

THE BIBLE OF GETTING A JOB IN GAME AUDIO, 2025 EDITION THE ULTIMATE COMPILATION OF ARTICLES!

Hello!

Welcome to **The Bible of Getting a Job in Game Audio, 2020 2025 Edition!**

This is a huge compilation of articles written by dozens of industry professionals who regularly undergo hiring processes. Its purpose is to **smooth out the learning curve** of applying to **audio jobs** in the **video game industry**, specifically to **AAA studios**.

It will help you avoid common mistakes that **waste time for everyone** -
the recruiters, the hiring team, and the applicants.

You can avoid paying the price of learning from needless mistakes, and get the job quicker.

If AAA is not your thing, no worries - it works for **indie, mobile, and small studios** too!

This document is for: **everyone who got caught in the layoffs**, but also college graduates, aspiring sound designers, indie game sound designers who want to switch to **AAA**, and sound professionals from TV, film or music jumping ship to video games.

If you're not getting a response to your applications, **keep reading!**

Since this field is small and specialized, the information presented here can help you
more than a career coach with no insight into game audio ever could!

A **great big thank you**, to all contributors - kudos for putting all this information out*! They are, in no particular order:

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I'm sorry if I forgot anyone! Editing this document was quite an endeavour. Please don't be offended and let me know so I can add you straight away!

2025 update: In the years since this compilation was first released, the game industry changed quite a bit, due to the pandemic, due to over-hiring and several rounds of layoffs. There have been no updates to this guide mostly because almost everything in here still applies. I did however receive many many messages from people who read, understood and applied the knowledge here got hired. I hope the next one comes from you!

Good luck job hunting, and happy reading!

- Compiled and edited by Florian Titus Ardelean, Technical Sound Designer at Vicious Sound LLC

*The articles below are sourced from studios' or sound designers' websites, A Sound Effect blog posts, Designing Sound.org articles, LinkedIn articles, posts and comments, tweets or comments, reddit threads, discord channels related to game audio. Everything in this document was posted on publicly accessible platforms in the last 18 months or received via DM from the authors. The articles were reprinted here with permission. This document will be updated periodically as new articles are published. **Last update: April, 2025**

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Audio Jobs: Finding the best tune, by [MCV Staff](#), June 2017

Originally published on [the MCV/Develop web site](#)

When you get a job in the games industry, you usually have a general idea of why you wanted to get that job in such a specialised field. Maybe you want to draw some fantastic characters, design memorable levels or even write a neat story into a small book in a large RPG.

Working in audio, however, can be quite different. It can be a very time and cost intensive area of development and the need for expertise and investment in technology can be great. Unlike other games jobs, there isn't an obvious or direct route into working on game audio.

Many studios now have their own in-house audio production facilities and need qualified staff to operate them. This can be difficult for employers looking for the right person with the right knowledge, especially in an industry that evolves as fast as gaming does. So how exactly do you get in? For many, it's down to a lifetime love of all things audio.

"I was lucky, way back in the 90's I answered a local newspaper advert for a place called Gremlin Graphics," recalls Pat Phelan, audio director at Sumo Digital. "The advert said that they were looking for a musician to work in house on their games. My background was as a programmer, but I played regular gigs with various bands at that time. I also had a massive interest in video games, in particular, the music they made. The musicians in those days were expected to do the audio design too. I naturally migrated towards sound design rather than music."

Frontier's Matthew Florianz's introduction to audio came at a very young age. "At seven years old, I had convinced myself that Han Solo had a real blaster-pistol," he says. "That fantasy came crashing down when a Star Wars documentary showed Ben Burtt banging a metal cable for his laser sounds. It was one of those naivety-born disappointments that would later become a fascination. I ended up in games almost by accident. I joined a web design company in the early 00s, and the owners were really keen on video games. Word reached our CEO that a Dutch publisher was looking for content. Our company got in contact and presented a document and within a few months we were working on our first game."

For others, the route into audio was just a beat away from studying. "I joined after graduating from university where I studied music technology," says Playground Games' lead audio designer, Douglas Watson. "It's a cliché?, but I seemed to be in the right place at the right time. I have always had a passion for games, so being able to apply my audio skillset to a format that I loved was a no brainer."

"After graduating I started out in QA," says Codemasters' senior producer, Mike Tebbutt. "From there I branched out over time into various development and production roles. Several of my jobs have involved managing or producing audio as part of my responsibilities."

One mistake is to re-score / redesign trailers for triple-A games. Having your work compared to the very best doesn't always work. - Matthew Florianz, Audio Lead, Frontier Developments

TUNING UP

The cost of running an in-house audio department is not cheap, so studios need to make sure that they have **the right people** who are ready to use the technology at hand. What kind of **skills** do you need to get an audio role at a studio? That depends on the technology the studio uses and where the developers place audio in their production priorities.

“In some studios, audio used to be an ‘end of chain service provider’,” says Frontier’s Florianz. “This is fast becoming an exception for in-house teams as we become an integral part of pre-production and involved in the concept phase. Audio work is moved from a one-to-one relationship (where something happens in-game, audio triggers a sound, sound plays on a pre-defined object) to being more data- and procedurally-informed.

“Members of the team work in DAW’s such as Cubase, Vegas, Pro-tools, Live, Soundforge and Reaper. We try **not to get bogged down by tech**, as we believe that **creative, communicative** people have all the tools to solve hardware and software problems; they know how to ask for help! For implementation, we use **Wwise**, which is pretty straightforward but does benefit from expertise.”

“At Playground we have two 7.1 mix rooms and one 5.1 edit suite,” explains Playground’s Watson. “Someone looking to work in game audio should already have **a strong knowledge of multiple digital audio workstations** and a **keen ear**. In-house audio designers are able to integrate and work closely with the wider team on a daily basis, that isn’t always possible with a distributed team. This enables audio designers to be included in the design process and apply their passion for sound to shape the project.”

“Being in-house means that you are a real part of the team,” says Sumo Digital’s Phelan. “You get to live and breathe the game within the culture of the team. Having that sense of ownership, being able to work with coders and artists directly in order to bring substance to your vision is vital; and it is why we like having our audio designers in house and working directly with the teams.

“We mostly work with PCs running Nuendo and a whole swathe of plugins. The useful thing about Nuendo is that it syncs with Wwise very nicely. Some of the guys here prefer Reaper so we’re keeping an eye on that too. We have a bunch of field recording equipment and an in-house studio where we record the source for most of our audio design. Understanding how to use new hardware/software is less important to me than having someone who understands how to create fantastic audio.”

Not everyone has the same requirements, however, as Codemasters' Tebbutt explains. "As we work on quite a realistic sounding game the audio team doesn't tend to have much use for hardware synthesisers and our mixing desks are all software based.

"In fact, the only hardware we really use are development kits. That said, most of our hardware comes in the form of recording gear, from microphones, windshields and recording devices, which we take on location to capture the sound of the F1 cars, tracks and garages."

HEARING THE SOUNDWAVE

So far, you'd be hard pressed to find a definitive answer for how you should approach looking for work in games audio as, demonstrated by our contributors, everyone's needs are very different. So it's difficult to create a showreel specifically for any project.

However, one thing that doesn't change across all of the studios we talked to is having an ear for audio and getting experience. "Someone looking for their first audio design job would probably need some sort of degree in an audio related discipline," says Sumo Digital's Phelan. "They should have a **good portfolio of work** that demonstrates their understanding of manipulating sound.

"Most importantly, **passion** is needed," says Phelan. "Audio is always last on everyone's list and the only reason there are so many awesome sounding games out there at the moment is because passionate, capable individuals are willing to push even when nobody else cares. It's a tough gig, the amount of high talent out there makes this a buyers' market. I'd suggest you try and develop your identity and style, be authentic and true to yourself and never ever undersell your services!" "Audio can be very abstract," says Frontier's Florianz. "Even where it's in direct support of the game. Designers have to be able to imagine the player's experience. A strong portfolio doesn't require an explanation (though don't hesitate to explain your thinking in an accompanying document). We tend to like bold choices, attention to detail and concise presentation.

"One **mistake**, especially made by enthusiastic juniors, is to **re-score trailers for triple-A games**. Chances are that audio guys / gals will have seen that trailer. Having **your work compared to the very best in the industry doesn't always work in your favour**."

For Codemasters, Tebbutt's requirements are more specific. "We ask applicants for an audio-related degree and a decent, **relevant portfolio**. Applicants should really **tailor their portfolio and CV** towards the company they are applying for. For us, any high quality racing-related work normally goes down well."

“Most audio designers have some kind of music background and, like other creative disciplines, I think **a strong showreel** is key,” says Playground’s Watson. “This should be used to showcase **the very best of your work**. Most importantly, you need to have a **passion for games and sound**.

“One thing I always say to people is **do your research**. If there is a game or a movie that you love the sound of, then try and find out about who designed the elements that you like and how they were made. Often, this will lead you down a path of discovering new techniques that you can utilise when you’re working on your showreel.”

“At the beginning of your career you are probably worried that what you have isn’t enough to show,” adds Frontier’s Florienz. “**Resist the urge to over compensate**, one really good example is better than adding anything that detracts from this. **Quality is king**, quantity not so much.

“Also, play a lot of games, especially those that are talked about in game audio circles, podcasts or that have won awards. Be **analytical when you play games or watch films**, even when you are just out and about: **Always be listening**.”

ALTERNATIVE KEYS

While some developers may have the budget to invest in their own audio studios in-house, others may not, or might need to branch out in order to get their audio finished. What do you do in those situations? One such place that offers this kind of outsourcing service is UK-based Sounding Sweet.

“Using an audio outsource company enables a developer to scale their business in-line with the project requirements and schedule,” says MD and audio producer at Sounding Sweet, Ed Walker. “It also gives them access to highly skilled and specialised audio professionals that have specific expertise in certain areas that may not be available in-house.

“Full-scale industry standard audio production facilities are expensive to purchase and maintain, therefore it often makes financial sense to hire an audio outsource company with the necessary facilities to provide recording alongside critical stereo and surround sound mixing work.”

Walker also hires new audio designers, as do many creative outsourcers. That means that not only are jobs available outside of development studios, but the jobs you can be working on might be more varied than those of a studio. So what does Walker look for in his prospective employees?

“The **three most important aspects** I look for when recruiting an associate audio designer are: **an analytical ear**, a **willingness to learn** and an **extraordinary passion for sound**,” he says. “Playing games and analysing audio production techniques is something we do every day.

“A question often asked during interviews is ‘**what games are you currently playing**, and what have you noticed about the sound?’

“In game audio, roles are often combined, which provides a great opportunity for an individual to work on a wide range of audio tasks. Working on a variety of jobs should appeal to anyone with a passion for sound.

Three ideas about getting a game audio job by David Vitas

Sound Designer at Digital Extremes, April 2019

Reprinted discussion from Blipsounds Discord server

1) **Get involved** in the community and **keep making stuff** - participate in game jams, you never know who you'll run into.

2) Capitalize on those small opportunities and don't waste them. For example: gotten to the audio test stage? Make sure you blow it out of the park. Have a chance to intern somewhere? **Don't take it lightly**.

3) Go **above and beyond** wherever you can. You're competing with people so **standing out is key**, any way you can. For example: Want to apply? Consider making a composition or sound design component to go with your application.

Three more ideas about getting a game audio job, by Ryan Stunkel

Sound Designer and Founder of Blipsounds:

Reprinted discussion from Blipsounds Discord server

- David's No. 2 (see above) is exactly why I say focus on less. If you have a chance to **blow it out of the park**, but have too many obligations on other social media platforms, then you're screwed.
- **Keep making stuff and share** with other people so they can learn too. It's encouraging for people to create and share via video, articles or SOMETHING that helps others.
- I think getting involved in **game jams** is important. But **giving back to the community** is even more important.

Another 3 ideas about getting a job in game audio, by Aaron Cendan

Audio Artist at Electronic Arts (EA)

Reprinted discussion from Blipsounds Discord server

Most people that have ever talked to me about getting a game audio job know that I never shut up about the following three things (from the perspective of the individual in charge of hiring):

1. Are they someone you'd be willing to work with?
2. Are they willing to **learn**?
3. Do they have the **initiative** to pursue and learn something on their own?

If you can prove that you genuinely fulfill all of the above,
you'll be a significantly stronger candidate for it!

Two golden tips for getting a job in game audio, by Juuso Tolonen

Sound Designer, Namida Diamond Factory Ltd.

Reprinted discussion from Blipsounds Discord server

Do **audio redesigns**. Maybe 2-3 games 10-20 sec each. Focus on things you find interesting but also **storytelling** and **details**. I've noticed that fancy sounds get you the initial response, but then if there is no **world** or **story** for the sounds, people notice that.

But my ultimate tip is to make **your own game scene** (not a whole game) that looks nice with some free assets and script the basic game mechanics and then some impressive audio functionality, with impressive sound design as well.

Hexany Audio's hiring process detailed by Richard Ludlow

Originally posted in a [Twitter thread](#), also reprinted on the [A Sound Effect blog](#)

The team at Hexany Audio has worked on franchises like Assassin's Creed, League of Legends, Call of Duty, Overwatch, Blade Runner, Jurassic World, and many more. At the time of writing, they have positions open for a Sound Designer, Assistant Sound Designer and Intern. See the currently open positions here, and learn more about the company here

We're hiring for a couple of sound design roles at Hexany Audio, so I thought I'd share a bit of what that process looks like at our studio. Please note: These things are true for us alone, not every studio.

Reels

Our very first step is a **blind review of demo reels**. We don't look at names, years of experience, resume, or anything else. We'll pass if your reel isn't **excellent**. And **if your link doesn't work, we move on**.

Pro Tip: Test your link a private window before sending.

We're looking to hire video game sound designers. If your reel is 100% film and doesn't contain anything at all from a game and your resume doesn't have anything related to games, you're probably not the best fit for this position.

We are **100% fine with sound re-designs** that aren't from titles you actually worked on. So long as they showcase your work, we don't care if they are from a game you didn't work on.

Audio-only reels are no good. We need to see sound **work done to picture** to tell what your creative intent was. Music, abstract soundscapes, and raw SFX without video aren't helpful, and if you don't have any examples of sound to picture, we'll pass on your application.

While not a factor in elimination, we don't love reels that are entirely 'stylized' work. If you're submitting all 8-bit work, spells or abstract concepts, it can be more difficult for us to gauge your abilities...

For example, we prefer a **cinematic demo** that is somewhat grounded in the **real world**, because we know what that sounds like and we can tell if you were able to successfully craft a scene that has less room for creative interpretation and a more expected end result.

Did you **record everything** in your reel yourself? Bonus points for **creativity**! But if the end result isn't incredible, **we do not favor your process over the end result**. We need to know you can make something amazing & at this stage we care much less about how you did it.

Application

At this point, if we like your reel, we'll look at the rest of your application. If you didn't follow the directions when applying (e.g. naming your files the correct way, etc.) we flag you as not having an attention to detail.

Attention to detail is critical in game work. We don't immediately eliminate you for this, but looking back, we've never actually hired someone who didn't follow all of our instructions explicitly. From here we look at your cover letter & resume. Not many things will eliminate you from consideration at this point, but one can be experience.

We hear from industry-seasoned candidates that they want to be considered for entry-level positions. But if we're hiring an assistant position, it means we want someone who is a blank slate we can train. Likewise if we are hiring for a position with a 'minimum years of experience', we want candidates to meet that minimum. **Too much or too little experience are absolutely factors**.

Interview

Next up is an interview. It's extremely rare we pass on someone due to culture fit, personality, or anything else in this first interview. We're looking to get confirmation your resume was truthful and that you love games. If so, you'll probably get a sound test.

Sound Test

Assuming you got an interview, the sound test is the #1 determining factor for us in hiring.

This is **your chance to shine**, and is the primary driving force in our hiring decisions for sound design positions. This deserves all of your love and attention.

Follow-up Interview

This is where we want you to dive into your process for the sound test. **Talk shop, give us details, and ask us questions.** This interview will include myself, our lead sound designer, producer, and potentially others.

In-Person Interview

Assuming that went well, we'll want you to come over at this point and meet the team, see the studio, and socialize with us. You'll be asked additional questions about experience, etc. to see if we think you'll be a good fit for the job and the team.

Final Thoughts

99% of questions we receive through email or DMs can be answered by reading the job description and application. Sending us a question that can be answered by reading the position details doesn't help get you noticed, it just **wastes everyone's time.**

How long should a demo reel be?

I wouldn't say there is a minimum or maximum length. I personally like to see 3 different scenes to showcase various styles of work. But even 30 seconds of something awesome would have us interested. Less is more.

When hiring for our sound design positions we are very focused on the quality of your work. Devote time to making your reel incredible and you'll rise to the top for sure, even if things aren't a perfect fit.

Richard Ludlow, March 2020

Here are 5 portfolio tips from Alex Riviere

Audio Director at Massive Entertainment.

Originally published on [Massive blog](#) and reprinted here with permission

1. DEMONSTRATE A PASSION FOR YOUR CRAFT

When reviewing your portfolio, not only do we evaluate your game audio design capabilities but also your attention to detail and the full range of your audio skills.

As a sound designer, you have a lot under your umbrella, which is why we want you to demonstrate your aesthetic taste, storytelling capabilities, game-play mechanics understanding, as well as editing and mixing skills.

With that in mind, the length of your show-reel, its pace, and how you handle audio transitions between different clips are probably as important as your demos themselves.

Keep it short (4-5 minutes max), with the right pace, consistent (EQ, dynamic range, levelling following loudness standards), and in a sensible order (see if you can tell a story – your story!).

2. CUSTOM-MADE FOR THE ROLE

We might look for candidates with different skill sets, even if it's for a similar role. Make sure you understand the role and that your portfolio is crafted to fit the role.

For example, if you apply for a generalist sound design role, we would expect absolutely no music in your portfolio. Instead, we would like to evaluate your general sound design skills, both on the content and the implementation side of things.

If you're applying for a music designer role, we would likely want to evaluate your music editing skills, but also your capabilities to design music systems that would serve gameplay or narrative.

Make sure you read through the job description in detail, read between lines, and try to understand what candidate profile we are looking for.

3. KEEP IT CLEAR

Label everything. We want to understand your responsibilities on the different projects show-cased in your reel. If you are editing a game capture with all sound design assets playing, we need to understand

if you were responsible for the ambiances, the NPC Foley (or weapons), the player character, or something else.

On top of that, we would love to know if you worked on the contents, their implementation, or both.

Make sure to provide a clear explanation regarding your responsibilities.

4. MAKE A FIRST (AND LAST) IMPRESSION

Order matters. Don't waste time in a busy and connected professional world where we all constantly switch between things to do.

Make an impression on your first clip to hook the hiring manager right away. Keep in mind we are likely reviewing a lot of demo-reels to evaluate candidates, along with their resume, before we even talk to them.

If you start with your most impressive work, we will get more inclined to keep watching until the end, and then hopefully experience your second most impressive work, finishing with something that would stand out and be remembered.

5. OPEN FOR MORE CONTENT TO BE REVIEWED

If you've done a good job following the guidelines above (and are a fit for the role), then it's always a good idea to reference a full portfolio page, and/or a website at the end of your show-reel.

Your portfolio is there to make an impression, but if we like what we hear, we might want to dig deeper into your skill sets, the projects you worked on, and more.

Source: <https://www.massive.se/blog/recruitment/my-top-5-portfolio-tips-audio/>

Applying for a job in game audio?

By [Matthew Florianz](#)

Lead Audio Designer at Frontier Developments

Originally published in 2018 and updated in 2021 as a [LinkedIn Article](#) and reprinted here with permission

While reading this and thinking of applying for a job in game audio (especially for junior / full positions), consider that 100s of people could be looking at the very same job. These points are intended to help you stand out in a positive way:

[PREPARATION]

- When a job is posted, your website, CV and showreel should already be up to date.
- Some job openings close within a week or even days, when enough candidates apply.

[PRESENTATION]

- Should CVs be scanned quickly, does the most important information stand out?
- When building a portfolio, resume and website. Is the relevant information obviously accessible? Do links work on different browsers (try accessing your site in incognito/private mode). Does it work on mobile?

[COVER LETTER]

- In the included and job-specific cover letter, acknowledge the position that is advertised.
- Successful candidates usually present themselves as having a good mix of skill and communication. A concise cover letter (and website / showreel) contributes to this.
- Read interviews, play released games and find something that resonates to talk about it in your cover letter
- Explain your work - it's not always self-evident and it's almost always interesting to hear someone talk about their work.

Talking from personal experience, I once got hired because the studio liked that I had written about how I designed and approached audio in my showreel, it gave them a feel for how I might work.

- Writing about what makes you a great candidate is good, but also explain what is attractive about the company - flattery works!

[CV]

- Organise and trim a CV to fit the advertised job. Strip non-relevant work-experience but not the hobby project that overlaps with the job description. Less is more.
 - It is reasonable to adjust a CV to fit a job description but not to the point of having to backtrack in an interview.
 - Have someone read over your application - avoid the possible trappings of creative tunnel-vision.
 - Important: When a job is posted and includes a "time frame" don't wait till the last minute. Postings can be closed before their stated end date.
 - Tip: Prepare a show-reel and CV / cover-letter template for a couple of companies you'd like to work for.
- Preparation can help speed up applications and being first to respond could make your work a benchmark, but don't rush out substandard work.

[THE PROCESS]

- The application process usually consists of rounds.
- Getting through the first round is a priority so don't make any obvious mistakes. Examples of mistakes are: applying for the wrong job, not acknowledging the job description, missing crucial information or defective and unclear links.
- A correct application is usually passed on to the audio team, who will decide on a first selection.
- The first impression (for me) is your show-reel, so make it land. Cover letter, CV and portfolio will be checked in detail after this and with the show-reel fresh in mind.
- From first selection - a smaller group will be invited for a practical test.

[THE TEST]

- Tests usually consist of a video requiring new sound and perhaps some technical questions.

- Read the instructions carefully and make sure that whatever is specifically asked for is as good as can be achieved in a set time limit.
- The work should be doable in one or two days while usually a week is given.
- Example: for a test I once did I was asked to specifically pay attention to weapons. I spend almost all my time making sure everything else sounded okay and thus spend less time on the weapons. With hindsight, it would have been better to not even have considered the rest until the weapons sounded right.
- Ask for clarification when receiving a test and you're unsure what is required; however, if the answer is going to be obvious, that leaves an impression also. It is not a good strategy to get extra attention for an application.
- Loudness standards, tone, specifications or any other technical are generally specifically stated if they are important. If not, master at "YouTube" level and let them know why you choose that loudness value.
- Watch an "art test" once and write down a rough sketch of what sounds are needed.
- Track lay the backbone of the mix first; Think about any large mix transitions (perspective, shift, deliberate filtering and movement) before watching it again.
- When watching the test a second time, compare notes and fill in details
- A good Foley and swoosh pass can ground your entire mix.
- Think about material, movement, weight, the "unseen" space beyond the camera, color, tone and mood.
- Tell a story, that's often the unspoken part that's being tested. Does the ground tremble when a character moves, is there a space beyond the view frustum that helps convey a setting?

[WRITTEN MATERIALS]

- Some tests will ask to write up the creative process. This is generally good practice as it allows insight into your process. Include it regardless (if you have time).
- When a test asks for an interactive or middleware write-up and this is unfamiliar terrain, think of the automation available in a DAW.
- Written implementation test; break audio design up into smaller parts > Start, Loop, End. This combo solves many challenges in game audio. How can those loop(s) be manipulated, Pitch? High-pass? EQ? What data from the game could drive such modifiers? The exact terminology is less important than showing an understanding between the relationship of creating audio and making it interactive.
- Sound design > Audio elements > Real-time manipulation > Game side modifiers

[FIRST INTERVIEW]

- The first interview sometimes happens before an art test and sometimes after. In this case I've written it as an after but this varies.
- Expect a skype / phone interview for a first test, pick a time and place where you are comfortable. This might reveal my age a little, but after a meal would be good for me.
- Approach this as a casual talk with an almost guaranteed follow-up, usually in the form of a test.
- Enjoy the talk. It is a unique opportunity to talk to (fellow) industry professionals so feel free to be curious.
- Prepare some questions. It's unsatisfying to talk to someone and they have nothing to add to the conversation as it might come across as "not really interested in the job".
- If nerves are getting in the way, make this known as it might come across uninterested or unengaged which comes across worse. Points aren't deducted for being a little nervous.

[ON-SITE INTERVIEW]

- Final interviews are usually on-site, but modern jobs might offer work from home and interviews as such.
- At this point all applicants are qualified for the job.

- Final interviews usually on-site companies should reimburse travel but this varies - those that have a budget for interviews are likely better companies to work for (but don't take that as gospel).
- For those not selected, a (good) company is happy to talk about test results. Notes about a test will probably have been made; it's okay to ask for feedback politely.
- Not hired at this stage? Good tests are remembered. Applicants have been known to be hired from previous tests.
- At the end of an interview, ask if there are any pressing reasons not to be considered for the role. It is the best moment to address any concerns there might be.
- Don't over-dress ... it could feel uncomfortable when everyone is dressed casually. Just dress and be like your normal self.

[SHOW REEL]

- In a show-reel clearly explain the contributions made - visual annotation is recommended.
- When redesigning an existing trailer or gameplay, choose something exciting.
- When redesigning a well known trailer with exceptionally good audio, be prepared for a comparison.
- Be original and creative. Even for graduate jobs; skill are expected to go beyond track-laying or finding sounds in a database.
- Tell a story; a positive creative surprise is a great way to get noticed.
- When a showreel only has audio, the general impression is that it misunderstood the medium in which we work.
- Don't save the best for last and show only the best. Less is always more so don't contribute to a drop in quality.
- When linking to a website (like YouTube or Vimeo) also point towards the most relevant examples.
- If it moves it probably needs a sound?
- Your logo shouldn't last more than a second or two, and don't over-design the audio.

[GETTING TO KNOW YOUR FUTURE EMPLOYER]

- Watch trailers / gameplay footage and analyse the audio. It is a guide to what the company likes.
- Be nice about the games that they make and in general about other companies or people in the industry.
- Being critical isn't bad, but it helps to have something positive to say also.
- When you play the game, watch talks, interviews or dev diaries - you get a feel of the company culture and if you can, bring it up in conversation.

[SALARY GUIDE]

***Editor's note:**

- for US-based studios: [Game Audio Industry Survey 2019 - GameSoundCon](#)
- for UK based studios, check out [this spreadsheet](#).
- also check out **#gamedevpaidme** hashtag on Twitter!

- The short answer is that it varies wildly. In the US, salaries seem to be twice as high as in Europe.
- As a general research option, investigate the locale for cost of living (rent, groceries, public transport) and add 30% on top for an absolute base minimum. Anything near a centre of a bigger city will have an inflated rent price.
- Generally I don't disclose my previous salary and instead will make clear that I'd like to work with a team or on a project first and that we can work out a salary together.
- Anecdotally; I've heard mention of taking age multiplied by 1000£ and add a bit for experience. Given USA salary surveys, that seems to fall short. In the UK the difference between North England or London seems to invalidate such calculations too.

Something that isn't mentioned explicitly: **creating audio is just one part of the job**. You will almost certainly be asked to work with tools, middleware, in house work tracking, asset management systems and production tools. Let people know you are keen to learn and work with software.

Furthermore, audio is a down-stream department. Being able to communicate clearly with others is an important part of the job and this is made easier if you make an investment in understanding their work-flows and tools.

Source: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/matthewflorianz/detail/recent-activity/posts/>

A different view on the game audio recruiting process -

Rob Carr

[Senior Sound Designer at Redhill Games](#)

Often audio is the final stage of development, with work frequently to be done and redone in accordance with iteration and replacement of placeholder assets. While everyone else is locked down and adding polish, audio is frequently still in full swing as some work can only be done once everything else is locked down.

Learning how to use **other tools within the pipeline** isn't just a good idea, it's almost **essential** to become a solid member of a team. If you have any skills in other software and parts of the pipeline, such as animation tools (audio folk often have to tag animations) through to 3DS max and engines such as unity and UE4 then make a point of highlighting it in your CV.

Audio jobs aren't always *just* about audio. 👍

Matthew Florianz:

Interdepartmental communication and technical skills are very present in audio creation as it is. Audio/Music is a communicative language (emotionally, storytelling and logically) and DAW's are very complex tools. If you can master those, you can learn specifics on the job.

Having an understanding of often used game development tools is helpful in communicating that there is a willingness to learn. Gamasutra has a wealth of blogs, articles and links about game-development and a lot of it is deeper than you'd need to know for an interview, but it helps create an "umfeld".

Like this deep dive on version management and control:

https://www.gamasutra.com/blogs/AshDavis/20161011/283058/Version_control_Effective_use_issues_and_thoughts_from_a_gamedev_perspective.php

The dilemma we face is having many applications for junior roles and being pressed for time (often the reason to hire) having an adequate HR team to carefully pre-select on the criteria of the application, makes sense.

This is why a CV and cover letter have to match the application.

When applying (over 20 companies before ending up at Frontier) personalized cover letters and specific CV's seemed more successful. So rather than having one cover letter and one CV I ended up making them specifically to fit job openings.

How do you stand out to HR? Matthew Florianz answers

Daniel Petras: Matthew, I would be really interested to know if there are any approaches to take when trying to stand out to HR specifically. Will experience at a well-known company always trump

a lack of experience despite there maybe not being any skill difference? If skill is not a factor during the initial HR screening what might be some other ways to rise above the rest that are valued as much as experience? I definitely do the personalized cover letters and will start looking more into custom resumes/CV's.

Matthew Florianz:

Experience does help, yes.

After working at a well known studio more doors opened, certainly more than "just" working at the unknown Dutch one.

I also owe a great deal of my career here in the UK to two very kind Sony audio employees, who went out on a limb to hire me.

But even before that experience and being just at an unknown studio, working on an mmorpg got me far into the process at a famous action-rpg maker. It just so happened that it was "the right" experience for the job posting.

The point there is, **understanding the job opening** and **what the company is looking for** is never a bad idea.

With that in mind, HR will not "reduce" a list to 10/15 percent of people out of principle (I'll make this more clear in the post above) but rather they root out obviously wrong applications.

An alternate route to experience is **going to meet-ups** and/or contacting audio people directly. If you have less experience but produce a **kick ass show-reel** and we have hired on this exact example before, that might be an alternate path?

However, realize you will expose yourself directly to industry professionals without the HR department as a safety-net to catch you in case you are not quite there yet.

Then again, in my experience **most audio people are absolutely lovely** and **will go out of their way to help**, as long as there is **respect for their time***. As the Dutch saying goes: "Niet geschoten, altijd mis" - don't shoot, always miss :)

Editors' note: Also see **Tips for students sending professional artists questions by Zac Retz on page 119*

Some thoughts about Audio Designer Applications by Dave Shumway, 2019

Originally published on Twitter and reprinted here with permission

I went through about 100 audio designer applications in the last week, and while there isn't a way to give meaningful feedback to each applicant, here's some thoughts that rose to the top of my mind.

