



Comments on Spawn Camping in the Ghost Recon Series of Games

April 10, 2006

You are being killed repeatedly as you spawn, things are not going well. You are being “spawn camped”. This is unfortunate.

I, for one, am getting sick of hearing people complain about it. No matter what your opinion is, some things need to be said. People need to start acting like adults.

By:
Ick

Fellow Gamers,

As of this article spawn killing has been in the Ghost Recon series for over 4 years. It has been a continuous concern over all 5 games in the series. It is here to stay. It continues to be quite an issue in all of the online forums and game lobbies. I thought it would be best to compose some thoughts here.

I have written this guide for several purposes:

1. explain this phenomena to new players
2. help guide players the right direction
3. help people avoid this aspect of the game as well as suggest what games don't have this element
4. explain the necessity of spawn killing in unlimited respawn games
5. illustrate some of the common objections to spawn killing
6. a warm and fuzzy feel good conclusion

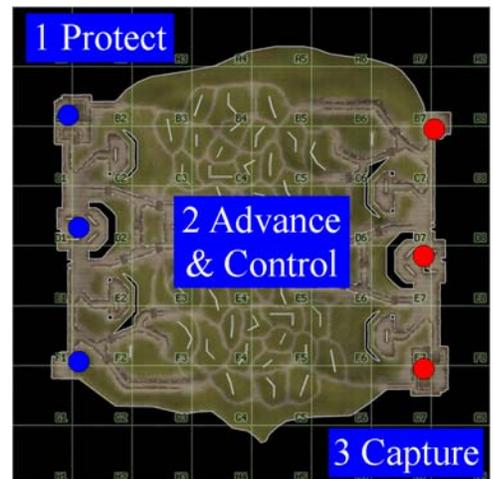
Get ready, Ick is going to act like he knows what he is talking about.

What is spawn camping

For those of us that don't understand spawn killing, here is some groundwork. When playing almost any unlimited respawn game most players find this experience. When players are killed during a game those players may get the opportunity to have another life. When -entering the map the player appears at certain points, these are called spawn points. What an opposing team will do is situate someone in this "spawn zone" area with the sole intention of killing him and his team members as they enter the game. This effectively prevents opposing forces from re-entering the game. Quite often, if a team...

- Doesn't have anyone alive outside the zone, OR
- Doesn't have team players that will come back and clear your spawn area of enemies...

...the entire remainder of the game is one team being killed repeatedly.



Here is a typical map in unlimited respawn games. Both team have spawn points that are vulnerable.

What game should I be playing?

There are generally two kinds of players. I have found that once a person decides how they feel on the issue there is little anyone can do to change their opinion.

The NO Camp

If you FEEL spawn camping is wrong limit your game types or find rooms with “rules.”

I FEEL spawn camping is wrong

If you find yourself on the receiving end of spawn camping and you FEEL that it is totally wrong, well then, who can argue with “how you feel?” I have my own feelings to deal with; I can’t deal with yours too. If this is how you FEEL then you should only play in:

1. no-respawn type rooms,
2. rooms with game types that are not conducive to spawn camping, or
3. rooms with hosts that have a “rule” against spawn camping.

Look, I really don’t think manufacturing no spawn camping rules is practical, but if you want to do it, great. Be my guest. I am happy you are part of Ghost Recon and I hope you have hours of fun in your rooms.

What “The NO Camp” should respectfully do: If you end up in a room where there is no rule against spawn camping don’t complain about it. Simply leave and find a room more conducive to your game style. Also, don’t bagger the host and his room for not “modifying” the game to your liking. You won’t convince anyone and you waste everyone’s time when you do this. Besides, this kind of bickering agitates my rash, and I am out of ointment.

The YES Camp

If you understand spawn camping’s place, play any game, but avoid rooms with “rules.”

If you can see that spawn camping is simply part of the game

If you can see that the control of spawn areas (your own and your enemies) is simply part of the game strategy then you can play ANY game type, but be wary of two things.

