

Resident Evil 4 is a game that needs no introduction. It's been ported to every system known to man, and it'll likely keep being ported unless it gets remade. If you can play games, you can probably play Resident Evil 4. It takes a very special game to get this level of treatment, and Resident Evil 4 certainly deserves it. It's nearly universally considered one of the best third person shooters, if not games, ever made. Because of this, every aspect of this game has been dissected under a microscope, and none more so than its selection of weapons.

Over 15 years of discussion, fans have mostly come to a consensus on the best of each weapon type. The best magnum is the Broken Butterfly because of its higher damage and the best reload animation ever. The best shotgun is the Striker because of its high damage, insane spread, and high rate of fire. On rifles, the community has more or less agreed that it's down to a matter of taste; both the bolt-action rifle and the semi-automatic rifle do their jobs perfectly well.

This consensus does not exist with handguns. For 15 years, there's been intense debate over which handgun is the best, what the role of a handgun is, and even what a handgun is to begin with. Unlike with the rifles, where people agree to disagree, the same arguments happen over and over, and nobody ever walks out with a changed mind. Today, I will attempt to settle this never-ending debate. May God have mercy on my soul.

[title scroll]

I'm going to gauge the effectiveness of a weapon at any point in the game with this graph. The x-axis is the cost of the gun and its upgrades. You gain money at a pretty steady rate throughout the game, so the cost is roughly analogous to your progress through the game.

The y-axis is a gun's damage per second. The higher it is, the harder you hit. Essentially, the further up, the better, and the further left, the better. Let's show how it works with our first handgun, the Handgun.

Leon starts the game with the Handgun, and it's your only option for the first few hours of the game. It's also in Wesker's loadout in the Mercenaries, equipped with a silencer that will stop enemies, even the Garradors, from hearing it.

It's perfectly capable of getting you through the game, even if you don't upgrade it, as is the case with every handgun. But that's not why we're here, we're here to determine the king.

There are four categories of upgrades for handguns: Damage, firing speed, reload speed, and capacity. Reload speed and capacity are nice, but every handgun has more than enough capacity to the point where it's irrelevant, and reload speed doesn't matter if you're playing well, so we won't consider those at all. All we care about is damage and how fast you deal it. If you only upgrade the damage, the Handgun stacks up like so:

Again, more than enough to get through the game, but as you can tell by the height of this chart, it's pretty low in the grand scheme of things. But don't count out our buddy yet; we still have to upgrade the firing speed. There are two upgrades, so let's draw two more lines.

Hey, that ain't half bad! That's a solid 6 DPS. The base DPS is 2.6, so that's a considerable improvement. It's also pretty easy on the wallet. Again, though, it's not much compared to the height of the graph, and if this was the extent of the Handgun's potential, we would not be discussing it. No, the reason why the Handgun is in the conversation at all is because of its exclusive.

Exclusives, for those who haven't played Resident Evil 4, are upgrades you can buy after buying every other upgrade for a gun. They're either dramatic boosts in one particular stat or a mechanic completely unique to that gun. The Handgun's exclusive quintuples the rate of critical hits.

When you shoot an enemy in the head, there's about an 8% chance of getting a critical hit, which instakills them and makes their head explode.

With the Handgun's exclusive, this gets raised to around 40%, which is crazy. You'll be popping heads left and right. As a bonus, this also applies to the knife while you have the Handgun equipped, which is very nice indeed. It's not exactly possible to measure how this affects the gun's DPS, but suffice it to say that it's a considerable improvement. Not bad, Handgun, let's see how your competition stacks up.

By shooting 10 of the 15 medallions scattered around the village, the Merchant will give you the Punisher for free. If you shoot all 15, you even get it with its first damage upgrade. Ada also has it in her Mercenaries loadout. Its schtick is that it can shoot through one enemy to hit another one. Because of this, however, its damage starts a bit worse than the Handgun's, and it never really recovers. You may think that the piercing would make up for this, but enemies very rarely line themselves up for you, instead trying to flank you most of the time.

The only time the piercing is consistently useful is against the shield enemies you start encountering in the Castle, and even then, you can get rid of the shield with a single shotgun blast. If you thought piercing through 2 enemies was useless, you haven't seen its Exclusive, which lets it pierce through 5 enemies. Suffice it to say, this has even less applications than before, and it's basically a waste of money.

People tend to stick with what they know unless something is clearly better than what they currently have, and the Punisher is not.

Almost nobody argues for the Punisher. It's outclassed in basically every way. The game gives it to you for free, and yet most will just sell it without a second thought. I think most of us have been the Punisher at some point in our lives. We put our best foot forward, we put in extra effort to stand out, and yet none of it matters.

Speaking of things that don't matter, the Matilda!

