

SETTING

Sword Art Online is a world actively curated by Kayaba Akihiko and subordinate AIs. By abusing a property of the Virtual Reality equipment, he is holding ten thousand players of the game- who will die if their HP reaches 0, or someone attempts to tamper with their VR equipment- hostage until such time as the one hundred dungeon bosses are killed.

It is his playground and fantasy come to life. He's running around as a player in secret, metagaming and using admin commands to prevent his own health from dropping below 50%. He is playing favourites, his designated heroes receiving special perks or advantages.

If someone disturbs his 'story' too much, he will react unpredictably. Though he cannot kill players with his admin controls, he has control of game balance and through broad reforming of the world, and control of quest lines, the world serves as his weapon against elements that he can't tolerate.

All that said, he's weird. He might enjoy the unexpected element and what it does to his story- and part of that story is that he dies in the hundredth dungeon, as the final boss of Sword Art Online.

CARDINAL

An AI that seeks to preserve game balance, managing quests, item drops, monster difficulty, and a thousand other things besides. Surprisingly canny- it is not unknown for it to turn player organized events into XP awarding quests. It also understands the idea that certain players are outliers, not to be used to judge the capability of the rest of the player base.

STATS

It's an RPG, but it only tracks two stats: Strength and Agility. Everything else is either a Skill- like regeneration (battle healing)- or simply not tracked by the system- like individual intelligence or sociability. Players start with a 5 in each stat and can eventually level up to the point that they can block the blows of towering monsters without losing ground, and toss those same enemies across rooms.

SKILLS AND THE SYSTEM ASSIST

Sword Art Online tracks just about everything you can do in the game as Skills, and as your ratings increase, the game will guide your motions to meet the standards of your skill numbers.

Displaying skill above your ratings is a sure way to get Critical Successes.

OUTSIDE SYSTEM SKILLS

What Sword Art Online can't track as skills are called Outside System Skills, emergent skills and techniques from the mechanics. Not quite exploits, these are minor exploits that arise from displays of pure skill.

IMPOSSIBLE FEATS

And sometimes the impossible happens. Sprinting in five minutes what took others an hour to cross. Keeping your last HP through simple grit and determination. When determination and skill clash with the world, the world- sometimes- breaks first.

HOW DO PERKS WORK?

You have a special super duper Virtual Reality helmet. It will essentially allow you to Astral Project into Virtual Reality and use the full breadth of your powers.

Be warned that part of Sword Art Online is functionally conceptual effects- there are 'Immortal Objects' that cannot be physically harmed (including Kayaba's player avatar, unless he should decide to deactivate that feature), objects with infinite weight, and most cities are no damage zones where players cannot accrue damage or die.

THE MIND IS ELSEWHERE

You're going to be motionless for a long time. Outside forces will not conspire to harm you. Rehab post game will also be a rapid process, even before any perks you might apply. Expect it to 'naturally' take somewhere between a week and a month to regain any fitness you lost.

YOU HAVE 1000CP

LOCATION + TIME

The Jump begins just as Kayaba teleports the players of Sword Art Online- including yourself- to the Official Tutorial, where he outlines the terms of his Death Game.

AGE + GENDER

13+1d8 years old or 50CP to choose. Same gender as before or 50CP to change.

ORIGIN

0 - Drop-In : No memories, no history.
50 - Player : You poor son of a bitch. You're likely a filthy casual.
50 - Beta : The local iteration of you was one of the Beta players, and already has a wealth of knowledge and experience with MMOs, VR, and SAO in particular.
50 - Accomplice : You're on Kayaba's side, for whatever reason. You're the secret 99th floor boss, but until then, you're- to all appearances- a normal Player. As a special exception, should you die in your capacity as the 99th floor boss, you will simply be politely logged out early.

PERKS

Perks within your Origin are at reduced rate- 100s are free, the rest are half price.

Free! - Flourishes : This doesn't make you any better with their practical usage, but when using a weapon or tool, you know how to make it look good- especially when you draw or holster it. Good for drawing attention.
Conditional Free! - In A Game : While you're in the game Sword Art Online, regardless of if you purchased the relevant perks, things like Switch! (because monster AI), Item Drops (because MMORPG), Critical Existence Failure (because videogame), and Sword Skills (because game) will be available to you. Purchasing the listed Perks is for permanence.

Drop-In:

100 - Switch! : You're good at trading spots with a partner, either leaving or entering combat with an enemy. This change will confuse opponents, who find themselves falling back on tactics that worked just seconds ago- against someone else.
300 - Item Drops : Monsters, beasts, and the like seem to all guard, carry, or have swallowed valuables now. At the same time, people become eager to make bets before entering any contest or combat. Even if they don't have valuables, expect observers to make their own betting pools and cut you in for a percent if you win. People tend to be good natured about losing.
600 - Critical Existence Failure : As an active skill (read: you must be conscious), you can switch to an HP bar instead of real injuries. Even at 0.001% HP, you will maintain 100% physical capability- but the moment you reach 0% HP, you will be knocked unconscious and all your injuries will return. Only then can someone attempt a death blow. No-one will think this odd.

Player:

100 - Tutorial : You become a single repetition learner. Further, this enhances the teaching ability of all of your instructors.
300 - Sword Skills : At the cost of freezing up after, you may enhance practiced patterns with extreme strength and speed. These patterns can be a simple slash or complicated multi hit combos. With training, you may eliminate the freeze up. Can be applied to any combat art.
600 - Let’s Not and Say we Didn’t : That’s dumb and you’re dumb. You possess the amazing ability to point out something is a bad idea and have it stick. Even without explaining your reasons, people will understand if your reasoning is good or bad. Should the idiot persist, they are compelled to reveal their reasoning- which you can then further point out as dumb.