Hopefully some of them are useful:

1. **Your reel is everything.** Show it to people. Get **feedback**. Recognize the bar set by your peers. Especially if you don't have a ton of experience, **THIS** is how you convince people to **give you a shot**.
2. Make the reel **easy to find** on your website/resume/cover letter. Don't make people google you or search on LinkedIn for it. Use **YouTube** for playback if possible. Everything else is friction.
3. Clarify what role you played in every clip, and be specific (Foley editing, UI design, mixing, implementation, etc.)

4. Read the job description and make sure your portfolio supports it with relevant examples. Please be respectful of the time people are taking to consider you.
5. **Low ego.** Don't think you have to be catchy, flashy or clever in your resume/ cover letter. Be yourself and let your work speak for you.

Some thoughts about Technical Sound Designer Applications by Brett Shipes , 2019

Having looked at over 200 technical sound designer applicants this week... **Include a cover letter.** Don't make me click on 8 links. **Read the job description, read your resume,** then **read the job description again,** make sure you **know what you're applying for.** Keep it relevant.

***What should a composer's/sound designer's reel look like?** A mix of different genres, along with sounds or rather one reel for each genre and one reel specifically for sounds (and then send only that reel to the company you are applying to)?*

Dave Shumway

Between the job description and what you know about the projects the company works on, **tailor one "best-of" reel** that immediately speaks to your ability to do what **they'll need you to do.**

Matthew Florianz

Great list! Should also include (why am I even typing this) **don't present your work on soundcloud** when you are applying for a medium in which audio is in support of visuals! Also, **stop over-designing your logo,** and don't make me wait for it to go away ;)

HOW TO BREAK INTO THE PROFESSIONAL AUDIO INDUSTRY – FIND AND KEEP YOUR FIRST VIDEO GAME AND RECORDING STUDIO JOBS -

by Aaron Brown, [2020](#)

Originally posted on [Aaron's web site](#) and reprinted here with permission

My original article has been read by **thousands of people.** A few have reached out and shared their success! **Yes, it is still possible to break into this industry** and I believe that you can too. I believe the original article still has valuable information, but some of it is definitely dated material. To handle this, it's time to add some updates and resources for this decade! I'll leave my original post at the bottom which I do still recommend reading as some of it is timeless advice.

BREAKING INTO GAME AUDIO IN 2020

Below you'll find a huge amount of resources to help you build skills and learn how to break into game audio. Should you read them all? **AB-SO-LUTELY!**

Yes, it will take at least a few days to read this information, but that's **a drop in the bucket** compared to the efforts it will take to break in.

RESOURCES

[Reddit Compiled List Of Resources](#)

Reddit Game Audio Wiki Of Resources

Yet Another Game Audio Hiring Article

Advice for All Those Looking To Break In

AKASH THAKKAR'S STORY: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48N222PuC64>

IMPLEMENTATION

For implementation I recommend taking **Udemy courses on Unity and Unreal** to learn basic systems. Audio touches every system so it's key to know the fundamentals on each system.

Each one should take 20-40 hours. Go with Unreal if you are focusing on AAA, Unity if the focus is mobile or indie.

Buy them when on sale for \$9-\$13. This happens often.

<https://www.udemy.com/unreal-engine-4-the-complete-beginners-course/learn/>

<https://www.udemy.com/unity-5-for-beginners/>

This **FMOD course** is about to be released and many people mention him as a good teacher.

<https://scottgamesounds.com/course/the-fmod-and-unity-essentials-course/>

The **Berklee wwise** course is excellent, but I'm also biased as I used to teach it. It covers Unity and Wwise integration.

<https://online.berklee.edu/courses/game-audio-production-with-wwise>

All the Wwise courses are free aside from certificates. Skip the certificates unless you want to teach and learn the materials for free.

<https://www.audiokinetic.com/learn/certifications/>

Also **dive into some Wwise projects**.

<https://www.audiokinetic.com/resources/project-samples/>

Blipsounds has a great community of budding sound designers. It includes FMOD, Wwise and sound design education.

Some courses are free!

<https://blipsounds.com>

All said and done, **for about \$50 and a few months of time**, using some Udemy courses and using free materials from Wwise you can become quite good at understanding systems and implementation! **Implementation is key to standing out** among the overwhelming masses trying to break in the industry.

DEMO REEL – REEL TALK

Your reel is your resume. It must **shine and sell your skills**. To help it do just that, watch Power Up Audio's Reel Talk on Twitch. They analyze demo reels and go over how to best present skills on a demo for employers.

<https://www.twitch.tv/powerupaudio>

I made a list of common feedback in 6 reel talk episodes:

PRESENTATION

Be concise.

10 seconds to communicate the message.

Bio only important **AFTER** you have established that you have skills. **Showreel on the main page.**

Then portfolio, bio, etc.

Website. All links work, easy to navigate, contact page instead of email:to, personalize things.

Everything is fully updated! People who view wonder why. **Be on top of blogs, twitter, and website posts.**

Clear Usability is essential!

Show diversity in the minute. The 1 minute is the best of the best, demo of what you can do! Cut, show many things.

Then, have options to hear more of those styles.

SOUNDCLOUD = DEATH. VISUALS. GIVE CONTEXT! MUST BE TO PICTURE.

DISTINCTION - Find a way to stand out instead of just having coverage. Unique talents, unique quality to the design.

PRESENTATION OF REEL

FLOW is important

AMP UP ALL STORY MOMENTS.

DETAILS ALL MATTER.

Consider player experience and communicating that to the player.

Use 16:9 aspect ratio, 4:3 is bad. Feels strange.

Invest in a graphic designer for reel! Must look great!

10 second intro. max. Aim at 2-3 seconds to get to things.

1 minute TOP length for demo.

Start with a bang, capture attention, 10 seconds. Cut to the **strongest 5-10 seconds of reel.**

KEEP ATTENTION

LEAVE TAGS IN THE LOWER 1/3rd UP THE WHOLE TIME SO LISTENER CAN SCRUB AROUND.

Make it clear what the focus is and don't change text regularly so the listener can focus on sounds.

Be clear in titles

Ramp volume into the main level of reel. Be courteous and not blow ears or listeners right away with a big hit.

AUDIO SKILLS

Game audio requires a heck of a lot of audio engineering skills. To build, enhance, and improve your audio skills there are TONS of amazing tutorials online now. While Youtube is free, these courses are more streamlined and worth the money in my experience.

Lynda.com, MacProVideo.com, SonicAcademy.com, and Unstoppable Recording Machine on Facebook all have incredible audio tutorials to fill in audio engineer knowledge gaps. Honestly, their content is better than most colleges and much cheaper. For the record, I still subscribe to Lynda and MacProVideo as they regularly update content and the tools of our trade are constantly changing. Never stop learning!

NETWORKING

If you are lucky there is a game audio group where you can begin networking locally. Below is a map of the existing game audio groups. If you aren't near one, don't fret! It's 2020. Get online and start building your brand. As you do cool audio things share them. Amplify the message of others in the community and engage sincerely with audio people world wide.

AUDIO JOBS

[Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com)

[soundlister jobs](https://www.soundlister.com)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/audiojobs/>
<https://gamejobs.co/>
<https://gamedevjobs.io/>
<https://gracklehq.com/>
gamesjobsdirect.com
gamejobhunter.com
jobs.gamasutra.com

Twitter

@Soundlister1 and @SchoolGameAudio

Maps

gamedevstudios.com
gamecompanies.com/map
gamedevmap.com

ABC: ALWAYS, BE, CREATING

The fastest path to getting hired is to have the skills desired by a team and **being on their radar as having those skills**. The fastest path to improving your skills is to **work on them as much as possible**. Create every chance you can and put those creations out there as a testament to your skills. If you are just starting out then you may want to start at a place like Blipsounds where you can share internally with other people cutting their teeth on their skills as well.

Eventually, your skills will match your taste, **your published work will be known by part of the community** and that community will likely have an **opening that matches your skills**.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

Now that you have these resources, read my article below for more in depth details. Then, after you build a 5 year plan, pick your path based on your desired destination and charge forward! It typically takes about 3 years to get a break depending on the starting point and target destination. **All the efforts snowball**. It's so hard at the start, but keep those eyes on the prize.

ORIGINAL ARTICLE FROM 2010:

If you are reading this then you are likely aware of how difficult it can be to get your start as a professional audio engineer. You might be approaching the end of your college career and realizing the high level of competition and small amount of entry positions posted online for audio work. I know how it feels because that was me back in 2005 as I was graduating college in Denver, CO with almost no contacts in the industry. However, after a ton of hard work, and lots of great advice from helpful professionals, I eventually made it into the industry. Since graduating, I have worked at multiple world class facilities like LucasArts, Disney, Playful (Oculus Rift VR Launch Title), Naughty Dog, Retro, EA, GI33k and more.

I'm now passing on the valuable knowledge that I had to learn the hard way in this post! Whether you want to work in recording studios or are a sound designer and composer looking for video game jobs, breaking in takes more than just talent and dreams. In this post I'll give you a lot of tips on how to get your big break and *stay employed* once you do.

Making a plan

The first and most important step is to **make a plan**. Without a plan you will waste valuable time doing things that won't get you where you want to be. Start by making a **five, two, and one year plan**. Be sure to start with **big long term goals** in mind.

Go ahead and start it now! I'll wait. Once you know the big picture of what you want to achieve, the short term planning becomes much easier. Then you will have a better idea of what you'll have to do to achieve your dreams. Once you have the plan written out you just need to make sure that everything you do in life leads you to achieve those goals. If they don't fit in the plan then they very likely are a waste of your professional time. Here's an example of what you might put into your plan.

- Recording Engineer plan example.
- 5 year
 - 1. Become a Staff Recording Engineer at a well known studio.
- 2 year
 - 1. Intern or assist at a reputable local studio.
- 1 year
 - 1. Record a few bands.
 - 2. Improve knowledge on mixing, microphones and other gear.
 - 3. Take some classes on DAWs (Digital Audio Workstations) and audio engineering skills.
 - 4. Make a great sounding demo reel for clients and studios.
- Sound Designer looking for video game jobs plan example.
- 5 year
 - 1. Become a lead sound designer at a reputable game studio.
- 2 year
 - 1. Get credit on a well known game mod or small developer project.
 - 2. Continue to update your resume and develop contacts.
- 1 year
 - 1. Get experience making sounds for games using game specific tools.
 - 2. Begin networking and start visiting game developer conferences.
 - 3. Make a resume and demo reel

Solving The “Experience” Paradox.

Now that you have a plan you just need to get the ball rolling. There is a problem though: In order to get a job in the industry you need experience, but to get experience you need a job. This makes it seem like there is a huge wall between you and your goals. Most jobs have this dilemma and game industry jobs are no exception! Don't worry, there are ways around this.

One solution is to buy some audio gear and teach yourself how to do things. Quality DAWs are cheaper every day. Many professional game tools, such as **Wwise**, are available for a free trial. There are numerous sources of tutorials online that cover all of these subjects. I believe that the best learning tool is experience. By doing things on your own you can learn how things work in a pressure free environment. Here are some recommendations of common tools and skills you should have.

Audio Engineer Tools: ProTools (Cubase, Sonar, and Logic are also great, but less common in pro studios), digital plug-ins, outboard gear (compressors, EQ, preamps, signal path, consoles), microphones, Mac Computers (much more common than PCs).

Audio Engineer Skills: Mixing in the box and on consoles, how to properly use microphones, basic music theory knowledge, recording and dealing with bands, cable wrapping (over/under FTW), and coffee making (Yes, I'm serious).

Game Industry Sound Designer Tools: **Wwise** (or another game sound engine such as **FMOD**), Unreal Ed (or another similar game engine like Crysis), **Unity** (Very popular game engine for mobile developers), Sound Forge or Peak for

batch processing (I'm a much bigger fan of sound forge), SoundMiner or another sound library management tool like [Basehead](#), Perforce source control, Native Instruments Komplete, Waves plug-ins and other creative tools like SoundToys and GRM tools, multitrack editing software like ProTools, Cubase, Sonar or Logic, MAC and PC computers.

Game industry sound designer skills: How to integrate sounds into a game, how to use game building tools like Unreal Ed ([3dBuzz.com](#) has some great free tutorials on this), quickly editing and batch processing lots of files at a time, memory management/limitations of current platforms, capturing gameplay (Fraps or other capture devices), how to set up a ProTools session with video capture of game-play and bounce out sounds to put into your game.

Resume

While you are getting your start you need to develop your resume. Formatting is very important to a good resume. A well formatted resume ensures your employer you pay attention to detail. Sloppy resumes show that you can't even take a simple task seriously.

Find some resumes online and get a feel for what they should look like. If you have access to professionals who look at resumes then ask them for help as you set yours up. It will take years to get meaningful experience. Until then, fill the resume with every little audio related thing you have done. This includes albums you have worked on, assisting on things, personal projects, goals, skills, and tools you are familiar with. Update your resume each time you progress through your goals.

Leave out anything that is totally unrelated, like restaurants, unless you had a management position and you have nothing else to put. As you progress your resume will start to fill itself out. Better resumes will open up more options to you in your career. Eventually you will look at your resume and wonder why it was so hard to get it started. Keep your eye on the prize and you will get there.

Demo Reel

Your demo reel is vital to get your big break. A demo reel is just a collection of works by a person. Though the term originally comes from having your work on reel to reel tape, the colloquialism is still used today. It will show employers your skills. In this digital age it is important to have both your demo reel and resume online. Recruiters meet hundreds of audio people at every convention so it is important to have an easy to find and well organized demo reel.

Now that you have some skills you can put together your best work into a demo. Remember that your demo reel needs to demonstrate the one skill that the job requires. If you want to be a sound designer, then it's best to have video that only has an SFX stem. No one likes to hear music on a foley demo. Similarly, no one wants to hear explosions over a music demo. Keep it short and sweet.

I have learned that three video demos are enough. However, if you only have one video that is professional don't put two other videos on your reel just as filler. Everything on your demo needs to be of the highest quality you can produce. Try finding a movie clip online, stripping out all the sound, and redoing it in your programs. Start with a video that is between 30 seconds and one minute. Don't pick a five minute video unless you have time to really do all five minutes at the best of your abilities. I don't know any audio leads who have five minutes to spare anyway, so just focus on getting 1-2 SOLID minutes that demonstrate your skills. Your demo reel needs to be easy to navigate and mastered well. If it isn't organized it makes you seem unprofessional.

Be sure to mention what work you actually did on each part of your demo reel. Well organized reels also show that you can pay attention to detail so make the demo a seamless experience. Keep your demo online in a common format like Quicktime H264. Display the link to your website on your resume. Having a few DVD copies of your demo reel is also useful, but many people I know prefer to find your work on the internet for convenience. Vimeo is the best site for professional demos in my opinion because it defaults to high fidelity, but Youtube has far more searches so either one is fine.

In the games industry, if you get a break you may get asked to make a specific demo for a studio. They will send you a video and you will have a chance to prove your talents. **MAKE SURE YOU TAKE ALL THE TIME THEY GIVE YOU AND DO**

IT RIGHT! By this I mean you should borrow or rent the best audio gear you can find to work on it. Mix it in a well tuned room and on headphones. Get feedback from other audio people before you send it off.

This could be your big chance and it's worth putting other things aside to get it done. You will only get one shot at these "auditions" so you need to make sure you do your best work. These studios won't cut you a break just because you only own cheap gear or a lack of free time. Do whatever it takes to make this sound AMAZING. Also, finishing it quickly doesn't earn you any extra points. Be sure to use all the time they give you to polish your work.

Immerse yourself in your trade

Subscribe to online audio forums, websites and trade magazines. Make friends in the audio profession who are starting out just like you. Buy gear to use at home for practice. Act like the person you want to become. Here are a few of my favorite online sources.

- <http://www.tapeop.com/subscription/>
 - The most accurate and unbiased magazine about audio gear IMHO. It's free so go subscribe now!
- <http://www.gamasutra.com/>
 - Great place for jobs, tutorials, and anything else game related. This is a great place to find mods and other projects you can work on to build your skills.
- <http://www.gearsllutz.com/board/>
 - Forum all about professional audio gear.
- http://sxsw.com/music/daily_chord/
 - Subscribe to their informative emails about what is happening in the music industry.
- <http://www.edge-online.com/>
 - Another good source for information about games. They have daily emails.
- <http://www.audiogang.org/>
 - A great source for beginning audio engineers. It's focus is on audio for games and the potential for networking here is great. A few of its members gave me some much appreciated advice on how to get my start.

Attitude is Everything

Positive attitudes can be more important than talent. I believe this now more than ever. If you are a positive person who gets the job done you will be more likely to get a good job and recommendations. Think about it. Would you rather hire a super talented jerk who is difficult to work with, or a person of average talent that is uplifting and fun to be around. I know that I'd prefer to work with people that make every day a fun experience. Attitudes and work ethics can be infectious whether they are negative or positive.

You should know that word travels very quickly in these tight knit industries. By being a positive and passionate person your attitude will help you get started in the industry. It will also improve your reputation and help you get work in the future. So when you are starting in the industry give a lot of thought to how you want to be thought of throughout your career. Who wants to be a mean anti-social jerk anyway? What better time to change your attitude than now while you get your start. Besides, developing a positive successful attitude will do wonders for your personal life as well. 😊

Where to start – Persistence is paramount

If you already have a basic knowledge of these tools then it's time to get more professional experience. I recommend internships for people wanting to work in studios. If you want to work in games you should work on mods or other projects for free. Almost all recording studios are in need of interns or people to help out. You may need to contact them multiple times to prove you are interested. The best studios get hundreds of applications a month to be interns. You have to stand out from the crowd by proving your determination to succeed, doing good work, remembering that you are a subordinate and showing professionalism.

College experience helps you get in the door, but isn't necessary. It is more important to know the profession and have a positive attitude. You can find game audio positions on Gamasutra.com. This site has lots of projects looking for

sound designers for small projects. Mod communities exist for many games, and they are a great way to learn how things work.

Keep in mind that You WILL have to do some free grunt work for a while until you build up a resume! The tasks you do at this stage of things will be the work other people don't want to do. Accepting this becomes easier if you keep your eye on the prize. Sweeping floors, cleaning up after sessions, and making coffee become daily tasks. By demonstrating your thirst for knowledge and success you will show prospective employers how valuable you are. You will also learn a lot of very important things along the way. I was an unpaid intern about 8 months at a few places early on in my career. I learned how to work with clients, how to act as an intern, how to run professional studio sessions, and other things that have formed how I work today. Remember, EVERYBODY had to start somewhere!

College for the entertainment industry – Necessary or a waste of time?

College is expensive, a lot of work, and a lot of time. So, is it a necessary step in achieving success as an audio person? Now that I've been in the industry for a while I can safely say that success isn't dependent on college experience. However, college can be a very good way to open doors to your future. I attended two colleges for music related careers and came out with two degrees.

After all that effort I only received brief recognition of my college experience. No one has ever checked into my grades or coursework. What I gained from my college education mostly came from connections, a sponsored internship, and obviously the classwork that improved my skills. Many internships require college so if you skip education then you are at a disadvantage over those that haven't.

College also puts you in touch with like minded people who can teach you more than any class. Developing these contacts can get you work and expand your skill sets much more than college classes will. Most of the audio professionals I know have gone to college for their trade. Many of them didn't graduate. I recommend at least starting college to build contacts and get an internship. It will make things much easier on you in the long run. Having a degree does look better on a resume than not having one. However, having a ton of professional experience seems far more important than college in the audio industry.

Networking and Interviews

Conferences, College, Classes, Facebook, [LinkedIn](#), Online Audio Forums and musician friends are all good to use for networking. Keep a list of every contact you have in Outlook, Gmail, or other organized manner. Make sure you back-up this list. It may very well hold the name of the one person willing to give you your big break.

Conferences are the best places to develop professional contacts in the games industry. You should really invest your time and money to go to [GDC](#). If you can't afford it, they take volunteers in order to earn a free badge through working the conference!

First, warm up by talking to some people about audio. I also recommend a practice interview with a friend. This way you will be socially loose and ready to go. Now that you have your resume, demo reel, and a knowledge of the industry you can really make things happen.

Go to each recruiters booth and ask if they have a position open for a sound designer. If they do then keep asking questions and be confident. Express your interest and passion for game audio. Give them your resume and a DVD of your demo reel. Having any sort of game experience on your resume immediately puts you ahead of every other audio person who isn't prepared.

If they don't have any positions you should find out if they ever hire external contractors or only use internal sound designers. Either way, be sure to get their contact info, write notes on their details, and follow up about a week later. If they have a position and are considering you for a position make sure you are persistent. Show them that you really want the work and are interested in the position. Don't be too pushy, but be sure to keep up on all leads for a position.

At first you won't get any offers, but as your resume improves and you get more confident the offers will come much easier. If you keep working hard and building everything I've described you'll have a huge list of professional contacts

all willing to help you get work. At this point it becomes more about managing your professional contacts than going to recruiting booths.

Now that you are out there developing professional contacts with the necessary experience you will eventually get interviewed. Interviews really come down to answering one question: Are you the best overall person for this position on this team at this time. You need to communicate that you are this person early in the interview for them to know it. To be this person you need the proper work history, attitude, and skills to do the job.

Don't be afraid of talking yourself up. I've botched interviews in the past because I was afraid to brag about my own talents. Don't come off cocky, just be confident of your abilities and assure them that you can handle the position.

Do your research on the company you are interviewing for. By doing your homework you will appear more interested in the position and come off looking like a better prospective hire. Have a list of questions for them based on your research. Showing up prepared with a pencil, paper and pre-written questions makes you look very prepared and organized. You can ask them questions about their games, life/work balance, tools and workflows.

You should also ask for more specifics about the position and what it is like to work for the company. Remember to be personable, honest, and confident. Definitely set up some practice interviews with friends before you go to the real interview. Think up what they may ask you and have some responses ready. If you do all this you will greatly improve your chances of getting the position when you get your big chance!

Conclusion

You may be wondering why I'm giving all of this advice for free. Well, I want to help people get their start just like some audio professionals helped me when I was starting out. Now that you are armed with more knowledge on how to get your start, you are well on your way to becoming an audio professional. It starts as an uphill battle, but you can learn to enjoy the challenge. Keep focused on your long term goals and you will achieve them in no time.

Remember, I had no connections in the audio industry in 2004 and very little experience. Through tons of networking, hard work, persistence, and dedication I've managed to work with Sony, EA, LucasArts, Disney, and many more studios doing professional audio work. Never stop believing that it is achievable and you will find a way to break in!

Please post a comment if this helps you at all. I'd love to hear about your successes, trials, failures, and any other feedback you have on this post. Thanks for coming by. I hope this helps give you the confidence to achieve your dreams. If it does, feel free to pay me back by buying me a nice Belgium beer at a game or audio conference. 😊 More importantly, pass your knowledge on to those around you to help build a better audio community. Who knows, one of you may end up being my boss someday!

-Aaron Brown

Aspiring game audio designers: Improve your employability by learning how to code!

[Matthew Florianz](#), Lead Audio Designer at Frontier Developments, 2016

Originally posted as an [article on LinkedIn](#) and reprinted here with permission

We are regularly contacted by students, composers and sound designers asking us:

How can I make myself more employable in game audio? Obviously, all the regular requirements apply:

- **Be a nice person**
- **Love games**
- **Have something to say (creatively)**

- And be **good** at that!

When applying for work (and [Frontier Developments](#) do hire straight out of University), realise you are almost never "the only one"-applying for a position. Apart from experience (James gives a few examples of how to gain it), what makes you stand out is code: Can you integrate wwise / fmod into an existing code base, do you know how to create Events / RTPC's?

Audio coding is the most "in-demand" requirement for game audio jobs right now, which means we all have to step up our game and get more involved. For old dogs like myself (who aren't so good at learning new tricks) this means at least understanding high-level system design and solid middle-ware knowledge. The future of audio is in systems and that requires more than just great DAW skills :)

We also need to think about getting our tech in such a state that it can work in unison with other game systems, such as particles:

Think of an explosion sound which (through callbacks / embedded markers) triggers particles based on transients rather than trying to fit audio to visuals. We'd get variations for free and it would sound much more like a Hollywood film!

The more you can show a mastery of technical & creative skills in audio design, the better your chances of employment and the better you can help how good our games sound!

Source: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/aspiring-game-audio-designers-improve-your-learning-how-florianz/>

Pursuing a job in Game Audio? 10 tips from James Stant

Senior Audio Designer at Frontier Developments

Originally posted on a now-defunct planet coaster forum in 2014, reprinted here with permission

- Networking is so important. If you've not already done so, sign up to **LinkedIn and Twitter**, create a profile and start connecting with people online! There are some great Game Audio groups on **Facebook** too where you can find like-minded people who are either in the same position as you or have been at some point.
- Have an **online presence** to share your work – Website / Soundcloud / Youtube / Vimeo: I don't remember the last time we reviewed an application on a CD/DVD actually
- Only put **your best work** in your portfolio. Companies/clients are normally swamped with people trying to get into audio and very often, you'd be lucky to get **2 minutes of a reviewer's time**.
- **Go to events** where possible; Develop conference, Eurogamer EGX, GDC, Game Music Connect, etc. Introduce yourself and say hello; everyone is friendly!
- Familiarise yourself with **Wwise** and/or **FMOD**. These pieces of audio middleware are free to download with lots of Youtube tutorials available. These days it's not just about whether you can create great content/assets, but whether you are aware of **context-sensitive interactivity**.

- **Consider QA** (Quality Assurance) as a route into the industry. Although I had some audio experience after uni, there were so few audio jobs that I took this 'foot in the door' route to get myself known and learn more about the industry. I believe that I'm a much more rounded developer because of this experience and have a greater appreciation for the way in which disciplines interweave. Oh, and it provides an EXCELLENT opportunity for you to network!
- Look for **independent game projects** on Help Wanted forums. Check out sites like **IndieGamer** and **ModDB**. There's so much competition for audio, but you can start getting experience and credits.
- Vary each application to the job description. If a company states that a role does not involve music, don't submit a portfolio of composition work. You'll be **wasting the reviewer's time** and they'll want to check that you can follow the most basic of instructions.
- Request **feedback** from industry professionals. Got a new piece/video/showreel? Post it around and **welcome feedback**. Even more crucial; **act on the feedback**. So much iteration occurs in game development, so you won't be able to get too attached to your work, even if you think it's perfect.
- Keep at it! **Work hard** and enjoy yourself. It will be tough, but keep trying and you can get there!

Where to start?

Originally [Posted on Reddit](#) by [bala_subramaniam](#)

Hi Guys! This is Bala from Chennai. I am a Sound Engineer by profession. I have been using this app (editor's note: this app = reddit/gameaudio) for about 6 months now and hands down this is the best I've experienced over the years. It's a huge pool of information and I am constantly learning. I really want to thank you all for that.

So here's the thing - I've been in this industry for about 6 years now and I do not possess any professional qualification. I am self taught and I have worked as a dubbing engineer and a Foley recordist I have also been recording songs and instruments as well. Currently I've done some movies as a sound designer. in order to explore more in sound design, I am thinking of game sound design but I am not sure as to where to start. I did a bit of research and found out that I should learn certain coding softwares. Can you kindly share details about the qualifications I'll need for this? Or rather any info around this topic would be highly useful for me.

Thanks in advance 😊

Christian Albiar, [Technical Sound Designer](#) at Somatone Interactive Inc.:

Hi Bala! I would suggest **getting familiar with a game engine** such as **Unity or Unreal Engine 4**. Due to the outbreak, Unity has offered their learning premium for free for 3 months so I suggest heading there.

Once you take some time to get familiar with those two or one of them look in **audio middleware** such as **Wwise** and **FMOD** which is used with the game engines. They pretty much act as a DAW. Both FMOD and Wwise have

good learning resources on their own websites. Again, **Unity Learn premium** has a pretty good Wwise + Unity integration lesson which I highly suggest using.

Also if you plan to work with a team it's worth checking out how **version control** works. Not sure of any good resources to learn this as I've learned from work experience but that will get you in the right direction!

Hope this helps and good luck!

Missilecommandtsd's answer:

I've been in this business for 15 years; I've worked in-house for 3 major publishers, out of house at a major 3rd party game audio service provider, and have been a freelancer on a couple large projects, and many more small projects. It's a glorious Saturday morning and I'm quarantined, so here's some long winded advice I'd pass on:

"Learn to program"

Although I agree with this, it is surprisingly over-rated in terms of how it can help you deliver value, as well as acquire game audio jobs, and I wouldn't start here. "Learning to program" at a level that will actually make a significant difference is extremely difficult and time consuming, comes at a cost, and people tend to overstate it because it is a 'fetish' of sorts among game audio folks.

We all struggle because this industry is difficult and tend to believe 'if I could only program too it would all be easier'. The reality is, you'll be surrounded by programmers who have been as passionate about programming as you have been about audio their whole lives - and they are the ones who are actually solving meaningful programming business challenges. I would recommend you 'learn to program' - but I think just about EVERYONE should learn to program.

"How do I start?"

If you're already super skilled in sound design, audio engineering, voice editing, music production, mastering, etc....I think step one is: Just **go through the wwise courses**. Those courses are amazing lessons in universal game audio concepts and topics (as well as the wwise tool, of course). I would NOT recommend learning game engines like unity or unreal first. Your employers will be experts in whatever engine they're using - many of which proprietary - and there are a ton of game engine choices - too many to learn. Over time it's good to know a game engine really well, so you're aware of game dev concepts outside of game audio, but definitely don't start here; that will just happen naturally.

Stick to extending and adding value through your core competency.

"What qualifications do I need to get a job?"

Assuming you're already an audio professional who is decent at sound design and can show that with a portfolio here's some answers you may not hear as often....

1. Without a doubt, **living in the right city is absolutely the single biggest qualification** for having a gainful career in game audio. Some people can make a career at game audio in distant parts of each

region, but it is EXTREMELY difficult to keep that up for more than a short stretch, and may be nearly impossible to break into. You need to live where the game-dev / tech jobs are and develop personal relationships with those professional communities. I don't like being the bearer of tough news, but making all your money from game audio in 90%+ of the cities in the world, is not viable. You probably can't feed your kids by being a lion trainer in Antarctica. As an example, there's probably 4 or 5 cities in the US where a long gainful career in game audio is truly viable. It is getting a little better, but has a long way to go - and people seriously considering making personal sacrifices for this career need to know that.

2. Even if you're in one of these opportunity rich cities, be **willing to move to a different one**. Game Audio professionals are a lot like film crew; they basically work on contract. Anyone who isn't changing jobs every couple years is not the norm or they are veterans with game audio start status.
3. **Develop an online presence**. If you can be charming and involved in the online game dev audio communities, this will definitely go a long way.
4. **Be a happy, empathetic, and honest person**. Peers and employers need to see you're **talented, knowledgeable** AND MOST IMPORTANTLY an **absolute joy to work with**. **NO ONE CARES IF YOU'RE A 'HOT SHOT'**. People who are genuinely **honest, pleasant, hard working, humble, smiling, helpful**, etc **get and keep jobs**. I do think we can all work on this and improve.

