



# THE IDLE RPG STARTER GUIDE

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The best idle RPGs for iPhone, and how to pick the one that fits your brain

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The Assembly Line Newsletter

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# What a great idle RPG actually does

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An idle RPG is a role-playing game that keeps progressing while you are not playing. You set a task, close the app, live your life, and come back to meaningful gains. The genre grew out of RuneScape-style skill grids and the incremental-game tradition, and at its best it respects two things at once: your time and your attention.

The problem is that most idle games on the App Store advertise offline progression and then quietly tax it. The tells are everywhere once you know them, and they are the difference between a game that works for you and one that works on you.

## The four caveats to watch for

- **Time caps with an ad to extend** (up to 8 hours offline, then watch a video).
- **Offline multipliers** (active play earns 2x what offline earns, so you are punished for leaving).
- **VIP-scaled offline** (the cap grows with how much you spend).
- **Partial accrual** (only passive skills move offline; combat does not).

This guide ranks seven idle RPGs you can actually play on iPhone today (one ships in 2027), tells you which fits which kind of player, and closes with a five-point checklist so you can judge any idle RPG before you commit your next hundred hours to it.

# The 7 best idle RPGs for iPhone

Ranked by overall recommendation strength for an iPhone player, not by raw size. Every entry is a real game with a current listing. Number one is ours, and we say why in plain sight; cross-reference it against the honest picks that follow.

## #1 Tideward Apple-native, every device, no ads

A patient idle RPG with 23 trades, true 24-hour offline progression, and a single \$9.99 unlock: no ads, no tracking, no subscription. The wedge for Apple players is that one purchase covers iPhone, iPad, Mac, Apple TV, Vision Pro, and Apple Watch, synced privately through iCloud. Built in pure SwiftUI.

**Best for:** Players who want a long-haul idle RPG that respects their time and privacy, especially across multiple Apple devices.

**Pros:** Truly native (no Unity wrapper) • 24-hour offline progression • One unlock covers six Apple platforms • Zero ads, zero trackers, no account

**Cons:** Apple-only (no Android / Windows / web) • Currently in free TestFlight alpha; 1.0 ships Feb 11, 2027

**Price:** Free download, \$9.99 unlock at launch **Where:** TestFlight alpha now, US App Store Feb 2027

*Disclosure: we publish Tideward. It is #1 because nothing else here is iPhone-first, Apple-native across every device, and architecturally ad-free and tracker-free. The other picks below are honest.*

## #2 Melvor Idle The deepest skill grid on iOS

A spiritual successor to RuneScape brought into idle form: 20+ skills, 1000+ hours of content, one-time purchase. The iOS app is solid and it is the genre reference for an idle RPG with real depth.

**Best for:** Players who want serious skill-tree depth and do not mind a slightly browser-feeling UI.

**Pros:** Massive skill depth and endgame • One-time purchase, no ads • Mod-friendly on desktop

**Cons:** UI is not iOS-native • No iCloud sync across Apple devices • Melvor Idle 2 still in alpha; pick this for now

**Price:** ~\$10 one-time **Where:** iOS, iPadOS, Android, Steam

### #3 Magic Research 2 **Tight, designed, premium**

A premium idle game built around magic research, crafting loops, and a deliberate progression rhythm. Smaller in scope than Melvor but more polished; every unlock feels earned.

**Best for:** Players who want a tighter, designed idle experience without the open-ended grind feeling.

**Pros:** Designed progression with real aha moments • One-time purchase, no ads • Genuinely good iOS UX

**Cons:** No combat in the RuneScape sense • Shorter total runtime • Not cross-device

**Price:** ~\$5 one-time **Where:** iOS, Android, Steam

### #4 Lootun **Mobile-first, casual progression**

A polished mobile idle RPG with auto-combat, loot, and skill progression. Lighter than Melvor and more accessible for the just-want-bars-to-fill audience.

**Best for:** Players who want a clean, modern mobile idle RPG without the genre weight.

**Pros:** Modern, polished mobile UI • Free with optional cosmetic IAP • No energy gates blocking progress

**Cons:** Has ads (skippable but present) • Less skill depth than Melvor • No iCloud cross-device sync

**Price:** Free, cosmetic IAP **Where:** iOS, Android, Steam

### #5 Idle Slayer **Side-scroll + idle hybrid**

A side-scrolling auto-runner with idle mechanics, prestige loops, and a long content tail. A different shape from a skill-grid RPG, but heavy audience overlap.

