

0. Introduction

Elite dangerous is a space game in which you start with a simple spaceship and some credits and you have to explore galaxy, fulfill contracts, trade and encounter other players or AI. You can play the game solo or in MMO style with other people in it. There are over 30 ships to choose from and all are customizable so there is a lot of choices and fun to be had. The experience I will be focusing on is the VR part of the game.



1. Why is it a good use of VR or AR?

Let me premise it by saying I am not a big fan of spaceships or space in general. However, I definitely find the experience of it very unique and interesting. So why exactly is it a good use of VR? Well, it is an experience none of us can have as of right now and even if it was possible it would cost a fortune. On top of getting unique experience you cannot have in real life it also promotes and supports the current VR game industry. The more people will buy it and use it the more and better games will show up on the market to compete with each other. That also is thanks to technology going forward pretty quickly so the prices of those headsets will go down and become more accessible to all users across the globe.



2. Who are its intended users?

I think anyone who wants to experience how it would feel to fly a spaceship should be on board. I would also include anyone who wants to experience something new or unique or simply experience something that is not available in real world. That being said, there are a lot of controls and the gameplay loop is definitely catered towards gamers who want to pilot spaceship, engage in space fights or explore. I couldn't call the game casual or newbie friendly so the intended users are definitely limited by the complexity.



3. What are the positives?

- Unique experience. I think the biggest selling point of the game is the experience it provides. I mean who doesn't want to at least try sitting behind big spaceship and fly in the space? You also have things like docking and light speed travel you can do as well as combat with other spaceships, exploring the galaxy, accepting and fulfilling requests for money, buying and customizing new spaceships and scanning entities. The number of things the game offers to the player is big. Not only that, but you can also meet other players and fight with them if you so choose. I think the experience itself is definitely worth it.



- The feel of realism. The graphics and realism the game brings is top notch. Player can expect to really feel like he/she is piloting the spaceship through the vast space. The audio aspect alongside the viewer centered perspective and natural interaction makes the experience feel very natural. The field of vision also did not seem off in any way so it added to the realism I could feel. You could compare the experience to flying an airplane except it is in different setting and the machine itself is more advanced for precise and fast maneuvers. Overall, in terms of technology used, all things like interaction, audio, tracking and perspective make the experience feel very real.



- Sitting experience. I think that VR definitely thrives in experiences where you don't have to move character in game from the first-person perspective. The reason why movement can dump the experience is because it doesn't feel natural to see things from first person and be able to interact with them and yet having to use controllers for movement in game. Some games even opt in for teleportation movement to avoid other issues like nausea for example. Since the player is sitting in the cockpit piloting the spaceship there is no issues with having to hold something physical to fly the machine. Overall, it makes sense and is realistic. I think you can also replace use of controllers with something like joystick to mimic the spaceship handle to even further enhance the experience.



- Menus are cool. The way the company handled the menus in VR is really impressive. You can access 5 different windows with tabs in them. The left one is used for navigation, transactions, contacts, sub-targets and inventory. While the right one is used for profile information, modules, fire groups, ship, inventory and status. In the profile tab you can also see some more in-depth information like codex for example. Now the rest of the menus are there for dialog communication with other players or reading the dialog from NPCs. Another one of them also is used to display the current tasks or missions. I really liked how menus worked in the game since this is how I would imagine it being in the future, I look to the left and menu pops up and I can choose whatever I need from it and then I stop looking left and menu disappears. Extremely cool touch and it definitely caught my attention.