What cities, would I say, are big for game dev?

Short list of cities that have the most viable long term game audio career potential in North America:

Seattle, San Fran/Bay-Area, LA/San Diego, Vancouver - and maybe - Austin-TX.

Less opportunities but still possible:

Chicago, Toronto, NYC, Boston, Atlanta, Las Vegas, Reno (there is some decent stability in Casino games for composers/sound designers). Every couple years there's something in Orlando, which is something.

To be clear, there are of course many game audio jobs outside of these cities (IE Cary-NC, Madison-WI, Orlando-FL and many more) but you should expect to have to move to a new city for your next job if you wanna stay in game audio full time. No big deal in your twenties/early-thirties - but if you get married and/or have a family, it gets really tough to move everybody. Game Audio is a young person's game outside that first list. You can of course make it work via other means. (A good reason to 'learn to code' is so you can live elsewhere - by having some solid less-audio-dependent income. Or, you could teach at a college - another good option for stability later in your career.)

I just rambled for ten minutes... so I'll stop there.

Rob Burnley, composer and sound designer (<https://soundcloud.com/robburnley>) answers:

You don't officially need any qualifications - **a nice showreel** will do more for you than a list of exams.

Check out itch.io - there are game jams happening all over the world and there are teams looking for sound designers. My advice would be to jump in and do a few game jams, through this process you'll get a feel for the work and hopefully get some nice examples of your work to start building a portfolio.

You don't have to learn any coding if you don't want - but it will make you more employable or give you more options. There are a lot of game studios that use their own engines but having a good working knowledge of at least **Unreal and Unity** is a great start. Unreal have a few ready built **game demos** you could add SFX to and I'm sure Unity will have too. Again you can do all of this without ever writing any code.

I've learnt enough in Unreal to implement the audio and I find that in game jams it's a useful addition to help out the team, but for most projects I've just been supplying audio files.

It's a great career to be involved with and loads of fun, so good luck with it all!

Corey Bertelsen - ex structural engineer now making games, sound, and music; adjunct Professor at NYU

There's some good information on here, as well as a few minor differences in opinion. I'd also highly suggest **clearly defining some personal and career goals**.

When getting advice on my reel, the **first thing my mentors have asked me** is:

"Are you going for Indie, Mobile or AAA?"

Because these 3 realms have very different value systems and expectations of their sound designers. I'd recommend doing your homework, picking one of those three and sticking with it. Each one is difficult in its own way.

I tried to toe the line and ended up with a lot of rejections, despite connections and knowing all the tools "on paper." AAA has a very high (but very stringent) quality bar; indie allows for more autonomy but you often need to obtain a high level of community visibility and/or shipped projects in order to sustain a career, and mobile is ... mobile. Can't really speak to it, honestly.

This is just my opinion, but if you're going for AAA, your learning priority should be **Wwise** first (as missilecommandtsd suggests). Your standard AAA "hire me" reel involves taking footage from an existing game, taking the sound out, and re-doing it. Do three games, a few clips each, representative of the kind of company you want to work for (3rd person action games for Naughty Dog, FPS games for Bungie, etc). Get it in front of some different eyes (here or on the **ReelTalk twitch stream** -- <https://www.twitch.tv/powerupaudio>). It should go without saying that you're aiming for a very high quality bar with this. Make a Wwise project from the sound assets that you used for one of those clips, and use that to show off implementation.

If you're going for Indie, you should learn the basics of **Unity** or **Unreal**, then pick up **FMOD**. Indie budgets are usually pretty tight - even for those with a budget, the pricing for Wwise often squeezes them out (are they going to pay another \$750 for the license, or find a sound designer who knows Unity?). FMOD also has a much more generous indie license.

Your typical Indie reel is a showreel of the games you worked on, which is a problem when first starting out. I'd again focus on the kind of games you want to work on, re-do the sound for a few video clips, then do something interactive. The Celeste FMOD project is great for this. Quality matters here too, but you really want to convey a sense of character. Indie devs range from 10+ year industry veterans to total newcomers - you want to be able to be an exciting, hands-on collaborator who knows how to direct the audio for a project. Once you know a bit of Unity or Unreal, you could get some stock projects and implement new sounds. And do some game jams too! Aaaand i need to get back to work. Good Luck!

I have no formal training in audio, would I be wasting my time?

I just produce weird tape music with samples galore in DAWs and am experienced as a player in bands.

Would it be fair to say I'm in no position to be taking this career on without a decent schooling in sound design first? As much as I'd love to crack ahead, buy a Zoom, start recording sounds, manipulating and implementing them, would I be wasting my time?

I would like to avoid school for sound design if possible as it's so expensive and time consuming. Honest brutal thoughts are welcome! - [baryosull. Reddit GameAudio subthread. 2020](#)

missilecommandtsd

Some of the most creative and amazing sound designers I've met don't come from traditional sound design backgrounds - and it can be an asset as they approach things differently that results in totally cool and unique results. Don't discredit yourself. Producing tape music and playing in bands could be the perfect background for you doing amazing work.

I must admit I am critical of higher education in the US. I ended up with three degrees (AS, BS, MS) in very related fields - and I was very lucky to get a partial (75%) scholarship - 15 years later, I'm still paying off student loans and still have to work extremely hard at simply staying employed beyond the ups and downs of the game industry - so it's hard for me to say that I got good 'value' for that time and money I spent, which was substantial. I guess I'm still just angry that young me was required to pay \$3500 per gen ed class for "Drug Use in American Society" and "The Music of Frank Zappa". (Don't get me wrong, I love Frank Zappa, but I doubt he would even approve of me doing this. In my grumpy opinion, being educated is a lifestyle motivated by personal values, not a commercial product. I digress.....

The last team I worked with, if I recall correctly - most of those guys went to 2 year programs (at excellent audio specific schools) and if I'm not mistaken a couple didn't go to school for audio at all, and they were all totally amazing and talented. I don't want to ID that team, but they literally won a legit industry award for game audio. So, in my biased experience, **there are a lot of colleges in the US that are not worth the money for this career path**. I imagine this is true in other countries. However, if you went to a specific program, in a specific market, it could actually be extremely valuable; so maybe I'll say, if

you're going to go to school to get into game audio, you need to be EXTREMELY selective and not necessarily think about traditional 4 year programs. Some educations will be 90% fluff and not be qualified to get you where you want to go. As a grouchy middle-ager, I'm starting to think this is true for many college degrees. Education debt in the US is a s**t show. However, I am excited to see that 'education' in 2020 is starting to break out of the college-only system.

And traditional paid education is only one path. As in my previous post, there are a lot of important things to consider, one of which; where are you going to be. If you're in Seattle (or similar), and you have an awesome portfolio, and you are truly skilled, are a positive, kind, hard working person, and have a day job (or other means) to wait for the right opportunity in game audio, and are active online in a responsible and positive way, that's a very viable path that doesn't 'require' any US college debt. I've never hired a sound designer in Seattle, so take all my advice with a grain of salt.

What it's like attending GDC for the first time - by Megan Fraizer, 2019

Sound Designer at HTC

Original published on the [A Sound Effect blog](#) and reprinted here with permission

Sound Designer Megan Frazier shares her experiences, highlights, strategies and lessons learned as a first-time attendee - and why GDC is much more than just a long networking event:

GDC - The Plan

I've heard GDC spoken of as a rite of passage in hushed whispers among sound designers. As if a magical level-up tone plays when you place the shiny badge around your neck and you are suddenly serious. I knew from the beginning that line of thought was a fallacy, akin to the need to have super expensive gear to make great sound. But in the weeks leading up to GDC, I admit to being overwhelmed by how monstrously enormous GDC is. Sifting through the schedule of all the activities, parties, and people, I imagined myself standing on street corners grunting and throwing my business card at random passersby ([and I found a nifty card shooter that might do the trick for future GDCs](#)). However, having now been through the rite of passage myself, I realize GDC is more than a long networking event. I came away with a deeper sense of belonging in the audio community as a whole, being more comfortable with myself, and actually being inspired.

As the metallic roar of the BART tore through South San Francisco, I promised myself I would stick to three strategies in order to shape my experience:

1. I would not ask for business cards
2. I would strive to branch outside of my discipline: Audio for Virtual Reality
3. I would always follow spontaneity as chance encounters came up

I know that a few of you might be surprised at number one on my list, since GDC is one of the largest networking events of the game industry. Since I used to be in sales I know deeply how to "[work the room](#)" when going to networking events. One of the skills I have been practicing for over a decade is being able to memorize names, companies and locations of people plus conversation points I've had with them, then write them down in my sales journal when I got home. This allowed me to not need

anyone's business card if I wanted to reach out to them at a future date and eventually business cards have become more of a secondary defense against forgetting someone.

One of the drawbacks of being good at this is I tend to get into the "game" of networking where I tend to start evaluating people whether or not I have a short term value add to their business, if I believe can get it, and moving on quickly by closing with "hey, can I get your business card?". The problem that I was attempting to address was that ending up with lots of contacts wasn't what I was looking for; I needed to establish authentic and genuine connections. I didn't know if taking away the easy way to close would help, but I thought it would craft a unique experience.

For example, on Monday afternoon I was chatting with a stranger after being introduced by an acquaintance and I felt the need to move on and start making as many connections as possible. I fought this urge, decided to stay and focused on shifting internally to making a genuine connection. What came out of it was I gained an insight into that person's business struggles as an indie developer. I also by random chance bumped into this person Thursday evening in the line to the [Unparty](#), where we talked about more personal things like their own experience with burnout in the industry. I realized I needed to slow down if I wanted to make genuine connections with people. Genuine connections take time and need to be nurtured.

An unintended negative consequence of choosing not to ask for business cards actually occurred on Wednesday when I was coming out of the Women and Marginalized Genders Roundtable. The Roundtable itself was an amazing smorgasbord of topics I had never had a chance to talk about or explore in person, and I recommend it to anyone because you will absolutely learn something, no matter your gender. One ally brought up the struggle in finding diversity in good candidates, and that resonated with me since I began my professional career as a headhunter. When I emerged from the Roundtable with a group of people, it would have been natural to thank him, gauge quickly if he wanted to continue the conversation, and ask for his business card. Since I wasn't asking for business cards, I made a slower transition, and a group of other folks from the Roundtable quickly formed, making that "right time and context" passed. The teachable moment for me is that making connections is all about context. It's ok to go for a quick close if they are moving on.

Imposter Syndrome

The second very specific choice I made – to branch out from VR Audio – really paid off at the Failure Workshop. I was intrigued by the title because so much of GDC focuses on teams' well-deserved success, and the more technical overviews I could rewatch in the GDC Vault. In my experience as a sound designer, my failures have often taught me better and more important lessons than my successes, so I thought I'd at least be in good company.

Of the three speakers, Jon Remedios from Actual Humans was whom I resonated the most with. Jon spoke extensively about withdrawing from people, not taking care of himself physically and mentally in the process of developing his game. The moment that actually made me tear up was when he said something to the effect of "when getting to the couch and doing nothing...and that was a good day". It resonated so deeply with me because I have, and still do, have those days. Those days are the crux of my imposter syndrome; this secret truth that I'm not cut out for this industry, that I'll never see my dreams come to fruition, and that anything I do that isn't directly correlated to making money through sound design is utterly worthless. To see someone successful, with courage and dignity, expose the

dark side of the creative process was incredibly liberating. I feel like those nasty internalized voices are a bit quieter, and that is a good thing.

While I have touched on the major points of his talk, I wholeheartedly recommend listening to the Failure Workshop if you have GDC Vault access. I never expected to come away resonating with the speakers' trials, or to have a confirmation of how important self-care is in the process of crafting stories and bringing life and wonder to games. Without the proper self-care, it becomes difficult to be inspired or inspiring to others.

Spontaneity

There was a lot of intention behind my GDC experience, but I actually think the most value came from my third strategy: to embrace spontaneity. I talked to multiple sound designers who had full books at GDC, and it made me nervous because while I had a few options for things to do during the day, I certainly didn't have anything that couldn't be dropped in a heartbeat for something more interesting. It was like standing on one leg among all the other flamingos cawing "[Am I doing this right?](#)" I'm glad that in this case, I was simply wrong to worry. A packed schedule would have completely taken the fun and wonder for me out of the experience.

For example, I had attended a morning audio Coffee Meetup hosted by Damian Kastbauer at the Sennheiser store, and heard about a meetup that evening called "Day of the Devs." I didn't know anything about it, but for whatever gut instinctual reason, I wanted to go. I had originally planned to do more of a standard meet-and-greet by Facebook Reality Labs, so I had a backup in case.

Later that day, in the middle of attending an audio talk, I got a text from my best friend's mom that he was in the hospital. After making sure he was ok and sorting through the logistics of coordinating with my partner to make sure he'd be ok when he got home, I was emotionally drained and just wanted to hang around a familiar face. Fortunately, I bumped into an audio acquaintance, Carlye Nyte from Camoflaj, and I mentioned I didn't have a ticket but wanted to sneak into "Day of the Devs." She knew Camden Stoddard from Doublefine who just happened to have a free ticket and connected me. It was in this [old timey dine-in theater](#) where they featured the respective indie developers playing their demos on a huge screen. It was an absolute blast!

Self-Care

The only downside to leaving things "open" was when I didn't feel well later in the week I found it hard to want to engage with anything. I had left Thursday fairly open to walk the expo floor, leaving chance guide me to fun things. I lost my voice Thursday because I went to a loud party Wednesday night, and ultimately pushing myself too hard Thursday made me truly sick Friday. I found it frustratingly hard to take basic care of myself. After taking a quiet moment for myself (which can be hard to find at GDC), I did manage to play the coolest little game I saw at Day of the Devs earlier that week, [Inmost](#), but overall I pushed myself a bit too hard simply for the sake of "putting myself out there". Every bit of my internalized imposter syndrome declared if I wasn't taking advantage of every moment at GDC I wasn't ever going to be a successful sound designer. I only realize this in reflecting on it afterwards, but it was

incredibly difficult to manage my internalized imposter syndrome while not feeling well. The way I have found to keep it at bay is through community.

For example, on Monday, I realized at lunch I had slept poorly and was dehydrated and had to head back to my hotel and sleep, instead of networking or going to the talk I had planned for. I almost wanted to break down and bawl in the middle of the fecal ridden streets of the Tenderloin. My internalized imposter syndrome huffily declared me going to nap was obviously a sign I'd completely wasted all of GDC, which I had gotten on scholarship from the [Audio Mentorship Program](#). I didn't even have the dignity to waste my own money with frivolous naps!

In order to combat this irritatingly powerful feeling of guilt, I actually messaged a mentor of mine, Matthew Marteinsson, announcing that I was instead going to take a nap than hang out with him. It was almost comical to see him reply with "Nap it up!" and realize that internalized imposter syndrome was completely out of touch with reality. I found out that taking a 90-minute nap was exactly what I needed, and I bounced right back. I felt great reconnecting with Matthew later for dinner, and meeting wonderful new people that evening. I will probably struggle with feeling guilty about taking care of myself throughout my career. But the people I've aligned with, the mentors and peers who have lifted me up, that's something that IS magic.

Life in Game Audio

There is a nigh limitless buffet of audio talks at GDC, but there were two I came away inspired by moving forward. The first would be [Stephan Schültze](#)'s talk about VR audio. Since my specialization and interest in audio is in a virtual reality context, I was excited to learn a few tips or tricks. What came out of that talk, especially the question segment, was this idea that choosing to use mono, stereo, binaural, or spatialization in the right context of the experience is actually something I need to consider more often in my design process. In the times I've worked on experiences, I defaulted to spatializing a lot "because it's VR. That's what you do right?" The point of Stephan's talk was that context is more important than "acoustic perfection" and to bear the user in mind first. While it might seem a simple concept, I feel inspired to bring a wealth of different kinds of sounds appropriate for the application on my next project. The second talk was at CarouselCon by Gwen Guo, co-founder of [IMBA Interactive](#). For the uninitiated, [CarouselCon](#) is an informal lunch meetup behind the carousel during GDC (Wednesday-Friday) where people will give short impromptu talks about any topic. Gwen's talk focused largely on her journey starting the studio and the relationships between the founders being like a "marriage" when undergoing challenges and the feeling of triumph overcoming them. Her most poignant point was when the studio was struggling for money and they got an opportunity to bid a lucrative contract for a casino. One of her co-founders could not justify the studio taking the contract, because someone close to them had destroyed their life through gambling, and they actively work to help their community deal with gambling addiction. She described the contentious screaming fight that they went through, working through the agony of going the ethical route when bills are due. She mentioned how her work and her personal life are mixed and that she could never separate them, and why making work a positive place was so essential.

This idea of work and my personal life being mixed has been something I have been processing from the beginning of choosing to become a sound designer. In my previous career I had a very divided life; my work persona was very different from who I was as a person. I was actively ridiculed for being a gamer while in sales, which led to this odd double-life between work and home. While I do feel

comfortable now talking about being a gamer in professional circles, I still largely only lurk on social media, and if I do emerge to contribute, it's in a very professional way. Gwen's talk seemed to hint that experimenting with the idea that with the passion and life I bring to my work, it becomes almost odd to separate personal from professional. It's all my life!

A big thanks to Megan Frazier for sharing her experience and insight gained at GDC! Learn more about Megan and her work [here](#), and meet her on Twitter [here](#)

Source: <https://www.asoundeffect.com/gdc-game-audio-experiences-2019/>

(Actual) Helpful words of advice on writing emails, by Nadia Wheaton

Music Operations, Bungie, march 16th, 2020

Originally posted on [Nadia's web site](#)

Hellllo! fun topic today. As a professional in the music industry, half of my job is **writing emails**.

Growing up my mom was a working engineer, and she helped me tremendously in developing my written etiquette. I realize not many people have this – if I was left to my own devices and had to learn writing from school...I don't think I'd be very good at writing emails.



Some general golden rules on emails:

- – Your email should always be straightforward, concise, to-the-point (especially in the subject line)
- – The addressing line needs to be correct with the correct name (if –available)
- – Your response time to emails should be within 1-3 business days, and *at max* one week.
 - – Anything later than that means suspect/very low priority
 - – If you're applying for a job, you should be responding within one day
- – Your sign-off signature should be appropriate
- – No direct links to music samples or reels, unless directly asked
- – Proofread for typos, spelling errors, clarity, you know the drill

There's a finesse to your written voice, and each situation is sometimes handled differently. I'll cover a variety of email methods, as well as share actual emails I've written! This is all advice based on my own experience. and i've gotten a nice compliment or two about my writing!

The general email structure (color-coded for ease of use!)

[GREETING]

[ONE SENTENCE SUMMARY OF THE POINT OF THE EMAIL]

[FURTHER EXPLANATION IF NEEDED]

[GENERAL THANKS, FOLLOW UP INFORMATION IF APPLICABLE]

[SIGN OFF]

The email where you ask for a job/internship

I'm not really sure why cold emailing is a controversial topic. Either they work, or they don't, and I see no shame in sending them. My beef with cold emails is that often those who send them, seldom bother following up (more on this later).

Here's a cold email I sent to a composer, who I ended up interning for:

Dear _____,

My name is Nadia Wheaton, I am a third-year Film Scoring student at Berklee College of Music.

My mother contacted you a few years ago about me, per the suggestion of her colleague _____ who played Taiko with you in college. I've gone off to Berklee since then and have found myself immersed in great music.

I admire your work immensely and would love an opportunity to see how the working music industry is. If you are open to having an intern, I've attached my resume and cover letter for reference.

Thank you for taking the time back then to reply to my mother with encouraging words.

Best wishes and happy early holidays,

Nadia Wheaton

A couple of notes... This email could have been a lot shorter, but it isn't bad for an introductory email with some context. While generic, it's intriguing because we had a mutual contact. [I cover mutual contacts in a previous blog.](#)

Phrasing: You're offering work as an intern, which can either be free work, work for credit, or cheap labor. A nice, gentle way to ask for an internship: "If you're open to having an intern...". "Would you be open to having an intern?" Even a simple "Do you offer mentee programs?".

A previous boss gave this advice, "I read these emails and one thing I skim for, is what can they offer *me*? Are they offering me anything? Nothing? Moving on."

Thank yous: Make sure your thanks is honest and thoughtful. There can never be too many thank yous in an email.

BUT most important thing: I attached a resume off the bat. Easy, accessible, no one needs to respond and ask me for it. It's already there. ATTACH YOUR RESUMES AS PDFs! (lol)

Here's another email I sent last year, responding to an open call for applicants via Facebook group. This more specifically follows my above format:

Hi _____,

I saw your post in the SAMPLE NAME group and wanted to introduce myself! I've been working in the film music industry for the past 3 years, and have found myself wanting to be more involved/embedded in a bigger in-house team. I have experience doing audio cleanup, and music editing specifically, so I'm familiar with ProTools and Izotope RX.

In the future I would see myself wanting to be in an associate audio producer role. I think this contract position would be a great opportunity to experience what it's like as a general audio team member (vs on an outsource music team).

I've attached my resume. I'm currently located in Los Angeles.

Looking forward to hearing more, please let me know if you have any questions for me. Thank you for your time!

All the best,

Nadia

I don't believe praise, or specific longform facts about how said person's music changed your life, is needed in initial emails. It can be nice to read, and sometimes enticing to respond to, but in my opinion it's all fluffy BS. Add it if you want, but I'd keep it to around 1 or 2 sentences (anything more seems...awkward).

Here's how I see it: You know your stuff. **You know yourself best.** *They* probably know about their discography better than you ever will. Don't ramble about how much you love the person's whole discography – it often doesn't get read.

Reiterating the important thing: **Attach your resume.** This is just a thing you're going to have to do whenever you introduce yourself for a job.

There is no shame in sending emails asking for job opportunities. It's all about tact, but the fundamental idea of reaching out should not be embarrassing.

Here's one more email I wrote to an agent after my internship ended, when I was starting to look for full-time work after Berklee:

Dear _____,

I hope your new year is off to a great start! My name is Nadia Wheaton. I hope you remember me, we met a few times over the past year while I was an intern to _____. I am looking for a music/composer assistant job, similar to the work I did for _____.

I helped him with office administrative tasks, booking studio sessions, as well as managing his website and social media updates. I also have experience with video editing, and of course other music-related tasks—I'm good with Pro Tools, Logic, Sibelius, Finale, and DP.

My study at Berklee was in film scoring and video game music composition. If you have any clients that need help, full-time or part-time assistance, I would greatly appreciate a referral.

I've attached my resume below for your convenience. Thank you so much for your help.

Kind Regards,

Nadia Wheaton

This email didn't get a response. While written nicely, it could've been much more straightforward. Here's how I'd approach it now:

Hi _____.

I hope you've been well! We met several times last year while I was interning for your client _____. I remember your great advice about networking at GDC, and have kept it with me since.

My internship with _____ ended last month. If you have any clients that need help, full-time or part-time assistance, I've attached my resume for reference. I specialize in music-related work, but I am also extremely proficient with general admin/social media assistance.

Thank you so much for reading, I really appreciate you taking the time to. Please let me know if you have any questions for me.

All my best,

Nadia

Realistically, this probably wouldn't get a response if the person is way too busy. But it is a lot shorter, more concise, and overall more confident. And a ballsy move. But this is my thinking: why not? if they don't respond, I am in the same exact spot I was in before had I never sent it.

Never waiver in your confidence, but the tone of your emails should always be clear, thoughtful, and appreciative.

Keep your biography to the hard facts: Location, What type of composer, Genres or Projects you've worked on.

The follow-up email

What constitutes a follow-up?

- – Any pending email chain that does not have a new response for about 10-14 business days (unless an action date is specified)
- – Generally, any response
- – An in-person meeting or favor

responding when you don't know what to respond yet (but you should respond anyways to acknowledge receipt!) AKA the "I'll get back to you":

EXAMPLE 1:

Hi _____,

Thanks for writing! I'll touch base soon.

Thanks,

Nadia

EXAMPLE 2:

Hi _____,

Thanks for the info! Could I get back to you when I have a clearer idea about details? Hopefully in a few weeks. I'll ping you closer to the date.

Thanks so much,

Nadia

The follow-up after you've met someone at an event:

Hi _____!

My name is Nadia Wheaton, it was great meeting you at the IASIG party at GDC. I'm a freelance composer's assistant, my most recent video game project was _____.

If you're free to grab a coffee in the coming weeks, I'd love to learn a little more about your career path and would appreciate any insight you may have. I am a big fan of your video game scoring work and went through college watching a lot of your library tutorials! I'm also based in Santa Monica, but I can meet wherever is most convenient for you.

Hope your GDC was great and looking forward to hearing back!

Best,

Nadia

It's super important that you follow-up with contacts **in a timely manner**. Make action items for yourself!

follow-up after you've met said person ^ above:

Hi _____,

Thanks for meeting with me and sharing some of your insight last week. I particularly enjoyed _____ and _____. Hope to keep in touch!

Best,

Nadia

follow-up after an interview:

This is an important one. All interviews...phone, in-person, Skype, etc. need follow-ups.

EX 1:

Hi _____,

I wanted to thank you for your time and support during my on-site. It was a great experience, and I can tell you have a great team of very talented individuals.

Thank you again for the opportunity, I would appreciate any feedback you may have. Looking forward to it!

Best regards,

Nadia

EXAMPLE 2 (this is to a recruiter):

Hi _____,

I had a nice chat with _____ and _____. Thank you for facilitating!

Please pass on my thanks to both of them. I look forward to hearing from you, any feedback would be appreciated as well!

Best,

Nadia

General follow-up for a dead thread

Hi,

Just pinging regarding below. Please let me know if you have any questions!

Thanks so much!

Nadia

the email asking for advice or feedback on your portfolio/reel

It's better to know someone well, and eventually ask them for feedback, or have *that* person connect you with someone else who can.

- – You need to have specific questions catered and relevant to that person's career
- – Aimless, general fluff or questions tend to be wastes of time for that person to answer

Hi _____,

My name is _____. My friend Nadia Wheaton recommended I reach out to you.

I am currently in my 2nd year at USC, majoring in video game scoring. I am also originally from the PNW, I noticed we have quite a few mutuals! If you have the time, would you be open to answering a few questions regarding _____?

Thank you so much for reading, I really appreciate you taking the time. Looking forward to hearing back.

All my best,

To CC or not to CC your friend? Just ask your friend if it's ok to put them on CC. Totally up to you.

So what's the point of this all?

Any rational person would not get mad over a well-written cold email. Any rational person would also not get mad over a poorly written cold email (I hope!).

hopefully some of you can use these tips to write future emails, and maybe even use these as templates if you want! I didn't learn any of this in school so I figured it'd be helpful to have this up somewhere.

(will add more emails in the future)

thx for reading!

Pete Reed's advice for getting into game audio from a theatrical sound engineering background

Pete Reed, Audio Designer at Supermassive Games Ltd

Originally posted on [Pete Reed's web site](#) and reprinted here with permission

Getting into video game sound design. (commonly known as Game Audio). There are two main levels you can work in, Indy and AAA. AAA are the games from studios you see on the shelves made with large teams.

Some successful indy studios will get on the shelves too, but mainly they are smaller teams and smaller budgets. Competition is high to get into the industry but it can be cracked and there are many things you can do to help yourself and many things you can learn.

The best thing about it is, all the software I mention below is free to download and learn (with the exception of the online courses). Creating the SFX is only part of the job, knowing how to get them into the game and make them sound how you want is another. Starting with creating the SFX, Every studio will want you to know a DAW at a high level. The most commonly used is **Reaper**.

It's ridiculously cheap and in my opinion the most powerful of all digital audio workstations. It is completely customisable. If you struggle to leave your beloved ProTools/Logic etc there are themes that change the look of reaper and give you the shortcuts you know. Moving on to getting SFX into the game. Known as middleware. There are two commonly used middleware. **AudioKinetic Wwise** and **FMod**. Wwise is the more commonly used so the best place to start.

FMod is a little more user friendly at the start but not as powerful in my opinion. By using middleware you are able to change things about the sound in game, ie; it's attenuation (how far away it can be heard) and playback parameters. (Note. It can do much, much more than this).

Finally, creating the game. You have made your SFX, you have your SFX into the middleware. Now you need to put it in game. Again there are many game engines but there are two commonly used ones. Unity and Unreal Engine 4 (UE4). Large AAA studios may have their own game engine but Unity and UE4 are a great place to start. (Note. Game engines also have native audio. Middleware is not always used).

My advice (and also what I did). **Start with Wwise**. Their site has an amazing learning page. They give you a basic game and take you step by step through what Wwise can do and how to do it. You can also do their certification if you want. Reapers learning videos are also great and worth checking out.

Another option is online courses. I'm not sure if this one is still running but I did an 8 week course with SSR where they teach you how to make your own game in Unity and then implement your sound design into it. Very helpful to better understand game creation and the steps involved with other areas of development.

I have heard very good things about the School of Video Game Audio. They have a number of courses that are similar to the SSR one. Worth checking out, though bear in mind that everyone that does the course creates a similar showreel and you will want to stand out.

Create a showreel and a portfolio.

When you apply to a job they will want to see what you can do and having a website is the easiest way to do that. At the start when you don't have published games, a common practice is to take a game trailer or two and replace all of the audio.

Whatever you do for your showreel make it your "**Sizzle Reel**". It should only showcase your best work, shouldn't be longer than a minute (at the time of writing this mine is but only by 20 seconds!) and has to be audio to video. I spoke with a recruiter at an interview, they had **200 applications in one week**.

She said they went through each one and if they didn't have a showreel on the landing page of their website they didn't get looked at. If their showreel was more than 2 minutes long they didn't look at it.

If their showreel was just an audio file...you get the point...Power up Audio do very good breakdowns of peoples (who ask them too) showreels called **Reel Talk**. Really worth looking at for content and presentation pointers.

Building your portfolio. I worked freelance for a time while still working a full time job creating SFX for small mobile games and often bedroom startups. The competition is tough for this type of work as everyone that's trying to get into game audio is fighting for work.

I used **upWork** for a time but they have recently changed their T&C and it's not free to use anymore. I know people that have offered their services on **faverr** too. I also reached out to small game devs on twitter **#gamedev** **#gameaudio**

Another place to look for gigs is **indie DB**.

People here are trying to put teams together to build smaller games but getting paid from them is...tricky. I write this knowing it is not the same for everyone. I went from never hearing back from applications to getting three AAA offers. I have since learned that what set me apart was my portfolio. I created my own games in Unity and UE4.

The second of which, I only used audio assets that I had recorded myself. I know creating your own game is a lot of effort and you don't have to do that to get into the industry.

