PvP

What is PvP?

PvP stands for *Player Versus Player* as distinct from PvE or *Player Versus Environment*; that is, normal, storyline play against the AI. Some players find PvP thrilling and rewarding, and even go so far as to sacrifice PvE utility in their Character Builds to facilitate effectiveness in PvP.

In Dark Souls, when playing online, PvP is accomplished by any given player using one of several online-only items to "invade" another player's world or to lay down a challenge which another player can either accept or reject as seen fit. The worlds connect within set level ranges and requirements. Further information on the various methods of initiating PvP is detailed below.

What happens in PvP?

Two or more players fight to the death. The winner receives different rewards depending on their method of invasion, which includes Souls and Humanity, or other items. These rewards are gifted to the winner by the game and are not removed from the loser's inventory.

The loser is sent to the last Bonfire they used, and depending on the method of invasion they will either lose nothing at all, or find a bloodstain containing their lost souls and humanity either where they died, or where they used their multiplayer item.

During an invasion, the area is locked with fog gates; the host cannot exit the area, though they may still initiate a boss fight by passing through a boss' fog gate, which will immediately send the invader home. If a Black Phantom and a Spirit of Vengeance invade the same world and one kills the other, the winner will obtain souls, but their ultimate goal remains unfinished; killing the host. If the player being invaded loses, they can use the Indictment item to add their invader's name to the Book of the Guilty, depending on the invader's type.

You cannot be invaded if you are Hollowed.

What happens if I'm in the <u>Book of the Guilty</u>?

If your name is in the <u>Book of the Guilty</u> for any reason, members of the <u>Blade of the Darkmoon</u> covenant can randomly invade your world as a <u>Spirit of Vengeance</u> by using their <u>Blue Eye Orb</u>. You cannot be targeted; it is a random, level-appropriate draw, and is based on your current area. See the <u>Book of the Guilty</u> for more information.

How do I invade?

At the beginning of the game, you can only invade by using a <u>Cracked Red Eye Orb</u>, which is consumed upon use. You can later gain other items from <u>Covenants</u> to invade. Any player can use the <u>Red Sign Soapstone</u> once found, which will lay down a Red <u>Soul Sign</u> for other players to invite you to invade. You can only use this if you are in human form.

Covenant PvP

There are multiple ways to PvP, depending on which covenant you join.

- The <u>Forest Hunter</u> covenant uses the <u>Cat Covenant Ring</u> which, when equipped, will summon you to invade human form players in the <u>Darkroot Garden</u>. You don't need to be in human form to use it.
- The <u>Blade of the Darkmoon</u> covenant has two ways of PvP: invade a player that has sinned by using the <u>Blue Eye Orb</u>, or wear the <u>Darkmoon Blade Covenant Ring</u> and be summoned to invade players in sunlight-less <u>Anor Londo</u> (that is, if they have killed <u>Princess Gwynevere</u>). Both items can also be used in hollow form.
- The <u>Gravelord Servant</u> covenant allows you to use the <u>Eye of Death</u> item; this places a Gravelord <u>Soul Sign</u> that causes stronger enemies to occur[1] in three players' worlds within <u>co-op range</u>. If they find the sign, they can invade your world to stop the effects of this item. Beware, this means that by invoking this power you could be subject to three other invading players! The sign is not visible to the player who caused it, the only indication to the Gravelord Servant that they are under the <u>Eye of Death</u> effect is a black aura emanating from the character.

- The Darkwraith Covenant uses Cracked Red Eye Orbs, which let you invade a random player's world. After advancing your Covenant Level to +1, you will be rewarded with the Red Eye Orb which has infinite uses.
- The Path of the Dragon covenant lets you place a Soul Sign by using the Dragon Eye. Other players can then summon you to invade their worlds. If you kill the host, you gain a Dragon Scale for covenant advancement. You don't need to be in human form to use it.

Where can I invade?

- Consult the list of invasion spawn locations.
- You can invade in every area except the Undead Asylum, the Valley of Drakes, The Great Hollow, and Ash Lake, which do not allow multiplayer activity.

Where can I find the Cracked Red Eye Orb?

