Games

Ireland has a growing digital games industry, with independent developers, larger studios and companies providing services to the global games industry.There are lots of different ways to work in games. You might be interested in art and animation, coding and technology, storytelling and design, working with players, or organising how a game gets made and launched. Curiosity, creativity, problem-solving, communication and teamwork are all valuable skills.

Typical Departments

Engineering

Engineering is where the technology behind a game is built. Engineers write code and create the systems that make games work, from gameplay and graphics to online features, tools and technology.

You could work on gameplay, graphics, artificial intelligence, physics, online systems, game tools or the technology that supports a game.

→ Skills to explore: Coding, mathematics, problem-solving, logical thinking and technology.

Game Design

Game Design is about deciding how a game works and what players experience. Designers develop gameplay systems, levels, challenges, quests, characters, stories and player experiences.

This is a great area if you enjoy thinking about how games work, creating ideas and solving problems creatively.

→ Skills to explore: Creativity, storytelling, problem-solving, communication and understanding what makes games fun.

Art

The Art team creates the visual identity and assets that make a game look the way it does. This can include characters, environments, objects, user interfaces, visual effects and the overall artistic style of a game.

There are lots of different areas within game art. You might work in 2D or 3D, create characters and environments, develop visual styles or work with technical tools to get art working effectively in the game.

→ Skills to explore: Drawing, visual creativity, 2D and 3D design, digital art, attention to detail and creativity.

Animation

Animation brings characters, creatures, objects and worlds to life. Animators create movement and performances that respond to what happens in a game and help communicate its story and personality.

Animation can involve character performance, cinematic sequences, technical animation and rigging — the systems that allow characters and objects to move.

→ Skills to explore: Drawing, observation, movement, storytelling, acting, 3D software and attention to detail.

Audio

Audio teams create the sounds and music that bring games to life. This can include sound effects, dialogue, music and interactive audio that changes depending on what the player is doing.

→ Skills to explore: Music, sound recording, technology, creativity and listening.

Quality Assurance (QA)

QA teams help make sure games work properly and provide a good experience for players. They test games, find problems, document issues and work with other departments to help solve them.

→ Skills to explore: Attention to detail, curiosity, problem-solving, planning, communication and persistence.

Production, Delivery & Product Management

Production teams help games get made. They help teams plan work, manage schedules, coordinate people and identify risks and problems. Product-focused roles also help decide what should be built and what is most important for the game and its players.

Producers work across departments, so communication, organisation and teamwork are particularly important.

→ Skills to explore: Organisation, communication, teamwork, problem-solving and planning.

Publishing & Commercial

Not everyone in games works directly on making the game. Publishing and commercial teams help games reach players and become successful businesses.

This can include marketing, sales, business development, working with platforms and partners, distribution, release planning and commercial strategy.

→ Skills to explore: Communication, creativity, business, marketing, research and understanding audiences.

Live Operations, Community & Player Support

Many games continue to evolve after they are released. Live operations teams help plan updates, events and new content, while community and player-support teams work directly with players.

This can include managing communities, responding to player feedback, supporting players and helping teams understand what players want.

→ Skills to explore: Communication, organisation, problem-solving, social media and understanding audiences.

Data & Analytics

Games generate lots of information about how players interact with them. Data and analytics teams use this information to understand player behaviour, test ideas and help teams make better decisions.

You don't have to be a programmer to work with data — curiosity, statistics, research and critical thinking are all useful.

→ Skills to explore: Mathematics, statistics, research, critical thinking and problem-solving.

Platform, Infrastructure & Technology

Games also need technology and infrastructure to run reliably. These teams work on platforms, online services, servers, development infrastructure and the systems that allow games and development teams to operate effectively.

→ Skills to explore: Computing, coding, problem-solving, systems thinking and technology.

Support Functions

Like Publishing & Commercial roles, not everyone who works in games is involved in designing or building the game itself. Games companies also need people who help the business, its people and its projects operate successfully.

Support functions can include areas such as finance, legal, human resources, recruitment, administration, IT, facilities and other business services. In smaller studios, these responsibilities may be shared between a small number of people or provided by external specialists.

These roles can be a great way to work in the games industry if you are interested in the sector but don't necessarily want to make games yourself.

→ Skills to explore: Organisation, communication, problem-solving, teamwork, business, technology and working with people.

Pathways into this sector:

Look at Higher Education options: Think about a course related to the area that interests you. Games professionals come from many different educational backgrounds, including computing, software development, game design, animation, art, music, business and digital media.

Look at Further Education options: FE colleges offer courses in areas such as games, computing, animation, art, design and digital media. Choose something that helps you develop the skills you are interested in and build work you can show to others.

Build your own projects: You don't need to wait until you are studying a games course to start making things. Try making a small game, creating a 3D model, writing a story, recording sound, designing a level or learning to code.

Join a club or community: A school coding club, game-making club, art group, music group or online creative community can help you develop skills and meet people with similar interests.

Try a game jam: Game jams are short events where people work together to create a game. They can be a great way to experiment, collaborate and build a portfolio.

Free Online Tools to Practise With:

• Scratch — make simple interactive projects and games.

• Unity — create your own 2D and 3D games and experiment with game development, programming and interactive experiences.

• Unreal Engine — explore professional game development and immersive experiences, including game design, programming, visual effects and virtual worlds.

• Blender — create 3D models, characters, environments and animations, and experiment with the tools used by professional artists and animators.

• Godot — learn game development and programming by creating your own games.

• GDevelop — create games without needing to start with traditional programming.

• itch.io — publish and share your own games and creative projects.

Skills Worth Developing

• Problem-solving & critical thinking

• Creativity & coming up with ideas

• Communication & explaining ideas clearly

• Teamwork & collaboration

• Adaptability & willingness to learn

• Attention to detail

• Technical and digital skills

• Understanding players and audiences

Sources & Further Reading:

Young Minds Coding

Imirt — Irish Game Makers Association

National Talent Academies

Careers in Screen

Global Game Jam

Eirmersive

Digital Games Competency Framework