

Addendum for the Sentinels Update

The following replaces pages sections from pages 86-92

Fighting Sentinels

The Sentinels are the security forces of the universe, but they aren't particularly open minded if they find you somewhere that they decree you shouldn't be, so they tend to be your main enemy.

You might be the sort of gamer that enjoys shoot-em-ups, or you might wish there wasn't so much conflict in NMS. Other than some mild shooting during the Expanding the Base missions, which can be circumvented, there are no essential items needed in the early part of the game forcing you to constantly fight Sentinels. If you like a good scrap, there are plenty of opportunities in the optional Nexus missions and Expeditions, however.

With the introduction of the Sentinels update, fighting them has become more rewarding and interesting. Again, NMS has been re-balanced so that the early encounters are a bit easier to extract yourself from and the later stages harder to win. Once you are reasonably well-equipped, fighting Sentinels can bring you large quantities of Nanites, allowing you to skip other paths to upgrading your equipment.

Using the Multi-tool

Before you get serious with fighting, it's important to become familiar with the Multi-Tool controls and their interaction. The last thing you need in the heat of battle is to forget how to fire, reload or switch weapons.

There is a basic discussion about the Multi-tool in the Equipment chapter, which you should read if you haven't done so already. There I suggest owning a selection and switching between them – you can now own up to six at any time and select them in the Quick Menu.

There are two active tools selected in your current Multi-tool. The main selection can be your Mining Laser (only useful against minor threats) and Terrain Manipulator (useless unless you are digging holes for enemies to fall into).

The fighting weapons are the **Boltcaster** (armour piercing), **Scatter Blaster** (close range), **Blade Javelin** (for fast moving targets), **Pulse Splitter** (rapid fire) or a new device introduced in the Sentinels update, the **Neutron Canon** (powerful, but takes time to fire). These now have upgrades available that can affect you enemies in new ways, such as making them immobile.

You fire all of the main tools with the Left Mouse Button/Right Fire/R2, and you switch between which one is active with G Key/Y Button/△ Button. The true

weapons require Projectile Ammunition (which you can craft or collect), and although they will automatically reload when fully depleted, it's better to reload them before they run out, with the R key/X Button/□ Button.

The Secondary tool can be defensive or aggressive. You switch between these by pressing the Mouse Wheel/B Button/O Button and use them with the Right Mouse/Left Bumper/L1.

The **Personal Forcefield** is a shield that absorbs incoming attacks. While you have it selected, you can't fire any weapons, and it drains your Life Support.

The Combat Scope narrows your field of vision, allowing greater accuracy of shooting. The **Plasma Launcher** and **Geology Cannons** are two types of grenade, the former for fighting and the latter for mining. They need Unstable Plasma to provide them with ammunition. A separate mission provides you with a new secondary weapon, the **Paralysis Mortar**, which stuns its target for 5 seconds so you can finish them off with conventional weapons.

All the information about your current Multi-tool configuration appears as an overlay top right of your HUD when you have your weapon drawn, which you do by briefly pressing the fire control. Weapons are banned on Space Stations and the Space Anomaly, so you can't shoot anybody there - and why would you?

When active, the centre of the screen shows the sights of the current main weapon, and this has a different appearance for each type. One disadvantage of having lots of main weapon types loaded into the Multi-tool is that switching between them takes time before you cycle through to the right one.

Tool upgrades

In the early stages of the game, you don't need much more than a Boltcaster and Personal Forcefield to deal with the Sentinels that bother you while you build up your status and tackle the early missions. Minor upgrades to these are a good idea, but not essential. However, once you want to regularly tackle Level 3 Sentinel alerts, or defend a Settlement, you are going to need some better weapons.

Camouflage

Once you have access to the Space Anomaly, you can visit Eos and for a very modest number of Nanites, buy a **Cloaking Device**. With this installed in your Multi-tool and selected as the Secondary device, you can make yourself invisible to the Sentinels by pressing Right Mouse/Left Bumper/L1. In its un-upgraded state the effect lasts around 8 seconds. While invisible you can't use your jetpack or use other multi-tools but you can still walk or even run. The Sentinels can't see you and the "Searching" counter starts. They therefore don't shoot at you, either.

After you run out of time, you revert to being visible and can't use the device again for another 8 seconds. I would expect that upgrades may become available for the cloaking device at some point in the future – I can't find any at the moment.

