



REVIEW

Open Transport Tycoon Deluxe Review – Open to Both Beginners and Pros

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I should have known from the start that my first foray into OpenTTD ([link to website](#)) was going to be an erratic one. The word *open* is in the title of this business simulator, after all. It implies the game has an open-source nature, one that is quite heavily community-driven. Not typically the most welcoming to beginners such as myself. Thankfully, OpenTTD has received a lot of love from its modding community. This community has provided plenty of options for newcomers to dive and get stuck in.

What is OpenTTD?



OpenTTD stands for Open Transport Tycoon Deluxe. It's easy from the second *T* to tell that this is a business simulation game. The first *T* emphasizing that your business empire is to be founded on running a smooth and robust transportation system. I learned that an original game simply titled TTD was designed and released by Chris Sawyer in 1994. The open version of this transportation business simulator was created as a "remake and expansion" of Sawyer's original vision, launching as an alpha version in 2004. Today, the game is up to version 1.11 and backed by a large number of user-created mods.

Just like any other business simulation game, the main aim of OpenTTD is to play at being an entrepreneur. You pull yourself from your bootstraps, using the resources available to you, particularly money, to develop and expand your transportation network. This can include trains, buses, ships, and airplanes. Naturally, you'll be doing a fair bit of money management. This including making sure your network is generating a steady flow of cash. This money is used to pay off bank loans and allows you to continue expanding. And it's this very aspect that makes or breaks OpenTTD and the rest of the business sim genre for certain players.

Who Should Play OpenTTD?



As I expressed in my intro, my initial experience with this open-source business simulator wasn't a pleasant one. The reason is simple: I don't consider myself much of a digital tycoon. The prospect is enticing enough to give it a go. This especially if the business sim in question holds my hand a fair bit. Give me and my peers free reign, however, and we quickly find ourselves confused and lost. In its base form, OpenTTD is not the kind of game that'll tell you what it's all about. This is making it much less suitable for anyone who's not somewhat experienced with business sims.

If you're a veteran tycoon, however, with several digital billion-dollar enterprises under your belt across a variety of titles, OpenTTD is likely to be a tantalizing sandbox. The game offers up a lot of options to run your games any way you wish. This gives you plenty of freedom to challenge yourself in any manner you see fit.

In both of these cases, OpenTTD can become a much more agreeable experience when you factor in the aforementioned user-created mods. These exist in abundance, but more on that later.

Is OpenTTD Fun?



As an overall experience, I believe any opinion I could express about OpenTTD would be an unfair one. When you combine something open-ended like business sims with an open-source model, you have to expect it's meant for a particular crowd. And I do know a fair bit of people who fit the profile of OpenTTD's target market. They thrive on having the freedom to make decisions based on data. Also making use of copious amounts of tools to make their virtual business come to life. At the same time experimenting with different maps, landscapes, and other setups. From this aspect, business simulator fans will be thoroughly delighted by OpenTTD.



That isn't to say that a newcomer's experience with the game can't be a good one. I had a couple of terribly frustrating starts. In the end I was able to grasp what the overall aim of the game was. Then I would get a quick network started in all four industries. Once I had my first airports and bus depots set up, I actually started to see what makes OpenTTD such an enticing experience for its vibrant community. The thrill of seeing your bird's eye view of your map filled with complex railroads is a powerful one. I believe with some patience and time, I could see myself getting stuck in for hours on end.

The main barrier in OpenTTD is its rough presentation and highly outdated look. The game's modding and general player community have done a lot to alleviate this.

Are There Mods?



I've mentioned user-generated mods in OpenTTD a fair bit so far and for good reason. You see, anything with the *open* moniker in its title can only thrive if it's got the backing of a few enthusiastic modders. And OpenTTD has them in spades. In fact, you'd be remiss if you started playing without any mods – like I foolishly did at first. Diving into OpenTTD's mod menu, you'll find all sorts of mods to tailor your experience. There are AI packs that can give you a more story-driven or hand-held experience so that you don't get lost, while others will change the textures, making the game easier on the eyes. I highly recommend the latter as your first port of call as the base game's UI and graphics can feel a bit rough.

Is OpenTTD Worth Playing?



It's a fair question to ask, given how archaic the game may look at first blush. Fans of the open business simulator have a variety of reasons for enjoying the game. For most, it doesn't seem to have anything to do with generating a lot of money as the game does have a tendency to bankrupt you if you make the slightest mistake. The overall consensus is that OpenTTD is at its most fun when you're building large, complex transport networks, especially trains. Small wonder, as the original TTD's designer, Chris Sawyer, went on to make another business sim called Locomotion.

What needs to be understood about OpenTTD is that it's not intended to be approached like a complete game. If you're coming from Factorio and Railroad Tycoon, for instance, you'll quickly find yourself aimless and without direction. Taking the time to set up a few mods will help you create a tailor-made experience. And that's the core strength of this open-source business sim. Its incredibly diverse set of mods supported by passionate modders means you can play OpenTTD your way and that's essentially what one could consider being the ultimate business simulation experience.

This article was written by Yannis Vatis, a contributing author for [Proqet Magazine](#) focusing on the political and business simulation genres.