But, a quick search of youtube and you will see hundreds of step by step tutorials on building games. I recommend Brackeys.

Pete

Reaper <https://www.reaper.fm/> **Wwise** <https://www.audiokinetic.com/products/wwise/>
FMod <https://www.fmod.com/> **Unity** <https://unity.com/> **Unreal** <https://www.unrealengine.com/en-US/>
SSR <https://www.s-s-r.com/online-courses>
SVGA <https://school.videogameaudio.com/apply/>
PowerUpAudio: <https://www.twitch.tv/powerupaudio>
Pete Reed's Portfolio <https://www.prsounddesign.com/>
IndieDB <https://www.indiedb.com/jobs>
Brackeys You Tube <https://www.youtube.com/channel/>

Source: <https://www.prsounddesign.com/blog>

David_Lieder's response to a reddit question about getting into Game Audio, Autumn 2019:

Originally posted in a [reddit thread](#) and reprinted here, permission pending

Music and sound design are completely different jobs, although some people try to focus on both. It's actually better to focus on one or the other. **Avoid music** unless you are already a composer. A composer will often deliver songs to the game dev team and that will be the end of it. A sound designer is the person in charge of much of the audio in the game, including environmental audio ambience, effects like bullet sounds, GUI sounds like beeps, and sounds that come from buildings, animals, monsters or areas.

Film and video game sound design are similar and in some ways the same. The main difference is financial: in video game projects the budget is very small. However, a lot of video game studios and indie studios are becoming aware that sound is important, and it's an emerging career path (lots of opportunities, but maybe not a lot of money).

If you're serious, then follow these steps:

Learn Unity audio, and learn the Master Audio asset.

Learn a DAW. Sonar is free. There are tutorial videos on YouTube. [EDITOR'S NOTE: **REAPER** IS PREFERRED IN GAME AUDIO due to its extensive scripting capabilities, personal license costs 60 USD but it also has a 60 day free trial and doesn't expire after those 60 days - so if you're strapped for cash, buy it after you get a job, but please buy it]

LEARN AUDIO ENGINEERING BASICS. Get engineering and DAW experience by pursuing intense self-study).

PROPER LISTENING. You need two speakers on your computer that will give you "flat" sound. Look up "audio studio monitors" on Sweetwater Sound website and on YouTube to learn about it.

Study other audio sound designers. For example, you might download every free library on this page and listen to all of them.

After you've done the above, post your sounds somewhere (like on the r/Unity3d reddit or r/gamedev) and offer to do work for a game that is close to publishing. Once you have a few games on your resume, you'll be a lot closer to getting a job. AAA companies require five years of experience, but part of that time can be making your own sounds, experimenting, or learning audio in an engine like Unity. Once you learn what I've mentioned here, then work with a few games (probably for free), and then you'll be ready for bigger opportunities.

If you focus on one thing (such as audio in Unity and sound design in a DAW like Sonar), you'll make a lot more progress and be good at it. People who try to specialize in twenty different aspects of game development will usually burn out or achieve very little. Focus on one or two main aspects, and follow your dream.

Game Audio Glossaries: Pt 1- Game dev disciplines and their relationship with Audio, by [Ashton Mills](#)

Audio Designer at Jagex, May 11th, 2020

Originally posted as a [LinkedIn Article](#) and reprinted here with permission

Speaking the game development 'language'

I often get contacted by people who are interested in getting into game audio for some advice on starting up and moving forward which is great, and although I've only got a few years under my belt, I'm keen to attempt to help where I can because I was given so much fantastic input from the game audio community when I was trying to get my foot in the door. I believe that language is at the core of everything we do in life, and so much of learning, whether it's a new skill or a craft we've been honing for many years, is speaking the 'language' of that subject. For working in the games industry this includes specific game-dev-related terminology but also an understanding of how all the bits fit together. This is often overlooked by aspiring audio folks in favour of focusing on the development of the hard skills you need to do the craft. But game development is a multidisciplinary field, and thus a great deal of communication between different teams is required to make games happen. Thus, a big part of being experienced is actually about having the language to communicate with people. You pick up so much of this language passively when you start working in a studio, but it's actually very important to grasp some of it in the early days of your journey into the industry so that you are able to have conversations and connect with people.

It can be hard to learn the language on your own, because you need to hear people use words and phrases that you don't know before you can look them up: you don't know what you don't know. I thought it might be interesting

and helpful to put together a bit of a glossary of terms, things and job roles, and how they relate to you as a game audio professional. I've ambitiously put 'Part 1' in the title in the hope that I'll have the time to do other parts, with a few different glossaries that go over different areas. This first one is about disciplines other than audio, and how what they do relates to your role in sound.

Game Development roles and how they relate to audio

This is based on my own experiences. Different companies work in different ways, and even different game teams within the same studio will differ in how they work and how they are structured. This is more focussed on mid to large sized game studios rather than small indie teams where you have a small number of people wearing loads of hats. It is worth noting as well that of course all disciplines relate to all other disciplines in some respect, but I've outlined the key ones that come up in relation to the day-to-day life of an in-house game audio designer. If you work in one of these disciplines and my description of your role is offensively over-simplified: my apologies in advance!

Role : Game Designer Description: These folks work on the core fabric of the game. Their work defines what all the other creative and technical disciplines will do. On a high level they will do things like decide on direction and vision of the game, design puzzles, combat systems, character classes etc. On a lower level things like how much damage a weapon does and what it looks and sounds like, how fast your character moves, the layout of the controls etc.

How it relates to Audio: A huge number of decisions made by game designers will inform your work as an audio designer. They will be the go-to person to discuss what things need to sound like and in many ways your role is to bring sound to their vision of the game.

Role : VFX Artist Description: They make all the pretty stuff that pops up on screen: explosions, muzzle flash, little puffs of debris behind players' footsteps, bits of highlighting to draw your attention to things, magic spells etc, numbers that popup on screen to show how much damage you dealt etc.

How it relates to Audio: There is a very close link between VFX and audio. What one does will heavily influence the other, and they tend to go hand in hand. This means to need to be communicating a lot to coordinate what you're doing, and negotiating access to the files as you're often needing to work on the same things around the same time.

Role : Localisation Description: Translates the game into different languages.

How it relates to Audio: If your game has localised VO, obviously you'll need to work with the loc team. Even if there's only one language voiced, if you end up editing any scripts in VO sessions, the loc team will need to know so they can edit the subtitles.

Role : Animator Description: They make game objects move.

How it relates to Audio: The link between animation and audio is crucial. The majority of SFX in game (in everything I've worked on at least) are triggered from animations. For that you'll need write access to animation sequence files so you need to negotiate with animators as you might not be able to work on the same files at the same time. For most things it's not possible to do a proper audio pass until you've got the animation for the respective job, and if that animation changes at all you need to iterate on the audio again so that everything stays in sync.

TL;DR: get to know the animators well because you need to communicate a lot.

Role : Narrative Designer Description: They write the dialogue and the stories and the lore of the game.

How it relates to Audio: If your audio design role involves working on VO then there is back-and-forth with narrative designers, from higher level things like casting characters and helping to decide on game hooks for dialogue trees down to them sitting in on VO sessions to help actors with how to pronounce and deliver the dialogue they wrote.

Role : Producer Description: Organises and manages the pipeline, so that everybody is working on the right things at the right time. Uses a project management tool (JIRA) to oversee what everybody is up to and keep things moving forward.

How it relates to Audio: As an audio designer your work on a game will need to be broken down into potentially thousands of smaller tasks, and for many of these you will be depending on somebody else to finish their work before you can start yours. Producers are there to minimise any blockers and make sure everybody can work effectively on whatever is the highest priority at the time, and manage deadlines and the breakdown of projects into manageable chunks.

Role : Quality Assurance (QA) Description: Tests all the content that goes into the game and makes sure everything is working as intended, and to feedback their findings to the appropriate person (programmer, designer, animator audio designer etc). These people are the lifeblood of the game, never underestimate their importance and expertise.

How it relates to Audio: When you finish a task QA will then need to check it to make sure you're doing what you intended to do. You need to communicate with them to let them know how to test your work and what the acceptance criteria are, and they need to communicate with you with feedback and if there are any bugs or omissions in the audio. Some companies have dedicated audio QA but most of the time this is not the case. The better your relationship with QA, the better the end result is going to be.

Role : Gameplay Programmer / Audio Programmer Description: They write and maintain the code that makes the game (/audio) work.

How it relates to Audio: Every sound you make will need to be triggered by the game code in some way, regardless of whether you use middleware or not. Programmers will help you make that happen. Even if your implementation skills are really hot and you can hook up everything yourself using code/visual scripts or animations, you'll likely still have a lot of dialogue with the programming team because they will have an overarching vision on how to keep the game code clean, efficient and reusable. An audio programmer is dedicated specifically to supporting the audio team, whereas gameplay programmers will be supporting you alongside all the other things they do. Audio programmers often come with other audio code skills beyond implementation as well such as DSP and building tools to improve the audio pipeline, and you will love them dearly.

Role : Engine/Tools Programmer Description: They write and maintain the code that makes the software that everybody else uses to create the game.

How it relates to Audio: A tools programmer might create the application that you use to sync audio to an animation, or to place sounds in a game level for example. An engine programmer might be working on the deep-level stuff to do with how audio plays in the game. You'll have much more of a relationship with this team if you're using a proprietary game engine rather than a third party engine but even if you are using Unity or Unreal

your paths may cross as bugs and issues come up, or for utilising more advanced middleware features, debugging or making custom tools for your workflow.

Role : Community Management (CM) Description: They talk to the players, manage social media and generally are the public face of the game team.

How it relates to Audio: Game communities of today have an appetite to see what happens behind the scenes and discuss the game with its creators and this can sometimes mean there being a dialogue between players and the audio team. Examples from my own experience include appearing on company live streams and panels at live events to discuss all things audio, taking questions from players through an exclusive forum for prime members and chatting to players when they come in for tours around the studio, all organised by the CM team.

Role : Video/Marketing Description: Makes the videos and trailers that get released to the world promote the studio and its products.

How it relates to Audio: These videos will need audio! The audio team is responsible for every noise that comes out of the company. Some studios have dedicated post-production audio people to work on the 'linear media' (i.e.: not the in-game audio) and some have the game audio team working on this content. Either way there is often a strong relationship between the two teams.

Role : Environment Artist Description: Making the props and scenery that go into game levels.

How it relates to Audio: If you're working on ambience then what the environment artists make and where they place it will inform how you design the audio. You'll both need to have write access to the map files for quite a long time in order to place your objects in, and usually these are locked so that only one person can edit them at a time, so I've found environment artists to be another one I need to communicate with a lot so that we don't block each other, and if you have a good rapport with them then they will be more likely to inform you if they make any audio-breaking changes such as moving or removing things you've mapped audio down for.

Role : Concept Artist Description: They take the designers' words about how things in the game should look and turn them into pictures that the rest of the art team (character, environment, VFX artists and animators) then use as a reference for their work. This is everything from weapons and environment props to creatures and players.

How it relates to Audio: Often (as always I'm talking from my experience) the rest of the art work on a particular job will be done before you start working on the audio, so you have completed models with animations and VFX all ready to go to design sound to, however it happens a lot that you need to be designing, or at least starting to design sound for things at the same time as the art team are doing their stuff. Concept art can be extremely helpful in giving you inspiration and reference for the sounds you need to make.

I hope this has been helpful. If you have any questions, or if you feel I've missed something or what I've written varies quite a lot from your experience then feel free to get in touch at ashton-mills@outlook.com

Ashton Mills is an Audio Designer at Jagex, a game studio based in Cambridge UK, where he works on sound design, VO and implementation across a range of game projects. (All thoughts and opinions are his own and not that of Jagex.)

SOURCE: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/game-audio-glossaries-part-1-dev-disciplines-ashton-mills/>

Do I need to be good at programming? Trevor Dikes answers.

Originally posted as a [Twitter thread](#) and [LinkedIn post](#) and reprinted here with permission

I've recently been speaking with some amazing up and coming game audio designers and a common question that I always get is "Do I need to be good at programming?" I always respond that it's good to know the fundamental basics of how basic programming works. I say this for a few reasons:

- + It will make you a better designer. You will think in terms of interactive systems, not just sounds.
- + You will communicate better with programmers.
- + You will be able to prototype ideas to pitch to team members, or quickly implement an idea to test it's validity in your project.
- + You will become a better troubleshooter.
- + The basic skills learnt will follow on to audio middleware and any system design you need to do.
- + Being able to quickly implement and test your ideas is so important. Anything that allows you to do that should be a priority to learn.
- + If you need to request tools for potential development it will assist you in determining scope, validity and functionality of those tools.

The most exciting thing about game audio is that you get to work with so many aspects of a game. Animators, design, code, UI, UX, writers, world design, level design, QA, marketing...

Having a better understanding of any discipline makes you a better game audio dev. [Source - LinkedIn](#) [Source - Twitter](#)

Want to be a Sound Designer? Here's some great insight from Mark Kilborn

Audio Director at Raven Software, 2014

Originally posted as a [Reddit thread](#) and reprinted here with permission

Over a year or so ago I emailed Raven Software asking if I could do an informational interview with Mark in order to learn more about what it would take for me to get into the Sound Design profession. Below is his response to my questions. I e-mailed him last week asking if it was alright to share but I haven't heard back from him so I'm going to go ahead and just post it. Not sure what kind of proof I need to post if any.

"Hi, I'm Mark Kilborn, the Audio Director at Raven Software. Your email was forwarded to me, so I'm going to do my best to answer your questions.

As a sound designer, how much programming experience is typical when starting out?

This really depends on the technology a team is using. Some game engines, like Unreal, require no programming skill for a sound designer to work with them. Other engines, like the Call of Duty engine, require a lot of skill. I generally tell people that programming experience isn't required to be a sound designer, but having it can only help you. If you do study programming, C and C++ are very useful.

Can you describe a typical day (if there is such a thing) at work for a Sound Designer?

In the game industry, **there really isn't a typical day**. We're often the smallest department in a game company, so we tend to be very busy and regularly switching between lots of different tasks. It's like fire-fighting in a sense: we deal with the biggest fires, then re-evaluate which are the biggest every few days. To give you an idea, here's a breakdown of my day today:

9:30AM Arrive at work, check email while downloading the latest version of the game and drinking some orange juice

9:45AM Look at my current task list, reprioritize my to do items based on what's going on (sorted out via emails and meetings the prior day)

10:00AM Start in on my current high priority task (editing new music for a downloadable mission for MW3)

10:45AM Receive an email from our VO producer with new recordings from a voice session for our downloadable mission, begin batch processing them and implementing them into the game

11:15AM Send email to design team to let them know the new VO is available, return to music editing

12:00PM Eat lunch while playing Skyrim on laptop and keeping an eye on email for any high importance issues that pop up

1:00PM Start working on ambient audio for an area in a downloadable map

2:00PM Meeting with a producer about some MP maps we have in production, getting up to date on where they are in production and when audio can start on them

2:30PM Back to work on ambient audio

3:00PM Stop to talk with the audio director at Infinity Ward about some equipment issues they're working with

3:15PM Back to work on ambient audio

4:00PM Meeting with another producer about our next major project, getting the latest details on what the design teams are up to

4:30PM Back to work on ambient audio

5:30PM Do end of day email pass, reply to email from Cole asking questions about my job J

5:45PM Back to work on ambient audio til end of day

That's my day. It's pretty typical, except that everything changes every day.

How important do you feel it is to have prior education or work experience?

It's very important, and that can be difficult for someone wanting to break into this business. I'll cover the two topics separately:

EDUCATION

It's important to have a background in audio engineering and game development if you want to pursue this field. For that, you first need to graduate high school (I don't know your age so don't know if you have yet). Then you need to figure out how you want to proceed on the other two. You can study both in a school, or pick one over the other then pursue the other on the side. For example, I earned a degree in audio engineering but pursued programming and game modding in my spare time, then married the two with my job. In hindsight, it might have been smarter to pursue programming in school and do the audio engineering stuff on the side, only because it would have provided a safety net had my career in games not worked out. If ever I lose my hearing, I'm going to have to scramble to find a job because I don't have a more portable degree.

WORK EXPERIENCE

This one is a catch 22 for people trying to get into the industry. It's hard to find openings aimed at people with little or no experience. The Raven audio team is made up of senior-level sound people. Senior level means we each have worked on at least three games (I've worked on 14 that have been released, four more that were canceled/aren't done yet). A lot of studios are like this, and will only hire people with experience behind them. Some are willing to take on people with less experience, so you'll want to focus on those when first trying to find a job. Internships are a great way to earn experience as well. We sometimes have an audio intern opening at Raven, though not currently.

Beyond actual work experience, any exposure you can get to game development is useful. If you can do sound for a Half Life 2 mod, or a Call of Duty mod, that demonstrates what you can do. It's VERY important to build up a portfolio of work that shows what you're capable of delivering. All the experience in the world won't make a difference if your portfolio isn't strong, but if your portfolio is out of this world, that might inspire someone to give you a chance despite a lack of experience.

What would you say is an average salary for a new Sound Designer? What about a senior Sound Designer?

This varies depending on the company, where you live, etc. It's hard to say. **A new sound designer could make anywhere between \$35-60,000 a year. A senior sound designer would be more like \$70,000-90,000.** Audio Directors usually make anywhere from **\$95,000 upward** depending on years of experience, number of awards won and lots more. These ranges can change a bit depending on the company, but that's been my experience. Location can play into this somewhat, although not necessarily enough to compensate for an extreme cost of living. I know mid-level sound designers in the San Francisco area that are living as roommates because they're making around \$55,000 a year and it's not enough for them to live on their own.

How did you get your start as a Sound Designer?

I did not start as Raven. My first work in sound was not in the games industry. I knew I wanted to get into games, but couldn't get anyone to hire me, so I worked as an intern at an audio post production facility in Detroit, MI. I moved from Dallas, TX to Detroit for this job (my parents were NOT happy about it, lol) and I worked for \$9 an hour taking session notes, duplicating tapes, etc. It wasn't glamorous, but I learned a lot.

My first games industry job came through a friend. He had some experience and was working on a Tony Hawk game. He asked if I was willing to help him, so I quit my job to work for him. It lasted about a year, but the experience and portfolio was enough to convince Bizarre Creations in Liverpool to hire me (Project Gotham Racing 4, The Club, Boom Boom Rocket) when they had an opening.

The big key here is this: a friend gave me my first job. The **game audio community is very small** and everyone is **very well connected**. I may not know everyone in the industry, but if I were to ask all the people I know to assemble a list of everyone they know and give it to me, I'd probably have a list of 90% of the working game audio professionals in the world. The best thing you can do after assembling a **great portfolio** is get to **know as many people in the industry as you can**. And **make friends with them**, don't just nag them for work. My friend gave me the job because we played in bands and had done shows together, we knew each other fairly well, and he knew I was trustworthy and could produce good results.

Networking is very important in this business.

SOURCE: https://www.reddit.com/r/GameAudio/comments/1jt91m/want_to_be_a_sound_designer_heres_some_great/

Advice for the Aspiring Sound Designer - Mark Kilborn, 2013

Originally posted as an [article on Game Career Guide](#) and reprinted here with permission

Mark Kilborn gives a series of beginner-friendly tips for audio designers who are attempting to build a portfolio and make an impression on employers in the games industry.

In my career I've been on both sides of the interview table, so as a hiring manager I recognize **some of the mistakes** I sometimes see from new or junior audio applicants. A lot of these things were confusing or intimidating to me as I started out, so I figured I'd write a little post and address some of them. It sucks being confused/concerned about how to apply for jobs.

So here are some questions I had when I was getting started, and the answers I've learned along the way. I hope these help.

What do I call myself?

First, if you're seeking sound design roles, call yourself a Sound Designer. Don't obsess about your lack of shipped titles or experience. For the first year or two I was trying to get my foot in the door, I obsessed over whether it was disingenuous and/or presumptuous to call myself what I so desperately wanted to be. It was silly. **If you design sound, you are a sound designer.**

Be confident about that.

But don't take it too far. I sometimes see people who refer to themselves as Audio Director, Creative Director, CEO, whatever of an independent audio company that has zero or minimal credits. This is a good way to elicit a sarcastic chuckle from a hiring manager.

Don't oversell yourself. Be real.

If you're an especially funny person, you can be funny with your title. It's good to show some personality. I once saw someone refer to themselves as "Noisy Ninja." That made me laugh and left a positive impression. I also once knew a programmer who had the title "International Man of Leisure" on his business cards. Loved it. Of course, it helped that he was an absolutely incredible programmer.

I don't have any projects. What can I put in my portfolio?

It's amazing how many younger sound designers I've encountered that aren't actively working on sound design projects in whatever free time they have. You should always be working on projects, even if they're projects of your own creation with nobody else involved.

Always be making noise. It's a well-known Internet Fact that you have to spend 10,000 hours working at anything to become an expert. If believing that will get you to sit down and make noise, then believe it. Always be working on something. And if you're always working on something, you'll always have materials to put in your portfolio.

If you're looking for a game audio position, I strongly suggest you try to work on something interactive. Go **download Unity Free**, get a book on it, and build some little level with minimal interaction. Then create and implement the sound for it. You can do the same in UDK, which is also available for free. Interactive demos help you develop implementation skills, which are critical in most in-house full time game audio roles.

But I don't have the tools to work on stuff at home!

My gut tells me to say "Then go home and don't be a sound designer" to this argument, because I strongly value problem solving skills in candidates. But I'll give you an answer because it's a nice day and I'm feeling nice.

There are cheap and free tools out there. Assuming you have a computer (and are likely using it to read this), for well under \$1000 you can assemble enough stuff to make some noise.

Need a DAW? Go get Reaper. It's \$60 for personal use. That's the price of a video game.
Need a WAV editor? Go get Audacity. It's free.

Need some source material? Get a **Sony PCM-M10***. \$200-250 depending on where you shop. Has a stereo omnidirectional mic pair built in, and they sound quite good. David Farmer, sound designer on the LOTR and Hobbit trilogies, turned me on to this thing. He uses his all the time.

[editor's note: The SONY M10 has been since been discontinued; a viable alternative is **ROLAND R07]*

Need some source material that you can't record yourself? You're in for a treat. First, there are three amazing sources for boutique sound effects libraries. Very cost effective, lots of cool stuff:

The Recordist - www.therecordist.com
Chuck Russom FX - www.chuckrussomfx.com

Rabbit Ears Audio - www.rabbitearsaudio.com

If you want to browse a massive database and purchase/download individual recordings, hit up www.prosoundeffects.com

**[editor's note: in the few years since Mark's interview, the indie sound library market grew exponentially, and at the moment the largest aggregator is <https://www.asoundeffect.com/>]*

Need some plugins? Lots of cheap and free options can be found at KVR (www.kvr-vst.com). If you want some amazing plugins for shocking prices, the Valhalla DSP (www.valhalladsp.com) plugins are an absolute steal.

Need an interface? Focusrite Scarlett 2i2. \$200.

Need monitors? This one's always a killer, but if you can't afford anything good here, get a pair of headphones. AKG K240. They're \$100.

SOURCE: https://www.gamecareerguide.com/features/1220/some_advice_for_the_aspiring_sound_.php

INTERVIEW WITH MARK KILBORN, IN 2013

Originally posted as an [article on The Sound Architect](#) and reprinted here with permission

We had the great opportunity to speak with Mark Kilborn, Audio Director at Raven/Activision. Known for his work on various AAA titles including PGR4, Forza Motorsport 3, Singularity and of course Call of Duty:Modern Warfare 3. Mark is currently working on the newest game immensely popular Call of Duty Series Call of Duty:Ghost. We speak to Mark via email.

What path led you into sound design in the beginning?

My interest in sound came from hearing music as a child. I liked a lot of stuff, but specifically I heard the album "Please" by the Pet Shop Boys, when I was 5, and it just caught my ear. The synth sounds were interesting, there's a bit of sound design in it where you hear a street scene, etc. At the time I was playing my shiny new NES and falling in love with video games, and I made the connection: someone makes sounds for games. That started it. I strayed a bit as I grew up, lost my determination and tried for a while to get a "real job," but I came back to it.

How long have you been a sound designer now?

I've been a regularly paid sound guy for about ten years now, 7 of that in games. But I've been working with sound in various ways for about 18-20 years (a lot of time in bands as a teenager).

Have you always wanted to work in games?

Yep. I had it figured out pretty early.

Just out of interest what was the first game you ever played?

I honestly don't remember. I know I played something on the 2600 at my uncle's house before I owned anything. I definitely remember that the first game console I owned was the NES (received for Christmas 1985), and I got the Deluxe Set. So I had Gyromite and Duck Hunt, and they bought Super Mario Bros. separately. So those were the first three I owned.

What has been your most challenging project so far?

My latest project is always the most challenging. Every project brings new challenges. And I realize that sounds like a cop out answer, but it's the truth. This job is like a rabbit hole that just keeps getting deeper. On each project I learn how to solve a lot of new problems, so I deal with them much more easily on the next, which gives me time to discover a lot of new problems.

What project are you most proud of?

It's hard to pick just one. I'm proud of different projects for different reasons. I'm extremely proud of what we accomplished in Singularity. The audio team here came together at the 11th hour and made some pretty dramatic changes to the sound of the game, and I think they significantly improved the final product.

I'm very proud of our work on Modern Warfare 3. There's some amazing work in there, despite pretty insane/ridiculous challenges. I'm proud of the racers (PGR4 and Forza Motorsport 3), which were amazing games and both taught me a lot.

What would be your dream project?

I'd love to work on a really scary survival horror game, something like the early Silent Hill titles. It would be fun to work on a tactical RPG, like XCOM/Tactics Ogre/FF Tactics. I've always wanted to work on something with a whimsical, humorous feel to it, like a DoubleFine game or something. Just about everything I've touched has been realistic or dark.

Is there a sound you've created that you'll always remember?

I don't know about a specific sound I'll always remember. There are things I'm proud of. I obviously have to be careful about revealing too much "behind the scenes" stuff here, but it's happened that I've put a lot of effort into the sound of something and been extremely proud of it, and that piece of the game, or an entire level, was cut for various reasons. Most of my proudest sound design moments have been like that. I'm thinking of a very specific example and it's making me sad, lol.

I did some work on a game that got cancelled, and was sounding amazing. It was a third person action game, and we were taking a lot of audio influence from Children of Men, The Bourne films and Uncharted. Two of us were on it, tag teaming it, and we were just so ecstatic at the results we were getting with some of the new approaches we were trying. I think it would have been the best sounding thing I've ever touched.

I'm also really proud of some of the technology stuff I've contributed to over the years. I'm much stronger as a sound implementer/mixer than I am as a sound designer, so I tend to get my hands dirty with hooking sounds up, resolving problems and creating hacky solutions when necessary to get the job done.

What software do you use?

It's a rotating collection of stuff. Nuendo is my go to DAW. Sound Forge has been my wave editor for years, but I'm slowly moving toward Audition because I'm sick of the bugs and crashes. I love Reaper for its batch processor and Python integration, and I keep meaning to dig further into it as a DAW. iZotope RX2 for cleaning stuff. Those are the core tools.

On the plug-in front, I use the Waves plugs as my general set. Altiverb and Speakerphone are awesome. I rotate some other stuff in and out, and I try out new things from time to time, but I'm just not the sound guy that gets into the latest, greatest plugins. I'm a firm believer that the two most powerful tools in a sound designer's toolbox are a good microphone and a good EQ, so I try to get a lot of mileage out of those. The Sound Toys and Valhalla stuff is on my "to check out" list though 😊

Outside of flashy audio software, I can't get through my day without a bunch of not-very-exciting-but-still-critical things: UltraEdit, Sox, Python, Renamer, Automator, AutoHotKey, TextEdit (getting fancy!).

As an aspiring games sound designer, where do I start?

Make noise. It's really that simple.

I wrote a big article on GameCareerGuide recently about this, but the gist of it is: make noise. Get the most basic tools you need to make sound (you can easily equip yourself for under \$1,000), make it. Get really, really good at it.

Download FMOD Designer or UDK or Unity or something. Learn how to implement sound with it. There are so many more tools out in the world now than there were even ten years ago.

How do I stand out from the crowd?

A few things catch my attention:

Really strong sound design. Make **amazing** things (more about this at the end). This doesn't just mean realistic. It means **memorable**.

Good mixing. This is a big one for me. There are too many flat sounding games in this industry, give me dynamics. There are too many overly busy games. **Reduce to just what matters**, turn down/mute the rest. Know when to push and pull. Break "rules" intelligently, don't say things like "this cannon is the loudest thing in the game, nothing can ever be louder than it." If there's a key climactic scene and someone pulls the pin of a grenade and drops it, let that pin drop be the loudest thing in the game.

Interactive demos. Anyone can make a video, and that only shows half your skill set. The other half is how you **implement**. Show it to me in a way that's interactive.

Show something **unique** about yourself. What are you into that's different? MaxMSP. Processing. Modular synthesizers.

A very **positive**, very **eager**, very **humble** personality. A **sense of humour** is great. Willingness to **accept** and **give criticism** in a **constructive** way. **Zero ego**.

What are your major Do's and Don'ts for applications?

I kinda covered the Dos above. Some don'ts:

If you're applying for a sound design job, **do not send music**. If you want to be a composer, that's a very different career path.

Don't send me letters or CVs with typos. Sound implementation is a very **detail oriented job**. A typo or a missed semicolon in our game can break the build and hinder the progress of 300 other developers. **Correct spelling, punctuation, this stuff matters.** If you can't pay attention to it when selling yourself, then how can I trust you not to break the game?

Don't send me demo materials that are **difficult to access**. I'm **very busy**, and I need to get to the meat of your demo as quickly as possible.

Were there any big mistakes in the beginning of your career that you learnt from the most?

Oh I make mistakes constantly, lol. Most of the bigger mistakes have been more political than tech/sound related. I'm a very un-political, uncensored person, so I've often offended people by just being myself and stating my opinions. I've tried over the years to be better at it, and I think I am better now than I used to be, but I still step in it from time to time.

Big lesson: this industry is small. You never know when you'll be working with or for someone. So be careful whose toes you step on. But, that said, **don't be a pushover**. **Be confident** in yourself, speak up for what you believe in, but **be humble** enough to know when you're wrong, **accept responsibility** for it, and **apologize**.

What did your first showreel consist of?

Oh it was a mess. I found a copy of it recently and was embarrassed to even look at it. It had a scene from a cartoon for which I did all new sound design and mix, and the result was pretty poor. I had a piece of music in it that I wrote, this was before I realized that you should target one or the other. But even with that aside, the music was awful.

My first really successful demo was for Bizarre Creations. I knew they made racing games, so I set up a recording session with a vehicle locally (a friend's Mustang, the best car I could find at the time), captured a bunch of materials, then downloaded FMOD Designer and built a session with an interactive engine.

It sounded pretty awful, but it was functional, so I shipped them the entire FMOD session. Their AD at the time said something like "Yeah, it sounds pretty awful, but it's better than our first attempt at this was, so let's talk."