- There are 4 near the Firelink Shrine area.
- There are also 6 more in the New Londo Ruins before The Four Kings boss.
- They can also be bought from Darkstalker Kaathe in the Abyss.

Where can I get the Red Eye Orb?

- Join the Darkwraith Covenant. After advancing to level +1, you will receive one as a reward.

What's the Blue Eye Orb?

- It's an orb that specifically allows you to invade those that are in the Book of the Guilty — obtained by joining the Blade of the Darkmoon covenant. Only members of this covenant

can use the item, and their invading <u>Phantoms</u> will be <u>Spirits of Vengeance</u>.

What determines the soul amount received?

- The amount of souls you get is determined solely by the <u>level</u> of your opponent. The amount of souls they're carrying has no impact on the amount you receive.
  - It is a percentage of the amount of souls it cost the opponent to level up from their previous level to their current one. An invader gets 10% of that amount, and a host gets 50% of that amount.
  - For example, it costs 90401 souls to level up from level 119 to level 120. When an invader kills a level 120 host, they will receive 9040 souls (10% of 90401). When a host kills a level 120 invader, they will receive 45,200 souls (50% of 90401).
- An invader killing a white or gold <u>phantom</u> will receive the same amount of souls as if those players were hosts (10%).
- An invader killing another invader will receive 25% of their previous level-up-cost (half of what the host receives for killing the same player).

PvP Tips

Dealing with Failed Connections

The <u>multiplayer items</u> require that various conditions are met for a successful connection to be made. If an invasion item is usable but doesn't find another player after searching for a minute, you will receive a "Failed to Invade" message. There are a few reasons why this might be the case.

- Your IP pool hasn't grown large enough yet

  Dark Souls doesn't make use of dedicated servers. Instead, when you log online, you will get paired with a list of available players that grows larger over time, referred to by the community as the "IP pool." When you first start the game, you will not be connected to as many people than if you were to wait over ten minutes instead.

- There aren't many hosts in human form, within your <u>level range</u>, where you are trying to invade

  To be able to invade in a given area successfully, it is recommended that you remain in

the suggested co-op level range, or within the end-game PvP meta, which is typically between levels 100-125. It is still possible to invade outside of these ranges, but you will encounter more failed invasion attempts in the process. Darkmoons can level up a bit higher since they can invade further below their level than any other covenant or item.

Some locations are much more popular for PvP than others. Some of the "PvP Hotspots" include the Undead Burg, Undead Parish, Darkroot Forest, Sen's Fortress, Anor Londo, Oolacile Township, and the Kiln of the First Flame.

- For Darkmoon invaders, there aren't enough hosts who have sinned and are logged in the Book of the Guilty.

  Because of the more limiting conditions that are needed to find a host, the frequency of failed invasions when trying to use the Blue Eye Orb will always be higher than that of the Red Eye Orb. Patience is required for finding successful Darkmoon invasions. To minimize failed invasion attempts, trying locations that have higher online activity than others are recommended. It is also less common for low-level hosts to have sinned, so being a very low-leveled Darkmoon invader is also not recommended.

Setting up a Duel

Setting up PvP with a specific person can be difficult due to the way Dark Souls was designed to facilitate connections between strangers primarily. You need to make sure you and your partner are within the appropriate level range of each other, and that various conditions are met. The level ranges and requirements are detailed on the online matchmaking page.

- Instead of invading, consensual summoning generally recommended. Using an item like the Red Sign Soapstone offers the chance for a host to summon a player based on their sign, which will display the player's gamertag and confirm who they are beforehand. Otherwise, a random invasion attempt carries no guarantee that the invader will target their PvP partner.
- Using a form of external communication to coordinate with your partner is almost essential, as there is no in-game chat.
- The player who wishes to be summoned should place their sign somewhere that is less likely to be found by other random players. Hiding your sign around a blind corner or underneath breakable objects increases the chances that your PvP partner will be the only person to find your sign.