This tool completely changes the nature of a skirmish if you use it properly. Having killed one Sentinel you can operate it, take stock of your whereabouts, select your next target and re-position yourself. You can't use it to give you a chance to reload or recharge, or fix your Minotaur, but it's also useful while fleeing.

The Minatour

The Sentinels update has vastly increased the importance of one of the Exocraft – the Minotaur, otherwise called an Exo Mech. Getting hold of one of these won't be possible in the very early stages of the game, so I will discuss it after looking at the basic principles behind a fight. Owning one of these will give you an advantage, particularly at Levels 4 and 5, and although it's not essential to win at these levels, it makes playing them a lot more fun. You need one to complete the *A Taste of Metal* mission, which I'll discuss in Part Three.

Keeping your Health topped up

The smallest amount of damage will cause you to lose some health. The bar top left of the screen will return to maximum after about 20 seconds if you can avoid any further damage and your Life Support is functional, but if it reaches zero at some point you will start losing shields, which makes you more vulnerable. To learn how to acquire a higher base level of shields, read the Exosuit Technology section. To check how many shields are operative, force the health display to show with H key/Left D-pad and check out the number of crosses.

There are a number of ways to repair your shields. First Aid Kits are sometimes present in cargo drops, and will restore them. First Aid Stations are present in some buildings and you can add them to the wall of a Base once you have the required formula. However, these methods have been superseded by the simple expedient of eating something. Every time you kill an animal, you are awarded meat of some description. Although you can use this for cooking, it's also possible to *Consume* it from your inventory, and each unit you eat restores a shield.

Sadly, this option is not available from the Quick Menu, so it isn't easy to do in the heat of battle but given how painless it is to collect and carry some food around with you, it's worth having a little snack after every fight!

Incidentally, for the vegetarians amongst you, to repair your Health Shields you need to consume meat. Plants and fruit restore your Hazard Protection.

Alternatively, some of the Barrel drops from dead Sentinels will restore your health and shields when you harvest them. There are other benefits from collecting these as well.

The Spoils of War

When you kill a Sentinel of any kind, you will collect some Pugneum. They will also shed barrels which you can destroy or pick up to gather extra rewards. In the past you just got some ammunition when you killed standard drones, but now the contents of the barrels can be very worthwhile. You sometimes get exotic materials such as Antimatter, your shields and health can be restored, but of most interest is **Salvaged Glass**. These stack up as you collect them, and you can then extract the contents. Sentinel Weapon Shards or Suit Fragments are effectively another type of Suspicious Upgrade Module which you can use to improve your equipment. Once you have enough of them, you can sell the surplus at Space Stations in exchange for Nanites.

Another drop from the Glass is a location map for a Sentinel Pillar. These locations are part of the A Taste of Metal story, and discussed in the Civilisation Chapter.

Your Sentinel Enemies

There are numerous types of planet-based Sentinels. The most common ones can fly, and the first you will encounter are unarmoured (but not unarmed!) **Patrol Drones**. You are minding your own business on a Planet, although you may have spotted a nearby Sentinel. You shoot at an object and the Sentinel comes over to have a sniff round.

What happens next depends on the level of aggressiveness of the Sentinels on the current Planet. If the planet hosts *Aggressive* Sentinels, you will progress immediately to level 3, so these aren't good places to practice your fighting skills.

If the Sentinel aggression level is less, and you don't shoot anything else, the Sentinel will lose interest and eventually drift away. Shoot something as soon as it starts to leave, and it will come back – this cycle continues until either you get bored or get the timing wrong, the icon turns red and the Sentinel calls a Level 1 alert and starts to attack you.

Alert Level 1

A single small red dot appears in the top right area of the screen, and you will be shortly joined by four new enemies. A small cylindrical drone carrying a spotlight is the **Repair Drone**, and it will fly close to the others that you damage and restore their health. While it is doing so, a spanner icon is displayed.

Obviously, I'm going to suggest you shoot that first. Also, I recommend that you initially use the Personal Forcefield as your secondary weapon, operating it while you sort out who to shoot next. By now you should have your Boltcaster selected as your primary weapon, unless you have something more powerful available.

There are two **Armoured Drones** that have the capability to create large semi-transparent triangular shields which they hide behind, but these shields are quite easy to destroy. The firepower from the drones is moderate, but they can also launch plasma grenades that will seriously damage your health. If you are quick to react, however, you can block the damage they cause to you with the Personal Forcefield.

Removing the armour plating from these drones by damaging them alters their appearance, so you can get an indication of your progress even when the white damage bar isn't showing.