**Best for:** Players who want active gameplay layered on top of idle progression.

**Pros:** Strong active-play loop • On iOS, Android, Steam • Premium unlock removes ads

**Cons:** Not skill-tree focused • F2P version has ads • Not strictly an RPG

**Price:** Free, premium unlock ~\$5 **Where:** iOS, Android, Steam

## #6 AdVenture Capitalist The clicker-to-idle gateway

The OG mobile idle. Not an RPG in the skill-tree sense, but the entry point most idle players cite, and the reference for businesses that upgrade themselves while you sleep.

**Best for:** Players new to the genre or looking for something to leave running over a long weekend.

**Pros:** Free, no purchase required • Polished, easy to learn • Long runway of content

**Cons:** Heavy ads in the F2P tier • Not an RPG (no character / gear) • Less depth than the skill-grid entries

**Price:** Free, IAP boosters **Where:** iOS, Android, Steam

## #7 Tap Titans 2 Tap + idle, long-running

A long-running tap + idle hybrid with hero summoning, prestige loops, and weekly tournaments. The RPG framing is loose but real, and the community is large.

**Best for:** Players who want a social or competitive layer on top of idle progression.

**Pros:** Active community and clans • Free with optional IAP • Long content runway since 2017

**Cons:** Ads and IAP-driven economy • Tap-heavy early game • Account required

**Price:** Free, IAP **Where:** iOS, Android

# 5 things to check before you commit

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## 1. Is offline progression real, or capped and gated?

Open the game's own description and look for the four caveats above. A true idle RPG simulates your tasks at full speed up to a fixed window (Tideward caps at 24 hours and applies no offline tax). A retention-engineered one makes offline a trickle you pay or watch ads to restore.

## 2. One-time purchase, or an ad-and-IAP economy?

One-time-purchase games (Melvor, Magic Research 2) and single-unlock games (Tideward) align the developer with your enjoyment. Ad-driven free-to-play games align the developer with your session count. Neither is wrong, but know which deal you are taking.

## 3. Real skill depth, or a single number going up?

Skill-grid RPGs (Melvor, Tideward) give you many interacting progression tracks: combat, gathering, crafting. Pure incrementals give you one big number. Both are valid; pick for the brain you have.

## 4. Does it sync across your devices?

Most idle games keep your save per-account on their own backend, so your iPhone and iPad are separate worlds. If you live across Apple devices, iCloud-synced saves (Tideward uses CloudKit, no account) matter more than any single feature.

## 5. What is it doing with your data?

Check the App Store privacy label. Many idle games embed ad and analytics SDKs that track you across apps. The ad-free, tracker-free entries here keep the deal simple: you play, that is all that happens.

# If you play on iPhone specifically

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Most idle RPGs on iPhone are cross-platform ports: a Unity or web build wrapped for iOS, with its own login and its own save server. That is fine, and several on this list are genuinely good. But it leaves three things on the table that matter to an Apple-first player.

## Native feel

A truly native build (pure SwiftUI, in Tideward's case) reads and scrolls like the rest of your phone, launches instantly, and behaves on iPad, Mac, and Apple TV without a separate effort.

## One game, every device

If your character lives in iCloud rather than on a company's server, it follows you: start a task on the Apple Watch, check the summary on your Mac at lunch, keep going on iPhone that night. One purchase, one save, six platforms.

## The clean deal

No ads, no third-party SDKs, no account: the privacy label says data is not collected because nothing in the binary collects it. For a game you may play daily for a year, that compounds.

### Want to try the one that does all three?

Tideward is free in TestFlight alpha right now, native on iPhone, iPad, Mac, Apple TV, Vision Pro, and Apple Watch. Install guide: [tideward.app/install/?ct=leadmagnet](https://tideward.app/install/?ct=leadmagnet)

# Keep going with The Assembly Line

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This guide is from The Assembly Line, a free newsletter about idle RPGs and factory games, twice a week. We cover the genre broadly, Melvor, OSRS-style skillers, IdleOn, and the games at the seam, and we build one of our own (Tideward) in the open.

## Where to go next

- **Subscribe (free):** [blog.manugames.com/subscribe](https://blog.manugames.com/subscribe)
- **Try Tideward free (TestFlight alpha):** [tideward.app/install/?ct=leadmagnet](https://tideward.app/install/?ct=leadmagnet)
- **Compare the genre:** [tideward.app/games-like-melvor-idle/](https://tideward.app/games-like-melvor-idle/)
- **Talk shop on Discord:** [discord.gg/hw6w93astV](https://discord.gg/hw6w93astV)

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