1. Respectfully ask if spawn camping is allowed. If you get a half-ass answer then I would suggest you assume it is allowed. If you “hang back” and the host understands this aspect of the game you run the danger of getting stomped.
2. Apologize for not knowing the hosts “modification” and respectfully leave the room if you discover this.

What “The YES Camp” should respectfully do: Don’t smack talk or demean those players that have a no spawn camp “rule” as you will never

convince someone of your “rightness”. It wastes everyone’s time, plus you could be using this time to find another room.

How to avoid Spawn Camping

I better get some constructive comments said before I run the risk of offending everyone with my additional comments. Here are some helpful hints to avoid spawn camping

Don’t play with strangers

I will say this; I don't play unlimited respawn games with a bunch of strangers for one principal reason. Generally when you join a public room it is "buddies" playing against a team of complete strangers. The game is lost even before it started. Furthermore, as the room progresses good payers get sick of playing with team members that don't use strategy, do their own thing, are new or simply aren't very good. This means that good players gravitate to good players. Who wants to be with below average players when you have a chance to join a better team? Perhaps you and I are different, but most people are not. Good players tend to leave disorganized weak teams for better opportunities.



Watch out!
Dodger tries to give out candy.

When this happens, the buddies on the opposite team play as a unit, or at a minimum, cooperate. You team is disorganized and likely does not communicate or strategize. The game is lost before it even starts. Furthermore these games, by their very nature, end up being spawn killing games. More comments on that below.

Oh, don't take candy from strangers either. Just thought I would pass that wisdom on as a side note. Gee, don't take candy from strangers; don't play random games with strangers. Is it coincidence that those two statements are so similar? I think not.

Friends

I have a great list of friends. Any room I am in (or enter) is full of guys I know and have fun playing with. I have no compelling reason to join random public games. When I do play unlimited respawn games with these guys the teams are generally balanced, therefore spawn killing doesn't happen, or it if does, it is overcome naturally with counter-maneuvers.

Play limited respawn games:

If you don't have a bank of friends you can count on then try a different game type that is more conducive to a good experience. For example, play:

- Team - Limited respawn games like Last Man Standing, Siege, or a bunch of other types that have a limited number of lives.
- Team – Objective based games. Many of the games are not scored



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based on kills, but rather based on another factor like controlling an area, etc.
This might be enough of a distraction to prevent spawn killing.

- Solo - Limited respawn games like Last Man Standing or thief.
- Co-op games
- Play checkers, chess, or scream “You Sunk My Battleship!”

Turn on the invincibility timer

Only the host can select this option. There is a setting whereby the spawning player gets a certain amount of time that he can spawn, select his weapon, and move while invincible. During this time the player can move, but may not shoot. Generally the spawning player, during a spawn camp situation, should “haul ass” to get out of the line of fire and get into position to clear his/her zone. THIS HELPS, but unfortunately there are three problems with this:

- Often this “invincible” time is not enough to do this effectively, but hey, it is better than having no invincibility timer.
- Many players charge the enemy and do not run for cover. The player’s invincibility wears off and bang, he is dead. The result ends up being no different than if it wasn’t on at all.
- Most hosts don’t use this feature.

Superman!

Make the teams more balanced

Like I said, if you have all friends on one team and strangers on the other, well, it works out to be an unbalanced situation. Try randomizing the teams. Friends want to play on a team with friends though, so not sure many people are going to take this advice.

The Host is king. Long live the king

Fortunately there is one “king” of the room, the host. It is his house, so play by his rules. Always respect the host. As a matter of fact, players should always respect other players, but especially the host.



If you have a problem with a room or situation, speak respectfully and say your peace. If the host is conducive to discussion, then by all means, carry on a conversation. If not, either shut up or leave. Yes, it is that simple. If the host is:

- Encouraging an un-balanced situation of friends verses strangers, you might as well leave.
- Has a “no spawn killing rule” then you better understand that there may be other “rules” to contend with. Get it out on the table early and discuss it. Know where you are at verses how the host and room feel. Occupy the corresponding “opinion” or leave and find a room that does.

- Completely opposed to any invulnerability timer, well then, you know what kind of host he/she is. If your beliefs align, have at it.

