



“Worry worry worry, love is passing me by,” sings the radio from my Pip-Boy as I traverse the broken wastelands of *Fallout 4*, eyes darting about madly at the ground. While fending off attacks from roaming feral ghouls and super mutant squads, my mind is fixated on a single thought: gathering adhesive. Where can I find more of it? Could I possibly have wiped out the game’s entire supply of adhesive? Does this dead raider have leftover adhesive on his body?



Nope, he does not. But I ransack his corpse anyway until he is left with only his tighty whities—which could have been a good source of cloth if Bethesda wasn't so finicky about modesty.

My love affair with junk starts here

A conniving, smooth-talking scoundrel. A battle-weary marksman. A one-punch man skilled in unarmed attacks. These are the kind of characters I expect to become when I first embark on my *Fallout 4* journey—but not an incorrigible hoarder of junk.

After the terrible nuclear explosion that wiped out most of humanity 200 years ago, post-apocalyptic Boston is brimming with junk of all sorts – coffee cups, silver spoons, cigarettes, rolls of duct tapes and even teddy bears. This is nothing new for the series, but unlike the totally unremarkable trinkets that litter the wasteland in *Fallout 3* and *Fallout: New Vegas* this junk can be further broken down into useful raw components such as ceramics, silver, cloth, and adhesive, which in turn can be used to craft anything from weapons to buildings. It is astounding how the end of the world has provided us with so many resources to rebuild our lives with.



With that out of the way, I hope you can understand how my collection of 89 dinner spoons was absolutely essential for the construction of a power generator that can produce electricity to power my entire settlement. And yes, I am very sure I needed that plastic spoon too, Codsworth.

How did I turn out like this?

Curiously, while *Fallout 3* and *Fallout: New Vegas* were not devoid of any crafting systems, I was never quite as thorough in my search for useful junk; the systems are little more than short distractions from the main game. In *Fallout 3*, schematics for various weapons, from a deathclaw gauntlet to a nuka grenade, need to be collected first before you can craft them. However, with only seven of them obtainable in the game, there really aren't that many schematics to begin with. Big deal, eh? Some merchants even sell these weapons, so hunting down their parts is honestly more tedious than avoiding hordes of pesky fire-breathing giant ants.

On the other hand, although *New Vegas's* crafting system also requires you to hunt for schematics, it has a greater focus on cooking food, like a bighorner steak or a wasteland omelet (which, by the way, is made from a deathclaw egg stolen from the clutches of an enraged deathclaw matriarch). Sure, these wasteland dishes are undoubtedly mouth-watering, but they serve more of a roleplaying purpose than truly enhancing your gameplay in any manner. Stimpaks are in great abundance too, and if I needed a quick pick-me-up, chems such as Psychos or Buffouts are conveniently located an arm's length away. Just look for the nearest drug-addled raider; a great number can be found preying on innocents at any corner of the wasteland.



This guy is not only a strung-out psychopath, he's also a great cook!

But in *Fallout 4*, crafting is absolutely essential, especially at the beginning – because the game is brutally punishing. It forces you to gather and craft all the possible weapons, armour and chems against its unforgiving wasteland. And even that might not be enough.

For instance, enemies are bigger, badder, and bolder. Even a radroach, which only inflicts measly damage in the previous games, is a force to reckoned with if you're caught off guard. What's worse is these radroaches can even sap your life away slowly through radiation poisoning – a terrible affliction that diminishes your hit points permanently until you take some Rad-Away or visit the Doc. This is a significant departure from *Fallout 3* and *New Vegas*, in which radiation only plays around with your stats slightly.

Plus, the moment you start to get comfortable with the game, a legendary-ranked enemy will materialise out of nowhere to give you a swift kick out of your comfort zone. You wouldn't know true fear until you are faced with a raging legendary deathclaw, armed with nothing but a 10mm pistol. And for all your efforts to shower a rain of bullets on the deathclaw, the attack probably feels more like a gentle massage to the hideous beast. It might just thank you for the effort, nonetheless. By ripping your head off.



Now you understand why I need to keep these stacks of teddy bears, eh? By tearing these bears apart, limb by limb, I might finally have enough leather to augment my armour's chest piece.

Hoarding is extremely rewarding though

Yet, crafting can prove to be incredibly therapeutic, though it is unfortunate that my companions look at me with such derision whenever I collect this seemingly pointless junk. I am surprised to still hear their sneering voices as I attach a jetpack to my Power Armor, made possible by the wonderglue I picked up minutes ago.

Can you fly, Piper? Can you FLY?!

All that tinkering around, though, can result in crafting some truly powerful items, like the aforementioned jetpack Power Armor that most people should be envious of. Another instance would be the laser musket I looted from a dead Minuteman at the start of the game. With some handy mods installed on the energy weapon, I sniped at a couple of rampaging Super Mutants with ease. Although that was immensely satisfying, I was still flanked by a Minigun-wielding Super Mutant Skirmisher. Taking cover from behind an indestructible crate, I started chowing down on mutt chops like I haven't had a proper meal in years – all thanks to my inclination for hoarding. My hit points restored, I quickly got back up and finished the Skirmisher off in one clean shot.



Yes, it is probably all worth it. Even though carrying around all this junk can be a huge burden, and I have to make frequent trips back to my settlement every few minutes or so. Even though I am agonising way too much about the junk that I cannot keep, because I am spending more time travelling to and fro from the wasteland to my settlement than exploring the outside world. Even though hunting and hoarding junk isn't quite the *Fallout* experience I've been waiting for for the past five years.

Wait, is playing *Fallout 4* supposed to be fun?

After sinking about 70 hours into the game, I am seeing things in a different light. The 10mm pistol I found earlier can be broken down to steel, screws, and springs. That shiny gold watch at the corner of the room? That's made up of gold, gear, and springs. The crazed raider kamikaze-ing in my direction is wearing a full suit of body armour that can be broken down into leather, rubber, steel, and cloth.

Maybe I am more of a wasteland trash collector than a wasteland saviour. Leaving any room unpicked leaves me feeling greatly unsettled, because components seem to be in such short supply all the time, that leaving anything behind feels like such a waste. And I still have yet to make my way to Diamond City, because I need to make sure my armour is augmented with raw components before I get there—just in case I get ambushed by one of these nasty synths I've heard so much about.

But to be honest, it is starting to get quite tiresome pouring through my inventory all the time just to check if I have enough materials to build my next mod.



I have no idea if this is one of *Fallout 4*'s biggest flaws – the fact that something as inconsequential as picking up rubbish has consumed me so much that it has interfered with my enjoyment of the game – or if that is evident of how well-designed the game is. Think about it: how many games offer the same degree of freedom as *Fallout 4*? Not once have I been so absorbed in a game world before, and I've played *Skyrim*. And that is a game that

allows me to catch butterflies.

For the first time in a very long while, the skies in a *Fallout* game are of a bright blue hue, filled with white wispy clouds that slowly waft over the desolate skyline of long-abandoned buildings. Get out of bed early, and you might even catch a glimpse of the morning sun peeking behind a distant hill. I wouldn't know, though. I am still too busy staring down at the dark grimy ground, looking out for any spare parts I might have missed. Worry worry worry, woe is me.

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