UX Audit: First-Time Experience in Dead Island 2

1. General Information

- *Game Title: Dead Island 2*

- *Developer / Publisher: Dambuster Studio / Deep Silver*

- *Release Date: April 21, 2023*

- *Platform Tested: PC*

- *Version Analyzed: October 2024 Patch*

- *Session Duration: 2 hours*

- *Audit Type: First-Time User Experience (FTUE)*

2. Executive Summary

Dead Island 2 delivers a strong first-time user experience. The interface is clean, menus are responsive, and the onboarding process is organically integrated into the narrative. Controls feel fluid and intuitive, and the game supports a wide variety of settings, including some HUD customization. However, the title lacks essential accessibility features such as colorblind modes, controller remapping, and cognitive support. These missing features represent the primary friction points for players with specific needs.

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3. Audit Objectives

- *Evaluate the overall user experience during a first gameplay session*

- *Identify friction points related to UI, navigation, and mechanic comprehension*

- *Provide concrete, actionable UX recommendations*

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4. Methodology

- *Direct observation and annotation of a first-time play session*

- *Evaluation grid based on:*

    - *Bastien & Scapin's ergonomic criteria*

    - *Nielsen's 10 usability heuristics*

    - *Game UX design best practices*

- *Focus areas: onboarding, readability, navigation, feedback, accessibility*

5. Detailed UX Analysis

5.1 Title Screen & Menus

✅ Menus are responsive, clean, and intuitive.
✅ Keyboard/mouse controls are fully remappable.
✅ Video and audio settings are complete and well-documented.
✅ Controllers can be switched on the fly.
✅ HUD elements are highly customizable.

⚠️ Some options are unclear — e.g., "dynamic HUD" is not explained.
⚠️ Accessibility options are minimal: only subtitles (adjustable in size).
⚠️ No visual accessibility or colorblind support.
⚠️ No full controller remapping.
⚠️ Language options are limited (e.g., no Dutch).

> **Recommendation**: Add tooltips or preview text for menu items before entering submenus. Provide more robust accessibility and language options.

5.2 Tutorial & Onboarding

✅ The tutorial is well integrated into the narrative and does not interrupt gameplay.
✅ Mechanics are introduced progressively to avoid cognitive overload.
✅ Visual and sound feedback are effective and clearly linked to player actions.
✅ All tutorial information is revisitable through the menu.
✅ The game avoids over-restrictive guidance while maintaining clarity.

> **No major issues identified in this area.**

5.3 In-Game Interface (HUD)

✅ HUD is clean and minimal by default, with adjustable visibility.
✅ Critical information (health, stamina, objectives) is well prioritized.
✅ Clear visual hierarchy — QTE prompts appear near the point of interaction and are instantly noticeable.
✅ Objectives are indicated on-screen with clear yellow markers.
✅ HUD elements can be disabled or adjusted individually.

Some HUD options (e.g., "dynamic HUD") lack explanation.
⚠️ *Yellow objective markers cannot be recolored — potential issue for colorblind players.*

> **Recommendation***: Provide color options for objective markers and clarify advanced HUD settings in the menu.*

5.4 Controls & Ergonomics

✅ *Controls are fluid and responsive.*
✅ *Hit feedback is immediate and satisfying.*
✅ *Keyboard/mouse keybindings are customizable.*
✅ *Controller layout follows standard conventions (e.g., RT to hit, B to crouch).*
✅ *Core interactions are intuitive.*

⚠️ *Controller remapping is not supported.*

> **Recommendation***: Add full remapping support for gamepads.*

5.5 Accessibility

✅ *Subtitles are available by default and font size can be adjusted.*
✅ *Remapping is available for keyboard/mouse.*
✅ *HUD and interface elements can be simplified or hidden.*

❌ *No colorblind mode.*
❌ *No font or contrast adjustment.*
❌ *No cognitive, visual, or motor disability support.*
❌ *No controller remapping.*
❌ *No audio visualization options.*

> **Recommendation***: Add a basic accessibility suite including colorblind filters, input remapping, and subtitle customization (background, font, contrast).*

6. UX Summary Table

UX Aspect	Strengths	Weaknesses
Menus	Smooth, intuitive navigation	Lacks descriptive previews in submenu entries
Onboarding	Seamless narrative integration	None noted
Interface	Minimalist and functional layout	Some advanced settings not clearly explained
Controls	Responsive and fluid gameplay	No controller remapping
Accessibility	Subtitles present and enabled by default	No colorblind support, font adjustment, or controller remap

7. UX Recommendations

1. Add descriptions or preview text for submenu content

2. Allow full remapping of controller inputs

3. Provide color customization for visual markers (e.g., objectives)

4. Introduce basic accessibility features (colorblind modes, font contrast)

5. Clarify ambiguous settings like "dynamic HUD" with tooltips or examples

8. Conclusion

Dead Island 2 offers a strong first impression in terms of usability, fluidity, and tutorial integration. However, to provide an inclusive experience and meet modern accessibility expectations, the game needs to expand its support for color vision deficiencies, cognitive load reduction, and physical input customization. These enhancements would benefit not only disabled players, but also a broader audience seeking customizable experiences.