

## Madden 2001 – Windows

**Developed by:** EA Sports (<http://www.easports.com>)

**Published by:** EA Sports (<http://www.easports.com>)

**Reviewed by:** Tim Maxwell

**Official Site:** <http://www.easports.com/games/madden2001/>

**Genre:** Sports/Football

### **System Requirements:**

Operating System	Windows 95 or Windows 98 (Windows NT/Windows2000 are not supported)
CPU Type & Speed	200 MHz or faster Intel Pentium MMX Processor; 3D Accelerated Mode requires a 266 MHz or faster Pentium II processor
Hard Drive Space	30 MB free hard disk space plus space for saved games (additional space required for Windows swap-file and Direct X 7.0 installation)
Memory	32 MB RAM
Graphics	High Color (16-bit) capable 2 MB PCI or AGP video card with DirectX 7.0 compatible driver; 3D Accelerated Mode requires a 4 MB (or greater) Direct3D capable video card with DirectX 7.0 compatible driver
CD-ROM Speed	8x or faster CD-ROM/DVD-ROM drive using 32-bit Windows 95/98 driver
Other Needs	DirectX 7 compatible sound card; Keyboard and Mouse

**Supports:** Windows supported joystick or gamepad

**ESRB:** Everyone

**Overall Rating:** 7

**Graphics:** 8/10

**Sound:** 6/10

**Documentation:** 7/10

**Getting Started:** 6/10

**Gameplay:** 7/10

**Value:** 7/10

**The Good Press:** Superb graphics and animation; a wide range of subtle details add to the realism; much improved interface; plenty of options.

**The Bad Press:** Running an effective offense is frustrating at first; slippery control; repetitive and unenthusiastic commentary; atrocious kicking mechanism.

**Overview:** If you can overcome some initial frustration and some audio deficiencies, *Madden 2001* offers a solid Sunday experience.

### **Tips:**

For a much better view of the field on passing plays, switch to the "Madden classic" camera angle.

You'll have much better luck with the running game if you stick to running outside.

Do yourself a favor and turn the false start penalties slider down considerably. Running an effective offense is difficult enough; you don't need to be backed up five yards on every other series.

My initial impression of the latest incarnation in the *Madden* football series, *2001*, was one of severe disappointment. Offense was frustrating and unrealistic, there was a notable shortage of "Maddenisms," and the gameplay seemed largely unchanged from last year's version. Considerable practice and option-tweaking improved my opinions of the game dramatically, but there are still an abundance of problems that really should have been ironed out before the game was released.

One major problem that has thankfully been addressed was the cumbersome interface. EA Sports has always had a problem with overrunning their front-end menus with fancy animations and sound effects and making even the most rudimentary task an exercise in frustration. The latest edition still takes a style over substance approach, but at least you can find your way around. In fairness, creating an intuitive interface must be a daunting task for EA Sports because their games always feature such an extensive array of options. *Madden 2001* is certainly no exception in this regard. Aside from the standard gameplay modes (exhibition, season, and practice), *Madden* allows you to start your own football dynasty (complete with salary cap worries and draft options) with franchise mode, play out some of the most memorable moments in NFL history with the greatest games mode, or duke it out

against your cyber buddies online. In terms of options, the coolest feature is the ability to adjust nearly every nuance of how the game plays. Everything from the likelihood of an interception to the probability of a roughing the passer penalty can be easily adjusted to suit your playing style. Several changes in this regard are highly recommended. More on that later.

Once you get out on the field, *Madden 2001* has its ups and downs. As previously mentioned, beginners will initially be discouraged by the difficulty posed by the computer. The running game, although much improved over previous *Maddens*, still requires a great deal of practice and patience. Linemen will actually block for you and open up holes this year, but it can be quite difficult to get through them on runs up the middle. The result is repeated losses of yardage and a lot of running in place. This problem can be alleviated somewhat by adjusting the blocking and running skill sliders, but giving your back all the ability in the world doesn't make the holes any bigger. To make matters worse, the control still feels slippery—an issue that has plagued past *Madden* games. This basically means that your players don't react immediately to your input so you have to rely on the juke buttons to evade defenders in most cases. The passing game sadly seems nearly identical to last year. There are some cool new features this year like altering a receiver's route before the snap, but dropped passes are still a problem and QBs still don't lead receivers as they should.

On the defensive side of the ball, things haven't changed much from years past either. The computer still can't run very effectively, but the passing game is generally formidable. A new feature called read-n-react has been added allowing you to adjust your defense based on how the offense lines up. This can be handy if you've called a running formation and the offense sends out five wide outs, for instance. About all it really does though is change how the linebackers react (charging aggressively when you choose run, and falling back when you select pass), and a simple audible would accomplish the task just as easily.

Perhaps the best aspect of *Madden 2001* is its attention to detail. In terms of graphics, lifelike presentation, and on-field ambience, EA Sports is king as far as I'm concerned. Visually, *Madden 2001* is breathtaking. The players themselves are exquisitely detailed, featuring accurate proportions and real faces in some cases. The stadiums are equally impressive, with fans dressed in home team garb, banners strewn about, and remarkable weather effects (play a game during a thunderstorm and you'll know what I mean). There are also a plethora of subtle nuances in *Madden 2001* that quietly add a great deal to the realism of the game. Such details include uniforms that get dirtier as the game wears on, and real NFL coaches commenting on bad penalties. Coaches challenges even occur from time to time, and a super slow-motion instant replay shows you exactly what happened during the play in question. These innovations don't necessarily make up for the gameplay shortcomings, but are impressive additions nonetheless.

A game of *Madden* football just isn't complete without a wide assortment of witty anecdotes from John himself. Unfortunately, most of the "Maddenisms" are far from witty, and in most cases, border on pointless. For example, after making a great catch, John will chime in with "You used to be able to use stick-em to catch balls like that. Now, they've got those gloves." Thanks for the insight, John. All told, there are about six or seven different general comments John makes, along with several player-specific comments per team. Combine this with the dry commentary from Pat Summerall and you've got a pretty forgettable broadcast booth. Luckily, the other sound effects (crowd noise, grunts and groans, etc.) are passable.

With little competition on the gridiron front this year, *Madden 2001* wins the PC football crown by default. The game does continue the EA Sports tradition of solid football action combined with outstanding graphics and options o'plenty. Still, there are a lot of minor quirks that could've been easily eliminated in the testing process. The good news is, *Madden 2001* is just a patch away from being a really solid football game. If you're willing to look past some minor gameplay quirks and some initial frustration, *Madden* is a worthwhile purchase.