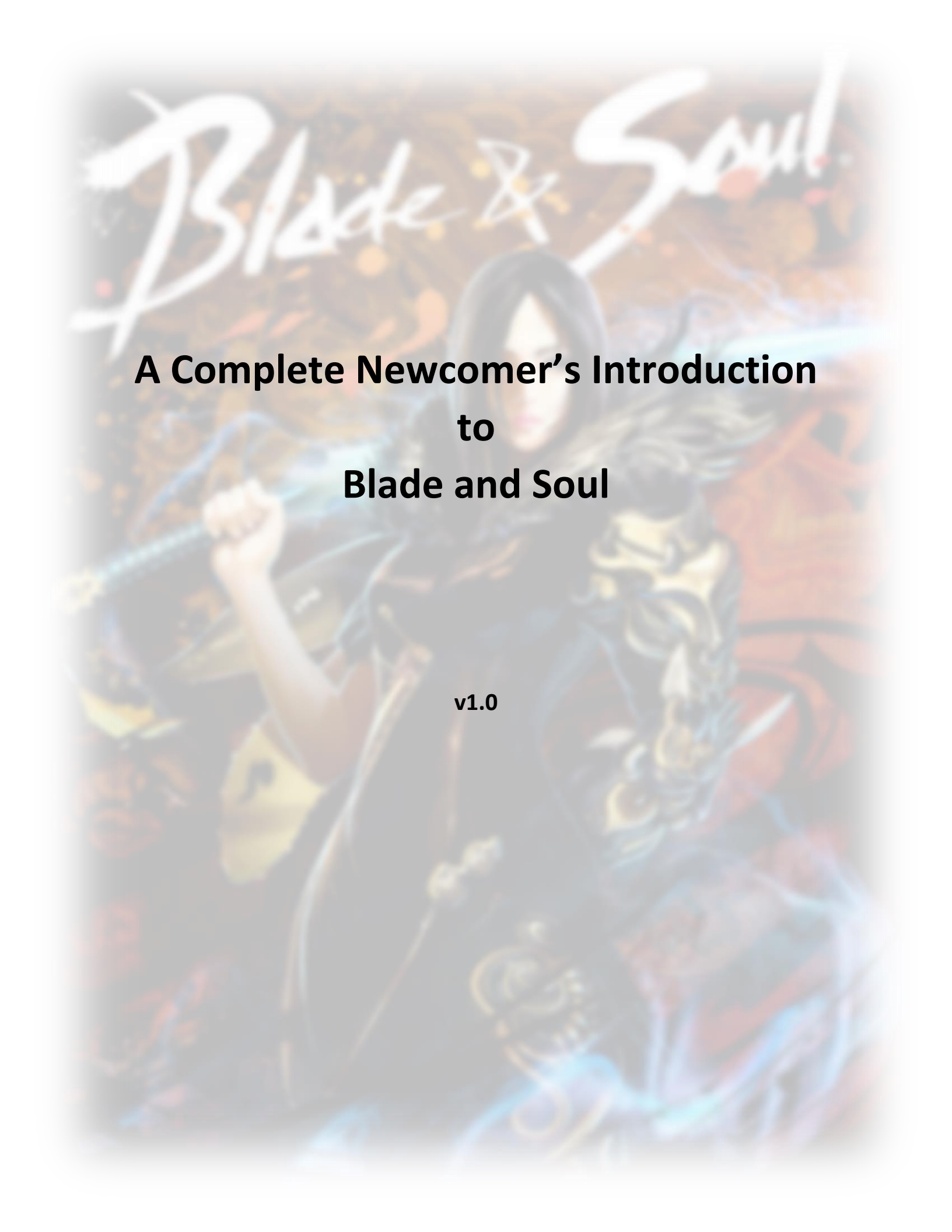


Blade & Soul

The background of the page is a faded, artistic illustration of a character from the game Blade & Soul. The character is a woman with long, dark hair, wearing a dark, intricately detailed outfit with gold and blue accents. She is holding a sword in her right hand, and there are blue, ethereal energy effects around her. The overall style is reminiscent of traditional Japanese or Korean art.