The fourth drone is the real issue, sometimes called a *Spawner*. It is triangular, and you may see it transmitting – a radio signal icon shows above it, which means it is calling for reinforcements. While this **Control Drone** lives, more drones will arrive, and you will never get rid of them unless you are powerfully armed and shielded. So, once the repair drone is taken care of, try to kill the Spawner next.

In the levels that follow, the number of Sentinels you may encounter may vary because of the effect of the Control Drone.

You should be able to get through this first wave with just three shield icons on your Exosuit and an un-enhanced Boltcaster, but if you can't and get fed up with dying, what should you do?

You can always run away. As long as you can put a bit of distance between you and the drones without taking too much damage, the terrain isn't too difficult and you can sprint, you should be able to shake off the first wave easily. A message will come up saying that they are "Searching..." and eventually if they don't get within range the attack will be deactivated.

In the Sentinels update this distance seems to have been shortened, so you might be able to see them, but they won't detect you. Two other things help here – the new camouflage function can help keep you unobserved for long enough to deactivate the attack, and you are now invisible to Sentinels once you enter a building.

This latter change could be a bug, so check that it works before basing a whole strategy on it! At the time of writing, if you can choose where to pick a fight, do so near a building. You will be safe from attack when you retreat inside and they will give up quickly, although those that you haven't killed will still be hanging around outside for some time. If you don't antagonise those, you can escape completely.

If you climb aboard your Starship, you will also be shielded from serious damage. As soon as you leave the Starship, the attack will continue. You can deactivate the attack, however, assuming you have some Launch Fuel – just take off and the

Sentinels will start searching for you. Even if your work in the current location is done, however, don't leave the atmosphere – either travel to your next destination without climbing too high, or just stooze round the area at 20u/s. You can even take potshots at them on the ground.

If the Sentinel force is still searching when you leave the Planet, then you are still a wanted Traveller and the Sentinel Spaceships will come after you, so you have just swapped one issue for another, although a fast ship can escape fairly easily.

Exocraft provide the same sort of shelter as a ship. You can use them to escape the Sentinels as well as fire at them, but you don't have the same nimbleness as when you are on foot.

You can use this first level attack for practice – get to know the capabilities of your different weapons and the effectiveness of the forcefield. Then, once you have killed all the drones, use your ship, hide inside a building or run away to deactivate the next level. When you have annoyed the Sentinels in a particular area you might encounter more during the next attack, so if you are just practising, move some distance away before starting again.

Suppression Level 2: Moderate

Killing the first bunch of Sentinels doesn't mean it's over. They will have called in reinforcements. Those take a while to arrive in the area – so you could start looking for shelter or begin running away before they get there, giving you a head start. The only issue with that is that you could be running towards them.

The next wave also consists flying drones. They will start at some distance off, and you can use the HUD icons to work out which direction they will be coming from. My weapon of choice from this stage on is the Scatter Blaster. If you can upgrade to it, I suggest you do so.

Getting through level 2 without using a Minotaur or used a Cloaking device is a good achievement. I'd suggest that you collect all the barrels that have been dropped when you do, because your glory will be short lived. Early in the game, this is a good time to take Falstaff's advice and let discretion be the better part of valour.

Suppression Level 3: Urgent

The next level is an important one, because it's the level of defence you will find already in place around Storage Depots, Manufacturing Facilities and Operations Centers– buildings you are going to want to raid at some point in the game. They already have Sentinels patrolling them and they jump straight in at level 3 when you attack.

Now you will encounter a Quadruped, often called a Dog Sentinel. These are a little slower to arrive, (giving you a chance to kill the control and repair drones) but

are armed with a powerful laser. They have a habit of launching themselves at you when they get close, taking a bite and doing a lot of damage. I find the best tactic with the dogs is to keep moving, even if it does mean hitting them is harder.

Because of the presence of quads or worse, speed is your best ally when attacking Secret Locations. You can generally break in or harvest most of the contents of the depot before things get too hot. You can then choose Fight or Flight. If you want to earn yourself some Quad servos though, you'll have to kill a Quad.

Incidentally, your Starship can be quite effective at destroying larger targets from the air, and that includes Storage Depots. It used to be an effective way of killing a Walker, but there are better solutions now.