The necessity of spawn killing in unlimited respawn games

You will likely never see me (Ick) in unlimited respawn games for two reasons:

1. I don't enjoy "run and gun" Ghost Recon. If I want fast paced I whip out Halo 2 or play a co-op game.
2. I don't particularly care for the strategy that is required in unlimited respawn games.

Having said that, here is how I see an unlimited respawn game. Unlimited respawn games have three parts:

1. Protecting your spawn, your team's weakest point on the entire map.
2. Advancing and fighting through the map
3. Containing and/or capturing the other teams spawn, the weakest point on the map for the opposing force

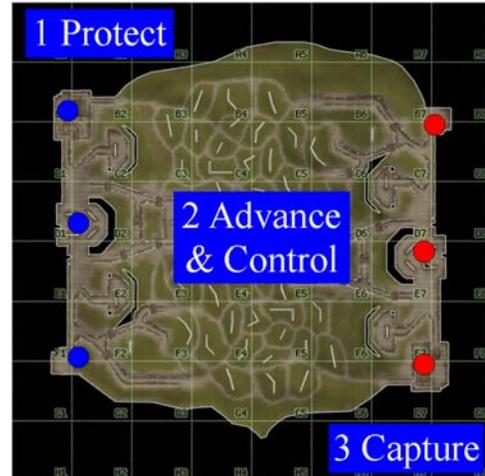
This is a game of strategy. Yes, I mean to include unlimited respawn games when I say that. Each move has a counter move. If you are being spawn killed your opportunity for a counter move has been lost. You lost the game long before the first in a series of spawn kills. You have allowed the opposing force to capture your spawn. Your chance for counter-strategy is GONE.

Just like in chess, there are moves and counter moves. The game is lost long before the king is in check.



Here is how this game type is played effectively. The blue team will cooperate early in the game to protect their spawn and advance. An effective play is to send a "sneak" to go into the enemy spawn and get some spawn kills. This weakens the red team making it easier for the remainder of the blue team to advance through the middle of the map. Eventually the whole blue team ends up in the red team spawn with the objective of trapping them there or killing them as they spawn.

Unfortunately for the blue team the opposing red players are trying to do the same. Ah, equality is sweet. In equally matched teams this results in a battle



Notice how each team has equal positions, each team should have a 3 part strategy.

People get focused on #2 and refuse to do #1. Let's hear it for selfish glory! No wonder people get spawn camped.

What do you think would happen to a volleyball team if everyone refused to block spikes? Exactly, spawn killing.



across the map. Most people like this aspect of the game. Eventually some spawn killing does happen on both sides. I have no idea what the percentage is, but I am sure that even matches with good teams result in fully contained spawn killing as one team will eventually get the upper hand.

Certainly, if one team is mismatched and superior, it is easy to see how the very NATURE of unlimited respawn games results in a spawn killing fest. One team has good players and understands the principles, the other does not.

Even though there are THREE crucial elements to team unlimited respawn games, people constantly decide to only play #2. They are missing two thirds of the game. Players have completely missed that aspect of the game even though it has been that way through 5 titles and 4 YEARS. Gee, I am repeating myself. It must be an important point then.

Don't get me wrong, this is unfortunate. But this is the way things are. It is not going to change.

Reasons why Spawn Killing is a valid play.

The inclusion of this aspect to Ghost Recon games is a great and thorough basis for inclusion of spawn killing in games. It is not the only reason, however.

Tournaments don't find a Spawn Camping rule warranted

First off, of the tournaments I have played in, heard about, watched, read the results of, or talked about...there are no anti-spawn killing rules. This says VOLUMES about the strategy inherent in the game. Tournaments generally ban aspects of the game that destroy the underlying game. They have no hard and fast rule against spawn camping. Therefore it is not a game busting tactic. This probably speaks more about the acceptability of spawn camping than anything else.

Spawn Killing requires no modification or violation of the game

Spawn camping doesn't require cheats, hacks, glitches or other game modifications. In fact it generally requires very hard work to capture the opposing teams spawn while protecting your own spawn. Clearly this is something within game parameters as a result of the very "UN REAL" aspect of respawning placed in to what is otherwise a "REALISTIC" military shooter.