A Complete Newcomer's Introduction to Blade and Soul

v1.0

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Introduction

This guide is meant to be a resource that is accessible to new players, is accurate and comprehensive, and guides them to a point where they know enough to be able to seek out other resources to help themselves.

This guide is written with a primary audience of NA/EU players in mind. I don't claim to have firsthand experience with every aspect of play on every class in the game, but I am writing this while being in frequent contact with active, dedicated players from the community. This version you are reading will have been reviewed and critiqued by many others, hopefully ensuring accuracy and a balanced opinion.

Blade and Soul is constantly being updated with new content. This means that all commentary should be accurate regarding the current state of the game but is not set in stone and may require revision in future patches and updates. I will also try to keep this guide up-to-date, but things like me getting busier with life, quitting the game, or suffering an untimely death are all possible. Please refer to the revision designation and [Changelog](#) to ensure that what you're looking at is relevant.

About Blade and Soul

Blade and Soul is a Korean MMORPG by NCSoft. It has a fantasy martial arts theme which may be a definite selling point to some players considering BnS, but there are also other important pros and cons to consider, many of which require playtime to understand.

BnS is a free-to-play MMO, with no subscription or upfront purchase needed. However, monetization practices like lootboxes make the gearing heavily “pay-to-progress”. While there are no items that are obtainable strictly by spending real money, there are ways to spend real money and save hours’ or even days’ worth of farming and gain gear advantages. These advantages are most apparent in the non-gear-equalized PvP modes but also can affect solo dungeon ladders and whether or not a certain player will find parties for endgame dungeons and raids.

BnS combat is widely regarded as one of the best-designed MMO combat systems today. It is fast-paced and fluid, with a heavier emphasis on procs, combos, and animation-canceling compared to other MMOs, almost playing like a fighting game. However, the downside to this is that gameplay is very ping-sensitive. While BnS is still “playable” at high latency, certain combos and procs become impossible to execute or react to consistently, and performance reduction due to mediocre network conditions can be very noticeable. This ping-dependence combined with questionable netcode and poor optimization have led many players to consider other third-party tools such as ping stabilizers and custom launchers to improve their gameplay experience.

The [Gear Progression](#) is very linear, with items of a certain tier often upgrading directly to or being replaced by another item of a higher tier. On the one hand, this means that gear progress is relatively “permanent”, unlike some other MMOs that reset their gearing curves every major expansion. It also makes farming more straightforward. However, the flip side is that it can be more difficult for new or returning players to catch up to endgame players, as they are unable to “skip” gear tiers and endgame gear never becomes obsolete. It also leads to a lack of build variety, as major gear options are generally limited to one BiS per slot, and viable alternatives only rarely exist.

Further things to consider include: BnS is not a “holy-trinity” MMO, and the only real roles are tank and DPS and mitigation is left up to each party member to handle; aside from combat modes and a minimal crafting system there is very little to do in terms of life-skilling or overworld activities; there are little to no incentives to do outdated content other than for fun or achievement hunting.

In short, if you like the fantasy martial arts flavor and you want to have great combat while not really caring about other gameplay aspects, BnS would be a good fit for you. In any case, it’s free-to-play, so the only cost to trying it out is your own time.

Gameplay Modes

Most players will probably think of PvE first when they consider an MMO, but BnS has many gameplay modes besides that, just like most of its competitors.

-PvE: Probably the most popular game mode. Primarily consists of forming parties of 6 or alliances of 12 to tackle dungeons and raids.

-Arena PvP: 1v1 or 3v3 PvP matches that operate around a competitive ladder and matchmaking system with end-of-season rewards. While Arena PvP is gear-equalized, other things such as levels and HM skills still provide effects and advantages.

-Battlegrounds PvP: 6v6 PvP matches with objective-oriented play that operate around a competitive ladder and matchmaking system with end-of-season rewards. Battlegrounds PvP is not gear-equalized and there are specific PvP gear trees that can have a huge impact on a player's effectiveness in these games.