Now, the age old question from most sound designers who want to get into games:

All the vacancies ask for experience on an AAA title, but how do I get this experience if I can't get these jobs?!

Yeah, the old catch 22. The answer is patience and networking. Once you've got experience on a AAA title, a lot more doors open up. But getting that first one is challenging.

Get to know as many people as you can in the field. And don't just get to know them to get work, get to know them to get to know them. **Make friends. Be genuine.** Most of the people making game audio are **amazing people** who are well worth knowing, so just **enjoy knowing them.**

Do whatever smaller work you can. Smartphone games, indie games, whatever. You'll get more experience while you continue pounding on the AAA door and, frankly, you might find you prefer working on the indie stuff. I know plenty of people who are very happy in that world, and some amazing sounding games are made in that sector (see Limbo).

So-called "luck" is really just the collision of preparation and opportunity. Develop your **skills.** **Build a portfolio** of good work. That's preparation.

Network. Surround yourself with people who are doing what you want to do. That's exposing yourself to opportunity.

At some point opportunity will appear, and you'll have put yourself in the right place with the right skills to take advantage of it.

In what ways did you network in the beginning?

I met people via mailing lists and whatever social media things existed at the time. Going to GDC and doing the Audio Boot Camp (I think they still do this) and the audio track sessions were huge. You go to those things, then next thing you know you're having dinner and drinking with other people, you build up a network of friends.

What got you your job in sound design for games i.e. what was your "big break"?

Like I said previously, it was the combination of preparation and opportunity. I had a lot of interest in music, played in bands, and through that I knew of someone who I later found out was working in game audio. I got to know him, and when an opportunity popped up, he got in touch and asked me if I was willing to help him out. I quit my job to work with him on the project, and that opened more doors.

What do you think lies in the future of sound design for gaming?

I've got a gamasutra blog in the works on this, but briefly:

I think real-time mixing is our next big frontier. With the next gen consoles and PC specs, there's not going to be a lot we can't do. A lot of games are using some form of real-time mixing now, but the power available to us is going to really open up next gen. So I'm thinking about things like dozens (or more!)

multi band EQs being used simultaneously at run time, with parameters dynamically scaling based on in-game data. More detailed reverbs with modeling that responds to in-game environmental changes (particularly destructible environments). Lots more

I'd also like to see a big push on the tools front. Different people are at different places on this, but I'd like for next gen to be the generation where we're all working in the build in real time, making tweaks with the game running. The more we can decrease down time per iteration, the more we can iterate, and ideally the better the sound of the finished game.

What are your goals for the future?

Total global domination.

Seriously, I occasionally think far ahead, but most of the time I'm only focused on the next one or two steps. Professionally, right now I'd say all of us in Raven Audio are focused on enhancing our games with amazing sound, and trying to score some awards for it. We can have our own opinions about the work we do, but if we can earn the respect of our peers in the form of AIAS/DICE or BAFTA awards, then we'll have independent confirmation. After that it will probably be "Okay, so we won an award, now how do we make our games sound EVEN BETTER?" And we'll have to come up with some new metric for success.

Personally my goals are to be a great husband and dad, continue to have a job that's enjoyable and satisfying (so my job isn't preventing me from being a great husband/dad), and to expand my skills as far as possible. I'm always digging into other disciplines and learning them. I've been learning how to make pixel art in the last week or so.

Can you tell us anything about your current/future projects from a sound design perspective?

Umm... they start with "C" and end with "all of Duty." That's about all I can say.

I will say that we're always very focused on how to improve the quality of Call of Duty audio across the board. When you get most of the CoD audio teams and directors together, that's usually where the discussion goes. It's on most of our minds. We (all, not just Raven) are a pretty passionate group, we're always listening to other games and films and other things, and looking for new styles, techniques, etc. to bring into the franchise. We're also a pretty down to earth, humble group, very approachable, minimal

ego, so it's easy to have challenging discussions. I love that about our peers at the other studios, and it's something I value in all audio people.

Do you offer internships or work experience at all?

We have in the past. It's not something we're doing currently because our schedule just doesn't permit it, and we don't have the space. I expect we might be looking at that again in early 2015.

What's your top tip for aspiring sound designers out there?

I'm going to cheat, here are two:

First, and this applies to more than just game audio folks, this applies to just about anything:

Learn to be a critic. Figure out what the best sounding games and films are, listen carefully and listen again, really dissect and analyze what they're doing. **Learn what's good and bad.** Develop an opinion. Annoy your partner by chattering about it during the movie. Be a snob about it!

Then take that opinion, that demand for quality, and use it as your standard. If you have **good taste in sound**, and are willing to be **honest** enough with yourself to hold yourself to that standard, then you just have to keep chasing it. **You'll get there.**

There's an amazing Ira Glass sound bite on this: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ResTHKVxf4>

Listen to that. Absorb it. Live it. And **keep holding yourself to that high standard.** No matter how successful you are, always be hungry for more. **Never settle on your success.** Even the very best sounding games in this business have plenty of room to improve.

Second, **be humble. Always be humble.** You learn so much more when you're willing to learn from anyone and not assume you know more than they do. There are a lot of wonderful, talented, friendly people in the field of game audio, and they're some of the most open and sharing people I've ever met. If you're as humble and open as they are, you can learn from each other. There are a few jerks, but the rest of us are slowly pushing them out of the industry 😊

Mark was a pleasure to speak to and amazingly helpful. We look forward to speaking to him again in the near future and also his future work.

Source: <https://www.thesoundarchitect.co.uk/interviews/interview-with-mark-kilborn/>

The importance of having passion for your craft - Bob Fitch, Engineering Director, Blizzard since 1992

Originally posted as a [twitter thread](#)

I have been doing Blizzard programming interviews for almost 30 years.

One thing I look for in candidates is passion for things they love, and passion in general for the tasks that will be required for the position. The following is MY opinion. My tweets are my own. #gamejobs

I ask many candidates, “Are you working on any fun projects? How do you keep current in the industry? Have you done any game jams? Mods? Do you read stack overflow or github? Read any programming books?”

If you don’t have a job yet, I will ask about projects you have done on your own. If you’re already working on a programming job then I will ask how you keep current, and what your last tasks were (if you can talk about them) and if you have solved any interesting bugs.

If you don’t program for your job already and I ask “How do you continue following your programming passion?” then you don’t want your answer to be

“I don’t have the time.” Find something you love and do it a little bit as often as you can.

Sometimes you can be doing the same things every day, and not really growing as a programmer even though you’re programming.

My advice for anyone who is looking for a career is: **spend a little time every day learning, growing, advancing your craft** in some way, even if it’s to spend 15 minutes a day reading a C# book because that’s all the time you have and you don’t have easy computer access.

In summary, don’t let “I don’t have the time” get in the way of continuing to grow and make you a better candidate. I might view that answer as “maybe programming is not for you, if you don’t like learning it.” Find a way to learn something new every day.

My Twitter exploded. Some answers: I stand vehemently opposed to crunch culture, support “no crunch” teams, advocate healthy work-life balance, never ask you to take work home, suggest you go home or take days off if working too much. Bliz offers on-the-clock training and courses.

[Source](#)

A Big Jumbled Blog About Joining Team Audio by Ariel Gross

June 26, 2012

Originally posted on [Ariel's website](#), featured on [AltDevBlogADay.com](#) and [gamasutra.com](#) and reprinted here with permission

I keep writing and rewriting this blog. First it was going to be about our hiring process at Volition. Then it was going to be about what it takes to join the Volition audio team. Then it was going to be about a few things that I’m looking for in audio design candidates. Then it was going to be about some of the resumes that I’ve seen and explain how certain things do not qualify people to be in-house game audio designers. Then it was going to be about jerky things that I think developers do to applicants.

I realized that I was doing that thing that I always do, which is spend an hour writing different titles for my blog, fantasize about the content, try to define the blog and what its importance was, and not get

anywhere. This is one of my curses when it comes to blogging. And it's silly. So, now I'm just gonna write this thing. Screw it! I'm writing it! And it's just going to be a big jumbled blog about all that stuff.

The Volition audio hiring process

I think it all really started with Anne. Anne is the project manager for audio at Volition. She's an innovator. I'd like to think that I am, too, but I'd rather someone else say it about me than to say it about myself. "I'm an innovator!" Sure ya are, buddy (wink-mouth click-point).

At the very least, I am an early adopter. So, with Anne and I working in the same department, experimentation can sometimes be the path of least resistance. (wink-mouth click-point-jump-heel click-belch) I don't know why I just wrote that.

Anyway, we decided to put the audio hiring process up for discussion and change.

We kept a central person to review all incoming applicants. That would be me. I'd scrap a bunch of incoming applicants because I could tell by **reading the cover letter and resume** that a person did not have the stuff. I will talk more about that later.

If someone piqued my interest, I would pass their cover letter, resume, and demo materials along to the rest of the audio team. I'd get feedback and then decide if we wanted to proceed with the candidate to the next step.

The next step would be some kind of **test**. Previously, we had sent out a written test that had a bunch of questions on it. Stuff like, what do you consider to be the three most important areas of sounds in an open world game? What do you think would be difficult about working on audio in an open world game? And if you had to design a beam weapon, how would you put it together both creatively and technically? And a bunch of other riddles and puzzles and noodle-ticklers that usually had no specific correct answer but plenty of potential incorrect or awkward answers.

We decided to kill the written test. We had all taken similar written tests and decided that they were annoying and time consuming. Additionally, those are the types of things that we discuss on a daily basis within the group. If someone in the Volition audio team were to say, "I'd design a beam weapon as 330 one-shot sound effects of varying lengths," then one of us would say, "That seems like an odd approach," while cleaning up all the barf. Also, we could ask questions like that over the phone or in person and it would allow for some back-and-forth.

Previously, if the applicant had gotten past the written test stage, they would go on to the **video test**. This is where we would send out a video capture of **Red Faction: Guerrilla** with the sound stripped out and would ask the applicant to replace the sounds with their own creations. This method is decent for exposing a candidate's **sound design skill**. They would need to design some weapons, some impacts, a vehicle engine, ambience... it would give us back a pretty good variety of sounds that would be relevant to their jobs.

But there are some problems with that method. We do some linear work within the Volition audio team, but the **vast majority of our work is non-linear**. Also, it's easy to get caught up in the little gotchas, like,

did they get every footstep? Did they notice that piece of metal in the distance falling over? Did they notice that the player is low on health in this section?

And if we weren't really careful about it, we might be mentally dinging an otherwise awesome candidate because they missed that little visual cue, which again, would be something that could be addressed in a feedback session if they were working here.

We also tended to get a lot of very similar results back. Also, it doesn't really give the candidate much of a chance to show us if they can get a point across or tell a story with sound, although that was partly because of the footage we would send.

Byron had heard that some other companies were instead sending out a scenario that is written out in text. The candidate is asked to read the scenario and to then send back an audio file. That is, there is no video component to sync the audio to.

There are some limitations, like how long they have to do it (**two weeks**) and the duration of the .wav file that they send back (**60-120 seconds**), but other than that, it's really up to the candidate to tell the story with their sounds. Not only does the candidate have more creative liberty, but they also get to completely control the pacing. They can tell a better story this way. So we did it. After getting a couple of these tests back, we decided that we were able to tell a lot more about our candidates than what we were able to tell from the video method.

So, the new process to this point would be to look at the applicant's materials that they've sent, then pass along the good ones to the team for discussion, and then to send out this new test. If we liked their test, we'd schedule a phone interview.

In the past, we had tried a couple different methods for the phone interview. The first method involved getting the entire audio team in a conference room and calling the poor applicant as a team. We would all go around the room asking questions off of a piece of paper. Lots of standard questions like, "Do you have any weaknesses? No? Okay, next question," and, "What's a game you think has cool sound? Saints Row? +10 points." It was too rigid and it didn't really give us a sense of who this person was.

So, the pendulum swung to the complete other side and we went paperless and very spontaneous. One might say unprepared. But we were all still in the conference room. Like seven or eight people asking all sorts of disconnected questions, like, "What kind of music do you listen to," followed by, "How would you design a tool to implement ambience," followed by, "What's your favorite plug-in?" My opinion was that it was a complete mess, and although we sometimes would get a better sense of who this person was than with the worksheet full of standard interview questions, it was spotty at best.

This time around, the phone interview was two people. I was in all the phone interviews and we rotated the other members of the audio team. We would meet for 15 minutes before the phone interview and toss around a few questions that we'd like to ask. Usually we would each have around five questions that we wanted to ask, and the rest of the time was left open for banter and rambling. Banter and rambling actually means a lot to me. I want to know how this person banters and rambles. In the end, I'd say that it went the best that it has ever gone. There are probably ways to improve the process, but it worked out better than anything before.

At this point, after the application process, the test, and the phone interview, we had a pretty good sense of this person. There was just one last test to go. The on-site interview.

To me, the on-site interview has a primary purpose, which is that I want to see how well this person is going to fit in with the team. I already know that this person is qualified or they wouldn't get to this point. So, for the on-site, I just want to be able to predict whether or not I want to work with this person day in and day out. But there are lots of other things that we can find out during the on-site.

When the candidate shows up for their on-site, the first thing we do is gather up the audio team and a few other relevant people and listen to the candidate's test a couple of times with the candidate in the room. Then we start the critique.

I find that it's actually pretty tricky, because the candidate wouldn't be sitting in a Volition conference room if their test was bad. My favorite question that I heard asked was, "If the tables were turned and you had to critique this test, what criticism would you have?" This was followed by, "Now respond to your own criticism." We would also pick a section and say, "What would you do to make this section more realistic?" This would be followed by, "Okay, same section, but how would you make it funnier?"

The responses to the questions aren't really the point to me, anyway. So, it doesn't really matter what we criticize. We do this because we want to know how the person reacts to feedback. Do they get defensive? Do they struggle with coming up with new approaches? Do they clam up and seem defeated? I personally give the candidate lots of slack, too, since they're in the hot seat for a job that they presumably want really badly.

After the critique, they get a little face time with me and our audio programmer and we tend to ask more technical questions. I want to get a better sense of whether this person has serious technical chops or if they are more of a content creator. Or maybe both.

This is followed by some show n' tell of what we're working on. We take them into one of our offices and just play the game. We talk about what we're working on, what gets us excited about the project, we play the game in front of them, and we check out their reaction.

We usually get some good questions from the candidate at this point in the process. The questions that they ask during the show n' tell of the game give me an indication of where their head is at, what they're most interested in, stuff like that.

Then it's lunch with the audio team. Lunch is important. This is the first chance that we have to see how the candidate behaves with the audio team in a more social setting. We're not in the office. We're not sitting in front of a computer.

We're not grilling the person. We continue to ask questions, but they're social ones. Anne likes to ask questions like, "What would you be leaving behind if you were to move here?" And I tend to ask stuff like, "What kind of music do you listen to?" More personal questions. It tells me a lot about the candidate. It's also a chance to reset the candidate and get them ready for what's coming next.

After lunch, we have an interview gauntlet. Three hours of interviews with people from the audio team as well as people from production, studio management, writing, design, and whoever else we think would be able to give us an interesting perspective on this person. This is probably the most stressful part of

the on-site. After this, it's usually around 4:30pm, and the candidate is probably like, "I need a drink." Which is exactly what we do.

It was Anne's idea and it has proved to be another great one. We have formalized drinks as the way that we end our on-site interview process. We promptly head out to a local bar and have beers for two hours. I find this to be the most interesting part of the on-site because once you get a beer or two into someone, especially after an extremely stressful day, they tend to open up.

To me, this is an essential part of the interview process because we start to see who this person really is.

After that, they go home and we make a decision in the following days. If you've read this far, well, I've just barely gotten started! Sorry boutcha! I haven't blogged in a couple of months and I have all these thoughts rattling around in the ol' fleshy hat rack.

What it takes to work with us

If you're applying to join Team Audio at Volition, your odds of actually joining us are very low. It doesn't matter if you're straight out of school or if you've been in the industry for 20 years, the odds are still very low. It doesn't matter if you've never worked on a game before or if you have 20 games under your belt. Still low.

For this round of hiring, we had 64 applicants that made it through HR and landed on the network for me to check out. That's the lowest that I've seen since I've been here, and it's probably because we didn't post the job to Gamasutra or other job sites.

Typically we have well over 100, but for what I'm about to say, let's go with 64. Out of these 64, we had on-sites for three of them. Of those three, we hired two.

So, purely looking at the numbers, without taking anything else into account, if you applied, you had around a 4 percent chance of getting an on-site interview, and around a 3 percent chance of getting hired. So, I would call that a pretty small chance. I'm assuming that I did the math right, there. I think I did.

I want to add that the people that we hired didn't really have experience as in-house game audio designers. We were able to hire senior guys if we wanted to, but we didn't. And I also want to add that we had senior candidates apply. **Lots of them.**

Full on industry vets that were more than qualified for the job requirements that we posted. But we went with guys that had way less comparable experience. And I'll also mention that we had that same criteria of experience and shipped titles on our job listing. So, why would we hire guys that didn't have a ton of experience?

It's because that stuff isn't all that matters to us. And I think it matters a lot less to people like me who are in the position to hire other people than many might think. In fact, if you're out there publicly complaining about the catch-22 of needing experience before getting an entry-level job, I think you're

looking at it from the wrong angle. Also, I might see you doing that, and as someone who gives people a chance, that might annoy me. Just sayin'!

And believe me, I understand how you could see things this way. I was in your shoes not too long ago. I remember sending my resume and demo materials to over 100 developers before Volition saw my potential and hired me. And I had experience and titles! And even then, they didn't really know what I was capable of until I had been working there for a while.

And that's kinda the point. We can research you and check out your previous projects and watch your demo and talk to you on the phone and even meet you in person at the on-site and we really don't know what we're getting until you've been working here for a while. And I realize this. I'd like to think that most people in my position realize this. Which is why many of us are looking for something that can't really be articulated very easily. Yes, we want to see an awesome demo reel. Yep, it would be great if you've got some experience. But there are things that mean way more to me than that stuff. I'm going to give you three things that I think are more important than all that other stuff.

First of all, I want to see that you have a purpose for wanting this job. Not what you're doing (e.g. your resume and demo). Not how you're doing it (e.g. your web site or blogs that show how you do what you do). But **why you're doing it**.

That's tougher to show me. I realize this. But people have managed to do it. It's in the tone of your presence on the Internet and in person. **It's written between the lines in the emails that you send me.** It's hidden in something you wrote on Twitter or on a comment on a Gamasutra article. It's the sound of your voice and the look in your eyes when we're talking in person.

And if you're starting to think this is unfair because it requires you to be active in some community that I'm a part of, then there's one glorious place where you're assured that I will see it no matter what. That is your cover letter. You should see the look on peoples' faces when I tell them that I often get more out of a cover letter than a resume or a demo. But sometimes I do. That's your shot at showing me that you have a purpose.

Secondly, I want to see the **potential for growth**. It doesn't matter if you've been around the block, either. There are as many titans of the game audio industry as there are newbies who realize that this field changes so quickly that you still need to be able to grow and change. If you think you have figured this whole game audio thing out, well, there might still be somewhere out there for you, but it's not Team Audio at Volition. I see this as going hand-in-hand with some other important qualities, like humility, a good sense of humor about yourself and your work, and the ability to take feedback. I wrap it all up in this thing that I call potential for growth.

And thirdly, I want to see that there's more to you than audio. Team Audio at Volition tries to look at each other as complete human beings. We can all design and implement audio. But that's not all there is to it, not by a long shot. There's so much more to being part of this game development team than being a good audio designer or than knowing how to make things sound right in Wwise.

Maybe you have some game design sensibilities. Maybe you're able to make people laugh. Maybe you play an instrument. Maybe you know how to read a schematic. Maybe you're good at making a point. Maybe you're a futurist. Maybe you like to take random online classes. Maybe you like to put together puzzles. It

doesn't matter. I'm not just trying to look at you as an audio designer, I'm trying to look at you as a complete human being. The bigger picture I can see, the more interested I may become.

One swallow does not a summer make

After looking at so many audio applicants since being at Volition, even the most recent time, when there is more information about what it takes to get an in-house audio job out there than ever before, it has become apparent that some people still don't understand the breadth of knowledge and skill that it takes to get an in-house audio gig at Volition.

I see a lot of applicants applying who have experience in some form of broadcast media. This is relevant, don't get me wrong. There are things that you could learn at these places that might give you some skills that would apply to the work that we do. But if this is all you got, then it's probable that you will be outgunned even for an entry-level position.

I see a lot of applicants applying who emphasize that they are musicians or composers. This is also relevant. But if that's all you got, you'll be outgunned.

I see a lot of applicants coming from advertising. Again, relevant. All you got? Outgunned.

Lots of applicants coming from good schools. That's it? Outgunned.

Theater audio? Outgunned.

Live sound? Outgunned.

Worked on a mod? Outgunned.

Helped engineer at a recording studio? Outgunned.

VO recording and editorial? Outgunned.

However, if you've done several of these things... I'm interested. You may or may not have noticed that this person hasn't shipped a game or held an in-house audio position at a game developer. But what this person at least appears to have done is, well, a lot. They've done a lot. Even though they haven't shipped a game, they're interesting to me. If their cover letter and demo is good, they're on the path to an interview. People like this definitely exist and they're itching to get into game audio.

Now, if someone has shipped a game or two, has a solid demo reel, has some knowledge of how audio works in games, and also has a good cover letter and resume, they are definitely going to give this other person a run for their money. But that doesn't automatically mean that they'll get the job. If you read everything else I wrote above, there's a lot of stuff that means a lot to me other than what someone has done in their past.

The reason I started this section with one swallow does not a summer make is because there are people out there who have dedicated huge amounts of effort to getting a job in game audio. Huge amounts of effort. Can't understate that. That's what it takes. And like I said earlier, if you've got other skills that make you valuable, like knowing how to script, or knowing how to solve complex problems, or knowing how to build a synthesizer, or knowing how memory and streaming work, or knowing how to build a level in Hammer, or know how to recount something that happened to you in a compelling way, well, that is awesome, because that sounds like someone I might want to work with.

So, be honest about where you're at and try to keep things in perspective. If you've applied to 100 game audio jobs and haven't found one yet, take some time to think critically about yourself and what you bring to the table. Think about what you could do, what you could learn, who you could learn from, what it might take to make you someone who a company must hire. Then go do that stuff. There are a lot of people out there already doing it. But don't let that discourage you. None of them are you and they can never be you.

Jerk move, potential employer. Jerk move.

Okay, this is the last thing I want to write about.

Why are developers being so jerky to their applicants? Do these people not realize or remember what it's like to be an applicant?

My friend Dave Samuel, a kick ass VFX artist, put it this way, and I'll never forget. When you're applying for jobs, a minute is like an hour, an hour is like a day, a day is like a week, a week is like a month, and a month is like ten years. These people are in agony, waiting with bated breath to hear back from you. It's way better to get a rejection quickly than to be strung along for who-knows-how-long. Stringing people along is lame. I'm guilty of it, too. Nobody's perfect. But I'm trying to get better. Try to tell your applicants how long it's really going to take to get them moving to the next step.

If you're rejecting someone, you can leave the door open. Sometimes your rejection letters can make people think that they will never have another shot at working there again. If that's the case, well, okay then, I guess. But is it the case? Not as far as I'm concerned. The door is always open to reapply. The door is always open to talk to me. Even after I've rejected you. In fact, if I reject someone and they keep in touch, I see that as a good thing. It seems like a mature and smart thing to do.

Also, give you applicants your direct work e-mail address if you can. If you can't give them that for some dumb reason, give them your home e-mail. Let them contact you. Encourage them to stay in touch. Build that relationship. It might turn into something amazing. Don't screw up HR, talk to your HR department about it first, but probably you can keep in touch with these people.

Before you hang up the phone from the phone interview, or after the on-site interview, tell the applicants that they should not hesitate to contact you if they want an update or for any reason. Remember, they're going to be biting their fingernails off and dreaming about your response. They probably have diarrhea from all the stress. Even if they know first hand that this process can take a really long time, it doesn't make it any less nerve-wracking.

There's no reason to leave these people thinking that they'll botch everything if they ask you what's going on or if there's any news. And if they do ask you for an update, be straight up with them. It's okay to say that there are other applicants and that you can't decide yet, or that the team has been too busy to make a decision, although if that's the case, then that's kind of annoying and you should probably consider addressing that.

Just remember that you're dealing with a human being. Someone who you could potentially be working with, or someday this person might be looking at your application. Who knows? There are all the reasons in the world to treat these people like you'd like to be treated. If you have the power to make or break

someone's dreams, then wield that power like a kind and honorable king. I believe it's the right thing to do.

The End

Alright, that's a bunch of stuff. I feel like I've said my piece a few times over. If you actually read all of this, you should leave a comment or send me an e-mail or something. I'm impressed that you, or anyone, would read these ramblings. And that's just what these are. Ramblings. Try not to take them too seriously. I'm just some schmuck.

On that note, I'd also like to point out that these are my opinions and mine alone. These opinions do not reflect Volition's official positions, or the Volition audio team's official positions, or THQ's official positions, or the FLOTUS's official opinions, or any other silly ideas that you might get in your head. Honestly they probably won't even reflect my own opinions in a few months.

Also: no bologna this time. Sorry. Except for that one that I just wrote. And this one: bologna.

Source <http://arielgross.com/2012/06/26/a-big-jumbled-blog-about-joining-team-audio/>

Yet Another Game Audio Hiring Article by [Ariel Gross](#), 2017

Source. Originally posted on AltDevBlogADay.com and featured on gamasutra.com. Reprinted here with permission

A WILD YAGAHA APPEARS!

I already know what you're all thinking. Who needs another YAGAHA? Related, what's a YAGAHA? Well, my friend, if you haven't already made that connection based on the title of this article, then I'll tell you now: YAGAHA stands for Yet Another Game Audio Hiring Article, and I chose that acronym due to it being just familiar enough to audio people by its similarity to the ubiquitous audio brand, Yamaha.

Way back in the vine-ripened and tender year of 2012, I wrote an article for a website called AltDevBlogADay titled "[A Big Jumbled Blog About Joining Team Audio.](#)" I didn't think much of it at the time, but it became one of the most popular articles I'd written. To this day, five years later, I still get an occasional email from someone about that article. Which is awesome! But the world, and my perception of it, has changed quite a bit in the last five years, so I wanted to take another crack at it.

There are articles aplenty about what it takes to get a job in game audio, but each different perspective can help someone persevere through the turbulent quest of attempting to join the ranks of game audio.

This article is primarily aimed at people who want to get an in-house game audio gig. The job listing might go by a few different names, but the most common seem to be Sound Designer, Audio Designer, and Audio Artist. Sometimes it's preceded with "Technical," as in Technical Sound

Designer, which usually implies something a bit different, but the principles here will still apply. The principles might apply to any job, really.

PREPARE TO QUALIFY

First of all, you should understand what you're getting into. Setting your expectations going into this marathon is important. Otherwise, you'll start panicking and crying hysterically while flailing your arms haphazardly and you'll knock over my coffee and scald my thighs and a hiring manager with burnt red thighs is less likely to hire you FACT.

Game Audio is an absurdly competitive field. Even though there seem to be more game audio jobs than ever, there are still fewer available gigs than capable and talented people to fill them. There are literally quadrillions of people applying for every single game audio job that's posted. That might be a slight rounding error, but I can't overstate how many people are going for these jobs, and many of the candidates have equal or better qualifications than you do.

It's probably going to feel like you're sending your resume into black holes, often hearing nothing for weeks. Sometimes you'll receive a form rejection letter six weeks after submitting your application. Meanwhile, you'll just be sitting there waiting, scratching your head, making your scalp all bloody and scarred, wondering if you're real, if you even exist.

It won't just be your emotional and mental fortitude that is tested. You will likely receive actual tests that take enormous amounts of time and effort if you want to compete with the other candidates. You're going to do this while you continue to work whatever job or attend whatever classes, which will leave you feeling like a rubbery, deflated balloon by the time you're done. And make no mistake that rubbery, deflated balloons still get rejected with impunity.

You'll interview with people that will ask you questions that you have no idea how to answer, and after you stumble your way through your response, you will be rewarded with dubious silence and/or increasingly difficult questions. You'll have to solve complicated problems on the spot, problems that you've never considered before, and you'll have to pull clever solutions from thin air and draw analogies that will make you feel like you're connecting strings between conspiracy theories.

You'll show up for an on-site interview and feel like you're getting a glimpse into Shangri-La, only to be hurriedly stuffed into a conference room and interrogated by people with titles that you've never heard of before. Why are these people even interested in talking with me? Why did they leave me in this room alone for six minutes? Why did someone draw a glowing banana wrapped in bacon on the whiteboard?

You'll enter into compensation negotiations that will make you question your own worth. People will be telling you to negotiate, but you'll want to just take the offer, but then you'll second guess yourself. You'll be worried that you'll say the wrong number and the offer will be rescinded and you'll be blacklisted forever and mightily thwapped on the back of the head

But then, if you persevere, if you keep learning and growing from each experience, you may find yourself being greeted by the endless sodas and pop tarts that you've always known to be your destiny, and it will be worth it. It's worth it!

LLLET'S GET READY TO GET READYYY!

You've decided that you want to join Team Audio. You position your mouse cursor above the "Apply Now" button, and just as you're about to click, a ghostly hand reaches out from your peripheral vision and yanks the mouse away and thwaps you mightily on the back of your head. That's me. That's my ghostly hand. Wait!

Before you press that button, peruse this handy list of things-to-consider. Don't worry, I'm gonna give you sweet deets about each.

- What do you actually want to do?
- Have you researched the company?
- How are your application materials?
- What does your online identity say about you?
- Who have you asked about the job?

You might think that the job process starts with the application. It doesn't. It starts long before that point. Recall that I used the word marathon earlier to describe this process. Not sprint or dash or even frolic, and believe you me, I love a good frolic. But no. It's a marathon.

WHAT DO YOU ACTUALLY WANT TO DO?

Hey, most of us are merely human, and sometimes we don't know what we want, and that's okay. But if you don't have an idea of what you want out of your life, then the universe might decide for you. Whose plan for your life, yours or the universe's, do you think will take your best interests into account? (Hint: Yours.)

So, even though you may not know today, or even if you think you know, I'd like to give you a couple experiments to try that might help you focus your aim.

DESCRIBE WHAT YOU WANT TO DO

Take your favorite notebook and pen and find a place where you can think. Maybe go somewhere slightly outside your element. Maybe a shady picnic table at a park, a quiet room at a nearby library, or a quiet coffee shop. I'd recommend somewhere generally free of distractions.

Once you're settled in, close your eyes and imagine yourself doing what you want to be doing at work. Don't think about companies you want to work at, the projects you'd like to work on, or the title you want to have. Those thoughts may creep in, and you can acknowledge them, but keep trying to refocus to what it is you're actually doing, actions that will make you really happy and excited. No need to rush it. Let your imagination go for a little bit.