The Matilda has one gigantic disadvantage against it, right out of the gate: It's only available in New Game Plus. By the time players have reached New Game Plus, they've already completed a run with a handgun that they've spent hours with, and have probably completely upgraded. Even worse than the Punisher, the Matilda has to compete with a handgun the player knows intimately, and so most players don't give it a second thought. Let's give it a second thought.

If we only go by the stats listed, the Matilda looks like it's just less for more compared to the standard handgun. It costs 70,000 Pesetas up front, and even fully upgraded, it doesn't touch the Handgun's DPS, and it costs almost twice as much. However, the Matilda is based off Leon's upgraded handgun from Resident Evil 2, and as such, it's got 3-round burst fire. As you might expect, this triples the Matilda's DPS to insane heights.

Unlike in Resident Evil 2, however, the player does NOT have the option to turn off this burst fire. The only way to shoot single bullets is by very briefly tapping the fire button, and even that isn't consistent; it's very common to accidentally fire one or two extra bullets, and even more so under pressure. Even if you do intend to fire all 3 bullets, the burst fire shooting is far from stable, and you may accidentally miss. This is the death knell of the Matilda.

Despite how insanely good it looks on paper, it eats through ammo more than any other handgun, and an alarming amount of that ammo is completely wasted. Its exclusive raises its capacity to 100 rounds, but as we've discussed, capacity means next to nothing. It's a damn shame, because it has some real potential, and a simple toggle may have saved it; use the single shot for standard enemies, and the burst fire for when you need to dish out damage.

This glaring flaw was addressed in later games; in Resident Evil 6, Sherry's handgun is the Triple Shot. As its name implies, it's also got 3-round burst fire, but it has the ever-so-crucial toggle to fire single rounds, and with that, it's one of the best weapons in her arsenal. This, and its availability, are the two fatal flaws that stifle what had the potential to be the best handgun in the game. No other gun in the game just barely misses the mark like the Matilda, and that's why it will live on in infamy as the worst handgun in the game. Now, back to the question of the best.

The most popular handgun in the game is the Red9, and it's not very hard to see why. After the Punisher, it's the first handgun available from the Merchant, and unlike the Punisher, the Red9 will likely outclass the Handgun in every way, even if it's been upgraded several times. Because of this, most players will trade their Handgun in at this point. There's a lot to like about it, too. It's got the second-best reload animation in the game, it's got some extremely punchy sound effects, and Luis Sera also uses it during the cabin fight.

In terms of DPS, it leaves the previous 3 handguns in the dust. Its exclusive just piles on the damage, bringing it to a whopping 6.5 per bullet. For reference, that's more than the base Shotgun, and it's by far the highest damage per bullet of any handgun.. This power comes with a price, however, as it's both the slowest-firing and most unstable handgun in the game. You can purchase a stock for 4000 Pesetas, which brings it from the least stable to the most stable at the cost of taking up an additional 3 inventory spaces.

Even without it, the Red9 is already tied for the largest handgun in the game. I would argue that inventory space is irrelevant as long as you're only running one of each weapon type, but I figured I would mention it in the spirit of fairness. Overall, the Red9 is an absolute powerhouse and one of the frontrunners for the best; there simply not much to complain about. Let's meet the other frontrunner.

The Blacktail is the second most popular handgun in the game. Available at the beginning of the Castle, it's likely to outclass the Red9 just as the Red9 did the Handgun. It's Leon's handgun of choice in the Mercenaries, and Ada's in Separate Ways. While it doesn't have the big dick energy of the Red9, it's no slouch by any means. Its unique gimmick is that it has 1.5x the aim speed of all other handguns, which can come in handy given how often enemies try to flank you.

Whereas the Red9 deals in damage, the Blacktail deals in firing speed. If you don't count the Matilda's burst fire, it crushes the rest of the handguns. That's not to say it's a pushover when it comes to damage, either; with its exclusive, it's second behind the Red9. The two are almost perfectly matched. They take almost the same amount to fully upgrade, and when they are fully upgraded, they deal almost identical amounts of damage, with a very slight edge going to the Blacktail.

Given all of this, it would seem that the Red9 would be preferable; you deal the same amount of damage while spending less ammo. However, there's one aspect we have yet to cover, and in my opinion, it pushes the Blacktail over the edge.

Resident Evil 4 was fairly groundbreaking in how its enemies reacted to being attacked. In most shooters, especially at the time, enemies had one response to being shot or maybe had a different response if you shot them in the head. Resident Evil 4 comes along and has enemies reacting in all kinds of ways; If they're holding a weapon, you can shoot it out of their hand. If you shoot them in the head, they grab it in pain. If you shoot them in the legs, they'll grab them in pain or fall to their knees, at which point you can shoot them in the chest to knock them to the ground, and the list goes on and on.

