# Games Designer

A games designer produces new ideas for computer games of all types: puzzle, adventure, role-play, combat, shooters and sports. They design games for different platforms: PCs, laptops, consoles, the internet, interactive TV and mobile phones.

## The Work

You could be:

- planning and developing the different elements of a game: setting, plot, levels, characters, vehicles and objects and modes of play
- presenting ideas, using written documents and computer graphics or sketches, to the rest of the team
- working with artists and programmers to build a game prototype
- adapting and improving the game structure, functionality and user experience (known as UX) throughout the development
- changing the original ideas if they turn out to be technically difficult to put into practice
- working on the whole game or on one aspect of design, such as environment, characters or objects
- training testers to play the game to find any bugs (problems)
- writing the game's instructions
- working on more than one game at a time.

## Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

Starting salaries for junior entry level positions are usually around £18,000 to £22,000 a year. With experience this can rise to between £30,000 and £45,000 a year. Senior designers may earn £60,000 or more a year. Salaries are usually higher in London.

You might earn extra through profit sharing, bonus payments and performance-related pay.

## Conditions

- You will spend most of your time working at a computer, usually in an open plan office.
- You work with other professionals, such as artists, computer animators, developers and testers.
- Although you work basic office hours, you might have to work overtime to meet deadlines.
- When deadlines are due, you work under pressure to complete projects on time.

## Getting In

- Entry is highly competitive and most entrants are graduates with degrees (SCQF Levels 9-11) in computing or IT, or specialist degrees in Computer Games. You should be able to demonstrate a real passion for gaming.
- Abertay, Edinburgh Napier, Glasgow Caledonian, Heriot-Watt and the West of Scotland universities offer degree courses in computer games subjects. Abertay and Glasgow Caledonian universities offer specialist degrees in computer games including design. Glasgow School of Art offers a degree in Games and Virtual Reality.
- Entry requirements for most of these courses are 4-5 Highers usually including Maths plus National 5 English. Check with the individual institution.
- If you have a degree in a relevant subject you could do a specialist postgraduate games development course at Abertay University.
- The ScreenSkills website lists endorsed degree courses for the computer games industry.
- You might enter after gaining experience as a programmer, graphic designer or games tester.
- You must have a portfolio of work including games projects and proposals.
- Studying for the Creative and Digital Media Foundation Apprenticeship (FA), which you can start in S5 and study at school and college, can count towards entry to a degree. Entry requirements vary between colleges, but you usually need 3-5 subjects at National 5 including English. Maths, Art and Design, Computing Science or a science subject may be required. It is recommended that you work towards relevant Highers by the end of S6.

Job vacancies are often advertised on the internet, for example, the Talent Scotland website. There is a lot of competition for jobs.

## What Does It Take

You need to have:

- imagination and creativity
- an analytical, logical approach
- excellent IT skills and knowledge of different game engines
- a wide knowledge of and a real enthusiasm for computer games and popular games culture
- good story telling and plot planning skills
- an understanding of design for user interfaces
- computer design skills
- excellent communication and presentation skills
- an awareness of target markets.

You need to be able to:

- adapt to ever-changing technology
- pay attention to detail
- be a good team worker
- work under pressure, accept criticism and meet deadlines.

## Training

- Training is often on the job.
- You could take short training courses in languages such as C++ and artificial intelligence techniques.

## Getting On

- Skilled designers are in demand and with experience you can specialise or move on to become a team or project leader.
- You may be able to work overseas in Europe, USA, Canada, Australia and Japan.
- With experience you could work on a freelance basis.

## More Information

- The University of Abertay has the UK's first university Centre of Excellence for Computer Games Education.
- BAFTA Young Games Designers is a competition with different categories for 10-14 and 15-18 year olds. You can write and illustrate your idea to enter the 'Concept Award' or make your own game to enter the 'Games-Making Award'. See the BAFTA Young Game Developer website for more details.
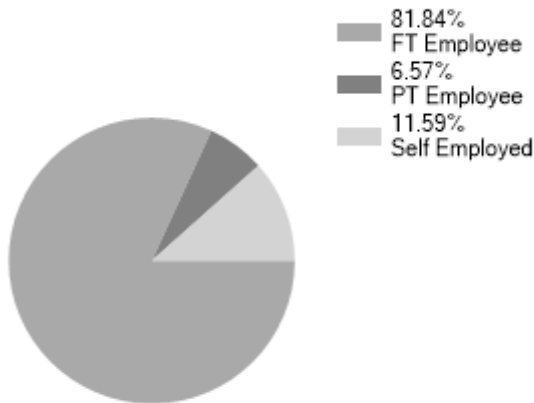
For more information please see the organisations listed below:

- BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT
- British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA)
- ScreenSkills
- TIGA

## Contacts

## Statistics

Employment Status UK %

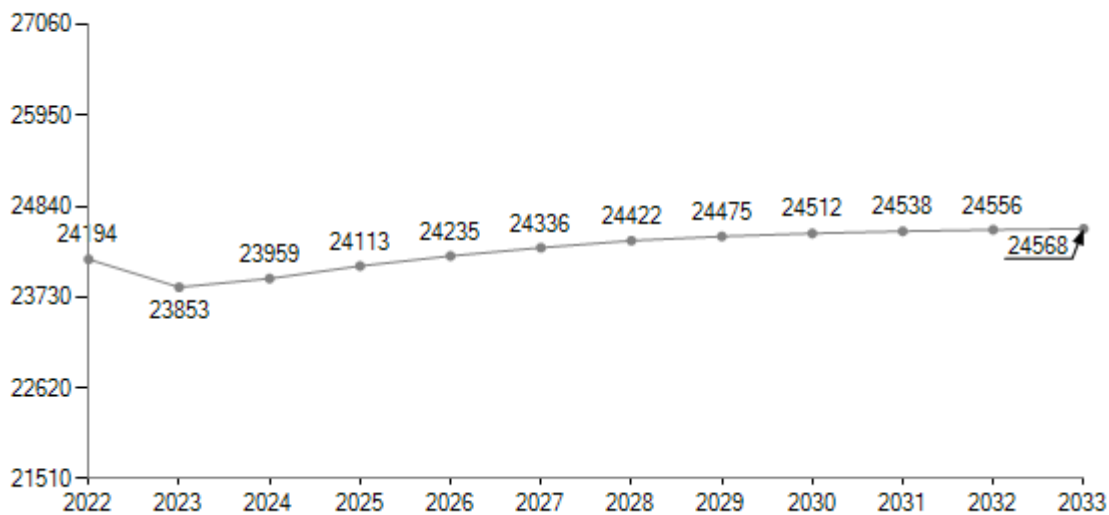- 81.84% FT Employee
- 6.57% PT Employee
- 11.59% Self Employed



LMI data powered by LMI for All

**Past Unemployment - Scotland**

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by Lightcast