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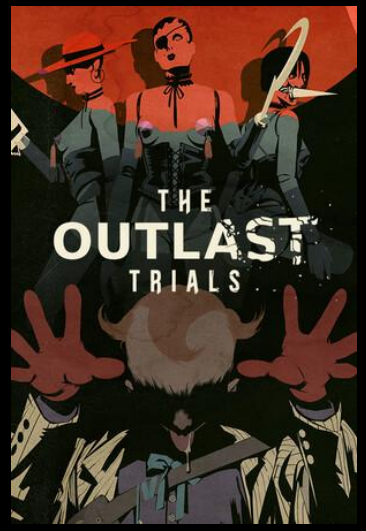
Early Access

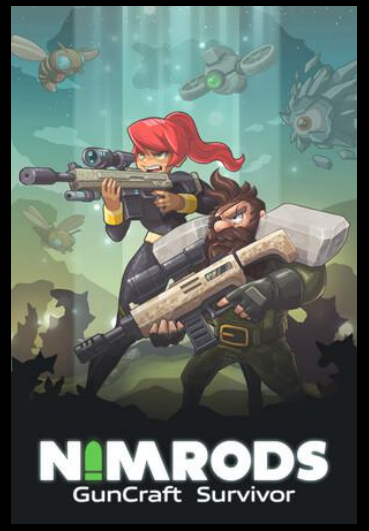
2025

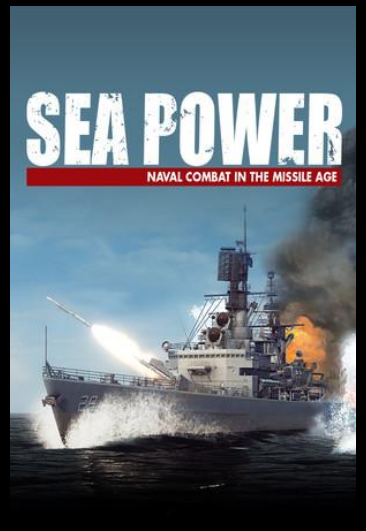
This talk:

Is Early Access still relevant?

Is Early Access different now than in the past?







Let’s learn from some of this year’s top Early Access releases.

This talk:

Is Early Access still relevant? ***YES***

Is Early Access different now than in the past? ***YES***

This talk: Early Access

- *What is it?*
- *Why/When to use it?*
- *How to prepare?*
- *How to manage it?*
- *When and how to 1.0?*

Early Access

What is it?

Early Access is:

A framework of messaging to support development in cooperation with players

Early Access is not:

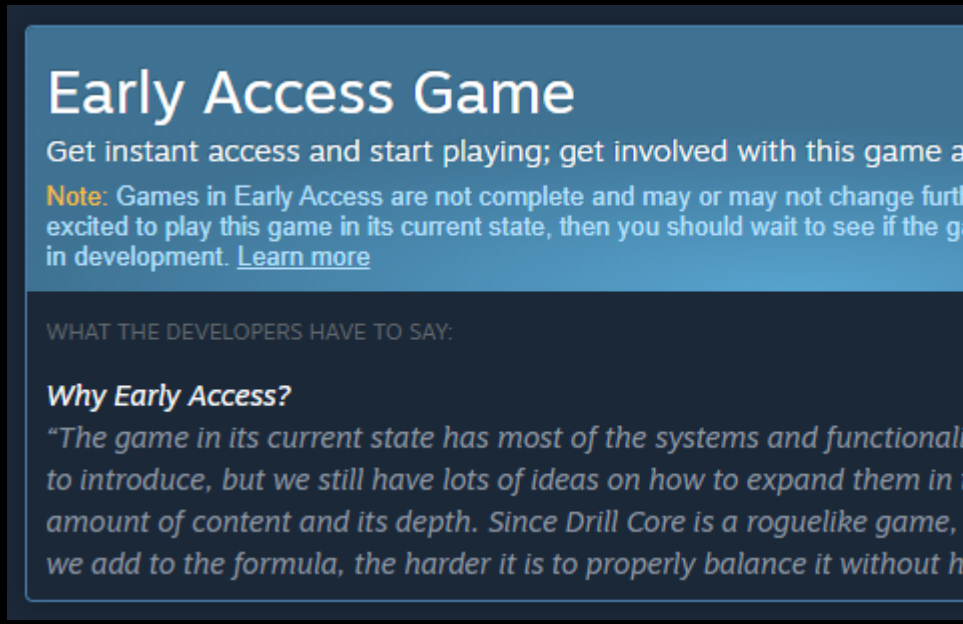
Not a marketing tool.