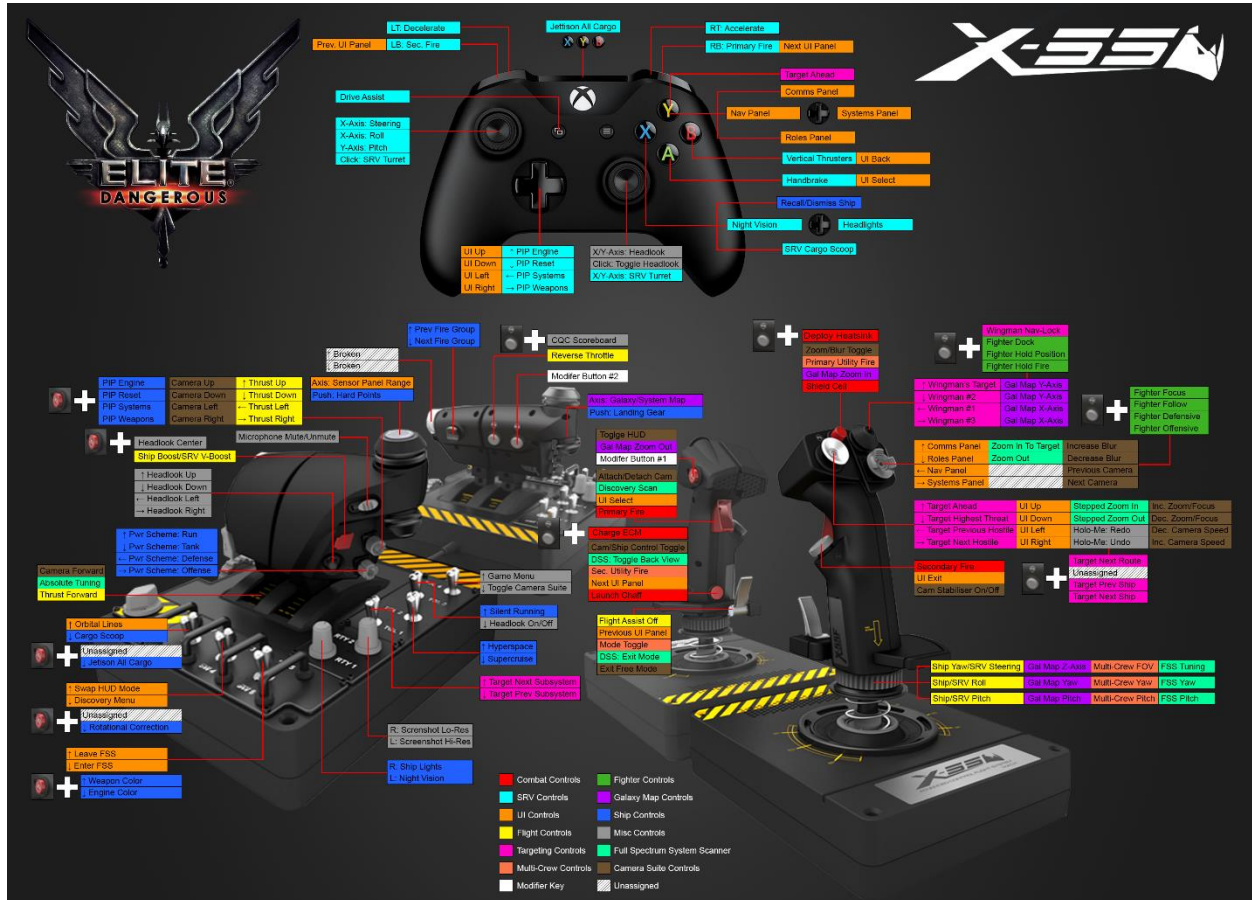


- Customization. The number of things you can customize in this game are insane. From many buttons and layouts to customizations in game like different spaceships, their color/design and their equipment. Each ship will feel different and excel at different type of play so players can really fine tune their experience to what they want.



4. What are the negatives?

- Controls. The main issue with controls I have is the fact there are a lot of them. It is less of an issue because of the game itself but rather issue of piloting complex machine. Especially when I use oculus controllers there are just not enough buttons to have everything there so some options are delegated to keyboard and having to take helmet off or lift it up a bit so I can press one button is definitely not ideal and breaks the immersion.



- Complexity. I touched on it a bit before but the game is really complex. And honestly it makes sense for something that tries to stay close and real to how piloting a plane or in this case spaceship would be. Since developers wanted the realism it makes the game pretty complex with a lot of buttons, menus, modes and HUD elements to know and keep in mind. In this case it is both positive and negative since even though it adds to realism it scares casual or new people like me from the game due to the learning curve needed in order to fully experience and enjoy the ride.

- Nausea. Let me premise it by saying I do not have nausea problems in any games I played on PC and few games I played on VR. Honestly, I don't even know if that is what I was feeling but there was definitely something off. It might have been wrong configuration of the physical helmet but I definitely felt a bit tired after playing for barely 30 minutes or so. That being said it would not surprise me if the game was prone to have its users experience those kinds of problems since you are moving your camera all over the place along all the axis and flying such machine with constant camera movement can definitely tire people out or make them feel nausea.

- Menus. While I really liked the idea of menus and still think it works and looks super cool, I did have one issues with it. Namely, whenever you are trying to move your heard into specific direction to see something you might trigger a menu focus and your buttons now act inside of the menu so you lose control over the spaceship. What I mean by that is for example button that was designed to increase throttle now acts as a tab switcher in the menu. It becomes really annoying when that happens. I understand the limitations of buttons already as it is so I understand the choice and am of full support for it. Maybe I would make it so you can lock the access to menus? In that case you would have to unlock it every time you want to actually access the menu so maybe there is just no perfect solution for that.

5. Final comments

The game itself is super worth it in my opinion. I would try it out first before buying especially with the VR use to make sure it does not make you feel nausea but that should go for pretty much every VR game. The good use of physicality, sitting experience, audio, graphics and gameplay premise with the gameplay loop makes the game realistic and enjoyable at the same time. The only thing that could hold you back is the complexity of the game but if you can overcome it, I bet the game will be extremely fun to play. I think that as a VR application this is an outstanding experience to be had at least once to feel the vast space and control of the spaceship.