-Solo Ladders: These are single-player challenges that have speedkill leaderboards and also provide end-of-season rewards. The enemies encountered in these instances are AI-controlled.

-Faction: Players are required to choose from one of 2 factions during the storyline. In order to participate in faction quests and content, you must equip a faction uniform which flags you for Open-World PvP against members of the other faction who are also wearing their uniform.

There are also other aspects of BnS gameplay like achievement hunting or fashion. Crafting and gathering systems exist, but they are more than glorified button clicking. Life-skilling is also not very developed, although a fishing system has been announced for a future update.

Endgame PvE

Here is an explanation of what I believe to be the most important concepts to understand about BnS PvE.

Monsters and bosses will aggro on whoever has the highest threat. Threat is simply based off of cumulative damage dealt since the start of the encounter. Certain classes can generate additional threat through other means, allowing them to hold aggro over other party members even if they are not dealing the most damage; therefore, they are frequently designated as the tanks.

If there is no designated tank in the party, the member with the highest damage output will likely end up tanking. However, if they lose too much uptime trying to avoid or mitigate the boss attacks, another member might end up pulling aggro as well. And even if there is a designated tank, it is possible to rip aggro from a huge difference in damage output. However, many other classes aside from the tank classes have sufficient tools to tank most bosses on their own.

Mitigation in BnS is left mostly to the individual player, and as a consequence, there are no designated healer classes. Boss attacks are either blockable or unblockable, or very rarely, iframe piercing or jump waves. Blockable attacks have a yellow indicator and can be mitigated by skills that block, counter, or parry. Unblockable attacks have red indicators and must be iframed with certain skills. Iframe skills are extremely important to understand when playing any class.

In terms of party play, each class provides at least one party utility. These are generally split between party buffs and party protects, and when used, apply a lockout to the entire party which prevents the same buff or protect from having effect until the lockout expires.

Party Buffs:

-Soulburn (SB): Places party members within range into the “Awakened” state for 15s, which modifies one or more skills (depending on class) turning them into “Awakened Skills”. Also buffs critical hit damage. 60s lockout.

-Blue Buff (BB): Actual name is Fighting Spirit, but provides the “Amplification” buff for 10s, which increases critical hit rate damage. 45s lockout.

Party Protects:

-Hongmoon Block: Actual skill names are Winged Protector and Maelstrom. When activated, party members receive a protective bubble for 5 seconds that provides an iframe. When hit, the bubble is refreshed for up to 5 seconds and up to 2 additional iframes. 30s lockout.

-Party Stealth: Actual skill names are Enhanced Decoy and Enhanced Seed Shroud. When activated, there is a 1s trigger window during which being hit places the party member(s) into stealth. After entering stealth, a 1s iframe window is also triggered. 30s lockout.

-Sheath: Actual skill names are Frost Sheath and Iron Plating. When activated, there is a 3s trigger window during which being hit locks the party member(s) inside a protective shell. While in the shell, members cannot move or attack, but are invulnerable. The shell expires after 5s but can also be broken out of early. 30s lockout.

Other Party Utilities:

-Resurrection: Actual skill names are Farewell and Lotus. Revives any party members in Near Death or Dead states. 10min lockout.

-Alpha Call: Removes any current party lockouts for the above party utilities and also refreshes the individual cooldowns of any skills that are used to activate these party utilities. 5min lockout. Does not remove its own lockout.

There are other minor skills that different classes have that also provide party utility, but are usually not as impactful. As a tradeoff, they have no lockout and can be used consecutively. Some examples include projectile protection, heals, and CC resist fields.

CC:

The last major aspect of party play is CC. There are 4 primary types of CC in BnS: knockdown, daze, stun, and knockback. CC's are commonly used to interrupt a channeled attack, provide more uptime, or force a phase transition, or all 3. Different bosses have different numbers of CC bars, which can be found right underneath their HP bar. These CC bars remain whited out for most of a typical fight, but will open at certain times, which usually means CC is necessary or encouraged. A boss will not be CC'ed until its CC bars are all filled with a matching CC, whether it is 2 bars, or 4, or even 8. The first CC to land on a boss will determine the CC being attempted. Other types of CC after this will not cancel the first CC, but will not fill the bar either. Only CC matching the first one will continue to fill the bar. If 2s passes after an initial CC and the bars are not filled, they will empty, and another CC attempt can be started as long as the bars remain open.