When Things get Tough

You will need to start to think about tactics and shelter at the higher levels. Using height to your advantage is a military tactic as old as warfare, and to some extent you can use it in NMS. There is a certain level above the current ground which the Sentinels don't fly, and the Quads Mechs and Walkers are ground based. I built a tall base with battlements on an aggressive Sentinel Planet where I used to “harvest” Walker Brains – although without guaranteed success, I must admit.

Using your Jetpack during battles is something that takes practice, but worth mastering. Using obstacles as shields used to fool the Sentinels easily, since the update they aren't quite as stupid, but can still get trapped.

Consider what distance you should attack from. While the Scatter Blaster is great when you can get close without fear of too much damage, shooting from a distance with an upgraded Boltcaster and using your Combat Scope might be a better option later in a conflict.

If you haven't done so already, you should think about acquiring a Minotaur Exocraft. You will need to equip it with a powerful cannon and add an Autopilot. That's all you need for it to start joining in on your side of a battle once you summon it to the scene. It will take a lot of pressure off you, although it can be damaged and then cease to be of any help.

When you have a freighter and add an Exocraft Summoning station to it, you will be able to summon the Minotaur to your assistance wherever you encounter Aggressive Sentinels.

Suppression Level 4: Severe

If you progress to Level 4 you will be challenged by more flying drones, but also meet an Exo Mech Sentinel that is similar to the Minotaur. It has a fire attack that's pretty dangerous, but it seems to take time to recharge, so there are gaps when you can get close, attack, and then avoid it. You need to destroy it's armour and guns

before it becomes vulnerable, and you can see the effect of this visually as the red body parts are destroyed.

We are into serious fighting now, but the worst is still to come....

Suppression Level 5: Maximum

Once this wave starts, see off the drones as quickly as you can, because destroying the **Walker** is a major task. The Repair Drones also repair it if you don't kill them first.

The Walker is much larger than the Exo Mech, although similar in its attacking methods. It has 5 areas of armour plating that you have to remove before you can kill it – the shins, thighs and head. Each of these have a white bar to let you know the level of damage.

The lower areas are susceptible to the Scatter Blaster, the upper ones to your favourite long range weapon. The Walker has a very strong sweeping laser, so unless you can shelter, you should keep moving. Having evaded or survived a laser attack, it takes the Walker quite some time – ten seconds or so – to recharge, so make the most of the chance.

If you hide behind a substantial building it will follow you round it, and you can get into an almost comical game of chase. Get the timing right and you may get in some hits and remove the armour. In the past I had most of my successes with lucky Plasma Cannon shots during this stage. Now that the Paralysis Mortar is available, use that to give you a chance to get closer

With its armour destroyed, the Walker's laser stops working, and it fires projectiles instead, so you might take a break to recharge everything before going in for the coup-de-grace. This needs to be to the torso. When you've finally defeated it - and it's collapse is worth seeing - don't forget to retrieve the **Walker Brain** from its Combat Supplies drop, which is larger than those dropped by the Quads and Drones. It's a valuable resource that allows you to fit Conflict Scanners to your Spacecraft.

The following is an addition to the Civilisation chapter

Sentinel Pillars

These bases are control centres for Sentinels. Heavily guarded, you can use speed of attack to destroy the three pillars and then operate the Control Panel to disable the defenders. Now rewards are available – new Multi-tools or learning some lore. They are an important part of the *Taste of Metal* mission, but subsequently may be of less interest than the other “Secret” locations.

The following is an addition to the Optional Missions section of part 3

A Taste of Metal

As a further enhancement to the Sentinels update, a new mission allows you to build a tame sentinel drone as a companion. You will need to own a Settlement before it is triggered (and probably a Minotaur). This happened to me just after successfully completing a Space Battle to save a Freighter, but this may have been a coincidence.

It's a well-guided series of tasks that follows the same pattern as other missions. You will be summoned to your Settlement to receive a broadcast from Tyheus. There now follows a series of tasks. You need to acquire a number of components to build your own drone. The first, a Drone Shell, will come from Salvaged Glass. The drone becomes your companion – you can summon and dismiss it with a Flare in your inventory.

The drone then asks you to re-equip your Minotaur Exo Mech. Not all of the series of tasks involve fighting, but the tricky ones do! You will have to locate Sentinels at specific locations to earn some of the required parts, which aren't available by any other means. The battles aren't quite as severe as regular ones, and before you attack the final Walker, you will have been awarded a blueprint for a Paralysis Mortar.

If you have been avoiding combat up to this point, the mission is a good introduction and provides you with tools that will give you a lot more confidence to fight Sentinels.

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