anything on the opposite side of a station - my advice is to orbit around the station before making a straight-line approach to such objects.


My own experiences from a first weekend after the jump...Day 1: PHP Is Not A Recognised Skill...But Missiles Are!

Sad to say, but I was unable to make a living in Eve Online as a PHP programmer. Aww... After booting up the Eve client I was greeted by an Introduction video detailing some of the back story to Eve Online. It's standard sci-fi fare as Tor would publish in a cut-sized paperback. Yep, a total cliché, but the backstory just set's the scene - it can be as clichéd as it likes. Anyway, does WOW not have the same? Afterwards I input my trial account username and password, before being greeted by the character creation screen.

Creating a character for Eve Online should not be done lightly. Read up online about what kinds of attributes, skills and race/bloodline mixes are best suited to what you want. I wanted to kick other player's asses (PVP/PVE) so I went with a Caldari Achura who had taken up the Soldier profession. I added my 5 attribute points to Perception, Intelligence and Memory (2-2-1). This gave me quite a collection of skills for in the area of Missiles, Gunnery and Calderi Frigates. More besides - but these are great ones to start a Soldier with. Adding a portrait is simple with the client's facial morphing abilities though each race has distinct Earth profiles - so my Calderi Soldier has distinctly Asian features.

The game opens with a tutorial of sorts. It's slightly erratic on two fronts. Firstly it doesn't automatically warp your ship to the tutorial area all the time (so you need to warp to a station, and restart the tutorial whose steps are thankfully easy to fast forward past). Secondly, you need to take instructions literally - for example when they talk about shooting a pirate with a blaster in the first tutorial don't assume to do it now - otherwise the next screen which does say to activate your guns will freeze. Why? Because the pirate is probably dead now after a few shots, and the tutorial doesn't realise you can't activate your guns anymore (no target). That's another route ripe for a restart 

Otherwise the tutorial isn't all that bad - it gives you the basics, introduces you to an Agent who provides missions, get's you up and running.

I spent the next day running missions. During this I made sure to a) have a Clone Beta on hand and move it to any new station I decided to base myself out of, and b) make sure I insured any new ships I received. Keeping all your off-ship cargo stored in a station is a really good idea. I consolidated my assets on my chosen station twice so far. In a few more days I suspect I'll need to consider a semi-permanent central station in the region to consolidate items and other ships in. In truth I spent the whole weekend in about 4 star systems around Uitra which is not bad for a Rookie in a 5000 star system game 

I started out in a Rookie Ibis ship. Basically a tincan with a Railgun and a Mining Laser. As a Soldier, I followed Agent Missions first. After a few I was awarded a new Calderi Condor Frigate which is a bit better than a tincan but only has 2 possible weapon points which I armed first of all with Blasters, but finally with Standard Missile Launchers. Missiles appeared more effective at the time - they deal a lot of damage from long range and even gave single-shot kills. Hybrid Turrets (Guns) are shorter ranged and take more time to kill anything with (as a Calderi at least). Long ranged combat simply makes sense since you're further from the target's own guns and they tend to use lower yield Rockets for long-ranged engagements.

Most of the first day was spent learning skills (usually level 1 and 2 for stuff like Learning, Clarity, Mechanics, Science, Navigation). I found my weapon skills were already at levels 3 and 4 but supporting skills for ship systems, shield and armor upgrades, afterburners, propulsion systems and capacitor upgrades were untrained. These are essential to add new ship subsystems like hardened shields, damage control modules, sensors, capacitor upgrades, etc. One of my current concerns is power. Your ships are never fully loaded up with equipment because available power is never enough - something I need to focus on. Processing capacity seems a lot better - but I'd bet that becomes a limiting factor later too. So yeah - train those skills. If not playing for a day or two - pick a big 60hr skill to train while you're offline.

Overall impressions: It was a good start. As I suspected it's not the most exciting game full of thrills and spills. It takes patience and acknowledgment of having to plan and execute a long term strategy of skills training, ship research, corporation membership and cash inflow (Missions, Corp work, Mining, Trading, etc). I intend training skills continually - only takes a quick login to start a new one training (lv1 about 30mins, lv2 about 1.5hrs and lv3 a lot more!). I also intend working my way to a new Calderi Kestrel or Merlin which are the most powerful Calderi Frigates. I'm sticking with Agent Missions for now. My Condor doesn't have the cargo space to go mining for cash and the starting Missions are more profitable for now, as well as being part of an interesting storyline.