Duel and Invasion Etiquette

There are no official rules. As an invader, it is your job to kill a host as you see fit. If you're invaded, you may likewise attempt to kill or evade the invader as you see fit. However, players generally distinguish "no rules" PvP as a separate way of playing from "dueling." In a duel, there are usually several unwritten but consistent rules:

- Do not heal using Estus or Humanity
- Do not retreat from the area you're fighting in
- Do not gank the other player (ganging up on them in a 2v1 or 3v1 situation)
- Allow the other player to cast a buff, consume an item, or complete a gesture at the beginning of the encounter (don't attack too soon)
- Baiting Invaders/Hosts into traps or NPC ambushes is usually frowned upon. Be mindful of your surroundings and try to memorize enemy locations before summoning an invader or going human.

The general idea behind a duel is to have a fair fight. Different communities will often impose stricter rules, where certain combinations of spells, gear, and attack methods are disallowed. However, it is highly recommended to expect that strangers will not follow any rules. The more rules a player would like to see enacted in a duel, the more they should seek out pre-arranged matches where the rules are agreed upon in advance. You can never assume that a stranger will know or care to abide by the same ruleset you are following.

Because there is no in-game mechanic for distinguishing the type of encounter you will have, it is best to keep an open mind and expect different behavior in different situations. Generally, players looking for consensual PvP will likely lean towards a dueling-style of play, while random invaders may lean towards a "no rules" style of play. However, neither are a given. Perhaps most importantly, if you're a host trying to clear an area, NEVER expect an invader to be respectful of your mission. Many will attempt to defeat you ruthlessly, which is entirely in the spirit of the game. Similarly, a host that is trying to beat a level has almost no tactics at their disposal that can be considered unfair, including ganging up on an invader with a group of friends.

Avoiding Unwanted PvP

A player can safely avoid invasions using one of the two following methods:

- Remaining in hollow-form
- Playing offline

To be invaded, a player must be in human form, having selected the option to reverse-hollow at a bonfire, in an area where the area boss remains undefeated. There are incentives for the player to go human, like being able to kindle a fire to receive more Estus charges. These things do not have to be avoided, as the player can do this offline or commit suicide after they've gotten what they wanted to block invasions again.

Impending invasions can also be detected in advance. Area boundaries will have fog gates go up that block the area off, and certain multiplayer items like the <u>White Sign Soapstone</u> will become grayed out in the HUD, indicating that its' disabled due to an impending invasion (that may take another ~10 to ~40 seconds to occur). If the player realizes they forgot to do one of the above and does not want to engage in PvP, they should do everything they can to look out for impending invasions and quit BEFORE an invader ever shows up. At all costs, avoid disconnecting on another player once they've entered your world. It is considered rude because of the legitimate in-game means to detect and prevent invasions.

PvP Strategies and Concepts

Backstabs

Backstabs can deal out massive <u>critical damage</u>, making them a very deadly and common tactic in PvP.

Backstab Window:

Newer players will often be surprised by how wide the backstab window appears. Partly due to the small amount of lag that's inherent in even good connections, players will often be backstabbed by their opponent when they did not appear to be directly behind them. If an opponent is attempting to circle behind you, they may be able to achieve the backstab already when they only appear at your side. Similarly, if a player is running straight at you, they may be attempting to brush past your shoulder and quickly turn around for a backstab. In this situation, it can appear as if you were backstabbed while your opponent was touching your shoulder from the front.

If the players are experiencing significant lag, then "lagstabs" will sometimes occur, causing the player to get backstabbed when it appeared as if the other player was nowhere near them. A poor connection with extreme lagging makes PvP difficult to judge since you cannot be sure of the location of your opponent. Though when players have a decent connection with each other, extreme lagstabbing should not occur.

Lock-engaged Backstab:

This is a backstabbing technique that involves sprinting past the side of your opponent while locked-on. The lock-on will cause you to rotate to face the character again, putting you in a position to backstab them if you quickly get behind them. <u>(video demonstration)</u>

If you can recognize an opponent attempting to pull off a lock-engaged backstab on you, it can be countered by likewise rotating around your opponent as they try to approach, where you put them in a position to be backstabbed instead. <u>(video demonstration)</u>

Pivot Backstab:

The pivot backstab is virtually identical to the lock-engaged backstab, though it is done without locking on; this requires manually turning around quickly when you run past your opponent since the camera lock-on isn't engaged and will not do it for you. A bonus to this method is that it can be easier to get behind someone who is backing away than if you were locked on. (video demonstration)