Stun and Knockdown are the 2 most commonly used CC types in group play. Daze is less commonly used and Knockback is even more rare, while also having the disadvantage of displacing the boss. Additional status conditions that may be counted as CC include root/freeze/snare, which can prevent the target from moving or turning; aerial, which launches the target into the air but is disliked since aerial targets can't be hit by melee attacks and certain others; grapple/pin, which suppresses the target for the duration; restrain, which suppresses the target for the duration and allows restrain skills to be used by party members.

The types of utility that each class has access to has a strong influence on party compositions and roles in PvE. In endgame raids, having at least one of each party utility per party is ideal, especially during progression raiding. Having at least one of each class is also preferred, since this means no loot will go to waste. Luckily, having one of each class (and doubling up on Warlocks and Gunslingers) means that all party utilities are covered by default, since most party utilities can be provided by more than one class. Warden is expected to release in NA/EU/RU very soon, and can easily be slotted in the place of a doubled-up Warlock without changing utility coverage. Archer is also an announced class that is speculated to have access to Alpha Call, which will round out the ideal composition by replacing a doubled-up Gunslinger. In general, this means that every class is somewhat desired at endgame, and has its own role in a party. For more information on what each class provides, refer to the [Classes](#) section below.

Classes

There are no official role designations in Blade and Soul, but the list of available classes can be divided into 3 general categories: tank, melee DPS, and ranged DPS.

Melee DPS classes must be in melee range ($\leq 4\text{m}$) to deal effective damage. While this exposes them to relatively more danger from boss attacks, they tend to have more defensive tools like parries, strafes, and mobility at their disposal to deal with them accordingly. Tank classes can be thought of as melee DPS with the additional option to spec certain skills to generate extra threat, making them naturally suited to tanking bosses. They also have good tools for countering boss attacks while keeping the boss from moving or turning. Tank classes always have the option to spec out of threat, in which case they function just like a melee DPS. Most melee DPS classes can also make fine tanks if they use threat consumables or HM points in threat.

Ranged DPS classes are capable of dealing damage anywhere from melee range out to 16m from the boss. While the ability to play from range means they can pre-position or walk out of attacks to avoid most damage, many ranged classes lack the defensive and recovery skills that melee classes have, making it riskier for them to be caught in an attack or CC. Some fights will need a range tank, where the aggro holder must be further than 10m to avoid triggering a punishing attack or mechanic. In these cases, a ranged class must hold aggro, which likewise can be made easier through the use of consumables or HM points in threat.

For the party utility that each class contributes, refer to [this quick guide](#), or you can check [BNSTree](#) for the skill pages of each class.

There are 6 elemental damage types in Blade and Soul: flame, frost, lightning, shadow, earth, and wind. Currently, there is no special purpose for elemental damage other than to separate elemental builds and for specific elemental gear to increase elemental damage of a certain type from the wearer. Each class in BnS has 2 possible elemental builds as follows:

- 🗡️ **Blade Master:** Flame and Lightning
- 🐉 **Kung Fu Master:** Flame and Wind
- 🔥 **Warden:** Lightning and Frost
- 🗡️ **Blade Dancer:** Lightning and Wind
- 🌪️ **Assassin:** Lightning and Shadow
- 🐉 **Destroyer:** Earth and Shadow
- 🌊 **Soul Fighter:** Earth and Frost
- 🔔 **Force Master:** Fire and Frost
- 🎵 **Summoner:** Earth and Wind
- 📖 **Warlock:** Frost and Shadow
- 🔫 **Gunslinger:** Fire and Shadow

The 2 elemental builds of a given class will share many core skills, but quite a few skills will change based on the build choice, including the main damage skills. While the role that any class fills is not affected by element choice, playstyle is often heavily affected. Elemental builds often differ from each other in ways such as burst vs. sustained damage, anicancel-heavy or spammy playstyle, single-target vs. aoe damage output, etc. The visuals and skill effects of a class will also differ greatly between the 2 elements. For more details on these differences, you can check the wiki on the BnS subreddit.