Day 2: Suicide Runs, More Missions, Corporation Recruitment Drives

I started Day 2 on a mission to destroy the lair of a Pirate. Outside the Station at Uitra VI Moon 4, a bunch of Rookies were annihilated in an "incident" after opening fire at another player. I also witnessed a wicked looking cargo ship shambling up to the Station for docking and had a quick conversation with the pilot. He was in from a 0.6 system to make a quick sale and get some repairs done. Dangerous places down past 0.8...

After another mission I was awarded a new Calderi Kestrel Frigate. Local chatter advised me it was the finest Calderi

platform for Missiles in the Frigate Class. I was happy enough to load it up with 4 Missile Launchers and another 3000 missiles as ammo. Ammo was seriously being chewed through by now from the more powerful Pirates I was taking Missions against. My ship's power continued to be a problem so I set to on a training track to provide skills I could use to increase capacitor output. Really need to get more supporting systems for my shields and armor in place - but first I need the power capacity to run them!

I spent a block of time spectating the local traffic. Basically just picking out ships, reading their information, and getting a feel for which ones were good, bad or indifferent. Most of the ships were Calderi, but I located an Amarr Industrial which marks a first for another species. I gather I'm so deep into Calderi space it's a rarity to find anything not Calderi yet.

After some bumming around I felt the need for a little exploration so I headed to the Jita System. Or as the local chatter were calling it: LagFest. Turns out Jita is a system at the confluence of three others which makes it a prime trading spot. It was so popular that the CCP servers in Iceland were having a bit of trouble keeping up with the populace 

. It was very laggy, but I purchased a few items at a supremely low price. It's almost a supermarket for the region with low prices and thousands of customers and a *lot*.

After my expedition of a whole 3 jumps from Uitra, I returned to Uitra VI Moon 4. One of the high points of the day was watching two Destroyers (my Kestral being a flea in comparison) start up a firefight. Between the missile barrages, shield flares, and beam weapons flying around a big crowd of Rookies gathered. Into the fray came a few extra ships including a few Frigates. It was an impressive display though one or two Rookies lost all sense of survivability and fired off some Missiles to see what would happen. With some restraint the opponents replied with a single low-yield missile. The antagonisers quickly warped away before the next one!

After some checking of ship, pilot and corporation affiliations of the battle members I realised the whole battle was a deliberate show - a publicity stunt of sorts for a local Corporation. As a recruitment drive it was a good one - Uitra is where most many Calderi Rookies end up so it was their first look at a full scale battle between 5-6 Frigates, Destroyers and Battleships. Such a show of force also underlined what players of 2-3 months can accomplish, which obviously underlines how huge a role patient plays in Eve Online. It takes real time to train up those skills and accumulate the cash for such extravagant ships and equipment.

I finished off the weekend of Eve Online by moving down to the Perimeter Star System a few jumps away. There's a Calderi Naval Assembly Station here and it's closer to my eventual possible home in another week down in Venelin. I've setup a Missile oriented skill to train which will take about 20hrs (sufficient time for me to sleep, go to work, and take my time recovering at home before logging in again for a quick check and a new skill to set training - maintenance mode on weekdays).


Final impressions: Read this <http://atomic-tourist.net/AAR.pdf> for a something interesting about Corporation play out in the real world of Eve Online in 0.0 security space. Long term is the keyword. Jumping into Eve and expecting to crush everyone inside of a few days is pure stupidity. It takes planning, strategy and research to pull off a good game. This undoubtably explains Eve continued disparate subscriber count. At 200,000 it's respectable but not even remotely close to what WOW pulls in. The fact is Eve Online is a different game. It's quite easy to get into, but whether you have a personal makeup capable of blasting away Pirates, mining for a few hours with a good book (obviously you need some in-game entertainment - which may seem counter-productive but then you're missing the point!), or trading. Personally if I take up Mining I intend on taking full advantage of the fact I have a PC which can run Eve, Firefox and Eclipse at the same time, and in the future a MacBook Pro too. Eve is not just about having "fun", it's about accomplishment on a large scale over an extended timeline. Other folk would find this all dreadfully boring and lack the patience and extended mindset to create their own fun and enjoyment from the game.