What are you physically doing? What do your surroundings look like? There's no right or wrong, no rules about what it should or shouldn't look like, and it doesn't need to be one single thing. Maybe you picture a few different things. As these things come into focus and you catch yourself thinking something like, "Yep, that would be awesome and I want to be doing that," then jot it down in your notebook.

It might feel weird and funny writing this stuff down. Maybe what you're imagining is really grand, or maybe it's very simple. Maybe it doesn't conform to what you expect, or what you've been told to expect, of your future career. Doesn't matter. Just write it down the best you can.

After you've finished writing the things that you imagined, try to sum it up into one concise sentence. My goal is to x, y, and z.

STUDY UP

Now it's time to search the internet for those things and figure out how people are doing it. Google x, y, and z, and see what sorts of content comes up. For example, if one of your results is "I'm designing sound effects for a badass cinematic for a game I love," then google things like "cinematic sound design interview" and "game audio cinematics article" and "game audio sound design tutorial" and see what comes up. Toss it into YouTube as well. Look at publicly available GDC talks. Scour Twitter and Facebook. Let yourself go down the rabbit hole and challenge yourself to find and consume as much information as you can stomach on each of your goals.

Start a document to keep track of these articles and videos. Document your search terms. Pretend like you're in school and jot down notes as you're reading or watching the content. Copy/paste links to all of the relevant materials that you find on the internet, and make bullet lists below them with your notes. Make notes about techniques that you'd like to try on your own sometime, or interesting tools that are being discussed, or people in the industry that are doing great work that you admire. Google those techniques, tools, and people. Keep going.

WRITE DOWN A STRATEGY

Hopefully by this point, you have some ideas about how you get from who you are today to become who you want to be. You've watched a bunch of videos, read a bunch of articles, and by now you're probably inspired to get going! That's great! But if you just start doing stuff, you may not do the right stuff. There are only so many hours in the day and you want to spend them wisely.

Your next task is to write down some steps that can take you where you want to go. Imagine a timeline with "who I am today" as the starting point and "who I want to be" as the ending point. What are all the steps in between that would move your starting dot towards your ending dot?

You may or may not know what those dots should be. Maybe by the end of this article, you'll have a better idea. Regardless, just do your best and write it all down. This is all an exercise and none of it is chiseled in stone. Wait, you've been chiseling this into stone tablets? Bold move! Pen and paper next time.

Once you've got some steps in there, do a cut session. For each step, ask yourself if you truly believe that this step is critical to getting to where you want to be. If it's not, write it again somewhere else under a different heading (e.g. wishlist, stretch, cut, save for later, etc.) and then

cross it out. You should cut at least one thing, if not more, so that you're left with what you believe are the essential steps that you need to take.

Again, you may not know what the steps are. That's okay. Think about the content you've been consuming and give it your best guess. Keep track of everything so you can evaluate it again later.

GET FEEDBACK FROM SOMEONE

This one will be tough for some people, but it can be immensely helpful and save you time.

Now that you have some plans and ideas on how you get from where you are today to where you want to be, it's time to bounce it off someone you trust.

You want to share your strategy with someone that has already achieved something close to what you ultimately want to do. I know people struggle with this. If you're an aspiring developer and you haven't worked in the industry yet, you may not know how to engage with someone that's already doing it. If you've been in the industry for a little while, you may feel vulnerable sharing this sort of personal stuff. But it's important to get some outside perspective from someone that's been doing it already.

Here are the questions you want to ask your special friend:

- Do these steps seem like valid steps to get where I want to go?
- Are any of the steps frivolous or skippable?
- Am I missing any key steps?

If you're in school and you don't know anyone employed in your field of choice, start with a teacher that you trust and respect. Show them your summary statement and your timeline of steps and ask the questions above. Then ask them if they know anyone that is already doing the thing you want to do. If they do, ask if they'd be willing to pass your plan along for review.

You can also engage in social media. Ask on Twitter or Facebook or whatever forums you're active on if there is anyone that would be willing to take a few minutes to give feedback on a high-level career plan. It should only take a few minutes and would help a lot. Even though you're not asking for much, don't expect a response right away.

If you don't get any help after a week or so, try again, but this time just pick one step that you'd really like to start on, and ask the question to someone or on social media. If one of your steps is "try to reproduce a sound effect I really love from scratch," then go to your social media outlet of choice (in the following example, Twitter) and ask something like, "I'm thinking of trying to reproduce a sound I love from scratch. Seem like a worthy effort to prepare for a #gameaudio job?" or what have you.

And if all else fails, reach out to me! The first thing I'm going to ask you is what you've already done to try to get someone to review your plan, and if it's nothing/nobody, then expect me to tell you to go do something/anything first. But if all else fails, you can always ask me. I'm easy to find out there on the internet and I always want to help as best I can. Give me a week or so between follow up emails.

ALWAYS KEEP MOVING

These steps are designed to mirror good practices in game development, and just like you can't wait around forever when working on a game, you don't want your career to be frozen in time while waiting on something you can't necessarily control. So, even if you haven't received feedback on your plan, keep moving forward! Go start the first thing on your timeline.

RESEARCH EACH COMPANY

Before you apply for any jobs, you want to build as deep an understanding of the companies that you're interested in as possible. Trust me, you need to do your homework. If I had a nickel for every time I thought I was applying at a game dev but it turned out to be a slaughterhouse, I'd have fifteen cents.

If you don't have a top ten of companies you'd like to work for, make that list right now. Go ahead, I'll wait for you here... Awesome! Nice list! Aiming high, I see! Good on ya.

There are three primary aspects of a company that I typically look into: The history, the team, and the products.

Depending on the company, finding the history might be as straightforward as reading a Wikipedia page, or it may take a little more detective work than that. Ultimately, you just want to gather as much about the company history as possible so that you are conversant if it comes up. Also, it can expose red flags. If the company has a history of layoffs or lawsuits, that may change the priority of applying there.

In the case of a start-up or a developer that doesn't have much of a history yet, your best bet is to focus on the team.

The team is the most important thing to research. The people are going to make or break your experience. Google, LinkedIn, and social media can usually help you get a sense of the people you might be working with. You will also want to find out as much information about the company's leadership as possible. With any luck, this research will get you more excited, but if you're having doubts when researching the team, that should be a serious red flag.

Finally, research the products that the company has worked on. If you haven't played any of the games, ideally you'd make some time to play them, but at a minimum you should take some time to read about them and watch some YouTube videos. If it turns out that the games don't appeal to you, that's another potential red flag, but if the company and team are great then you may be willing to make a concession here.

During this company research, I like to take notes and jot down questions that I would ask during a potential interview. It's not good to come up blank when an interviewer asks if you have questions, because if you're taking it seriously, you will. Repeat! You should prepare some questions if you're serious about the job.

If you're researching the company and you don't have questions, you might ask yourself if you're truly interested in working there. It doesn't mean you shouldn't apply, but it may be a sign that it's a lower priority than somewhere else that is more exciting to you.

YOUR APPLICATION MATERIALS

Okay, so, this one's a doozy.

Application materials, and specifically demo reels, are probably the most written-about and discussed aspect of this process. And for good reason! It's one of the most important bits.

The good news is that you'll be in decent shape if you've done the prep work that we've been talking about. You should have some idea of what you want out of your career, you'll have a strategy to build up your skills, and you'll have researched the companies that you're aiming for. That's a great starting point to get going on your application materials.

I'm going to break this into three sections. First, the resume. Second, the cover letter. And third, the demo reel. All of them are important in that any of them could grab someone's interest or screw you over, so I'll cover each.

But before that, a quick note about HR and hiring processes.

WHO SEES YOUR STUFF?

Another important reason to research a company is to try to get an understanding into who will be reviewing your application materials. There are a few ways to get a sense of who will be checking you out.

First, at a high level, you can make some guesses. If you're applying at an established AAA game developer, it's more likely that first contact with your application will be made by a Recruiter or someone from HR (i.e. not the hiring manager). They may filter out candidates that are missing non-negotiable requirements for the position. In these cases, it can be very important to align your resume with the job listing to make sure you end up in the right pile.

If you're applying at an independent company, it can be a little less clear. Sometimes there's a Recruiter, other times your materials go straight to the hiring manager(s), other times it may go to a council of stakeholders. In the case of indies, sometimes the posting will say what happens with your stuff, and other times you can figure it out by poking around on LinkedIn or social media.

Ultimately your audience is the hiring manager and team you're trying to join, but knowing who's going to be passing things along may give you a slight edge in how you think about your application. Making a good impression on a recruiter can have long-lasting benefits for your entire career!

YOUR RESUME

The Eye Tracking Study

The first thing I always tell people regarding resumes is to read this study from beginning to end:

Keeping An Eye On Recruiter Behavior

There are a couple things I like to point out about this study.

First, recruiters and hiring managers are not spending a lot of time reading your resume. Generally, they are scanning resumes very quickly. And they tend to scan a resume in a specific way, looking for specific data.

Second, they are looking at these data points: Your name, current and previous companies and titles, education, and keywords related to the job posting.

This is why I always encourage people to go for simplicity and readability in their resumes. Yes, we are in a creative industry and sometimes a clever, creative resume might be the right choice, but I've never heard of a simple, readable resume being a problem. Not even once!

Besides, you can express your creativity with your deeper online identity, like your website, demo reel, online persona, etc.

Aligning to the Job Posting

Since we know that recruiters and hiring managers are scanning your resume quickly, try to align the content of your resume to the job posting.

One approach is to copy the job posting into a local document and start marking it up. Read the bullet points in the posting and see if there are any words that are repeated. Highlight those. Those might be good words to use in your resume. Under each responsibility and qualification, make a note about something relevant that you've done.

If you don't have directly applicable experience, take the experience you do have and try to frame it in the context of the job posting. Look at it as a minigame. How can you take something you've done and make it relevant to something you haven't done? That's pretty much what we do in our jobs on a daily basis. We take what we know and apply it to what we don't know.

It's okay if you're making an analogy that is a bit of a stretch, but never stretch the truth. You should always be honest with your experience! Otherwise you're setting landmines in your own career path and you never know when one will detonate in your face.

The Left Edge

Check out the left edge of your resume. If the eye travels down the left edge, what's the message? This is a trick that can help make sure you're properly representing who you are.

Use strong action verbs at the beginning of your bullet points. Instead of these bullets:

- Sound design and implementation using Unity
- Custom field recording and related editorial
- Bug fixing and playback optimization

Consider these:

- Designed and implemented sounds using Unity
- Recorded and edited custom field recordings
- Optimized playback and fixed bugs

In this way, as the eye travels down the left edge of the resume, you can end up with a list of what it is that you actually do. Instead of the left edge reading Sound, Custom, Bug, it now reads Designed, Recorded, Optimized. The latter sounds more like what you'd actually be doing.

A Few Things You Don't Need

Here are some things you really don't need on your resume that might be making it more noisy and cluttered, or even playing against you due to subconscious biases.

You don't need to include your picture. It doesn't seem like your appearance should ever be relevant to your job hunt. We'd all like to think that hiring managers are impervious to pointless data. However, it's no secret that physical characteristics can create biases in others. We're basically hardwired as humans to judge appearances. Skip it!

You don't need to include your full address. If you think that your physical location is relevant to the job you'll be doing for whatever reason, consider limiting this information to your city and state. For example, you may want to signal to an employer that relocation will be required. In that case, a city and state should be enough.

You don't need to include unrelated work experience. If you worked in an unrelated field (e.g. retail, customer service, call center, etc.), then consider first whether or not you can include experience from that job that is directly relevant to the work you would be doing. Only add it if there is a compelling reason to add it, otherwise it's just reducing readability.

Resist Fluff

If you find yourself staring at a blank page after you remove extraneous information, resist the urge to add fluff. Resist! Maybe you're not ready yet. That's okay! Know why? Because you have a strategy.

Go back to your strategy. What can you do from your strategy that will give you relevant stuff to add to your resume?

Either way, the fluff is really not necessary and it often makes a candidate feel like they're even less prepared than a resume that is mostly empty but contains only relevant content.

Show Someone and Experiment

Always have someone proofread your resume. Ask them to point out any clunky phrasing or spelling errors. Ask them if it flows well and is easy to read. After they're done, tell them to turn away from it and ask them what they remember.

Make a backup of your resume and try out their advice. You always have your last one to fall back on, but experiment with changes that people suggest. Move sections around and try rephrasing things. Look at it like an experiment and try to have some fun with it.

YOUR COVER LETTER

Cover letters are an odd thing. Ask hiring managers whether or not cover letters matter and the responses are all over the place. Some consider them crucial. They'll print them and put them in frames and hang them in their cover letter shrine. Others think they're pointless. They print them out and shred them and then throw the shredded scraps into a chemical fire, cackling maniacally, green flames dancing in the reflections of their eyes.

The key is that some people really care about cover letters and you can't be sure whether or not they will matter. So, your best bet is to assume they matter and to make them as good as your resume and other materials.

How To Start Your Cover Letter

First of all, don't get specific with your salutation. If you met someone at a convention or get together, you should definitely try to chat with them before you apply, but don't direct your cover letter to them. Here's a reliable salutation you can use for every cover letter you write:

To the hiring managers at company:

It might feel a little impersonal, but it's professional and doesn't make any assumptions. It doesn't matter who reads this salutation, they're probably included in the "hiring managers" group.

For the first paragraph, you can just say who you are, why you're applying for this specific job at this specific company, and why your previous experiences qualify you for the position. It shouldn't be super long. Maybe three or four sentences.

Tell Some Stories

A common approach I've seen with cover letters is to basically restate the resume. People will talk about the responsibilities they had at each job. This, to me, is a great way to make a cover letter redundant and boring. We already get this information in the resume. We don't need it again in a different format.

Consider instead that the cover letter may be your chance to make a compelling case for not just what you've done, but for who you are. It's difficult, and maybe even ill-advised, to infuse a resume with personality or emotion, but cover letters are a great place to be authentic and let the real you shine through.

For the next few paragraphs, tell some stories about what you did at your previous jobs or in school. Talk about a time when you made a difference, and how it felt, and what you learned. Talk

about specific moments where you shined brightest, how your actions positively impacted others, and how you plan to build on those successes at the new company. You're looking for stand-out moments that you're really proud of.

Don't be afraid to frame your experiences as miniature plots, each with a call to action, crisis, climax, and denouement. The idea is to paint a picture of who you are as a person in a way that your resume can't.

A Final Commitment

I've seen people end cover letters with statements ranging from overconfident bargains, almost like they don't even really want the job, to downright desperate pleas to be given a chance. But where is this letter ultimately leading?

You've stated who you are and why you belong in this position. You've told some memorable stories that demonstrate the kind of person you are. By this point, hopefully the person reviewing your resume is impressed and is seriously considering you as a contender for this job. This is why I usually recommend punctuating the entire letter with a commitment.

The message is simple: I'm ready to commit all of my best qualities and all of my experience toward making your company, your team, and your products the absolute best that they can be. Don't just copy/paste that. Convey the sentiment in a way that is authentic to who you are.

Then, sign off simply like this:

Thanks,

Your Name

YOUR DEMO REEL

Fortunately, we have [Reel Talk](#), hosted by Kevin Regamey and Matthew Marteinsson. Here you can view hours and hours of game audio demo reel critiques, which is what you must do. Watching several episodes of this show will give you a much deeper understanding of what's expected and what people are doing than I can cover in this section.

But since you're here and since I love you, I'll say a few things on the subject!

First thing's first, if you're going for a position with Designer or Artist in the title, you're going to need a demo reel and it needs to be good. Not having one is a dealbreaker. You won't get a job in game audio without being able to demonstrate what you can do.

If you've already worked on a game, then use footage from that game. Game jam games count, which is why it's important that you do a good job on any project you contribute to. Game modding counts, too. Student projects also count, but just be advised that hiring managers see lots of the same student projects, so you're going to need to stand out even more.

If you haven't worked on a game yet, then start working on a game. It doesn't really matter how big or how small. There are forums and other places on social media where you can find teams that are just now forming up or that are already in progress. Be aware that even for game jam games

and game mods there will still be a desire to see a demonstration of your work. You just want some actual game development experience, and you may make some friends that can help you find more work later.

If you're super ambitious, you could also try making your own game using an engine like GameMaker Studio 2, Unreal, or Unity. There are lots of engines. This is hard mode, but depending on who you are, it might also be fun mode, and you will learn LOTS of important and relevant skills. If you go this route, my advice would be to make something simple that highlights your audio.

While you're figuring out how to get involved in a game, also figure out other ways to demonstrate your skills (see Reel Talk).

No matter what, keep practicing. Keep pushing yourself. Keep creating new things. This can be really hard. After a draining day at work or school, the question we face on a daily basis is whether we choose to rest or we choose the toil of creating art. It's easy to choose to rest. We need rest! But if we want to improve, then we have to choose the toil of creating art. We have to practice as much as we can.

Go watch Reel Talk.

YOUR ONLINE IDENTITY

It's not uncommon for employers to do a BrainLink Persona Scan on each employee. Sometimes they even do a DNA parse! Oh wait, I thought I was writing this in 2027. What is this, 2017? Sorry about that. It's not uncommon for employers to do a search for you on... the Googles?!

Many hiring managers use the Internet to research promising candidates. Again, we would love for all hiring managers to be impervious to bias, but is that realistic? We're talking about humans here. Imperfect, biased humans.

It's up to each of us to cultivate an online identity that is curated to the careers that we want. Whether we think it's right or wrong is irrelevant. Our online identities become our personal brands, as the general public's window into who we are and what we represent, and it's our own sole responsibility to make that image compatible with our goals.

This doesn't mean that you can't be yourself and have opinions. You can be a person. But it doesn't hurt to consider what potential employers will think when they search for you online. This is part of your strategy just like having a plan and great application materials.

What happens when you search for yourself online? Is there anything that comes up that you wouldn't want your future employer to see? What does your web page look like? Your LinkedIn profile? Your social media? Are your skills and interests properly represented? Is everything up-to-date? Everything spelled properly? Everything accurate?

You get the idea. This is your life, your identity, and your career. How you appear online should be under your control. Make the time to keep your brand strong and cohesive with your vision of

yourself. The line of separation between personal and professional identities is growing thinner by the day and it would be a shame if it came between you and your dream job.

ASK PEOPLE ABOUT THE JOB

Before you apply for the job, talk to a couple people about it. If you don't have any friends that are already employed in game audio, then this might be a great way to make some connections. People are typically willing to give their opinion about a company and a team, especially if they have connections there, and if you play your cards right, it may even result in an introduction to someone that works there.

You can also run the job description by a few people that you trust, whether they're teachers or friends that work in related industries. Ask them if they think you're a good fit for the position. Ask them what areas they think you might be coming up short, and if they have any ideas about how you can compensate in your application materials. Ask them if they know anyone else that might be good to reach out to for some feedback about the position.

The goal of this step is to get that last spoonful of context before applying to the job. Think of all of this preparation as sharpening your sword before going into battle. You want to have an edge that shines when you go into this process. Just like all the other humans, you have blind spots, and the thing about blind spots is that it usually takes someone else to help you see them.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

All of this prep work is an attempt to help you face one simple fact: The sheer number of people applying for game audio jobs is staggering, and if you want to have a shot at joining the ranks, you need to be prepared before you apply.

There's a double-edge to the fact that you're not alone. On the one hand, there are a lot of people out there who are sharing your struggle. On the other, each of these people are toiling day in and day out to apply for the same few jobs that you're applying for.

Game developers often have their pick of dozens or even hundreds of applicants, and there are more people interested in game development than ever before, many of whom are getting formal education in their fields. Experienced individuals that are already working in game development also like to move around, and I've seen people applying for positions that they're overqualified for because they admire the company or the products. These all contribute toward allowing studios to have a very high standard for hiring.

My hope is that by giving you this advice on how to prepare, you'll be able to compete for these positions.

MAKING FRIENDS

I was about to title this section “Networking,” but I’m honestly kinda sick of that term. I don’t know about you, but when I hear the term networking, I conjure up images of people in fancy clothes mingling in a beige convention space, repeating their “what they do” line over and over, handing out business cards, performing their best fake laugh, basically marketing themselves into a better job.

And you know what? That totally happens. People totally do that, and maybe it can work sometimes. But in my experience, there’s a better path, especially for people who feel like they’re covered in a thin veneer of slime after an event like that. It’s called making friends!

There’s always a sense of urgency when you’re trying to find a job, whether you’re fresh out of school and need to start paying off your debts or you’re feeling stuck in your current job. It’s why when I go to game dev events, I’m inevitably cornered by a poor, desperate soul that assails me with endless questions that all amount to “can you get me a job?” And I get it! I really do. Which is why I flex my patience and empathy muscles as hard as humanly possible in these situations.

That said, I can’t understate the value of patience and of playing the long game. Remember, this is a marathon, not a mad dash to the finish.

One of the absolute best pieces of advice that I have been given and that I can pass along to you right now is to make friends. Not business associates. Not acquaintances that can be leveraged later. But real, honest-to-goodness friends.

THE GARDEN METAPHOR

Imagine your career is a garden, and each person you meet is a seed. When you shake their hand and introduce yourself, you’re pressing the seed into the ground. When you spend an evening with them, just being yourself and having fun, you’re covering the seed with dirt. When you say bye to them at the end of the night, you’re sprinkling a little water on the dirt.

Just like in an actual garden, you’re not going to have fruit the next day. Not even close! It usually takes a season before you see fruit, and sometimes you don’t get fruit that season, so you need to wait until next year. I think these timelines are pretty accurate for making friends and having those friendships bear fruit, too.

Each time you have a positive interaction with someone, you’re sprinkling some water on the seed, but remember that there’s a balance. You don’t want the soil to go dry, but you also don’t want to overwater, and each plant-person is different. Some plant-people just need a little water, and others will take as much water as they can get. Sometimes you figure this ratio out on your own through careful experimentation, and other times you talk to other plant-people to figure out what the right amount is.

The important bit is that there are REAL PLANT-PEOPLE OUT THERE OH YE GADS RUN FOR YOUR LIVES. Just kidding. They’re not very fast.

HOW TO NOT BE ANNOYING

Let's call a spade a spade (really harvesting this garden metaphor -- or is that a card metaphor? I don't know...). It's pretty easy to be annoying when meeting new people that could be valuable for your career. I'm going to give you three rules of thumb.

- Don't just talk about yourself.

It's hard to do because you want to let people know how great and employable you are, but it turns people off and can make you seem desperate and insecure. Wait for someone to ask you to talk about yourself before talking about yourself. And when you do start opening up about yourself, keep it to a few sentences and then end on a question about the other person. Good segue into the next tip.

- Ask people questions and really listen to them.

People love to talk about themselves and their interests. Get them going and then listen to what they're saying. Try not to think about what you want to say next, but instead, actively listen to them and absorb the information. Take some mental notes about stuff you have in common, and then ask follow-up questions about those things. In this way, you can steer the conversation to topics that you can contribute to.

- No one-upping.

Want to know a great way to completely tank a positive interaction? One-up someone's story. Most sincere, healthy friendships are less about competition and more about collaboration. Get excited about someone's success, and instead of telling a comparable story in response to theirs, ask more questions so that you can get a deeper understanding of their story. Don't worry, your story matters, too! And you'll get a chance to tell it someday. Just not right now. Even if it's absurdly cool. You don't want to be the one that's stealing the thunder from someone else.

IT'S NOT WHO YOU KNOW

All of this is to recalibrate your understanding of the old adage, "It's not what you know, but who you know." This is too simplified. I'd like to propose a couple alternatives to this saying.

- **"It's not who you know, but who trusts you."**

I know lots of people, but there are very few of them who I'd stake my reputation on vouching for them. Game development is becoming a pretty big industry, but our specialized fields tend to be very small, tightly-knit groups. You could very easily play six degrees of separation between almost

any game audio developer. Most of us who are gainfully employed know that our reputations are our livelihoods, and we aren't going to meaningfully vouch for an acquaintance. It's about trust.

- "It's not who you know, but who likes to be around you."

One of the greatest predictors of success that I've seen comes down to likeability. There have been studies that suggest you're more likely to be successful by being likeable than by being competent. This doesn't give anyone license to not be great at what they do, that's still very important, but being likeable goes a really long way in a demanding industry like game development. After all, we always want to have a good day, especially when the going gets tough.

- "It's not who you know, but who knows you."

Your reputation is extremely important in this industry, and when your reputation precedes you, the momentum will be there even before you apply. This is what it's important to curate your online identity and to become an active contributor to the game dev community. Game developers live and die by their reputation. When someone asks about you, what do you want them to say? What can you do today that will cause people to say what you want them to say about you? Think about it and make it part of your strategy.

FINDING A MENTOR

On the topic of knowing people and relationships, possibly the most important relationships you will have in your career will be with mentors.

A mentor is someone that takes a personal interest in you and your career. They are someone that trusts you, and someone that you trust. Someone that you can confide in without judgment. Someone that will hold you accountable to make progress toward your goals. They may have more experience, but the relationship is different than teacher-to-student or supervisor-to-report. It should feel more like peers.

Finding a mentor can be a challenge. It takes **humility** and **vulnerability** to create an **honest relationship** with someone that can guide you. It can take *months* or even *years* to build the trust and willingness required for someone to invest their limited time into you. **But it's worth it.** Mentors accelerate your growth and help you navigate the trickiest times.

My best advice for finding a mentor is to **be observant**. Pay close attention to the people around you. Watch for people who seem to consistently perform at the top of their game, who are central hubs of communication, and who have great reputations. Find people that you want to be like, people who you want to associate with, and figure out ways to have some good interactions with them.

Examples of good interactions with potential mentors include asking for advice, seeking their feedback on works in progress, and bouncing ideas off them in a one-on-one setting. These interactions should all feel natural and authentic. You'll have to be observant and respectful of their time, and you'll have to show that you're taking their input to heart.

It may not always be easy to hear advice from a mentor since honesty doesn't always feel good. After all, a true friend tells you when you have a booger hanging out of your nose. It's an uncomfortable thing to hear, but it prevents an entire day of embarrassment. You'll have to pay attention and judge over time whether someone is giving you solid advice. When someone gives you advice that consistently makes you better, you may have found a potential mentor.

If you work in game audio, you can apply for a mentorship at the [Audio Mentoring Project](#), but if that doesn't suit your fancy, start thinking about the positive role models in your life. You may already have mentors and either don't realize it or just need to nudge things along.

By the way, you don't need to make things formal by asking someone, "Will you be my mentor?" It shouldn't feel forced and there's no reason to label the relationship. Doing this can change the nature of the relationship. Later, it's nice to acknowledge that someone has been a pivotal mentor in your career, but the mentorship can happen naturally.

NEPOTISM VS. SMART HIRING

One of the industry's not-so-secret secrets is that lots of jobs never get posted. They exist, but you'd never know about them. Why? Because the hiring manager probably already has a short list of people they want to work with, and if those don't pan out, they reach out to their most trusted colleagues to see if they know anyone.

Some people see this as nepotism, and I'm not gonna lie, nepotism exists in this industry. It's not unheard of for hiring managers to give jobs to their friends and family, even when they're not qualified. This is a heinous practice when the recruits are not qualified. It can tank a team and tank a product. I'm talking to you, hiring managers: **Stop that!**

That said, I'd like to explain why this happens and how it can be a good thing.

When you've been working for a while and have closely observed the hiring cycle, you tend to come to the conclusion that you don't really know if a person is going to work out based on their application and interview. You really just don't know who you're getting until they've been there for a little while. This is part of why you'll see lots of contract positions out there, and why even full time positions are often started with a trial period of a few months where the employer can eject them from the building without cause.

Because of this ambiguity, and because there are so many applicants that are qualified on paper, and because each position tends to be so vitally important, and because we need to keep costs down and rarely have wiggle room for hiring, we like to either directly solicit people we know and trust, or we reach out to those we trust for guidance. This can often lead to better hiring decisions, both for the employer and the employee.

This all comes back around to your identity and your interactions. **Every single interaction you have with every single person you come across matters.** When I have a position open up, and when I reach out to someone that I trust, you want your name to be on the list of people they suggest.

THE BLACK HOLE

I want to end this article by addressing one of the most painful aspects of the game dev job hunt, and that is what I refer to as The Black Hole.

The Black Hole is when you've applied to a position and you hear nothing back. This has been a problem in game development since I've been a part of it. It has caused enormous amounts of heartburn and emotional anguish for applicants for decades. And just like a real black hole, it SUCKS.

I'm not excusing this phenomenon, but maybe understanding it better, it will cause you less pain.

The number one cause of The Black Hole is due to **priorities**. It's not always possible to prioritize hiring even when the position has been publicly posted. This seems crazy, but think about it!

Why would a team post a position? Probably because they're short staffed and need help, right? What are the traits of a team that is short staffed and needs help? A few that come to mind: They're overloaded, they're falling behind in their work, and they aren't able to prioritize all the important stuff they need to do (i.e. hiring).

The day-to-day work doesn't stop when hiring for a position, and hiring managers are often in some of the most demanding jobs that exist in game development. They are managers, directors, leads, and senior contributors. These positions often come with the most accountability and responsibility, and the engine of game development churns ever-forward whether an applicant is sitting in the queue or not.

Imagine you're headed toward a really important deadline, one where failure is not an option, and you're guiding your team on a daily basis toward executing on a plan that has very little room for error, and you have a daily deluge of questions and tasks coming from executives above you as well as reports below you. Everyone is depending on you, and you can't let anyone down. Then BAM, the Executive Producer just found a showstopping bug that your department is responsible for! It needs to be fixed right away! Also you just got your 34th application for that job you posted.

What do you do? Well, I can tell you what you don't do, which is stop everything and reply to the applicant.

I know it sucks. That's why I call it The Black Hole. And by the way, I believe that hiring is the absolute top priority of any organization. I mean I'm writing this article, aren't I? But that doesn't mean that it's always the most urgent. And even when it is the most urgent, that doesn't relieve the hiring manager of their other responsibilities.

To you, dear applicant, you need to be patient. There's a lot to do in the meantime. Keep practicing your craft, keep making friends, keep polishing your application materials, keep building yourself up. Go back to your strategy from before. You can even start it all over from square one.

To you, dear hiring manager, you need to be communicative. Don't leave these poor applicants hanging for weeks on end. Even a message saying that they're still in the running but that there are lots of applicants to get through is better than dead air. Remember, when applying for a job, a

minute feels like an hour, an hour feels like a day, a day feels like a week, and a week feels like 698574398674 years. We need to be compassionate. Reject people quickly, and **try not to keep potential hires in the dark for more than a week.**

ONE LAST THING

I just want to express some gratitude to all the people that I've gotten to know over the years that have given me so much to think about when it comes to hiring. Thank you to all the people that asked me for advice over the years and to the educators and working professionals that have given me opportunities to interact with people that are striving toward being part of this awesome industry. Most of all, thank you to the people that have helped me along the way and have given me sage wisdom over the years when it comes to my own career.

