

1. Occupational Title: **Video Game Designer**
2. Occupational Coding Systems:  
SOC Code: 15-1199.11
3. Military occupational title
  - None found, the nearest occupation listed is Multimedia Illustrator
  - However, the military does employ civilian game and simulation designers:
    - i. Software Engineering Directorate, America's Army
    - ii. FAAC Incorporated (Arotech Inc.), military simulators
4. Military occupation code numbers
  - Army: 25M
5. Occupational descriptions

Video Game Designers create the gameplay experiences and manage the production of the software features of the video game.
6. Occupational tasks, duties and competencies
  - Balance and adjust gameplay experiences to ensure the critical and commercial success of the product.
  - Create core game features including storylines, role-play mechanics, and character biographies for a new video game or game franchise.
  - Create and manage documentation, production schedules, prototyping goals, and communication plans in collaboration with production staff.
  - Keep abreast of game design technology and techniques, industry trends, or audience interests, reactions, and needs by reviewing current literature, talking with colleagues, participating in educational programs, attending meetings or workshops, or participating in professional organizations or conferences.
  - Knowledge of computers and electronics, design, English language, communication media, psychology, mathematics
  - Skills: computer programming, complex problem solving, time management, writing, cooperative decision making, creativity and originality
  - It is stated by many in the field that in game design, no skill is useless or wasted

**7. Nature of the work narrative**

In a large company (producing MMOs, AAA title or large brand mobile games), video game designers are promoted lead roles, where employees often start their careers as artists, programmers or quality testers. The designer manages the team producing the game, and makes the decisions for the features of the game, such as the gameplay experiences, level design, user interface, and the technological systems to support each of these features. The designer will meet frequently (daily or weekly) with the other team members to evaluate progress and set new goals. The designer will also work on the features of the game pertaining to their own area of expertise (art, programming, etc.) The designer may also produce reports communicating the team's progress to superiors, or analyzing the effects of various systems within the game, and their effects on the gameplay (for example, if the auction house is fair and fun for players to participate in).

As an entry level position, video game designers can more easily enter the career working independently or in small teams. These designers have all the similar functions as a designer in a large company, but will also need to develop the skills for managing a business. These skills would include maintaining a budget, acquiring equipment, obtaining licenses, and negotiating work for hire. However, the size of the design studio should not be an indication of potential success of the game. Some independent designers have been very successful: Flappy Bird, Braid, Minecraft.

**8. List of related occupations**

Design Director, Designer/Writer, Game Designer, Game Designer/Creative Director, Lead Designer, Lead Game Designer, Lead Level Designer, Mid Level Game Designer, Senior Game Designer, World Designer

**9. Occupation location within career clusters**

Information Support and Services

**10. Distribution of occupation across industries**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics does not collect data about Video Game Designers, but lists them as "Multimedia Artists and Animators" under the "Computer Occupations, All Other" category.

While most game designers work in the game development industry, a few other industries hire game designers to promote their product, industry or service. Examples include:

- The National Park Service
- The Oil Industry
- Retailers
- The U.S. Army

11. Family support and resources needed to succeed in the occupation

Making a video game can take many hours, sometimes requiring grueling overtime to meet deadlines. The family of the developer needs to be sympathetic to these requirements.

Access to a desktop computer and the target platform devices are required to make video games. The computer will need the development software to create the application, artwork, music and sound effects, but some versions of these are available for free. The device platform publishers (the app stores) usually require a developer's license as well.

12. Earning Factors

- Average earning ..... \$73,864
- Median earning ..... \$88,880 for "Computer Occupations, All Other"
- Starting earning ..... \$50,625
- Fringe benefits: ..... \$13,860  
Annual bonus, Project/Title bonus, Royalties, Stock options/equity, Profit sharing, Pension
- National salary information  
    \$50,625 with less than 3 years of experience  
    \$86,563 with more than 6 years of experience
- State salary information  
    \$39,140 to \$112,730 in Ohio for "Computer Occupations, All Other"
- Local labor market salary information  
    \$76,580 annual mean wage in Cincinnati for "Computer Occupations, All Other"  
    \$85,260 annual mean wage in Columbus
- Training earnings  
    paid internships, entry level salary

Note: The BLS categorizes Video Game Designers under the "Computer Occupations, All Other" category. The salaries given in the BLS reports are consistently higher than in the reports published by the game industry itself (Gamasutra, 2014), which were used in the figures above whenever available.