Creating a Character

If you really care about gameplay and want to make sure that you enjoy it, I highly recommend doing some research about the various classes to identify which ones you like the most and maybe even narrow it down to a class of your choice. It is important to do this since class is the only thing that cannot be changed once chosen – race/gender and appearance change services can be purchased later on, but you must make a new character if you wish to play a different class. It is also important to decide beforehand since many of the classes are race-restricted to certain races out of the four available: Jin, Gon, Lyn, and Yun. Some classes are race-locked to only one race.

For others, race, appearance, flavor, and style are more important, and they may decide on a race before a class, and then just run with whatever class they like best out of the ones available to that race.

Aside from the class availabilities, race choice will not affect gameplay in any significant way. There are no racial skills, no racial stat bonuses or penalties, and no race-specific content. The only major difference is how certain cosmetic outfits appear on characters depending on their race, and certain outfits may be race-locked as well.

Your Leveling Journey

Blade and Soul's main story has received very mixed reviews, with some praising the game's Asian fantasy setting and its many memorable characters, and others find it boring and drawn-out, with predictable and repetitive plotlines. The main thing to understand about the leveling process is that the majority of players are already at level cap, so do not expect to see very many people in low-level areas, and if you do, they are probably just as new as you are. Many will advise treating leveling as an extended, single-person tutorial/introduction to the game. Previous streamlining changes have made it so that it is no longer necessary to do any dungeon content until you reach level cap. My recommendations are to do these quests:

- Yellow Quest Markers:** Indicates a Main Story Quest, needed to advance your character through the storyline.
- Purple Quest Markers:** Class tutorial quests or Windwalking quests; these serve as a weak tutorial to class basics or grant you movement abilities and stamina, respectively.
- Red Quest Markers:** Faction quests. If you do not plan on doing faction content at all, then you can skip these. In my opinion, taking a bit of time to grow your faction rank whenever you pass by these areas saves you time if you decide to do faction content later on.
- Orange Quest Markers:** Unlocks raid content.

Any blue quest markers are side quests and can be skipped to save a lot of time. Markers with an infinity symbol indicate a daily quest. Some important quests will not be marked on the map but instead will come to you through a quest letter, so be sure to constantly check your received letters.

Gear Progression

Blade and Soul's gear system has your typical weapon and accessory slots, similar to many other traditional MMOs. The following is a summary of the different gear slots and what they typically provide:

-Weapon: Attack Power, Critical, and Piercing. Weapons will also come with weapon effects which have a chance to proc on hit, and have gem slots which can be slotted with gems to increase Attack Power even further and provide additional gem effects.

-Necklace: Attack Power, Critical, Critical Damage, and Piercing. Higher tier necklaces also grant elemental damage and an additional Critical Damage buff.

-Earring: Attack Power, Accuracy, Critical Damage, and Additional Damage. Higher tier earrings also grant elemental damage and an additional Critical buff.

-Ring: Attack Power, Critical, Critical Damage, and Evasion. Higher tier rings also grant elemental damage and a focus recovery buff.

-Bracelet: Attack Power, Critical Damage, Additional Damage, and Block. Higher tier bracelets have a buff that is procced on the use of a specific skill, which often becomes the basis for a rotation or build.

-Belt: Defense, Recovery, HP, and HP Regen. Higher tier belts also have a healing or recovery buff that procs when taking damage.

-Gloves: Attack Power, Accuracy, Critical Damage. Higher tier gloves also grant Additional Damage, and an additional Critical Damage buff.

-Soul Badge: Passively adds an additional effect to one or more skills when equipped, often significantly changing a rotation or playstyle. Typically defines a build when paired with a bracelet.

-Mystic Badge: Also adds an additional effect to one or more skills like a Soul Badge. Can also be rotation-changing.