It's all great stuff, but we're interested in 2 particular enemy states: Grabbing their head, and on their knees. These are the only states that result in melee prompts. On all types of Ganados, the head-grabbing animation gives you a prompt for a roundhouse kick. It's a good AoE attack to deal with crowds, and it does a lot of damage. On villager Ganados, the kneeling animation gives you a prompt for a single-target kick that does more damage than the roundhouse kick.

These are both powerful attacks, but the real prize is the third melee prompt. On non-Villager Ganados, the kneeling animation will give you a prompt for a suplex. This is one of the deadliest tools in Leon's arsenal.

On top of dealing the most damage of the three and looking absolutely amazing, it also has around a 30% chance to instantly kill, which is only slightly less than the Handgun's exclusive crit rate.

This is amazing by itself, but if the enemy dies from the suplex, it completely prevents a Plaga from spawning. Plagas are nasty to deal with, usually having multiple times the base enemy's HP and either an obnoxious range or an instakill attack. It goes without saying that avoiding them saves you both time and ammo, and it's therefore optimal to suplex enemies whenever possible.

This is where the Blacktail edges out the Red9, in my opinion. You've got the same DPS as the Red9, but you're firing almost twice as many bullets and therefore getting twice as many suplex opportunities. While some may decry this as a waste of ammo, I'd argue you're wasting far more ammo dealing with Plagas. For this reason, I'm going to definitively say that the Blacktail is superior to the Red 9, the Matilda, the Punisher, and the Handgun, making it the best in-wait, what's that?

[reveal TMP's line]

Holy shit.

The TMP is the final handgun we'll be discussing today. It's available at the same time the Red9 is, and you'll likely be picking up ammo for it before that. It's also the most common weapon across all of the game's modes; Ada uses it in Assignment Ada, Separate Ways, and the Mercenaries, it's HUNK's only weapon in Mercenaries, and Krauser and Ada both use the TMP at various points in the main story. The game really wants you to use it, between how much free ammo it gives you in the main story and how often other characters use it, and as you can see, it's for good reason.

While the damage numbers seem thoroughly unimpressive at first, they're made up for completely by its insane firing rate. With its exclusive, its top DPS is a mammoth 18. While I've previously said that capacity is irrelevant, it's a bit of a special case for the TMP. The amount of free ammo you get from upgrading it is almost enough to clear the game on its own.

All of this does come with a significant downside, however; it fires from the hip instead of the shoulder, which is counter to almost every other gun in the game, and it's very unstable to boot. Like the Red9, though, you can buy a stock to improve its stability and fire from the shoulder.

Now, I feel the need to defend myself. The question as to whether the TMP is even a handgun is extremely contentious because it doesn't use the same ammo as the others and it's fully

automatic. While the TMP is automatic, so is the Matilda, and nobody is going to say it isn't a handgun.

Although the TMP doesn't take the same ammo as its peers, it still does everything the others do, and even better. It seems overly pedantic to exclude it simply because it takes different ammo.

Now, the fact that it's automatic like the Matilda may be setting off alarms in your head, but even though the TMP doesn't have a toggle for its automatic fire, unintentionally firing a couple more rounds is much less of an issue with how much more common the ammo is. Because of this, it's everything that the Matilda aspires to be and more. It deals insane amounts of damage with its full auto while also being a rather effective single-fire weapon.

All the praise I heaped on the Blacktail for its firing rate goes double for the TMP; it's the single most effective suplex machine in the game, and you may even want to go without the stock, as firing from the hip automatically aims closer to the legs.

It simply obliterates its competition. It is without peer. It is the king of handguns.

Except, the TMP is not the most popular handgun. It's not even close; it's closer to third or fourth in popularity. This raises the question: Why would the majority of players go with worse options? Do they just not know? The thing is, nothing exists in a vacuum.

Nobody has all of the numbers in front of them on their first playthrough. Plenty of people chose their handguns completely on a whim, and spent the rest of the game with them. They learned all the ins and outs of their respective playstyles. They formed memories with them, and as I've said before, people stick with what they know.

Some people like making heads explode. Some people like doing more damage than a shotgun. Some people like punching holes in enemies. These are all perfectly natural human desires. All the numbers in the world don't mean a thing compared to these unique experiences.

I was 4 when Resident Evil 4 was released. I didn't play it until 2017, and it still blew me away with how good it was. It's one of my favorite games of all time. The same arguments from 2005 are still popping up in 2021. I take this not as the sign of a stagnant fanbase, but of a timeless game. Regardless of whether your favorite is the Handgun, the Punisher, the Matilda, the Red9, the Blacktail, or the TMP, the one thing we can all agree on is that Resident Evil 4 is a masterpiece.

Thank you so much for watching. This is my first ever scripted video, and I'd like to know how much appetite there is for more, so if you enjoyed it, please like and subscribe. If you have an idea for a video, feel free to post it in the comments. I've got one or two more left in the tank, but that's about it for me. I will try to get another video out within a month of this one, but with college, I can't make any promises. Goodbye, and I hope you have a wonderful day.