13. Working Conditions

- Health risks: Repetitive Strain Injury, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, Poor Posture, Eye Strain - Video Game Designers can spend long hours sitting at a desk in front of a computer screen.
- Safety risks: no typical safety risks

**14. Lifestyle factors**

Video game designers work full-time or part-time in large companies or in small teams. Sometimes, long overtime hours, known as “crunch time,” are required to meet deadlines. The designer should attend to his or her work-life balance. However, video game design is a creative endeavor, and most designers are very passionate about their work and report a high level of satisfaction in their work.

**15. Short term occupational projections**

Short term projections see a decrease in the number of video game designer positions. This is due to the volatile nature of the industry. Larger companies are less willing to take risks with new properties, and are releasing new versions and updates of established franchises. However, the growth of small teams publishing these riskier titles have dramatically increased in the past few years.

Overall, however, the video game industry is growing steadily, and there are growing opportunities for programmers and artists.

**BLS.gov Figures**

- National            +8% for Multimedia Artists and Animators  
                             +31% for Software Developers, Applications
- State                +2% for Multimedia Artists and Animators  
                             +5.8% for Software Developers, Applications
- Local                not available

**16. Long term occupational projections**

- National            +19% for Video Game Designers
- State:                +3.2% for Multimedia Artists and Animators  
                             +18.1 for Software Developers, Applications
- Local                not available

**17. Types of education and training needed**

While a college degree can be helpful in obtaining a job with a large game development company, it is certainly not a requirement. This is especially true for independent developers. Knowing how to develop games and software, with a portfolio which demonstrates one's skills, is much more important. In a 2016 survey of Game Developers, the following percent of respondents report their highest educational attainment:

- Some or no college                      15%
- Associate's degree                      6%
- Bachelor's degree                      63%
- Graduate degree                      16%

Only 32% of respondents reported having a degree which was directly related to game development.

**18. Occupational and industry recognized credentials**

- Associate's degrees
- Bachelor's degrees
- Graduate degrees
- Certificates in specific software development tools: Adobe Photoshop, Unity3D
- Software Industry Project Management: Certified Scrum Developer

**19. Length of training needed**

Varies according to program desired

**20. Apprenticeship opportunities**

Paid and unpaid internships with a large game development company

**21. Education majors**

Game Design, Digital Art, Software Development, Computer Science, Business, Marketing, Literature, Physics, Art History, Mathematics

22. Schools and colleges providing preparation

- Miami University (Oxford, OH)
- Shawnee State University (Portsmouth, OH)
  
- Edison State Community College (Piqua, Ohio)
- The Ohio State University
- Columbus State Community College
- Columbus College of Art & Design
- Kent State University
- Ohio University
- Franklin University
- Stark State College
- University of Cincinnati

23. Projected costs of education and training needs

- Game Development Associate's Degree  
at Columbus State Community College: \$27,620
  
- Bachelor of Science in Computer Science and Engineering  
at The Ohio State University \$86,812

24. Opportunities for advancement

Game Designers can be promoted into positions as Lead Designers or Design Directors.

25. Anticipated technology changes

In this field, the technology is constantly changing. Processors and display devices are continually being upgraded. Additionally, Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality (AR/VR) are significant leading edge technologies. In the future, we can expect games with more robust Artificial Intelligence, more expansive virtual worlds and virtual reality affecting more of the human senses (smell, touch).

Presentation: <http://www.oakhillstech.org/bradrick/vgd/index.html>

### References

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