Both teams have equal playing field

On a similar line spawn killing, it is not a "one sided" luck factor. An example of this would be tournament rules for the game "Magic". This game has several powerful cards that almost make the game unplayable. The "luck" of getting your card before your opponent makes the game a game of luck, not skill and strategy. Tournaments often ban certain cards to maintain the viability of the game. "Card X is illegal" because it defeats



the purpose of strategy do such a degree that the game disintegrates into unplayable status.

We are fortunate in Ghost Recon that there are very few features that “luck” even remotely affects the outcome. No, in Ghost Recon, strategy and teamwork are the overriding factor that contributes to a win or a loss.

I know what some readers are thinking, “but the host stacks his team in his favor.” If you choose to play in a room where the host has the teams stacked, then your problem isn’t spawn killing, it is playing in a room where the host is a jerk.

To sum this section up

There is a great series of articles that talk about items of this nature. These series of articles, written by Serlin, are referenced at the end of this article. This article has a great summary of what constitutes something that should be banned. It makes sense:

“A ban must be enforceable, warranted, and concrete (or discrete).“ (Serlin, [Playing to Win, Part 2: Mailbag](#))

There is no “strict enforceability” that can be done with spawn killing. Is 10 meters from a team spawn the rule to follow? If you have this 10 meter rule then isn’t my strategy to be 10.1 meters outside your spawn the best tactic and result in the same spawn killing? How about a rule that says “your team can only advance to this line here, on the D2-D3 line.” Is that an enforceable rule? No, of course it is NOT. Certainly a rule like that would preclude someone from “standing in F2 behind your spawn point”, but would it really be “enforceable” if someone was 3 meters in from your D2-D3 line at a bush? Again, this is not workable in-game.

Besides, do you want to have to carry around some rule book that includes all of the Ghost Recon maps and where the “permitted areas” are? Do you want to have to constantly check your map to see if you have crossed the line? This is not a workable solution and is not enforceable.

More to the point, the rule has to be warranted. If an enemy team is trying to capture my spawn, is there any way for me to prevent that? Of course there is. You need to protect your spawn as your team advances. Therefore, a ban is not warranted as a valid tactic and counter is available to all players. The act of trying to capture your spawn does not warrant the game unplayable NOR is it a tactic that will always result in a win.

SOLO unlimited respawn games.

Of course there is this same problem in solo matches with unlimited respawn games. It would seem to me that a player winning the game using this tactic would be quite a target. In a room of good players doesn't he become an easy target when he fires his weapon and gives away his position? Doesn't he give away his position even if it is a silenced weapon? Seems like a strategy that could be countered to me.

The key in solo unlimited respawn games is to get more than a 1:1 kill ratio. An undiscovered spawn killer sure can wrack up kills fast, but he often becomes a high priority target for players that know that effective movement and key locations result in victory. Furthermore, once you kill me at spawn #8 you won't catch me spawning there again. No, I will spawn at location #12 and kill the guy that is trying the spawn kill maneuver at spawn #8.

Winning a solo unlimited respawn match doesn't just require me to get kills, it also requires me to keep my opponents from getting kills. If someone is getting spawn kills it is in my best interest to up-root their efforts and prevent them from harvesting points using this tactic.

Common Objections to Spawn Killing

Here are a few common objections. I am sure some of them are really going to piss people off, but that is the way it goes when you disagree with some people. Some people can respectfully disagree. Others have an open mind and consider your thoughts and learn from them. Others get angry when they are challenged and throw a tantrum. The nature of our world I suppose.

I am going to generalize and pigeon-hole people into one of 8 objections.

Objection #1 - This is not the way the game was meant to be played

This is said by people who, magically, understand that the

developers never thought the game would be played this way. They say this even though, as previously mentioned, the game has had 4 years and 5 games designed almost exactly the same way. I can see the guys at Red Storm saying:

“Jeepers, can you believe GR fans are playing this way again? We didn't intend for them to play it this way. I guess we better finally make a design change to prevent this so they understand we didn't want the game played this way.



