

## Get out and Exercise - Zombies, Run!

Summer is a great time to get out and enjoy the outdoors. With their warm days and cool nights, the mild northeast summers are perfect for just about any type of exercise. For me, I have squeezed in some soccer, canoeing, bicycling, swimming, and running. And while I did manage to put in *some* time gaming over the summer, it has been very limited. I wrote about my love-hate relationship with Diablo III last month, and while I finally finished end of the game on Inferno difficulty, there is not much more to write about (for now, I won't get into patch 1.04, which looks to be a game changer). Nonetheless, gaming has very much been on the back burner. So just as I was about to give up this month because I had nothing to write about, I recalled that I have been playing a game on my iPhone throughout the spring and summer that is very much worth mentioning. It slipped under my radar because it's not a game in the traditional sense.

Released about 6 months ago, *Zombies, Run!* is an augmented reality app available for the iPhone, Android, or Windows Phone. I downloaded a copy to my iPhone in May, and have been using it since. The premise is clever: you are "runner 5," and you participate in an semi-interactive audio drama that takes place in the middle of a zombie apocalypse. From your small settlement of Able Township you embark on a series of missions--23 in all--that require you to run to succeed (eg. retrieve medical supplies, rescue someone, or deliver an important message). The app uses your GPS to determine your speed and distance, and there is an option to turn on "zombie chases," which require you to speed up significantly for short periods of time (think interval training). You can choose 30 or 60 minute missions, each of which has about 5 minutes of recorded dialogue, chunked into smaller segments that are interspersed with the running list of your choice. Ultimately the primary interactions with the game involve running and running faster (thankfully no direction changes are needed, which would be horrible when running on roads). You do collect items automatically while you run, which can be used later to improve your settlement in a Farmville-esque mini-game, although this is largely parallel to the primary story, and doesn't affect the outcome. Overall the British voice acting is solid, the story is well conceived, and it is certainly worth its \$7.99 price tag.

*Zombies, Run!* is also noteworthy in that it is an indie game developed through "Kickstarter" microdonations (see [www.kickstarter.com](http://www.kickstarter.com)). Kickstarter allows for independent game developers to experiment with new game formats. In this case the game developer *Six to Start* found a winning formula by combining augmented reality, exercise, and storytelling. Given the success of this app, it will almost certainly lead to a series of similar games in the near future. I for one very much look forward to see what comes next, if for no other reason than to ensure that I'll have something to write about next summer!

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