Roll Backstab:

The roll backstab is a more advanced technique that involves rolling through an enemy's attack, from a distance and angle that places you in a position to immediately backstab them when you stand up. (video demonstration)

Chain Backstab:

Backstabs can be chained so that a player attempting to get away after recovering from a previous backstab can be backstabbed again. It is a deadly cycle with various strategies to achieve and counter. (video demonstration)

The Importance of Poise

The player's poise stat determines what kind of hits they can receive without being stunned; this is important because a stunned player is without defense, and can wind up in a stunlock. It can also provide an advantage for offensive tactics, where the player may be able to take a hit while they're getting into the position for a backstab and not be interrupted.

Poise Break Points:

The community refers to various specific values as "poise break points", which is the minimum amount of poise needed to withstand particular attacks. For example, a 1-handed R1 attack from a Katana will drain 20 poise from an opponent. At 20 poise or less, the attacked player is guaranteed to be stunned by the hit. Therefore, the poise needed for that attack is 21.

Some of the more popular poise breakpoints include 8, 31, 41, 53, and 76:

- While 8 poise doesn't offer much protection, it allows withstanding 1-handed or 2-handed dagger attacks or stepping out of lava from Chaos Storm and the Great Chaos Fireball
- 31 poise allows the player to withstand both 1-handed and 2-handed R1 attacks from most non-heavy weapons, including Straight Swords, Curved Swords, and Katanas
- 41 poise allows the player to withstand two consecutive 1-handed R1 attacks from most non-heavy weapons, as well as Great Combustion

- 53 poise withstands 2-handed R1 attacks from Curved Greatswords, Greatswords, Hammers, and Axes
- 76 poise withstands 2-handed R1 attacks from Ultra Greatswords, Greataxes, and Great Hammers

Sources of Poise:

- Players will often mix and match armor to achieve a desirable combination of poise and weight
- Heavier armors offer more poise, while lighter armors typically provide little or none
- An example of relatively light armor with poise is the Hollow Soldier Set, with the Hollow Soldier Waistcloth often considered desirable for its poise-to-weight ratio
- The Wolf Ring is a popular item because it offers 40 poise without any weight

Avoiding Stunlocks

When a hit triggers a stun animation on a player, this can allow the attacker to strike again while they're stunned. With the right weapon and sufficient stamina, the attacker may be able to keep attacking while the victim is locked into a reoccurring stun animation. If a player is unable to avoid or escape a stunlock, it is often deadly. Players equipped in light armor need to be particularly wary of stunlocking.

Toggle Escaping

A "toggle escape" is a glitch that is commonly used to evade a stunlock when the player does not have enough poise to withstand it. It is achieved by pressing left or right on the d-pad to toggle to your next right or left-hand weapon, and it must be done slightly *before* the attack hits the player.

(video demonstration)

Dead Angles

A Dead Angle is a type of hit that allows an attack to ignore a shield's defense. It is a mechanic resulting from how the game handles blocking. For a block to be successful, the game considers only the angle you're facing, relative to your opponent. If your opponent attacks to the side or away from you, this treats it as if you are blocking in the wrong direction.

Though it can theoretically work with almost any attack type, weapons that have attacks with broad horizontal sweeps are preferred; this is because the wide hitbox makes it easier to make contact with your opponent if you're facing a perpendicular angle to them. The angle at which a

Dead Angle can be achieved depends on the specific weapon and attack being used, in some cases working at a 90° angle to your opponent, other times even working at a complete 180°. (video demonstration)

Dead Angling can also make the Wrath of the Gods miracle dangerous, since casting the spell facing away from your opponent will likewise hit them as if their shield isn't up. With a bit of practice, though, it can be somewhat easily countered by rolling through the blast and taking advantage of the opponent facing away from you by backstabbing them.

Dead Angling is only present in Dark Souls, not Dark Souls Remastered.

Status Effects

In PVP, the buildup of status effects (Bleed, Poison, and Toxic) occurs as standard on a hit, but it should be noted that buildup occurs at its full rate even if blocked.

Footnotes

1. These enemies only spawn in NG+ and above

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