So the story so far at 2 days? Eve Online is attractive, skills can be trained offline, but it requires patience and long term commitment. The commitment needn't be time consuming either. I could play for a few hours at the

weekend, or a few minutes at a time on a week day, and it wouldn't put a dent into my free time. With skills training offline there's far less pressure to be online all the time, or even a lot of the time. Many corporations clearly state they are looking for players who play "once a month or more" even...


Posted by Pádraic Brady in PC Gaming, PHP Security at 12:35

I play EVE, too. Been playing since late May '06. I'm at the point now where I log in every once in a while to change a skill, but that probably has more to do with the fact that Charter disconnects me after 5 minutes or so.


If you ever need any help or tips (or isk 

) send a message to "Baleygr" in game. Anonymous on Feb 18 2008, 14:36


Oh yeah, GoonFleet believes anyone can enter 0.0 space as soon as they join. 0.0 is approximately 1000% more fun than empire, but you need friends. Anonymous on Feb 18 2008, 14:37

Hi James 

. Will do - you can find me ingame as "Maugrim McFiriba" docked down in Perimeter at the moment. Still on my trial account and considering the jump to subscriber. Eve I guess hit's the sweet spot for what I like in a good game.


I'll no doubt explore some 0.0 space in something expendable at some point soon. I'm exactly swimming in ISK, but the experience would be worth a little expense for my ultimate untimely end after some sight seeing 

. Anonymous on Feb 18 2008, 15:08

Should startup a PHP Corp 

Anonymous on Feb 18 2008, 16:19

Something else I forgot to mention (there's too much stuff to remember in EVE sometimes I swear): EVEMon (<http://evemon.battleclinic.com/>) is your friend. Very useful for planning out what skills to train in the future. Anonymous on Feb 18 2008, 17:52

Thanks, that's all I need is another game to try, play, and get sucked into... Thanks a lot! 


Anonymous on Feb 18 2008, 18:29

Just left eve, I don't have the time or money for it, but it was brilliant while I played.


It's perfectly possible for rookies to go down to 0.5 space, if you meet any nasty belt rats just jump away. It's 0.4 down that gets dangerous. Anonymous on Feb 18 2008, 20:22

Glad you enjoyed your first to days!

If you're looking for additional information, guides and howtos, visit my blog for a ton of great links! Anonymous on Feb 19 2008, 16:00

@CrazyKinix: Already have 


. From your blog I've built up a reading list over the past week to capture how the game's story has built up. Currently looking into the history of the BOB vs Goonfleet (and assorted allies) has panned out over the last six months.

Fascinating reading actually 


. Anonymous on Feb 20 2008, 00:20


It's getting kind of boring now. BOB is down to their last region and we're invading their capital system right now.

Finally killing them is nice, though. Anonymous on Feb 20 2008, 00:59

Ok so im in, name cyberlot and im lost 

Thank got for a 14 day free trial Anonymous on Feb 20 2008, 01:41

If you're playing Caldari, I'm over in Uitra 

. Still getting my space legs as a new member of a local Corp (Crimson Development and Research) for the moment. My ingame name is "Maugrim McFiriba". Maybe we can link up once you survive the first few days - took at least two days for me to figure out enough not to spend all the time in a confused daze 

. Crazy Kinux blog has some good links to fill in the backstory to date or other gaps. Anonymous on Feb 20 2008, 10:25

Well well well


Look who it is!

I play EVE myself...or rather, i used to.

Lost my caracel after my three month 'trial' came to an end, so i havent played since.

EW3 is heavily based on eve...lol Anonymous on Feb 21 2008, 18:54

Maug, check ur PMs on AF.net Anonymous on Feb 21 2008, 21:12

Will do - or you could just email me direct 

. maugrimtr @at yahoo .dot com

I'm just about to move up to a Caracel after the weekend's Corp mining op. Anonymous on Feb 22 2008, 01:13