You still need to market your game.

Impact on presentation:

Excluded from homepage “New & Trending”

This nifty widget appears on your store page →



Early Access :

Is it still relevant?

Popular among devs and players:

14,000+ available right now

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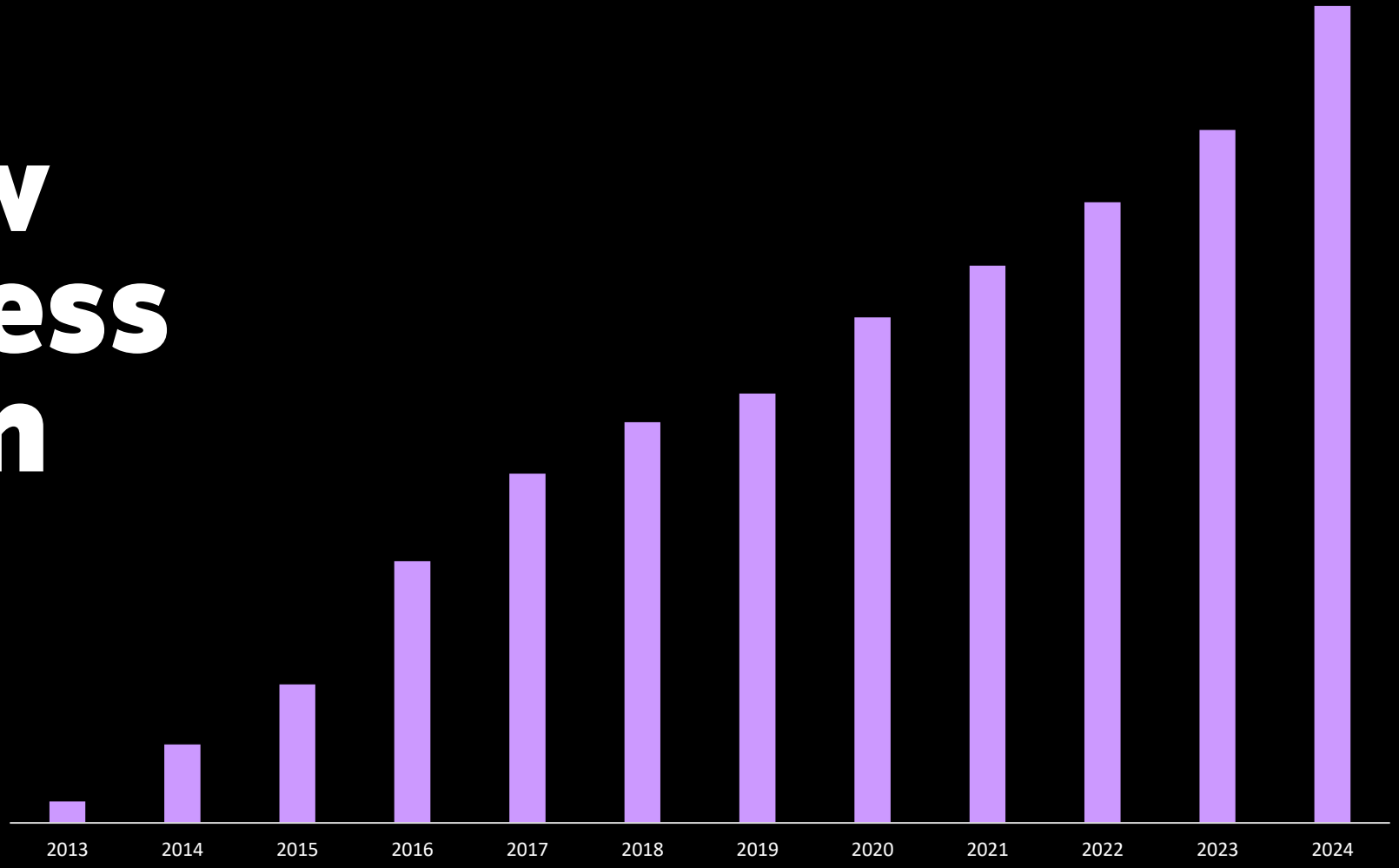
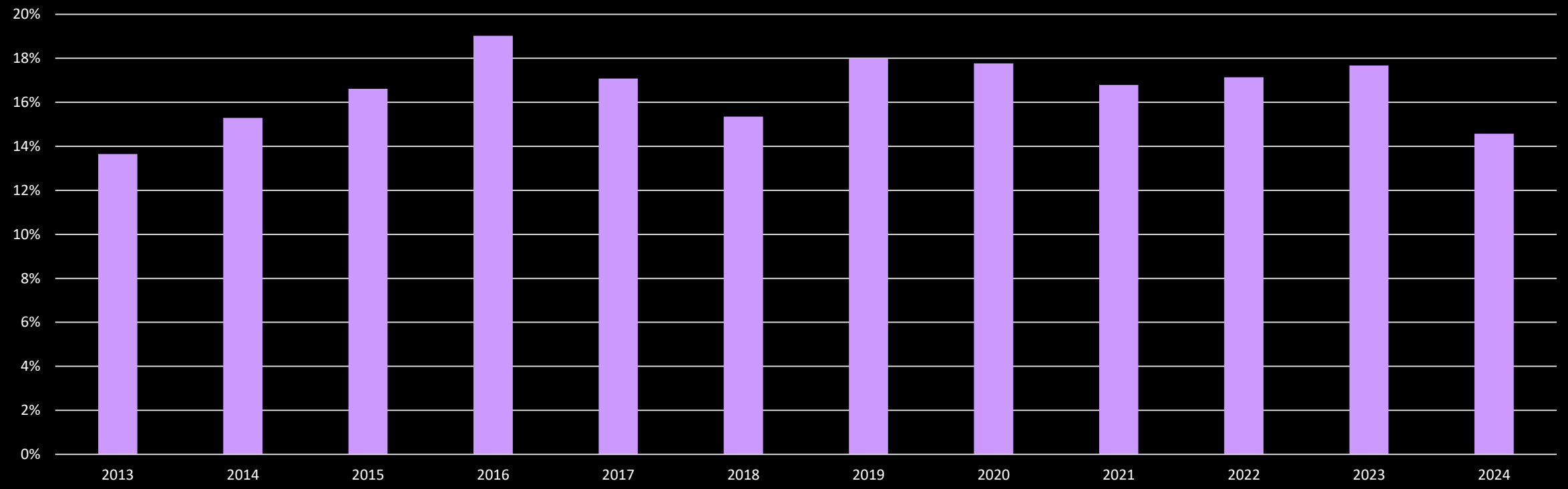
Still a popular model:

2,897 New Early Access releases in 2024



Fairly steady percentage of all releases



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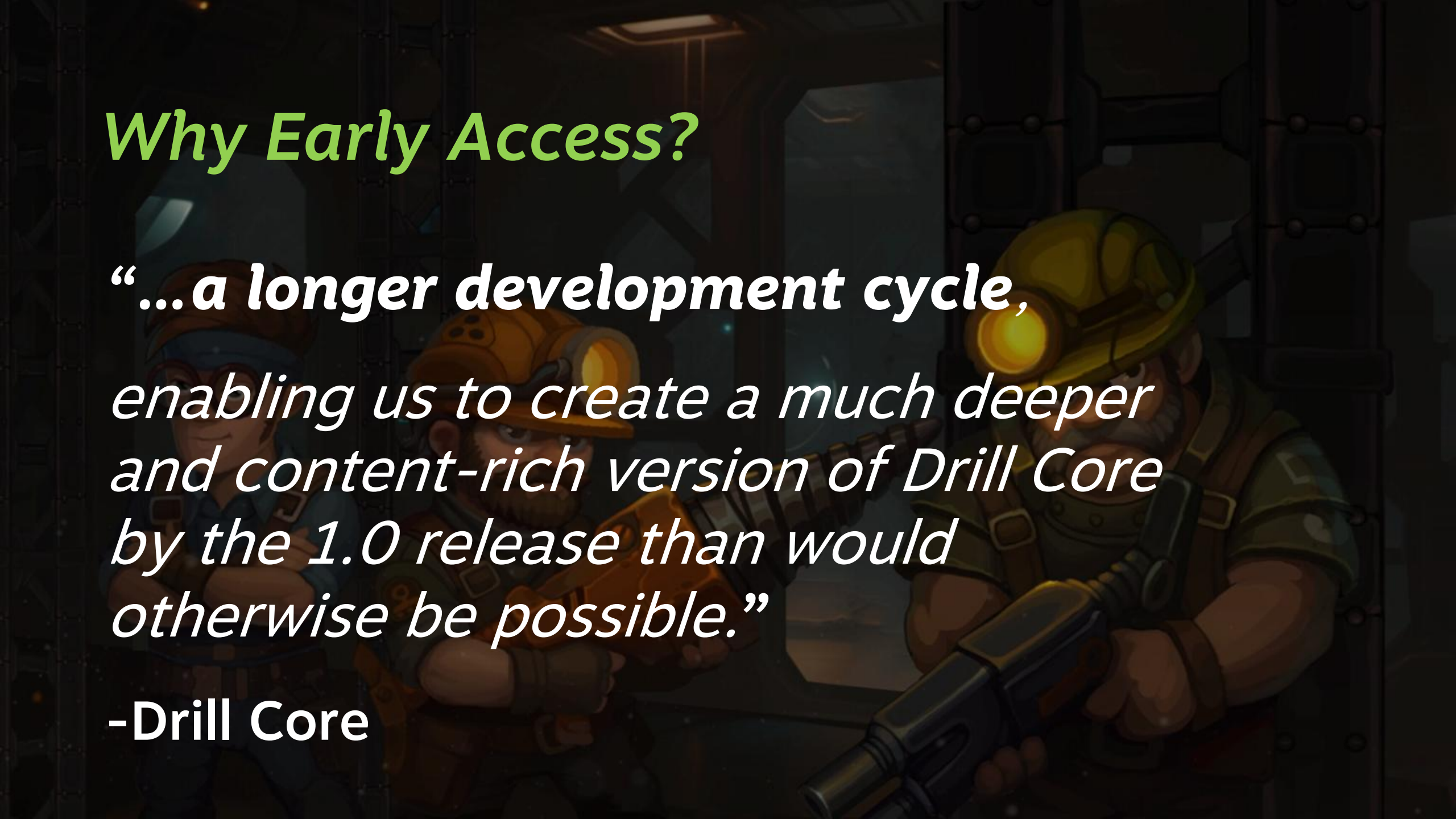
Popular among devs and players:

28% of 2024's top releases

Early Access

Why/When to use it?



Why Early Access?

*“**...a longer development cycle**,*

enabling us to create a much deeper and content-rich version of Drill Core by the 1.0 release than would otherwise be possible.”

-Drill Core

Why Early Access?

“…lots of feedback from actual players

to make the most out of Thronefall’s potential…”

Why Early Access?

“Are [the dev team] interested in engaging with the community?”

-Daedalic Entertainment

Top reasons:

- *More time for the game to cook*
- *Want player feedback*
- *Want to be engaged with players*
- *Have a system-based game*

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How to prepare?

Your team:

Excited to engage with players

Organized around this process

Plan your process:

Communicate a lot

Update regularly

Expect to adapt

Concerns going in?

