Youngstown

Game
Developers

-presents-

Your Future in
Game Development

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Game
Developers

Living the Dream

So you want to make video games?

That's fantastic! I'm sure you have some questions about how to get started with a career in game development:

- What schools should you attend?

- What classes should you take?

- Where do you look for a job?

- What should you have in your portfolio before you look for a job?

- What resources are available for you to start making video games?

- You don't know how to program or you are not artistic. Can you still make games?

- What types of jobs are available in the video game industry?

These are all questions that get asked, *ALL* the time. To put it simply, if you want to make video games or be a part of the video game industry, there is something out there for you, as long as you have the passion and dedication to do it.

Game Dev Jobs

There is this crazy fear that only programmers can be in the video game industry. That is so not true.

Once of the coolest things about the video game industry, is that there are so many job types available for you to choose from. Whether you want to make games, or market games, or defend games in court, there is something for you.

Below is a list of some game industry jobs:

- Programmer
- Graphic Designer
- Concept Artist
- 3D Character Artist
- 3D Ennvironment Artist
- Level Designer
- Story Writer / Story Boarding

- Indie Game Developer
- Marketing
- Lawyer
- 2D Character Artist
- 2D Ennvironment Artist
- Web Developer
- Game Tester (Quality Assurence)

Where do I find these jobs?

In general, there are 3 main resources for you to find a job in the game development industry. Networking, internet job postings, and your college's resource network.

Networking can be done both through the internet via social media such as Twitter, Google+, Facebook, LinkedIn, and many others and through face to face networking.

While social media networking is easily available, there is a right way and a wrong way to do it. The right way is to be professional online because once it's there, it's there forever. Be aware that your public profile represents you, and if you are doing things that your future employer would find unprofessional, you may be passed up for another candidate. You should also join groups and channels and forums that talk about the part of the industry you want to be a part of. Just Google search what you want to do and plenty of places will appear for you.

Once you find a group with similar interests, find some topics to discuss. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Game developers weren't born developers, they started somewhere, too, and most developers are more than willing to help a noob.

Face to face networking is probably the best way to get to know other developers. This form of networking allows other developers to see how you work and get to know you in person. There are many way to do face to face networking, from local Meetup.com groups to conventions and expos to even your local sandwich shop.

Online Networking Resources:

- Meetup.com

- Facebook pages and groups

- Google+ pages and hangouts

- Twitter

- LinkedIn

- Gamasutra

- PixelProspector.com

- Unity forums

Face to Face Networking Resources:

- Youngstown Game Developers (YGD)

- Internation Game Developers Association (IGDA)

- Ohio Game Developer Association

- Ohio Game Dev Expo (OGDE)

- Penny Arcade Expo (PAX)

- local conventions
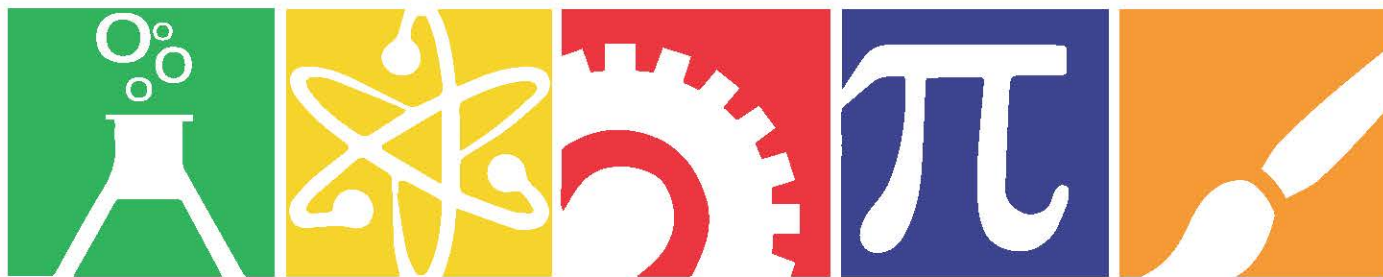
Let's Get Educated!

There is this other crazy fear that only people with video game degrees can get into the video game industry. That is also not true.

The video game industry is still in its infancy, and many schools don't have an education specifically for game development. Not to mention that many of the ones that do, only offer game development degrees in either programming or art, but nothing as a general degree. So how do you get educated for the game industry field?

Truly, that depends on what you want to do in the industry. Most schools offer classes and degrees that are specific to an area of game development. For instane, if you want to be a graphic designer in game development, you are most likely going to be working on User Interfaces (the main menus and the in game score and lives area of the screen). Some classes you might take would be basic graphic design classes, but also interactive design classes, which will teach you some basic programming for menus and websites.

If you were to go into programming, you would want to take computer science classes that focus on object oriented programming. You would also want to take classes with the three primary (in my opinion) programming languages in the game dev industry which are C/C#/C++, JavaScript and Python. If your school offers classes using and game engines such as Unity or Unreal, you would definitely want to take those classes since they are two of the most popular game engines, currently, in the industry.

If you are going into law and would like to represent game developers, you would want to take all required classes and pass your BAR exam, but you would also need to learn about what kinds of needs game developers need, such as business licenses, representation in court, and also study past cases and why the judge ruled in the developer's (or whoever won the case) favor. There is also a lot of issues in the workplace where you culd choose to represent the employee vs. the game developer company, with instances of over work due to crunch time, or even discrimination in the workplace.