This kid is crying about a scrape on his knee. Either side you sit on the spawn camping issue, make sure you don't look like this.



Perhaps if we issued a press release saying we didn't intend it to be this way they would stop."

How peculiar is that?

Perhaps this is not the way you want to play the game, well then, say that. It is "you're modified way with rules." Let's call it what it is. Play the game you want to, but don't claim that it is "the designer's way".

Objection #2 - Spawn Killing is Just Cheap

These players think that they are "Noble" for only playing #2 (see above) and staying in the middle of the map. You might also hear these players saying something like "you just can't beat me in the middle of the map one on one so you have to spawn camp." While I can see the nobility of their statement it is obvious that they CHOOSE to IGNORE a basic, fundamental, put in on purpose, aspect of the game. I suspect that players that play this are simply on unbalanced teams OR are simply playing the wrong game type. Please see that section above.

Is a person "cheap" for playing an aspect of the game put in on purpose? Or is it more likely that this person is limiting his experience by trying to play one third of the game and using some kind of "noble" motive as his reason? I guess you have to answer that for yourself.

Objection #3 - Spawn Killing is cheating

These players just hate to loose and it prevents them from giving even the smallest thought to the nature of the game. They have just lumped spawn killing in with wall glitching, rock glitching, bandwidth abusing, and players that access areas off of the map clearly out of play. Obviously this is an aspect of the game designed into unlimited respawn game types, it cannot possibly be cheating.

Objection #4 - Spawn killing takes no skill

People that say this have either never played in a match with two balanced teams or they didn't realize what was going on when they had the opportunity to do so. If they did, then they would find the strategy and intensity of those matches to be MORE fun than "meet in the middle" matches with "no spawn killing" rules.

Granted, when the spawn has been totally captured it takes no skill to continually kill enemies as they appear. **Clearly**, too totally capture the spawn of a good team **takes quite a bit of skill**.

People that are close minded or only want to occupy a superficial aspect to the game say this quite a bit. They don't read the explanations of how it is a crucial element in strategy and ON TOP OF THAT, they REFUSE to try something else. Isn't it perplexing that

someone would keep running into the same thing online...get the same results...yet NOT try something different?

Objection #5 - All this one guy does is “sneak” to our spawn and spawn kill us

Well now, given the objections above I think you know what I am going to respond. It sounds like an opposing player has chosen a strategy. You either need to deal with it and have a counter strategy or quit.

Objection #6 - I don't want to stay back and defend our spawn

Of course crucial element #1, “protecting your spawn, your team's weakest point on the entire map” is, well, crucial. I suspect that #1 is just not glorified enough for someone to humble themselves to play. Our society teaches us that ego rules the day. The most endearing characteristic of people to us is their ability to score, check, tackle, kill, beat up, awe, win, scream, demand, embarrass, challenge, or otherwise attract attention. Me, me, me, me, ME!

Protecting your spawn, your team's weakest point on the entire map, is BENEATH MOST PLAYERS EGOS. The problem is ego, not spawn killing. Nobody wants to fit the role of protection. While I am sure spawn campers have a healthy serving of ego themselves, at least they understand that part of their role is “serving” the team as a whole and protecting the spawn.



“...let go, I'm the one that won the game for us...”

Objection #7 - My team members don't cooperate and we get spawn killed.

Alas, an almost valid objection; almost (but not) a valid objection to spawn killing. Unfortunately this game was lost even before you entered the room. Either you are playing with complete strangers, see above, or your team is not working as a unit. Again, see the notes on joining random rooms above. The problem isn't spawn killing; it is lack of an effective team. This is two different things completely. The one is the result of the other. Poor coordination and teamwork = getting spawn killed. It doesn't make spawn killing wrong. Lack of teamwork just makes you easier to beat.

You say Spawn Killing is in the game on purpose. For the past 4 years and 5 releases I have been able to kill my own team members if I want, therefore Team Killing is also a valid play and should be allowed.