“Our main concern was meeting player expectations.”

-Sea Power : Naval Combat in the Missile Age

Build confidence in your game:

Playtest prior to Early Access
(Keys, Steam Playtest, Demo, etc.)

Build a polished vertical slice

Harness your core players:

Identify players good at feedback

Form a small, dedicated group to test ideas

Establish flexible roadmap:

Internally: a clear vision for 1.0

Externally: a vague set of intentions

Flexibility to adjust priority

Early Access roadmap:

“We make it as easy for us to update as possible…”

-Deep Rock Galactic: Survivor

Early Access

How to manage it?

Advice for other devs?

“Be honest about your limitations”

- SULFUR

Best practices:

1. *Listen to feedback*
2. *Communicate regularly*
3. *Test with core fans*
4. *Update*

Interpreting feedback

“…when you have a clear vision of what you’re trying to achieve, it makes it easier to filter all the feedback”

-Outlast Trials

Listen: Interpreting feedback

Read between the lines

Use for prioritizing

Keep scope in mind

Communicate: Where players are

Make regular posts along the way; don’t build up too long

Be present in chat

Localize

Test: Harness your core fans

Deploy experimental features or initial implementations to get feedback

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Update:

Fix bugs quickly

Take longer to roll together meaningful updates

Don’t get derailed

Expanding scope only when supported by the game and audience

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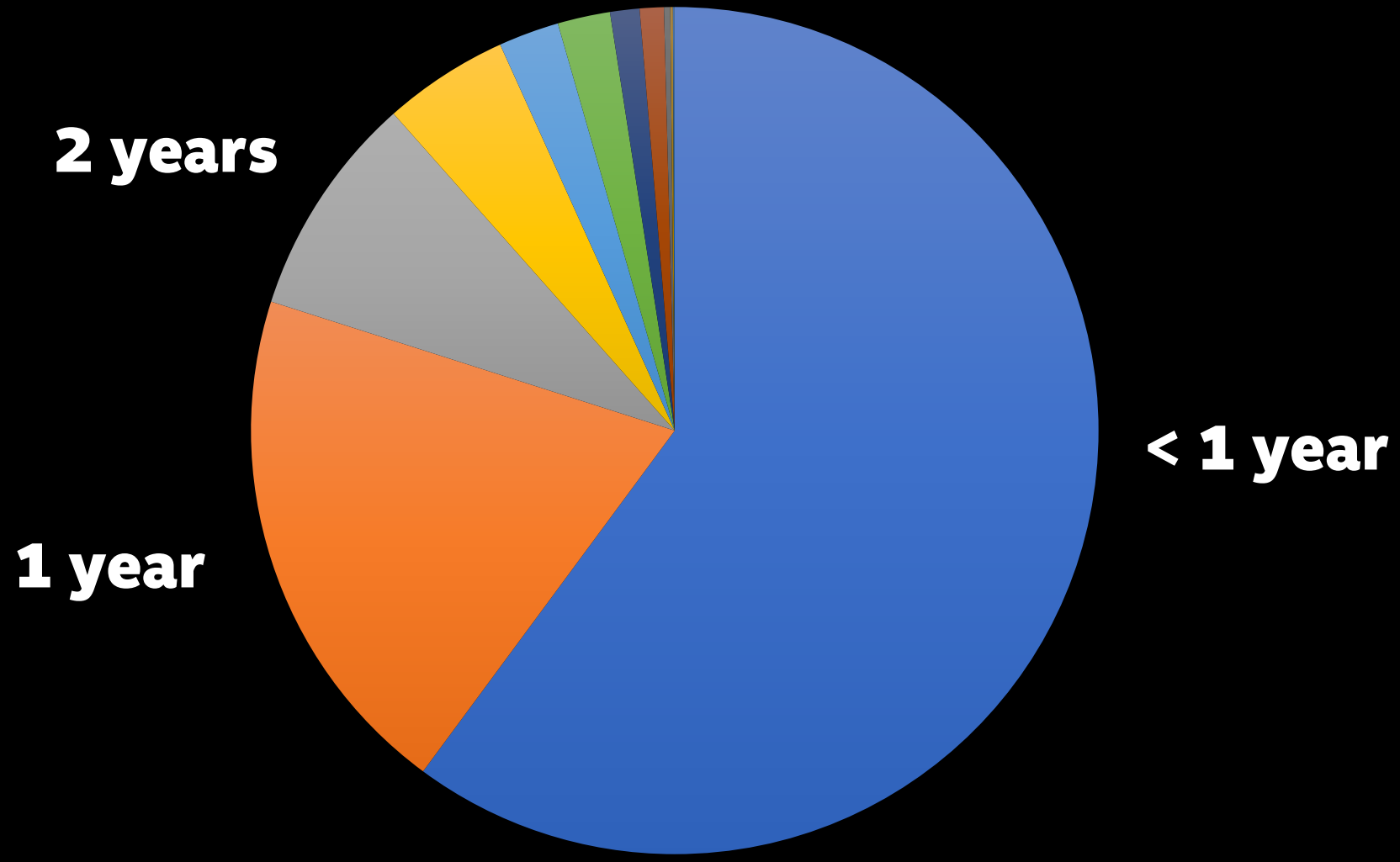
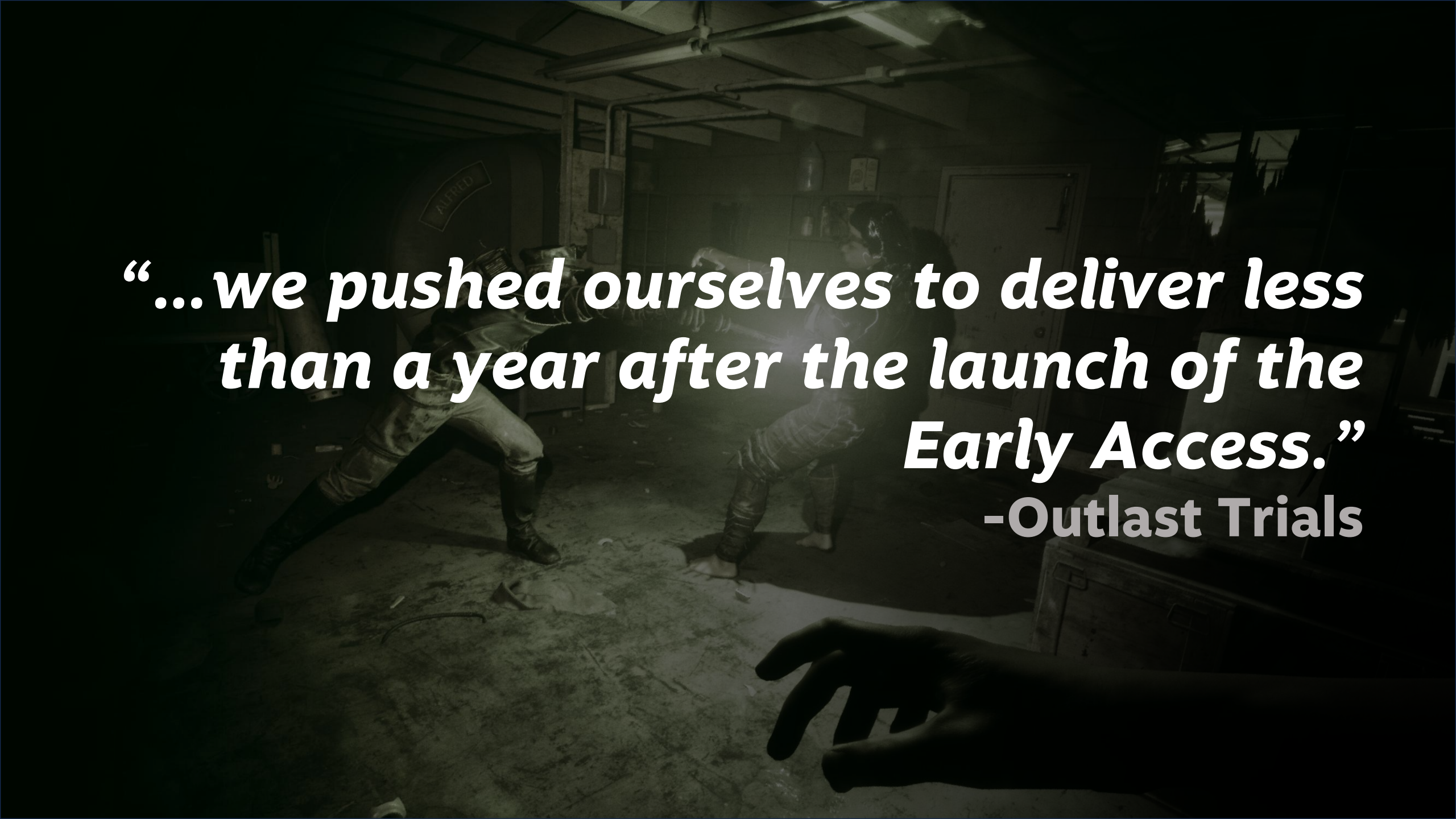
When and how to 1.0?