-Soul: Attack Power, Critical Damage. Higher tier souls have a buff window that procs on hit and provides increased Attack Power and Critical during the buff. Endgame play tends to focus on aligning Soul proc windows with Bracelet buff windows and other strong buffs.

-Heart: Attack Power, Critical. Higher tier hearts have a stacking buff that has a chance to proc on hit, and when stacked fully, offer a short buff window similar to a soul proc, but less consistent.

-Pet: HP, Defense. Higher tier pets also provide Recovery and Critical Defense and have pet effects that trigger when taking damage.

-Soul Shields: Provide HP as a guaranteed stat, and pseudo-random secondary stats. There are 8 soul shield slots, and soul shields come in sets, having set bonuses at 3, 5, and 8 pieces when equipped together. Common setups are either all 8 pieces of a certain set, which grants all set bonuses, or 3 pieces of a certain set and 5 pieces from another, which grants a 3-set bonus from the first, and the 3-set and 5-set bonuses from the second set. These set bonuses often add additional damage to or reduce the cooldown of certain skills.

Beginner Progression:

As you finish the main story questline, you should have a basic set of gear from story rewards. At this point, your gear is not specific to either of the 2 elemental builds available to you, but you should probably decide on one of the 2 if you have not already done so, since some of your early gearing choices will be build-specific.

Your first steps will primarily revolve around gathering components that enable a working damage rotation. Major components include Soul Badges, Mystic Badges, Hongmoon Skills, and Soul Shield sets. Once the appropriate soul shields have been collected, infusing Critical on them is highly recommended, as many rotations function much better at higher critical rates.

Another priority is getting enough raw stats to be able to run mid-game content effectively. This standard is a bit subjective, as this involves not only raw damage output and survivability, but also playerbase expectations for what is acceptable when forming parties. The best upgrades for this at lower levels are weapon levels, gems, and the Draken accessories. The recommended Draken accessories are the bracelet, which will help define your build, and the necklace and belt, which should be worn together to grant a solid set bonus.

Midgame Progression:

At this point, you should have most of the gear that defines your build and also soft-locks you to an element. This includes a bracelet, a Soul/Mystic Badge, and perhaps an elemental gem. Your critical rate should be fairly high, and many accessory upgrades will shift away from critical and more towards elemental damage, further locking you to an element. Most of the significant upgrades in this stage come from raid content, and some upgrades to Soul/Mystic Badges or Soul Shield sets can greatly change or streamline your damage rotations.

Additional Resources

This is a list of resources that I find useful as a player and consult often outside of actual play:

[Blade and Soul Official Site](#)

The news section is particularly useful for keeping track of upcoming changes and patches as well as limited-time events.

[Blade and Soul Subreddit](#)

Community content and discussion.

[BnS Academy](#)

The Discord server is a good place for learning about both basic and advanced class mechanics or for discussion on various gameplay subjects. BnS Academy also has a collection of guides on endgame dungeons and raids.

[BNSTree](#)

This website has features that replicate the in-game skill page, allowing users to look at skill effects for all classes. Also includes key information on Soul Shields and badges and has a character look-up function.

Credits

Thanks to Decaedeus for proofreading my unbearable first drafts and helping to cut down on like only half a page. Also for font and readability feedback.

Additional thanks to Chikotan and Xenyu for input on visual design.

As always, thanks to Selavy for being the unofficial translator for any of the newest changes released on the KR server.

Changelog

- **27 June 2018 (v0.1):** created table of contents, all section designations, and wrote intro and about sections
- **23 August 2018 (v0.2):** revised intro and about sections and wrote gameplay modes section
- **29 August 2018 (v0.3):** wrote endgame PvE, character creation, and leveling sections
- **5 September 2018 (v0.4):** wrote classes, gear progression, and resources sections; added links and hyperlinks
- **6 September 2018 (v0.5):** revised all sections, added additional hyperlinks and new image assets, included contributor credits
- **12 September 2018 (v1.0):** revised additional content, added page backgrounds, first release on BNS subreddit