Here is the twisted logic. This person compared spawn killing which is:

1. a strategy
2. allowed by game rules
3. designed to help my team win

to team killing, which is:

1. an immature/insane action
2. allowed by game rules (since there is friendly fire)
3. designed to destroy my own team and be counter-productive



People will say anything to try to give their argument credence. Obviously these are two different things. The only thing they have in common is #2, they are allowed by the inherent game rules.

When people use this application of logic they are grasping for straws to try to eliminate spawn camping by comparing it to immaturity and/or insanity.

Let us suppose for the moment that these two things are comparable (which they are not). You know what the funny thing is? If someone on my team starts team killing, it is something my team has to deal with until the game ends. Just like spawn killing, it is something that my team has to account for and try to work around. Now when the game ends the team killer is asked to leave, gets booted, or my team members refuse to continue to play with that person. This is how team killing is dealt with. It is part of the game, just like spawn killing. This argument against spawn killing does not work.

Other Comments

- Here is a repeated item. It is important, so I say it again. Should an opposing team successfully capture your entire spawn and play "whack-a-mole" and kill you repeatedly, well, the game was lost long before the easy killing started. Sure picking off fish in a barrel is easy, but capturing the spawn of a good team is HARD work. Sure, if your team is full of strangers and devoid of strategy it is easier for a quality team to capture your spawn, but like I said, playing with strangers or against a superior team is kind of like asking for it, isn't it?
- A very limited friend list has great potential to limit your Ghost Recon experience. The real key to this game is not games with complete strangers, it is a great friend list made up of guys that like the game the same way you do. You wouldn't go to the bus stop and invite the 30 people standing there into your living room, yet that is what a public game is like. You need friends, in life, and on LIVE.
- It is NOT about winning at any cost using all methods. It is about enjoying all of the aspects of the game put before us while staying within the bounds of NOT CHEATING. We are not talking about shutting the drone or lone wolf weapons on or off, a PERSONAL PREFERENCE. It is about having (or not having) rules that change the game. Just keep in mind that if you have a "No spawn camping" rule then YOU are the one "not playing the game they way it was meant to be played." Enough said, go play the game you want to play with friend that like it that way too, just don't "bash" a valid tactic because you "feel" it is distasteful.
- Many players claim that spawn killing is worthy of bad feedback AND should be reported as cheating. It is unfortunate that people without an open mind...or people that should be playing in another room with "rules"...decide that a valid game tactic is "cheating". Something tells me that if these people reserved the



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“cheating“ feedback for those persons who “cheat” everyone’s experience would improve as XBOX LIVE would be able to deal with the true cheaters and hacks more effectively.

- Keep things in perspective, this is just a game.

Feel Good Summary

So to sum things up, if you don’t like spawn killing then try the above items to eliminate it from your life. If you continue to play unlimited respawn games, then please stop complaining about it and appreciate all the aspects of the game. Above all.....**build a great friend list and this will no longer be a problem.**

One very important aspect of this whole thing is that you and I do not need to agree. There are plenty of players on LIVE that we both can have hours of great games without one of us having to compromise on this issue.

Find rooms that have players that feel the same way you do on this issue, and avoid those rooms that do not.

I hope I didn't offend anyone to the point of no return. That is how I see it. It is important that we all get to play the game that we want to.

Ick

April 10, 2006

Afterthought:

Several years ago I discovered a great series of articles that have this same ring to them. The article uses as its base the video game “Street Fighter”. However, the article’s comments and analysis transcend that game and apply to all video games.

Here is a paraphrase of several responses Serlin received to part 1:

“I thoroughly enjoyed your “Playing to Win” article. It has changed the way I think about games. [Or, I always believed the same things about games but you put them into words for me.] What you described about Street Fighter is exactly the same for [game X] that I play.”

Here is the article:

[Playing to Win](#), Part 1

http://www.sirlin.net/Features/feature_PlayToWinPart1.htm

By Serlin

Whether you agree or disagree with his comments, the follow up articles have responses to specific rebuttals Serlin received. They are even more entertaining than Part 1.

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