I know there's a lot that I haven't covered here, but I'm willing to talk more about this stuff. I'm pretty easy to get in touch with, so reach out. Just like other hiring managers, I've got a lot of competing priorities, but I'll help if I can.

So, get in touch! Connections! Always connections.

Q&A's:

Harold Pichol - Hey Ariel! Thank you for the article that sums it all. A few questions:

- How do you (in general but also in your case) make the jump from game audio to game production? Is there anything that producers are looking for that game audio designers particularly have?
- About reels. The output quality varies quite a lot and it's connected to time and expensive assets like libraries, gear etc. Say I make a reel in which I sound design my own pocket recorder recordings, it will obviously not be the greatest quality but would still show off some skills and dedication. Is it going to be enough or do I really need to buy the expensive stuff? How do you make sure a game audio reel in 2017 puts a smile on the face of the hiring person?
- Lastly, with games being more and more services, how do you convince a team that you will be a great sound designer for that great game when there are so many great games out there and that you didn't play that one much if at all (platform you don't own, not enough time etc)?

Thank you!

ANSWER: Hi Harold! Good to hear from you!

I've had an article in the makes regarding the transition from game audio to game production for a while.

The short version is that my path to Producer was through a Studio Audio Director position, which gave me experience in managing direct reports, managing and executing budgets, and wrangling schedules and resource allocation across multiple projects and sites.

Game audio also connects to just about every system and discipline in the game, so we have opportunities to learn how things are done across a wide spectrum. That's very valuable for a Producer.

For your reel, you don't need to buy expensive stuff. There are lots of a la carte sound libraries on the Internet where you can be more strategic about spending for your demo.

Instead of spending \$400 for a comprehensive weapons library, you can spend \$40 to buy exactly the weapon sounds you need. Then you can layer your own recordings and use effects to make those sounds your own.

You can also find excellent free, CC0 recordings of just about anything if you are truly determined to dig for them!

To see examples of demo reels that put a smile on someone's face, watch a bunch of episodes of Reel Talk by Power Up Audio. The link is in the article.

If I'm understanding your last question correctly, most of the time you don't need to be an avid player of the specific game or franchise that you're trying to work on, though it can be helpful. At the very least, you want to be well versed with the products. If you can't play the game, go consume lots of gameplay videos on YouTube, read articles and reviews about the games, and look for interviews with the people that worked on it.

As far as convincing people that you'd be a great sound designer for that project, it's usually about showing them through your demo reel and related experience. **People want proof.** Make demos using similar games in the genre that you would do differently (just **be cautious about doing redesigns on games known for excellence in audio**). Try to join a game jam or hobby project that is in the vein of the company you'd like to work for.

It can take **a long time**. I **worked audio contracts for 11 years** before becoming a regular full-time employee. I had to pick up all kinds of odd jobs to make ends meet during those years. And that's okay. Every path is different, just persist and keep practicing!

Hope this helps. Let me know if you have more questions!

SOURCE: https://www.gamasutra.com/blogs/ArielGross/20170626/300505/Yet_Another_Game_Audio_Hiring_Article.php

4 EFFECTIVE WAYS TO BREAK INTO GAME AUDIO - By Adam T. Croft

Originally posted on the [A Sound Effect Blog](#), and reprinted here with permission

Hi friend, if you don't already know me – my name is Adam Croft (no relation to *Tomb Raider*, but at this point it would be more fun if there were) – and I have the pleasure of writing to you because Asbjorn is super awesome and asked me to. I *might* be worth listening to (up to you, of course) as I've worked in various forms of audio for the last decade, and helped bring titles to life for companies like Bungie, Turn 10 Studios, 343 Industries, etc.

You and I are about to have some fun – especially if you're interested in breaking into game audio for the first time. I know there are a bunch of you who think it would be *super awesome* to design sounds for games (spoiler alert: working on games *is* fun) but are frustrated because there's not exactly a clear step-by-step roadmap to get there.

If you're scared, frustrated, confused, lost, have huge dreams – but know deep down that you're talented and just need an opportunity – I have great news for you that doesn't involve browsing Reddit for advice at 1am... You've already got the roadmap you need.

No, seriously, I'm not kidding. You do! So, let's dive in – I'm going to tell you a bunch of stuff you've already heard before, but you **definitely** need to hear again.

Oh, and if what I've got to share with you below hits you like a ton of bricks – I elaborate in-depth on all of it in my book [Quit Aspiring](#).

Do the Work

At one point in my life, and career, I had a hard time finishing any project I was super personally passionate about.

I could go to work and help bring the creative visions of others to life – no problem. But my own ambitions? Nearly impossible.

I'm sure you know this story well – start one project, get a week (or maybe 2 days) in, hit a small wall, become enraptured by a new idea, repeat the cycle – you never get anything *done*.

Now I'm going to break your heart, because I know you'd like a sweet tip and a shortcut to just fix that forever. But, **there isn't one**.

I *do* have a method in my book that I use to defeat this cycle in myself – but my method *or any other method* all eventually end up at the same place:

Creative work is still work, and you need to do the work.

We imagine, because we're passionate about our acoustical arts, that they're always supposed to be fun. We imagine something like “you'll never work a day in your life if you love what you do”.

While that's *kind of* true – none of us envies a janitor and we have way more fun than that job – there's still parts of our work that are just downright taxing.

Some days your ears are just off, and you're not hearing things right.

Some days you have to slog through data management and metadata.

Some days none of your software is working properly.

Some days you run into unexpected bugs, or just can't create what you're hearing in your head.

Some days, even, you disagree with your boss on what something should sound like and you need to do what *they* want.

None of those things are particularly easy, right?

But I know of no way to get “around” those hard parts. You focus, and you get them done. Everyone else arounds you loves you more the less you complain about them, too.

So, you can go browse the internet for plenty of “tactics” to make this part easier, you and I both know there are plenty. But it simply comes down to figuring out how you tick, how to make yourself focus, and how *you* get to the finish line.

Then do it.

That demo reel, demo game, website, resume, and cover letter aren't going to build themselves.

Nobody is going to do it for you, and nobody's going to hand you the opportunity – everyone else is too busy with their own things!

So, it comes down to you, and doing the work.

Ship your stuff

Once you've convinced yourself to sit down and work for an extended period of time (I'm talking consistency over months, not a few days) then you're going to run into your next problem – finishing.

This time I don't mean preventing yourself from getting distracted. I mean deciding on where to stop and committing to it. It could be (and should be) a specific date, but it also could be a point where you reach “feature complete”.

The problem *everyone* has is that they're too vague about what “finished” means.

You might need to complete 3 more sounds, but then you'll find 3 more that you want to do to make your finished product that much better.

But we both know you'll find 1 or 2 more after that.

This is your own personal version of “development hell” – where it never ends until you say it does.

There are a *bunch* of things wrapped up in this – but most of them revolve around ego and fear. You absolutely want to make the best impression upon the world that you can, and you're freaked out that you won't. You've put so much effort into this thing that you don't want to ship and be let down when nobody cares, or somebody hates it.

So, you never ship. It's an avoidance mechanism.

First of all – ouch – look at what you're doing to yourself! You're so scared about your incompetence that you're more willing to bury your work than share it! That's a huge, huge bummer.

Second – you and I both know reality here. Unless you ship your work, nothing is ever going to happen.

The second most important thing after doing the work, is shipping the work you've done.

If you're working on a demo reel, or job application – you have 0% chance of getting hired if you don't ship those things off, right?

I could state the obvious here and repeat “**so get it done.**” But I actually have something else that can help you here.

There's a really easy way to get beyond your fear of shipping out your work and making sure it's 100% perfect.

Ship more work – ship all the time, as often as possible.

Another problem that a lot of you run into is simple idolatry of your work and ego. You work on one piece for so long, with so much effort, that a large amount of your identity as a creative individual is wrapped up in your project and its hopeful success.

What I mean by that is, if it fails – you feel like you are a failure.

That could not be any further from the truth, but I understand where you're coming from and I've felt that way before.

The easiest way I've found to prevent that is by *radically* increasing the amount of content you put out.

For example, I ship blogs at my website every week. Sometimes I get asked to create additional content by others (like what you're reading right now). I've written 2 books, created multiple pieces of software, and worked on *ten years* of audio projects.

If you create so much that no one piece can define you and your story, your ego and identity become less fragile and are not a problem.

You might hear things like “you need to put in 10,000 hours to master a skill” or “you need to fail and suck in order to get good at something”. You can distill all of that down into simply “ship more and worry less about what you're shipping”.

Believe me, you're smart and you'll *know* when something you're shipping requires a little bit more time and effort to get right.

But your demo reel is not that project. It's simply a showcase of where you're at right now, and if you're not great – you still need to finish it and then work to make it better.

Stand Out

“Be unique!”

“You have to stand out in a crowded market!”

“It’s so hard to get work if you’re not doing something special!”

You’re going to hear things like this when you decide to dive into game audio. Here’s the response you’re going to have:

“**Well, HOW THE *#(\$)! AM I SUPPOSED TO DO THAT?!**”

The emphasis with all-caps is mine. You’ll identify with it if you’ve been at this a while and gotten nowhere – you’re probably fairly frustrated.

Here’s what’s funny to me about this in regard to sound designers.

Almost all of you crazies think of the *exact same thing* to do when it comes to being unique.

The trendy thing today, as of this writing? Learning implementation. So many young hopeful sound designers come to me and ask about programming and implementation because they’re worried they can’t get a job on their sound design alone. You’re all convinced that if you know how to use middleware well and/or code – you’ll be an instant-hire.

So, let me straighten this out – learning middleware *is* great for you to know. If you’re hoping to be a sound designer, forget about coding.

But none of those things makes you super unique or special, especially as a **sound designer**.

Instead, you should be doing everything you can to make your sonic fingerprint unique. You should also be creating special ways to present your work. *This* is where you should be going crazy and embracing your creativity!

I’ve remarked to a few sound designer friends that I’m honestly surprised that more sound designers **don’t** make effects libraries – like things you see at A Sound Effect.

(Before you go lose your mind and respond to me about how the quality of sound libraries is diminishing and it’s a giant race to the bottom in terms of quality and price – hear me out...)

I’m of firm belief that if you put out your work to sell it (and *did* sell it), that you would stand out significantly amongst your peers. I [did this myself](#), just with programming instead of sound design.

But you can screw that idea up **incredibly easily**. No, I don’t mean by putting out bad/lacking work or not getting your files tagged correctly.

I mean that – if you take that idea I just presented (please do) – you need to create it for the right market.

If you’re going to make sound libraries for sound designers – I think **you’re shooting yourself in the foot**. There are companies who do that professionally, and it requires a *lot* of work. It requires heavy research of what sound designers are missing, and what they simply cannot record themselves.

Unless you live in an incredibly unique area – you’re probably not going to make your mark by selling city ambiences to sound designers. Sorry.

You can make this tremendously easier on yourself by making things for the market that **actually buys** your work in the first place – game developers and video editors.

There are a huge number of independent game developers and video editors that want sounds they can simply drag and drop into their projects.

It’s your job to find them (there’s plenty of online forums if you don’t live in a city where these people are), find out what sounds they could use, and then rip them out fully polished. Who cares if they’re not

perfect? Who cares if it's impossible to make sure they sit in a mix right? That's not your job at this point.

Your job is to simply make things that other creatives want to use. Then you can turn to potential employers and say, with confidence:

"Yes, I can make the sounds your game needs. Yes, I know how to work your middleware. Oh – and by the way – as proof of this here's my demo reel, and I've also sold a small sound library to independent game developers and video editors."

Saying something like that, you've proven you can do the work fine. Everything from there is a matter of how well you fit with the company.

Shake Hands [**editor's note: elbow bump works, too*]

The last thing I have to offer you is this – get out and meet people.

Most of you see yourself as introverts. You're freaked out of walking into a room full (or mostly full) of people that you don't know and getting to know them.

Again, I have a whole section of my book on step-by-step ways of going about doing this successfully. Here though, I'll leave you with two things.

First, when you go to "network", it's much easier than you might imagine. Most of you hate talking about yourselves and feel like self-promotion is weird or you don't know what to say because you don't know anything about these other people.

That's actually a huge blessing.

Instead of talking at others – all you need to do is ask questions and listen intently. A few questions deep and you'll be off to the races.

Oh, and don't start out with this: *"So what do you do?"*

Your only response to whatever they say is going to be *"Oh, cool..."* That's essentially saying *"That's nice, but I don't really care."*

You *must* be honestly interested in what they respond with. For example:

"How long have you been coming here?"

No matter what they say you can easily respond with

"Oh awesome – how did you find out about this event?"

Which you can follow up with

"Neat! How have these events been helpful and beneficial to you? I'm trying to find my way around."

Continue down the path that your conversation partner presents and ask more questions about what they have to say. You'll learn a ton, and they'll fall in love with you too!

Second, you need to be very wary and careful about what events and meetups you actually show up to. Let me make this super clear: **going to audio meetups is a great way to make friends, and a bad way to get a job.**

Audio people, especially when working independently, don't hire audio people. The only way to get hired by audio people is if the company is large enough, or if a friend of yours has too much work and needs to hand some off.

Instead, make sure you get to **game development** meetups. Go to meetups with independent developers, or game engine-based meetups, or game jams, or VR/AR technology meetups. Meet the people who *don't* do what you do, because those are the people who will hire you – they need help!

Shameless Self-Promotion

If you've read any of this and thought "ugh, I KNOW this stuff and I'm just not doing it", I'd love it if you reached out to me. You will likely also find my book, [Quit Aspiring](#), super helpful.

I wish you the best of luck on your journey, and hopefully we'll connect in the near future!

A big thanks to Adam Croft for sharing his insights on how to get into game audio!

SOURCE: <https://www.asoundeffect.com/how-to-break-into-game-audio/>

Freelance Game Audio: Getting Started and finding work by Ashton Morris

Originally posted on Ashton's website and reprinted here with permission

The below information is based on my personal experiences.

I have been working in game audio for over five years now, and I would like to share the type information that I wish I'd found when I started. Please keep in mind throughout this that these are my personal opinions and that other audio professionals might have different ones.

Getting Started

Get on twitter

Some people don't like twitter but it works for me. Every time I play a fun game, see some great artwork, here some good music/sfx in a game, or find an interesting devlog, I find them on twitter if I can and follow them. #gameaudio on twitter is the *go to* place online. You'll be able to find out all sorts of relevant information and be able keep up to date on what is happening in the game audio world (Please don't spam this hashtag.)

Twitter helps me to converse with my peers and heroes, know what important conversations and events are happening in the industry, and it helps me be accessible for those who want to find out what I am up to. It's also a nice promotional tool when you are working on something cool. So this one is **BIG**. Especially if you don't live near a large game dev scene.

Continue working on your craft.

Obviously when you start out you won't have a ton of work rolling in through the door, but you should still create something new everyday. Set some time each day to work on a personal project, be it writing music, field recording, sound design or learning to implement audio better.

Whatever it is, try to be constantly learning and creating something that was not there the day before. This will help you build a good portfolio while you look for work.

Set up a website.

Now is the time to figure out if you are going to use a company name (Power Up Audio), a pseudonym (think Disasterpeace) or your real name (think Danny Baranowsky).

Figure that out, register for a domain name, and keep it simple and memorable. While you're at it, reserve that name on any social media you feel you might use. Then find some affordable or free web hosting and get someone to set it up, or set it up yourself. I use WordPress with Theme x and it's pretty easy to navigate.

Choose an email through your site or from an email provider and pick a professional and simple email address to use. There are plenty of good wordpress themes that you can use to make a nice portfolio site and plenty of other services where you can make a simple website. Find out what works for you.

The basic pages that you should put on your site would be.

- A portfolio page. Links to your past work. Video is best but audio will do. Vimeo is classy for your reel, and Soundcloud is pretty standard for streaming audio, or you can use your web host to handle hosting the audio.
- A short Bio or about me page. It's hard to write about yourself but do your best.
- A contact page. Links to all of you social media and email address or a contact form.
- Projects page. Past projects you have worked on and anything you are proud of and want people to see.

The rest is up to you. Some people add blogs or their other endeavors, but nothing else aside from the above is really necessary.

Create a portfolio.

Make something that showcases your abilities and creativity.

Be it a video reel of your past work, a sound or music replacement video, a playable game portfolio piece (which is awesome!), or some sfx or music tracks. From what I have heard audio + video is much better than just audio tracks, so try to do that.

I have a video reel of my music and sfx in games then audio tracks below for people that want to hear more.

Get business cards or whatever you feel will help people remember how to find you.

My business card has my name, website, email and twitter handle on it. There is a debate on whether business cards are necessary or old news. Personally, I use them and enjoy having my little icon on them but they are not for everyone. So just have something so people can easily find how to reach you or collect other people's info you meet and get in touch with them.

Rules and guidelines for freelance work in game audio

Rule #1 – Go out there and meet some people!

Regardless of all the tools and ways to find remote work, there is still no substitute for meeting developers and artists in person. No matter where you live, do your best to find a meetup or game jam or even start your own and go regularly. People like working with people they like and it's a lot easier to like someone that you have met in person and enjoyed talking to than someone who you only know through email and an avatar.

When I moved recently I found sound design work at the second meetup I went to, compare that to having found remote work after emailing and applying to 62 different developers/ads. (those are actual numbers)

So many of life's experiences happen though people you randomly meet. Best friends, marriages, companies formed, revolutions started, all of these things happen though meeting people in person and there is no substitute. I love to hide from the world in my studio as much as the next audio person but meeting people and sharing ideas and having real conversations is where it all happens.

Rule #2 – Show up!

When you do find work (and you will eventually) be available, communicate often, do your absolute best, be nice and polite, and help out in any other way you can. I have gotten a few gigs because the other composer/sound designer went radio silent or took too long to reply to emails, etc.

If you stay with it for years, eventually a large portion of your work will be from repeat clients. You should be doing your best so that each time they start developing a new game they already have you in mind. They will also recommend you to their friends if they've had a good experience with you. So just stay hungry, don't be hard to reach and don't take forever to reply and once you do get a gig.

Even if your best isn't as good as someone else, it's still your best. Each project is your baby too and it will reflect on you for years to come. Also try to help out in any other way you can. Test the game,

promote it when it goes on greenlight or comes out, help edit the trailer to whatever else you can do to be someone of value and help the project succeed.

Rule #3 – Pick your winners!

Look for games and developers that you believe in, are unique, and are made by amazingly talented people. The faster you can hone in on what genres work for you and you are passionate about, the better off you'll be.

In my opinion – financially speaking, you are likely to earn more money over your lifetime from a game that pays you less but is popular, critically acclaimed, has a cult following, or is extremely unique than from a game that has a large budget and pays you a lot but gets no attention or is not developed with real passion.

I know many people reading this would say “But I am looking for any project to get involved in, how can I be picky at all in the first place?” I get it, it's hard to find work in the first place. But don't sell yourself short.

If you see a game and you don't understand why anyone would be interested in playing it, then maybe your time would be better spent elsewhere. You will be doing them a favor because they will eventually find someone passionate about their game and you will produce better work with a game you really believe in.

One of the lowest paying gigs I got when I first started out has, over the years, paid as much as my highest paying gig, mostly through the attention it received and the ease it made in meeting new developers. This helped to create new clients, fans, and also sell many soundtracks.

I'm not suggesting you accept less money than you are worth. I am suggesting that you don't just follow the most money, or easiest work to get. Follow things that really grab your attention and amaze you.

All great music genres and groundbreaking artistic movements happened because people were following what they were passionate about, and that happened to be at the same time when the rest of society was ready to appreciate those ideas as well (usually a little after). If you follow what you love and what you are intrigued by, you are more likely to be in the right place at the right time rather than following the most accessible jobs. Just my opinion.

Rule #4 – Be a good farmer!

There is A LOT of competition in the world of games, and many believe the game audio market is oversaturated so you will have to play the long game.

Finding work as a composer or sound designer is less like picking low hanging fruits and more like planting seeds and nurturing their growth.

What I mean by this is: Create good friendships, participate in the conversation and in the community, help out other artists/devs, give back and keep in touch. These partnerships happen over time and often you will be contacted out of nowhere from a conversation you had a year or more ago.

For instance here's how I got a recent composing job: A year ago I saw an interesting dev on twitter and followed him. I occasionally saw him there and probably commented and retweeted a few of his tweets. One day I saw him say "I should probably start thinking about adding music soon..." So I PM'd him and said I'd be interested in collaborating with him. He then replied "I had already listened to your whole bandcamp when you originally followed me, and I love your work."

That's how it works, long term involvement within the community.

Being a good farmer is also about helping out and connecting others. You will come across multiple opportunities to recommend a colleague for a job, or offer some advice to a dev with a few audio questions.

Be a source that gives back. Write a blog, make a video, reply to the email of a budding composer, or connect people of talent with people in need of talent. One of my happier moments is when I told a talented pixel artist about a job opening on a well known game and he got it!

So if you see a way to help out or give back, do it!

To start out, here are the various ways I've used to find work and make money in game audio. I have ordered them from best to worst and in terms of frequency/likelihood and enjoyability in my experience.

1. Repeat Clients (developers you have already worked for and have an existing relationship with)
2. In person friendships or networking (making friends at a meetup or game jam and eventually working with them)
3. Cold Calling (personally reaching out to a developer that you really appreciate and asking if they need audio help)
4. Clients that found you through your website or past work ("I really liked the music for this game, are you available?")
5. Referrals (someone you know or have worked with refers you to a developer)
6. Other audio people needing help or having too much work ("Hey I have a friend working on a cool game but I don't have time etc")
7. Random tweets or develop musings ("This game is coming together, I should really start thinking about audio soon...")
8. Want ads (developers posting ads on forums)
9. Audio for hire posts (you post your information on various sites and forums looking for work)
10. Stock Music or SFX (sites where you write general music or sfx to be licensed)
11. Freelance sites (sites where you place a bid for posted work like Freelancer or UpWork etc.)
- Dark Horse? – Selling music or SFX on the Unity Asset store or other asset stores. I have no experience with this but did message the designer of the top selling sound pack on there. He said it is easier selling code or art than sound but it can be done.

Personally I think numbers 8, 9, 10, and 11 **suck!** But realistically, what I did (and what a lot of people do) was start from the bottom few and work my way up.

1. Repeat Clients

This is very simple. Do your best, and treat every client like they are Vlambeer or Asher Vollmer. Also this is another reason to “Pick your winners.” Because someone you believe is wildly talented is more likely to succeed and make more games in the future. Thus they are likely to hire you if you did your best for them.

- Out of my last three jobs one of them was and from an existing relationship with someone I had previously worked with.

2. From in person friendships or relationships.

Here is where you battle social anxiety and realize that everyone you meet is feeling as weird as you are :p

This one is actually simple: **Just go to events and be a nice person to talk to.** Help people out if the chance arises, and don't act like a used car salesman looking for audio work.

Here are some great places to meet developers, artists, and other audio professionals.

Meetup.com Search for developer meetups, audio, VR or even film if you are interested.

- I have gotten one gig from attending local meetups, but more importantly I have made many friends. Also I have had a lot of success getting work working for other types of meetups that are media or art based.

Gamedevmap.com Find out what studios are in your area. Check out their website and find out if there are any events or conventions that you could attend. Or just be aware of their presence and what they have developed.

- I got one job at a pre-release/testing party at a local studio.

Indiegamejams.com is a good resource for Game Jams. The two most popular are Global Game Jam and Ludum Dare. Game jams are an **awesome** place to meet and work with developers! One, because you get to work with them throughout the process and help conceptualize the game. Two, because there aren't always a lot of audio people there so you will probably be able to help out a few teams.

From all of the audio people I talk to Game Jams are heralded as one of the best ways to meet developers. It's best if you can go in person, but there are plenty of opportunities to work remotely on a game jam.

- No jobs were gotten at the game jam I helped with, but I had so much fun doing it.

GDC

This is the biggie convention that I have been told is the *one* to go to. I went for the first time last year and had a great time! I was extremely nervous and felt like a fish out of water but I got to meet so many interesting people and had many great conversations.

From what I gather going to GDC year after year is all about building friendships. Also it's like saying "Working in games is important to me and I am serious enough to pay for the large cost and take the time to attend" So it seems like a legitimizer to me.

There is a debate on how important this is, but all of the talented audio people I follow (and podcasts I listen to) have said it's important to go so I did.

- I did not get work from this. But I did meet a ton of audio people who I only knew online. I also met clients that I'd worked for but had never met in person. I plan to attend GDC again.

Here are some other conventions that are game related. I have not had the chance to attend these yet.

PAX

E3

Game Sound Con

Comic Cons

- I did attend our local Comic Con in Denver this year and it wasn't great for meeting devs and I probably will skip next year. But I assume some state's/country's/city's Comic Cons have more game representation.

If anyone has any other good resources let me know.

3. Cold Calling

Cold calling is contacting a developer or artist out of the blue that you don't know, telling them that you appreciate their work and would love to work with them if the situation arose.

Honestly it must be annoying for some developers. I talked to an awesome indie studio at GDC and they said they get about 1-2 emails a week from random composers. But if you're nice and polite and aren't just spamming every dev in the world then how can anyone blame you.

You want to find work and you want to do your best. I have never received a rude reply from a dev and I think they understand our situation. Here are some tips for cold calling.

No.1 Do research.

Look them up. Have they ever finished a game? Does it say they already have a composer or sound designer on their web page?

Are they serious? Do you think they will complete this project? Does their website or devlog look like they have put any time into it? It will be hard at first but after a while you will be able to tell if a team is dedicated or not.

Look at Moonlighters Devlog, it's amazing! The concept is great, the art looks awesome, they have updated their devlog consistently, they have custom art for explaining the game mechanics, etc. It's just so well thought out and that says a lot! Look for signs of professionalism like this when searching for games to get involved in.

No.2 Do not copy and paste!

I write every cold call email from scratch even if they might be similar at times. I always try to reference all of their materials that I have seen and what I like about them. I will even reference games that might have been their inspiration while making this. I am polite and not in their face (or at least I do my best to be).

No.3 Brevity = Longevity.

I have learned to keep things simple and sweet, there is no need to write ten paragraphs in a cold call email. People are busy and they might be getting a lot of CC emails already, so keep it on the short side.

No.4 Keep it at or slightly above your skill level.

I do not email Blizzard or Activision out of the blue. That would be a waste of their time and mine. Yes, shoot for the stars, but don't have your head in the clouds. I will email an amazing indie team who I feel is of superior quality to anything I have worked with, but I will not email anyone way, way out of my league. Just use your best judgement.

Today I actually got a reply to a cold call email I sent seven months ago. Here was the original email I sent to them.

Hi XXXX team!

I ran across your devlog today for XXXXX and I absolutely love what you did with the trailer. I am a big Bomberman fan myself. It's nice to see that style of game being revitalized.

Your website said that you are on the lookout for exciting collaborators so I thought I would get in touch with you. I am a composer and sound designer and I would be very interested in working on XXXXXX if you are still looking for an audio person. It really looks like a fun game, and I'd love to contribute to it.

All the best and good luck with the game, it looks awesome!

Kind Regards,

Ashton Morris

<https://ashtonmorris.com/>

Yes, I cringe when I see how my old emails look, but oh well. They originally replied that they already had a composer and I said "ok good luck with the game!" But today they said that they are actually looking for someone because that person is unavailable for whatever reason.

Also, I keep a spreadsheet of who I contacted, when, and notes if they reply. I don't want to email the same person twice on accident and keeping dates helps you keep in touch with people.

I am connecting with people all of the time even when I have a lot of work. You never know what can happen in the future. Here are a few places to follow interesting games and find interesting people.

Tigsource Devlogs Really awesome development logs for all types of games and developers.

Visual Devlog Map This connects to Tigsource and creates a mosaic of images from Devlogs. It's pretty cool.

Twitter Devlogs This is a good twitter account that follows devlogs.

Kickstarter This is less populated than it used to be but you can still find really cool games to support here.

#screenshotsaturday Follow this on twitter to see some really cool games in progress.

Nerd Time Screenshot Saturday This person hand picks great #screenshotsaturday tweets each week.

I Need A Team – Reddit A place to find collaborators (usually non paid teams).

twitter I see so many cool games on twitter. Often they are retweeted by someone you follow.

****Bonus**** If you want to read another great blog with insights into cold calling in game audio, check out Steve's "Cold Calls Getting Warmer" post.

4. Clients that found you through your website or past work.

This one is why it's important to have a professional portfolio and website and to always do your best on past projects. You **never know** who is listening or checking out your stuff.

- I have gotten a handful of jobs from people who have heard me from my past games, and from people who googled me or found me on twitter. It does happen.

5. Referrals

(someone you know or have worked with mentions you to a developer)

These also come from doing your best and being a nice professional person.

6. Other audio people needing help or having too much work

("Hey I have a friend working on a cool game but I don't have time etc.")

Believe it or not this does happen. There are plenty of audio people that will need to outsource work occasionally, or know of a good gig that they can't take on at the moment and will recommend you. These conversations happen in person and online.

But first you have to get to know people without looking for work, make friends, and participate in the game audio conversation. The game audio community is very welcoming so just get involved and you'll see opportunities from time to time. But don't get involved just to find work! **I have gotten at least two jobs this way.**

Aside from meeting audio people at game jams, meetups and conventions, here are a few places online where they might be loitering.

Video Game – Composers & Sound Designers (fans are welcome too) FB

Game Audio Denizens

Game Audio Self Promotion

#gameaudio on twitter

Reddit Game Audio

Tigsource/Audio

There are also a growing number of chat rooms (usually in Slack) that audio professionals and hobbyists frequent. These are a great place to talk with people from all levels of knowledge and experience.

AudioVR Slack

Composers Circle Skype

There are plenty of others too that I haven't had the chance to check out.

7. Random tweets or develog musings

("This game is coming together, I should really start thinking about audio soon..." or "we are looking for a composer..") Just another reason why being on twitter and following talented people is a good idea. You'll see occasional tweets where people mention audio. Also I love to follow interesting develogs on tigsource and sometimes people will write that they are looking for someone on there.

- I have found more than a few freelance jobs this way.

8. Want ads

(developers posting ads on forums)

Even though gigs through these are less common and I don't prefer finding them this way, I still check a few websites every day to see if anything is posted. I use Google Chrome and I have a few of my favorite of these sites bookmarked in a folder labeled "Daily Check".

I just right click the folder and choose "Open all bookmarks in a new window" and then I go through them. Once you get into the habit of it, it only takes a minute or two because you have checked them yesterday and it's easy to tell the ones you've already read.

To give you an honest idea of how many composers are on these vying for work: when I applied for a recent Arcadian Atlas composer opening on Tigsources (which I did not get but a super talented composer did) their announcement email stated that there were 221 composer submissions. So that's the reality here.

- Having depressed you (and myself) here are some forums you can check and my experiences with them.

