

What is a Game Writer?

In general, there are two key activities that separate games writers from game designers. Of course, one person can fulfill both roles, but it does not follow that the game designer is the same as a game writer, especially these days. Some people like to use the term writer-designer to designate a game writer who is also involved in the process of game design.

- **Interactive dialogue scripting** (or perhaps dialogue scripting for games) is writing the dialogue spoken within the game and/or writing other text which serves a narrative purpose.
- **Narrative design** is the process of creating the story which is included in the game.

Of course, there are various subsidiary roles that a game writer may perform - writing manuals, promotional copy or short stories to act as a teaser for the game, for instance. But the real meat of the work is in dialogue scripting and narrative design.

Dialogue Scripting

Most of the times that a game writer is brought in on a project, it is to write the dialogue. Often the game story has already been designed (as part of the regular design process), so it will be your job to provide dialogue for use in the game.

You will need to review the game design materials if you are going to write a good script, and you will also need to know how much freedom you have in terms of inventing new characters, or fleshing out the characters that are already present in the game. Ask lots of questions before you even begin to write the script.

Just as in TV and film, your first draft will almost never be used, so be prepared to go through at least one (more typically two) rounds of edits as you adjust the script to the developers taste. Some of the changes you are asked to make may not satisfy you as a writer, and you are free to make your case for an alternative approach, but when the developer asks you to deliver one thing you have an obligation to deliver exactly that.

Remember, the game belongs to no one person, but to every consumer who is going to buy the game. The developer's vision of the target audience of the game must be taken as gospel, even if you feel differently. But of course, you can raise your points to the developer and see what they have to say - they may be open to a different approach (especially if the development schedule is quite long), but most development projects are tight on both time and money so there are usually severe limits to be worked within.

Narrative Design

The process of narrative design is the art of designing the storyline to a game. It takes place at a broad-strokes level, much like a treatment for a film or book. The best time to be developing narrative is when the concept design for the game is being carried out, and ideally this is when a game writer should be brought in. They can work with the game designer to influence the game levels towards a strong narrative. In practice, game writers are often brought in during the mid to late stage of development - the narrative design is usually locked in at this point. .