Beta:

100 - My Quest Senses Are Tingling : You gain a supernatural sense for when someone needs something done. Further, you get a broad sense for what rewards there might be (major monetary reward, minor artifact reward, increased reputation, etc) and the danger (beneath/at/above your level) before you even suggest you’ll do it for them.
300 - Like Riding a Bike : Your skills never deteriorate. Ever. Not for any reason, but especially not disuse. Further, you can easily adapt them to new circumstances: recreate your favourite spell in a different Jump’s magic system, translate your sword style to hand to hand, etc.
600 - APM Intensifies : More than just god like reflexes, you’re also able to process input fast enough to take calm, deliberate action at any speed.

Accomplice:

100 - Roleplay : You may construct identities, effortlessly separating 'their' powers, knowledge, relationships, etc are. Never again accidentally use your water magic when you're pretending to be a fire mage, or slip up by mentioning knowledge your role could not have known.
300 - Environment PK : The world around you is a weapon, make no mistake. Both the environment and the monsters that inhabit it. You have unnatural skill and luck at manipulating the world to kill your enemies for you. Unless caught in the act, it is vanishingly unlikely you will be held accountable- it will simply be an unfortunate accident.
600 - This Is, In Fact, My Final Form : You gain a giant and monstrous alt form, drawn from mythology. It is extremely well suited to fighting a large group (read: raid) simultaneously. Further, any alt forms you have may now be freely combined; access any of your powers or traits from any form.

ITEMS

Free! - Digital Projection Helmet : This piece of headgear looks ridiculously futuristic. It allows you to Astrally Project your self/soul into Virtual Reality games- thereby allowing you the full breadth and depth of your power.
Free! - Load Out : Typical MMO starting equipment- newbie armor, sword, and some currency.
50 - Teleport Crystal : You have a teleport crystal- activating it will immediately bring you back to a ‘safe place.’ 24 hours after use, a new teleport crystal will appear on your person or the Warehouse.
50 - Healing Crystal : You have a healing crystal- activating it will immediately restore you to perfect physical condition. 24 hours after use, a new healing crystal will appear on your person or the Warehouse.
100 - Sweet Sword : An ornate, nigh-indestructible sword. On the plus side, it’s not going to break or even need maintenance. On the negative side, it’ll be really hard to improve it.
100 - Sturdy Shield : What the hell is this thing made out of? On it’s own, it’s an excellent shield, withstanding great force. Wielded by you as a shield, it uses your own acquired immunities and applies them to itself twice over.
100 - Immortal Object : Take an item you own. It is now indestructible, frozen in time. This doesn’t tend to play well with moving parts, and also stops improvements dead in their tracks.
200 - Cottage : A rustic cottage, surrounded by nothing but natural beauty (and a small, pleasant community), awaits you in all Jumps.

COMPANIONS

At no cost, you may bring your Companions with you as normal, either in the real or virtual worlds. The Warehouse may be used as an overlapping space to meet.

All options below come with Switch!, Sword Skills, and Critical Existence Failure.

100 - Party Up : Companion Import.
400 - Guild : Party Up times Eight.
100 - Dependable Swordsman : A talented swordsman with a unique style all his own. A mysterious and unyielding code of honor with an appreciation for the simple things in life. He's a little awkward with the ladies, but when he speaks from the heart he's surprisingly charming.

I’m speaking, of course, of Klein.

The face of a thug, a heart of gold, and a skill for keeping anyone under his command alive, this Samurai will stand by your side through thick and thin.

DRAWBACKS (MAX +600)

Drawbacks override Perks

+100 Abhorrent Admirer : You attract creeps like Asuna does. Admirers, stalkers, with potential murderers or rapists thrown in.
+100 Aggro : If a monster can detect you, it will target you. Even the neutral mobs. In the real world, animals are uniformly hostile.
+100 An Inconvenient World : Unless actively controlling your reactions, your emotions are exaggerated and obvious for all to see.
+200 Crime Prevention Code : No intoxication. No sex. Hell, you can barely touch or be touched without the CPC popping up, always with you as the party in the wrong. Even in the real world, somehow.
+200 16.5 : You will only achieve sexual release once every two years. When you do, there are obscene amounts of fluids. You will feel the pressure build up, and it must be released.
+200 Lag : Sometimes- especially when it's inconvenient- there's a second of lag. Treat it like actively malicious bad luck.
+300 No Jumper, you are the Kayaba : Or at least, that's what everyone is convinced of. In the game, you are always 'recognized' as Kayaba. Outside of the game, everyone is quite certain that you are his major co-conspirator, just as culpable as him.
+300 Fresh out of Mercy : He's unstable, your existence triggers his PTSD (violently so), and he has all your Perks. Somehow.
+300 A Game Not Meant To Be Played : While in VR, your Physical perks do not carry over. In SAO, the headset is able to kill you.

CLOSING NOTES

If Kayaba is content as he dies, you are rewarded with a copy of the World Seed. It is everything you need to make a self sustaining and regulating virtual or dream world, either through technology or magic.

No matter what happens, at the conclusion of Kayaba's death game, your Digital Projection Helmet is connected to an unlimited subscription to every VR game, single player or MMO.

GAME OVER

You're all played out. Head home with all your Perks, Items, and Companions.

STAY LOGGED IN

End the Jumpchain here.

You are declared deceased and your affairs are quietly put in order back home. Your loved ones have a brief period of mourning, but intuitively know you're okay, just not with them.

NEW GAME+

The Jumpchain never ends. There are new worlds to explore, new friends to make… new loot to hoard...