If you want to get into marketing for game developers, study current game trends and be able to predict what the consumer will be wanting to spend their money on. In 2009, single player puzzle games from studios like Big Fish Games, were extremely popular. Then, in 2010, smartphones hit the consumr market and everyone was playing Angry Birds. Why did this happen?

Before games go to market, they need to be tested. But playing games and testing games are two totally different things. Your Quality Assurance life will be dedicated to finding bugs by walking into walls, jumping out of the game world, and essentially finding ways to break the game. This is probably the only field that does not require a college education, but should you want to become a QA Analist or a manager within a publisher, you would need a college education.

To be a concept artist, you would want a Fine Arts or Arts degree. You would need to understand the world, and how everything (visually) works within it. You would be studying human and animal anatomy and how to draw it. You would want to take classes for many art forms, from Manga and Comic Books drawings, to realism and arcitecture and then swing on back to cartoon styles. You would also need to take classes on character turn arounds and visual perspective.

Typically, Level Designers don't start out right from college. You would normally start as an artist of some sort and then move up the food chain when positions become available. However, if that is your goal, you would want to find classes that work within many game engines. Many times, you won't see these classes available to you at many colleges until your junior or senior year, if they are available at all. So what you would want to do is start building levels with the tools that are available to you. There are a lot of free game engines to play around with, including Unity, GameMaker, and the Mario World game engine Lunar Engine. All of these are available to download to your computer for free, and there are tutorials all over Google search, Vimeo and YouTube for you to learn how to use them.

Indie Game Developers are basically a "many hats" club. Indie or independent game developers are typically game studios that are not owned or financed by a publisher, and consist of a team smaller than 20 people. Most indie game devs are 5 or less people. Indie game devs do all of the jobs listed above, and then some. And if you are making the game on your own, then you alone (unless you have the finances to hire contract employees) do all of those jobs and the success of your game(s) depends solely on you. It's a lot of work, but the bonus is you create your own deadlines, and you can create what you want to create, how you want to create it.

There are many more jobs available in the industry, and I could write an encyclopedie to describe all of the jobs, but I'm sure you would like to know more about the industry and where to go to school.

Honestly, go to school where you want to go to school. There are, of course, elite schools to attend like MIT or DigiPen, but not everyone can or is able to afford to go to school in those places. But most schools offer most of the courses you would need in order to start your game career.

Now, just because you have an education, does not mean you will get a job right out of school. It helps because it shows you are dedicated, but what game developers want to see is what you can do and what you are go at.

Which brings us to our next point, your portfolio.

Get a Portfolio!

There is this another crazy lie that only artists need a portfolio. If you thought that, you are wrong.

Everyone who graduates college and wants a job needs a portfolio. So what do you need in your portfolio? What are portfolios made of?

Portfolios require examples of your work, a basic cover letter, and your resume.

Your cover letter should consist of your passion about game development. Don't write something like "I've been playing Halo since I was 5 and now I want to make Halo games." That would be a turn-off to developers. Game devs want to here why games have moved you to be so dedicated to be a part of the game development industry. List what skills you currently posses that would make you a great asset to the developer you are applying to be . Say something about why you want to be a part of the development team or publisher that you are applying to be a part of. And give a couple examples of some projects you were a part of in the game development field.

Your resume is also important. This shows how you have used your skills, that you are able to work as a team member and what has brought you to be who you are. If you have large gaps in between your jobs, be prepared to explain what you did during those gaps and how you made you free time useful towards becoming a game developer.

The most important part is your portfolio. You should have a LinkedIn account and a website that displays your best works, your experience, links to projects you have worked on, groups and clubs that you are a part of and whatever else is relevant to making you look good. This will show developers what you have worked on in the past, and what you will be ready to do if you are hired.

Best of Luck

Thanks for reading this little helpful guide to getting started in the video game industry!

We wish you the best of luck in your future career, and if you ever have any questions, comments or concerns, please contact us!

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About Today's Speakers

Kendra Corpier - A professional graphic designer by day and professional indie game developer by night. She is the founder of Eimear Studios and Organizer for Youngstown Game Developers. She has done a lot in the video game industry, from being a QA tester in her early years, working for studios, and even being a part of video game press. With her indie studio, she creates, designs, produces and publishes her games, from concept to finish. Kendra believes the best part about being indie, is the freedom to create and learn on her own terms.

Bill Jones - A professional software engineer whose passion for game development has lead to many great experiences. Bill has presented at the indie mega booth at PAX East and has frozen his butt off and become sleep deprived at several Global Game Jams at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh. He is a co-organizer of the Youngstown Game Developer Meetup and has contributed to several games that have reached various levels of notoriety. Bill believes that games represent the best melding of art, entertainment, and design and is always looking for interesting people to collaborate with.

Andrew Pavlick - Spends most of his days pushing polygons to make the world a better place. Andrew's professional work encompasses everything from real-time graphics to 3D printing, including (but not limited to): custom 3D characters for SpeechPathology, environments and prop modeling for Fresenius Kabi, and recording motion capture and custom character rigging for training and medical simulations. He was a co-founder of Enyx Studios, and currently operates his own business, Create at Andrew Pavlick (CAP). Computer graphics is an incredibly fast paced industry and Andrew's goal is to support independent and small studios in creation of triple-A content.