Time in Early Access



“If we take too long, we’ll disappoint either ourselves or our players”
-SULFUR


“...we pushed ourselves to deliver less than a year after the launch of the Early Access.”
-Outlast Trials

“When your game feels like it could be printed on a disc”
-Deep Rock Galactic: Survivor

1.0 Best practices:

1. *Make a splash*
2. *Align with other platforms*
3. *Plan ahead for price/discounts*

Make a splash

Consider more than just a big update

<Capstone update>

Align with other platforms

Consider timing your 1.0 with launch on consoles

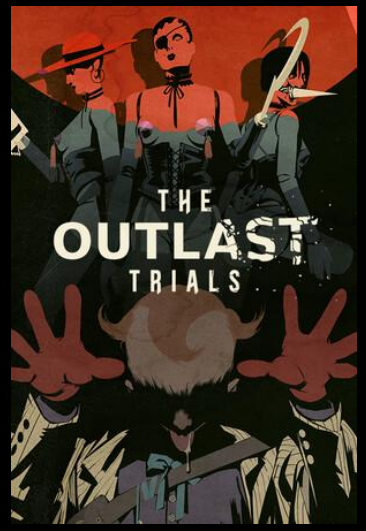
Plan ahead for price/discounts

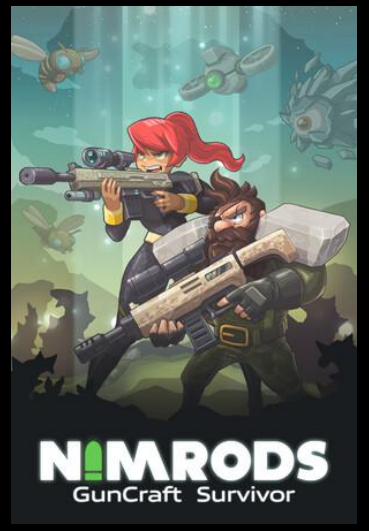
- **Price of your game at launch**
- **Launch discount**
- **Upcoming event opportunities**

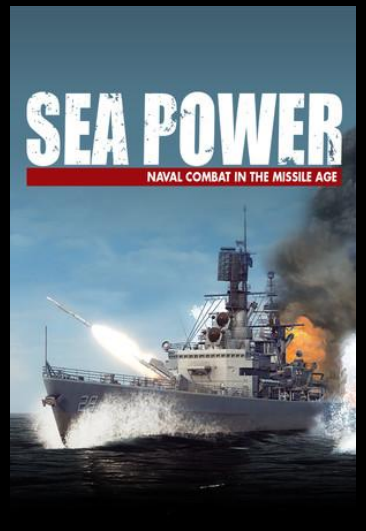
This talk:

Is Early Access still relevant? ***YES, as popular as ever***

Is Early Access different now than in the past? ***YES, higher expectations***







Thank you to these fine folks!

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Thank you

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