TigSource/PaidWork I have found a few jobs on here and applied for about a hundred.

Reddit/GameDevClassifieds I have found maybe one job here. Decent community.

UnrealEngineJobOfferings Not sure if I have ever found work on this one.

IndieGamer/HelpWanted Lots of postings sometimes audio related.

IndieDB/Recruiting & Resumes Mostly other composers and sound designers looking for work.

PolyCount/FreelanceJobs Don't think I have found work here, but still check it from time to time.

EpicGames This is also mostly filled with ads from composers and sound designers.

FGL.com I actually found a bit of work on here years ago, but it looks like it's mostly contests being posted nowadays.

GameJolt/Jobs Never found work on here.

TouchArcade.com Don't think I have ever found anything on here either.

Cocos-2D/Jobs Imagine drowning in a sea of composers.

Unity/NonCommercialCollaboration Some of these are paid although most are specifically not. Might be a good place to meet developers though.

Newgrounds/Collab I actually found work here years ago and I have since worked with that dev on three projects. I don't go on there much now though because it seems a younger less serious community.

GarageGames - Never found work here.

XboxForums - Again a lot of composers. I haven't found work there either.

Scirra - Haven't found work there before.

Some of those above probably aren't that useful but I wanted to allow you to make your own decision on that. Please feel free to let me know of any other useful job forums and I will add them to this list.

9. Audio for hire posts (you post your information on various sites and forums looking for work)

I *and everyone else* did this when I started out. You post something like "Composer and sound designer available" on different forums and hope that an interesting game that needs help contacts you. I do not do this anymore because I prefer to directly look for projects that interest me, but when I started out I did find at least a few jobs this way.

I know that at least one of my long time clients whom I have worked with on three titles found me on one of these sites. So it's not a horrible idea at all. In no particular order here are some places where you can place your ad. **Please keep in mind that I do now know all of the rules and guidelines for posting on these pages.**

UnrealEngine Looking for Work

IndieGamer Music & Sound Portfolios

Reddit Game Dev Classifieds

IndieDB Recruiting & Resumes and Audio/Visual

GameJolt/Audio

Cocos2D/Sound

Newgrounds

10. Stock Music or stock SFX sites

(sites where you write general music or sfx to be licensed)

I have put two pieces of music on stock sites and probably made \$70 total over the years. Honestly I think if you were really into that and you kept growing your catalogue you could make a decent living (same with stock photography).

The drawback for music is that most of the stock music that really sells is for Corporate videos/promos (think apple commercial). In reality it's a bit soulless and that's probably not satisfying for the people reading this that dream of working on games.

For instance the piece I did that sold the most, had a ukulele, glockenspiels, and whistling. Not really my thing, and let's be honest I didn't get into game audio for the money. That's not the driving force here.

Austin Wintory isn't getting rich off of stock music, he's working on projects that he's passionate about. If you are interested in this though: Here is a much better guide to stock music than I could write.

11. Freelance sites

(sites where you place a bid for posted freelance jobs.)

There are actually a lot of game related audio jobs on these. The only problem is that when you normally apply for a game audio job on a forum there are 200+ respondents but **you aren't aware of it**. On these sites you do know, and **can see how many people bid** for these projects, and for some reason it's very disheartening to me.

I have made at least a couple hundred dollars from work on these sites but I am just not into it for some reason. Having said that, I do see really interesting game audio ads on these sometimes, and it's worth at least considering. Here are a few places to check out.

UpWork I have gotten work from their original company's site Elance.

Freelancer Never applied for any of these, but I have seen a few game audio jobs now and then.

Conclusion

So in conclusion, as Matt said “**Game Audio is a war of attrition.**” It's harsh but true. Finding work is really really hard and even if you do some awesome work on a game, it might never even get finished or be released.

But making friends in this industry is easy. People are generally welcoming, supportive, and happy to share what knowledge they have. So **don't lose hope!** Just continue to do your best, stay polished, stay hungry, stay polite, and keep at it. Best of luck!

SOURCE: <https://www.ashtonmorris.com/freelance-game-audio-finding-work/>

Making a Career Out of Audio by Rev. Dr. Bradley D Meyer, 2018

Originally posted as an [article on designingsound.org](#) and reprinted here with permission

I was exceptionally lucky to have stumbled/led my way into a dream job designing sound for video games twenty years ago, and am even more fortunate to have somehow made a career out of it. Sometimes people ask me how I've managed to stay afloat in this tumultuous industry having braved numerous crunches, layoffs, studio shutdowns, moral dilemmas, and crises of confidence. When most people ask me how I've persisted, my usual answer is “luck,” which I feel— at least in my situation— is one of many factors. There are plenty of other facets at work here: a strong work ethic, persistence/doggedness, good interviewing skills, etc. But every situation is different, so I decided to canvas the greater industry, asking people with ten or more years experience how they've managed to keep going in order to distill down some useful advice on how to maintain a career and stay relevant in this ever-shifting industry. Many of these tips and processes seem obvious on the surface, but how we

go about them is critical and when we get too tied up in other facets of our work, sometimes we lose or forget about these other important factors, so it's always good to remind yourself.

Define your goals/expectations

Perhaps the easiest thing to overlook when thinking about how to stay in your job is yourself. Staying healthy and trying to do things that make you feel happy or fulfilled can be crucial to making you *want* to stay in such a kooky industry.

Kristen Quebe points out the importance of, "taking time for self care," and this cannot be overstated. Burnout is a critical factor in many people leaving the industry too soon. Therefore, it's important to continually ask yourself what you want to be doing, or as Matthew Grimm puts it, "what kind of work environments make you happy? Is it more important to work on a major title or to have a work life balance that is more manageable?" Work situations are often not so binary, but you need to be taking time to check in with yourself and make sure you're doing what you want to and not harming yourself long-term as a result.

For Kenny Young, his drive is to create sublime work. I don't think I'll ever achieve that, but I'm more than happy to spend my days trying. It's nice to have a goal you can't achieve because it's impossible to fail, all you can do is get better/closer." This continual practice of self-reflection also transcends where you work or who you work with. Kenny notes, "if you've stopped growing, it's time to move on. Everything is built on top of your love of the relationship between sound and the moving image. If you ever find yourself lost or adrift, come back to this foundation stone because it's a great lens to view career decisions through."

Be inspired/passionate/learning

Which brings us to one of the more obvious, yet critical keys to longevity in a creative industry: passion. Passion can take the form of many different outlets from the mantra "always be recording" to it's equally important cousin brought up by numerous people: Always be learning. We live in a very fluid industry and one thing you must do to stay relevant is, as Mark Kilborn says, "Always be learning new things. Always be developing your skills. Always be looking for inspiration." These are key practices echoed by many.

Mike Niederquell sums it up as, "'love what you do.' If that holds true, you will continuously educate yourself with trends, workflows, processes." Kristen Quebe similarly mentioned the importance of, "learning on all fronts. Listen with intention, work on skills that make you a good collaborator, always study and take time to practice and follow what others are doing." This brings up a great point: our industry is one of collaboration. Few projects are done solo and relying on colleagues whether audio or non-audio people is critical to achieving— and maintaining— success. More on that later, but this

sentiment is echoed by Kenny Young with the brilliant advice to, “seek out the best of the best. Be inquisitive. Ask for help and guidance on your quest. Always be a student. When you stumble upon something that moves you in a profound way, learn everything that you can about it. When you start to dig into how these experiences came to be, one truth that becomes inescapable is that collaborations and creative relationships are everything. Without mutual trust, support, encouragement and respectful criticism all you will ever achieve is ‘good’ work, ‘nice sounds’. Which is totally valid as a starting point, but if you want to create meaningful work – “the good s**t” – sublime work, then you can’t and won’t achieve that on your own.”

We are very fortunate then that our industry is a very open one in that there are numerous resources for dialogue with colleagues. Kristen Quebe recommends we, “develop support systems and mentors, mentor others.” For Ariel Gross, “one thing that has kept me afloat in this industry is **my reputation**, and the way I got that was **by helping people**, and I think that **helping people** is a **tried and true method** for **staying relevant** in this field. Probably any field. Take time to listen to people, think about them, help them, and be there for them when they need someone.” Audio people are generally a very communicative sort and the regular meetups of sound people around the world are testament to the availability of like-minded people to discuss and grow your skills and continue to fan the flames of sonic passion.

It is this combination of inspiration, passion and learning that keep many people fresh and relevant in this industry. There is always something new to learn, whether that’s a new technique, a new skill, new terminology, a new scripting language, or developing a new audio system. Once we stop learning, our skills and our passion begin to atrophy. In order to stay relevant we need to be able to know where our industry is and be able to speculate where it’s going. Furthermore, to keep our creative juices flowing, we should be continually challenging ourselves creatively. Clark Wen brought up an example when, “working in house, it’s easy to rest on your laurels and become complacent. . . by focusing only the projects I was working on instead of doing more extracurricular, exploratory work.” It’s easy to fall into these traps, especially as work can often consume us and make it harder to carve out time to try new things or learn new concepts, but to be successful you need to make time for yourself to continue developing your skills.

Be respectful

As noted above, our jobs are never solo efforts, so while taking care of yourself and maintaining your passion and inspiration are so important, it’s also critical to treat others with respect in order to maintain relevance and longevity in your career. Clark Wen advises, “Always **be respectful of your peers! Thank people** if they’ve helped you and always be looking for ways to **return the favor**. It’s a small industry and you better believe I’ll remember someone that treats others like dirt!”

There's A LOT of talented people out there and no one likes to work with a jerk. So, as Mark Kilborn advises, "Always **keep your ego in check**. Always **serve the project**. **Be kind**." Matthew Grimm adds to this by noting the importance of learning, "**the value of humility**. Finding value and knowledge in your current role, no matter what that might be."

Whether you're a contractor or generally work in-house, a **positive attitude** and **friendly demeanor** goes a long way. **Martin Kvale** has found success by being, "fair, open and treat people well. If you are a freelancer, **communicate** and **give notice** when you realize you will be late."

Somewhat related here is not just being respectful, but also realizing that when working with others, another core competency is to be, "very flexible and very well-rounded," as Jeff Hinton suggests. Adam Croft expands on this by, "serving everyone I work with unbelievably well. I always make sure I get what I need, but not at the expense of others." This allows you not only to sharpen your talents and create a more diverse skill set, but makes you a person who's **easier to work with**, and if there's one way to make people **want to hire you again** and again, it's by being both **talented AND amiable**.

The Social Network(ing)

Staying connected can be the most uncomfortable part of staying relevant and employed for some people as it requires some level of extroverted behavior, but as mentioned above, the relationships we form at any point in our career can help us in the future. Being respectful and being flexible are core to having good working relationships, but you also need to maintain those relationships and there are so many ways to do so via networking, social media, and just keeping the chain of communication open with others. There weren't any big surprising comments about this but nearly everyone brought up the importance of keeping in touch. Clark Wen brought this up and realized that, "The work I'm doing now is largely because of people that I met back in 1997 and 2000! My biggest regret is that I didn't keep in touch more with my other coworkers as I never gave much thought to it back then." Mark Kilborn also stressed the importance of not just cultivating and maintaining contacts with audio people but to, "establish friendships in the industry, both in and out of game audio specifically. Be kind. Don't burn bridges."

Matthew Marteinsson may be the poster child for networking skills. Although professional he's known for work on lots of great indie titles, he's made a name for himself as one of the hosts of the popular podcast, Beard Cats and Indie Game Audio, running the popular Game Audio Slack, doing demo reel evaluations with Reel Talk, coordinating the CarouselCon at the Game Developers Conference every year in addition to helping with the bi-annual Game Audio Bash meetup. To top it off, even though he lives in Vancouver, on a nearly monthly basis he will, "drive 3 hours to attend Seattle meetups." While his motivation is largely to share and gather information and stay in touch with friends, all of these activities

collectively form into a strong network of contacts and part of maintaining relevance is to nurture the relationships you have and continually develop new ones.

Perhaps the biggest challenge with networking is that it's not a fire and forget task, it's something you need to always be following up on. As musician D-Hydrate, mentions networking is, "not just meeting people and exchanging information, but keeping in contact and checking in with them periodically to see how they're doing and what they're working on. This is especially true when you've been booked for a while on a particular project and if people know you're busy on that, they won't bother you with more work. So staying in touch and letting people know when you are available is important."

There's a lot of strategies we all employ to maintain relevance and stay employed. And while I think luck plays at least some small role for most of us, it is a combination of some of these concepts listed above that gives us the foundation to continue to grow, evolve, develop and maintain relationships and stay employed. Together we change our industry as our industry changes around us.

Special thanks to those who contributed to this post: Adam Croft, Ariel Gross, Clark Wen, D-Hydrate, Jeff Hinton,. Kenny Young, Kristen Quebe, Mark Kilborn, Martin Kvale, Matthew Grimm, Matthew Marteinsson and Mike Niederquell.

Source: <https://designingsound.org/2018/06/25/making-a-career-out-of-audio/>

Tips for students sending professional artists questions by Zac Retz

- visual development artist at Sony Pictures Animation

Originally published as a twitter thread on July 3rd and reprinted here with permission

When sending questions to professionals or mentors:

- **Don't send a book for us to read. Keep is short and to the point.** Professional artists are busy. If I see an email that will take me 20 min. to read, I'll probably ignore it.
- Don't send a generic list of questions that you send to a bunch of artists.
- **Do your research before emailing an artist.** Is this the best artist to ask your questions to? Don't ask an environment designer about animation. Ask an animator. In vis dev 95% of the time you will be doing EITHER character design OR environments. You won't be doing both. Of course sometimes there's some crossover. But if you have questions about character design then ask a character designer.

EDITOR's NOTE: This applies to sound design very well! Research your dream role, and your favourite genre. Don't ask questions about racing games unless the mentor you're asking is specialized in racing

games!

- **Don't ask open ended questions** like, give me tips on painting, or tell me about your experience in vis dev... Better questions are, "I am struggling with values, what did you do to get better with value structure?" OR "Do you recommend any classes learn about composition?"
- A general tip: **Have a focus in your portfolio**. Schools are really bad at teaching this. If you are a character designer, environment designer, storyboard artist, 3D generalist, AND animator... It probably means you are not good at any of these things and it will be very hard to get a job.

Studios want to know what they are hiring you for. In vis dev you might touch on all of those things *but don't advertise yourself as that*.

Pick one and become the best you can at that. Then over time learn and branch out in other directions.

I think most artists are very willing to help and may really enjoy helping others. I know I do!

But please be respectful of our time.

SOURCE: <https://twitter.com/ZacDRetz/status/1278802602029772800?s=20>

Rami Sethi on finding mentors

We once considered creating a program on how to find a mentor. After doing a few weeks of customer research, we scrapped the entire idea because nobody will ever buy a program on how to find a mentor.

The big insight: **PEOPLE WANT A MENTOR, BUT THEY DON'T WANT TO DO THE WORK TO FIND A MENTOR.**

They want to be able to call Michelle Obama, or text Tim Ferriss, or hang with Richard Branson on his island...but they don't want to do the painstaking work of becoming valuable enough that someone would want to mentor them!

We scrapped the product idea immediately. (Btw, every time I share this story, a bunch of people say, "I'd buy that!" Then I ask them if they've ever bought a single book or product on finding a mentor before. "Uhh....no...I've been busy." I ask them how much they'd pay at this very moment for the program. They look down at their shoes, saying, "I don't know...maybe \$7 or \$8?" People do not want this product.)

To find a mentor, it doesn't cost you money. You already have great advice around you from books, articles, and courses you've taken. Take a minute to write a DETAILED email, sharing what you learned from them, what surprised you, and what your next steps are. Then follow up with them in a couple months to update them on your progress.

Great people DESPERATELY want to mentor other great people. The very best in the world LOVE to teach. Unfortunately, most people do not do the work of **earning** the right to be mentored. Follow this approach and you'll stand out over time.

For more information, google "Ramit Sethi mentor"

Source: <https://twitter.com/ramit/status/1278394563951038464?s=20>

Reevaluating the Practice of Testing Prospective Candidates

by Rev. Dr. Bradley D Meyer

[Originally published on the Designing Sounds website, March 20, 2018](#)

Eureka moments are often steeped in excitement and wonder. They are the great discoveries and innovations of the ages. Others are a slap on the forehead, a “why didn’t I think of this sooner?” moment. This particular Eureka moment I’m about to share is of the latter variety and came about three paragraphs into an email I was writing. The monologue from my brain to myself went something like this: “My hiring process is fairly unique and was created as a reaction to what I feel is a misguided norm within our industry. I should write it down and share it with people!” So there you have the impetus for this rant.

Hiring a new employee is always a gamble. You’re basing a very important decision for you, the candidate, often that candidate’s family, and your entire team on a few conversations, a demo reel, possibly a test, and a few hours spent one-on-one with this person. Is that really enough time to gauge the multitude of questions like: Is this person a good sound designer? Will this person fit into our team’s culture? Can this person handle their tasks professionally in a deadline-driven environment? If they don’t already know our tools can they learn them in a relatively quick time? How do they behave under pressure? If they were an item on a Taco Bell menu, which one would they be?

With good interviewing skills (and lots of practice), you and your team can uncover answers to many of these questions. But one critical thing missing from a set of interview questions is related to the applied skillset(s) of sound design. We generally ask for a demo reel to help weed out unqualified candidates and assess skill level, but a demo does not show us the nuts and bolts of how they work, often how they design and integrate. A bad demo doesn’t explain what the candidate’s contribution to the various clips actually is. These are some of the reasons why we also often test our candidates. But rather than using the test as a rehash of their demo reel, we should be looking at our hiring tests as a way to pull more information out from the candidate to answer these other critical hiring questions.

The way it’s been done

Testing is not novel to audio teams; many disciplines do it, from artists and animators to programmers and designers. Interestingly, many audio tests I’ve seen are often just sound replacements for a cinematic. In our line of work this is usually a minimal part of what we do as sound designers. Naturally, many games have cinematics and sometimes there is even a sound designer (or team of them!) dedicated to cinematics, but designing for a linear piece of media lacks a demonstration of any of the technical or nuanced differences between linear and interactive design.

I’ve had other tests which included a portion of gameplay and asked the candidate to design the scene with both their own sounds and a set of sounds provided by the company. This is a bit more interesting and appropriate scenario in that it looks at how the player may approach designing both on their own and with a set of limitations. But it’s also worth considering on some level that asking someone to design a scene outside of their work environment can provide an unfair disadvantage to a talented sound designer who may not have access to sound libraries, microphones, recorders or plugins due to financial constraints. With that said, there’s plenty of free or cheap tools available and passion and talent can often make do with less-than-top-of-the-line gear or samples.

The final issue where many tests fall into unfair territory is in considering time expectations for the candidate. We work in a deadline driven environment, and it's good to see how a potential employee can handle a heavy workload, but we also need to remember that a candidate may have a full time job (and may even be crunching!), and additionally they most likely have a life outside of work, be that friends, family, small children, pets, etc. Is it fair to demand free work of someone that may help you evaluate them, but also puts them at risk professionally or personally? The answer to me is yes— *within reason*, and that we should be putting greater emphasis on what we can evaluate from a candidate based on their past work (if it exists) and from in-person interviewing and exercises, and put constraints on our tests so that they do not become time sinks for potential candidates.

A new way forward

I have shared my test and interview plan with some colleagues and it has struck most of them as novel. It has been overwhelmingly regarded as positive by candidates and has so far done a good service in helping me find qualified and talented candidates, much more than I've been able to hire unfortunately. Obviously the first order of business in the entire hiring process is writing or revising the job description. Try to outline the actual duties of the job, qualifications, and skills or experiences which are required vs. optional. A lot of these bullet points can be a bit loose, but try to err on the side of what you're really looking for. A requirement to have shipped at least 3 titles is pointless if you find an amazing candidate who has only shipped two. So try to be descriptive so that candidates understand what they are applying for and you're not over or under-asking of potential candidates' qualifications. I also like to throw in a "fun" question to be included as part of their cover letter such as "Please describe your favorite sound toy," or "What's your favorite sound you've designed?"

A question like this serves multiple purposes: First it shows they're paying attention and you're not just getting a carbon copy cover letter.

The cover letter is the first glimpse into how a candidate communicates [in this case in written format] and perhaps you can start gauging their passion levels and cultural fit as well. Also it's critical to make it clear that a demo reel should include annotations for designer's contributions. I've had to send a few back to get clarification and others have been so poorly communicated I rejected the candidate outright.

If cover letter, resume experience and demo reel are all up to par, which, depending on the position, may eliminate the bulk of candidates, next up would be a phone interview, which is usually the basic stuff: explaining the position to them, talking about their experiences, their current or most recent position, trying to get a sense of how they communicate verbally, and how much their representation on paper (their resume) matches their experience. I know some managers who use this time to weed out candidates using excessively difficult or esoteric technical questions.

But if you've already been through resumes, cover letters and demo reels, a simple conversation should usually reveal whether this person is real, passionate and whether or not your needs and their goals are a match. If they need to understand the difference between binaural and ambisonic and cannot describe it, perhaps they are not the best candidate, but if they can't give a concise definition of dithering or when to use DC offset, these issues are generally less of a concern for a modern day sound designer.

If the phone screen goes well, like most hiring managers, I move on to the test and this is where I

diverge a bit. For the reasons mentioned above, my test is a bit unique. It is not based on how well they can create sounds because I should ideally be able to get a sense of their sound design from their demo, and their process from the phone screen. Instead I'm looking for other critical aspects of their work habits and analytical skills which will ideally help demonstrate whether or not they will be a good employee AND a good designer.

Part one of my test actually has two parts. I give them a few movies of gameplay from a past game along with a ton of in-game assets. Part one is a written portion asking them to choose one video, and write about what they feel the most important aspects to cover with sound design are in the scene, but also explain details they feel may be overlooked by others as well as provide pie-in-the-sky design ideas.

The second part of this exercise asks them to design the scene they wrote about using only the assets provided. They can manipulate those sounds in any way they like and are also instructed to only focus on what they deem important and then write about their choices and why they made them. I actually stole this idea from Andy Martin who set up the sound design test at Sucker Punch before I joined. I feel it does a good job in discovering how well a candidate can analyze audio, communicate their vision and discuss their design philosophy.

The next part of the test evaluates both critical interactive sound design skills and basic Wwise proficiency (Wwise is the audio middleware we use, so a basic understanding of it is required). Rather than designing to picture, I give them a video of a specific event– in this case the powerful ionic smoke power from InFamous Second Son and have them create all the events they would use in the real world to design for this sound, create a SoundCaster session in Wwise for these events, write a brief explanation of how and why they chose these sounds, when they would like them to trigger in the animation, and any additional mixing techniques they would use to enhance the scene. This is a good litmus test for seeing how they approach the ever critical facets of sound design within a middleware tool. So much of what we do in regards to the nuance of sound design happens more and more in the middleware and it's great insight to see how someone thinks creatively within the tools they'll be using everyday.

The last assignment is more of a technical assignment strictly in Wwise, which is to construct a modular clothing system for a character with three different outfits and create events for 5 specific animations (arm swing, jump, land hard, etc.). In this assignment, the user only creates the structures in Wwise, they do not do anything with sound assets, which is a great way to evaluate how they think within the middleware and how they build more complex systems.

The interesting thing I found in this portion of the test is that candidates came up with a raft of unique ways to complete the assignment and some of the more interesting ones have come from candidates who were not as well versed in Wwise, which I view as a positive– someone able to take a new tool and find an efficient means to achieve a task generally extend these latent skills to other areas of their work as well.

I explicitly acknowledge that candidates are doing this test for free on their own time and as they most likely have a job and a life outside of work, I ask them to try and spend no more than 8 hours on the test, and I give them ample amount of time to complete it, usually two weeks, with the option to extend more if they need to. Again, I don't want to put anyone at a disadvantage because of their personal work/life situation so I try to keep a level playing field by providing these limitations. There is no real way to monitor candidates to ensure they stick to this request, so it's really a matter of trust that I try to

emphasize when explaining the time constraint aspect.

After the test, I will usually schedule a second call with prospective candidates and follow up on their tests, ask them any other questions that may arise either via their test or through our conversation and then take all of this information to determine if we want to bring them in for an onsite interview.

My onsite interview process is meant to gauge a variety of things: how well they would get along with teammates both on the sound team and within the rest of the production group, to allow other members of the team to evaluate the candidate, learn about their experiences, ask them questions and also gauge their cultural fit into the larger company. I also encourage my co-workers to be creative in the questions they ask, or at least to have some fun with the interview. For example, Michelle Thomas, one of my sound designers, likes to ask candidates if they could be a dinosaur, what kind would they be. The answer to this question is never going to be a deciding factor in the hiring decision, but it's a fun insight into a candidate's personality and we've got some really great answers: one candidate said he'd be a velociraptor because they hunt in packs and he likes doing things as a team. Another said they would be a brontosaurus because they were vegetarian. Interviews can be nerve wracking and adding some fun into the day can help relieve tension and get to know the candidate better.

I usually kickoff the interview day with an introduction of myself and the project we're working on as well as going into more detail about the role. We'll often go over the test together for any final clarifications or questions. Then I'll hand the candidate off to a designer who, after getting to know them a little, gives them a hypothetical design scenario like designing a collectible or walking through a mission and discussing sound needs with the game designer.

Next one of my sound designers will discuss more sound-focused topics and gauge how they look at their past career, previous employers and co-workers. We have two people take the candidate out to lunch, usually a programmer and an animator since we work closely with both departments. These two are responsible for evaluating both the candidates past experience with these two disciplines as well as cultural fit within the studio, whether or not they're impulsive, can give fair evaluations of people, etc. We'll have a producer evaluate their task tracking and interdepartmental communication skills, and lastly I spend another couple hours with them asking more questions, posing hypotheticals and doing thought experiments and exercises.

My interview is meant to gauge several skills: how well they can handle an ever-shifting production environment, how they adapt to change, and even how passionate they are about various aspects of sound design. My favorite part of the interview, and the favorite part for most of the candidates, is when I lay out a bunch of props on the table and tell them to play around with these things and see what kinds of sounds they can make out of them.



There is no right answer, it's an exercise to see how their brain thinks on the fly, to glimpse at their creative process when performing foley, and help evaluate their passion levels. The props I use are random, but sometimes I'll use similar ones across candidates and it is fun to see what props certain candidates gravitate to as well as the common sounds that many people find within these items.

Some of the props I may test candidates with

Then comes the difficult part of choosing a candidate. Usually if they've made it through this whole process it is either clear they're not going to work for one reason or another or we want to hire them and deciding between multiple talented candidates is both a difficult decision and a gamble. Even though we know a lot more about this person now than we did before the interview process, we still don't have the full picture of how they work with a group of new people in a different production environment with different tools.

There is no perfect solution for wading through candidates to find the best, but this process we have developed has evolved into a pretty solid measurement of how well potential candidates will thrive or fail within our specific development environment. I hope some of these techniques prove useful to others because I feel the testing and interview processes in finding a new job should be looking at a candidate's skills in a way that minimizes detrimental impact on their life while also promoting creativity and getting a glimpse at the passion that makes a good sound designer great.

Andy Martin's comment on the article - March 28, 2018

You're welcome. ;P I'm actually glad to see someone making thoughtful considerations in their hiring process. I'd only point out that it's not just the candidate's personal & professional security you're looking out for with the time & resources consideration. It's YOURS. So often it is the under-qualified candidates that may put forth the best test reel if given enough time and resources. Why? As you said, the best candidates are likely currently employed and without the time to dedicate. Many high-level sound designers don't have home studios and libraries at home, not out of willful laziness but because they've always been working and never needed to acquire such tools. The ever-decreasing costs of tools and libraries means that greener sound designers without job experience can more readily purchase them. Combine that with the time available if unemployed... and you have a situation where the under-qualified produce a better result. By effectively limiting the time and resources of the test you're leveling the playing field for all concerned helping yourself find a better candidate.

I'd personally be in favor of eliminating tests altogether, especially for senior level positions, but it would require studios to commit to hiring before the headcount is needed, knowing that some on-the-job training is necessary to support new-hires in learning tools such as Wwise or FMOD (if they only know one) or Nuendo if they're a Pro Tools fiend, etc.

Of course, that would require studios to be willing to commit more to their sound departments and be accountable for the growth of their employees. And this IS the games industry. So.... yeah. There's that.

-andy

(Nice props!)

Source: <https://designingsound.org/2018/03/20/reevaluating-the-practice-of-testing-prospective-candidates/>

How to get into audio programming for games - Daniel Matarov April 2025

Source; linkedin post

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/daniel-matarov-58134316a_how-to-get-into-audio-programming-for-game-s-activity-7314955317837017090-ADI5

Since my last two posts a few people have asked me about what they need to learn in order to get into an games audio programming role.

As previously promised here are a few of the skills in order of importance(in my opinion) that will be necessary to start your audio programming journey

1. C++ knowledge - most game engines use C++ and good knowledge of the language will be pretty much mandatory in order to be an audio programmer. Pretty much all of the programming pre-requisites to be a games programmer apply to audio programming. Everything else is what comes on top of general programming knowledge, which is one of the reasons why this role is quite rare.

2. Middleware knowledge - Wwise and FMOD are the two main middleware solutions used for audio in games. In my experience, Wwise is by far the more popular one, especially when it comes to bigger projects. Having good knowledge of the tools and API of a project's selected middleware will make you stand out in interviews and be a valuable team member.
3. General knowledge of digital audio fundamentals - understanding sampling rates, buffer sizes, how audio is processed and rendered, audio codecs specific to games and performance implications for how different methods of playing audio in game (streaming vs loading in memory)
4. Spatial audio knowledge - audio is a big part of immersion in games. Understanding how audio behaves in a physical space and knowing of solutions which emulate sound propagation and traversal is always a plus.
5. Audio lingo - you will often be working with sound designers, thus being able to speak their language and being familiar with audio terminology will be handy
6. Passion for audio - this is arguably the reason why I got into this field of games programming. When you love audio and like great sounding games, this job will be very rewarding. The reason why this is very low on this list however is that it is not enough - the hard skills listed above will be absolutely necessary to be a good audio programmer, while simply being passionate about audio is more of a soft feature that will drive you and keep you motivated to improve in this field.

This list of skills and knowledge makes for a very specific person. Audio folks often joke that audio programmers are like unicorns - you need to be knowledgeable of audio and programming and be happy with sitting behind the scenes and making sure audio CAN be added to the game, instead of making it yourself.

The Bible of Applying to Game Audio Jobs: That's it for now!

The next chapter has some other useful resources of my own recommendation.

If you find any articles or videos worth adding here, please get in touch with me at [florian.ardelean \(at\) gmail \(dot\) com](mailto:florian.ardelean@gmail.com)

Recommended Resources:

<https://www.gameaudiolearning.com/>

- **The Place To Learn All Things Game Audio** - by the wonderful Greg Lester and Jonny Sands.

Peruse the [DesigningSound.org](https://designingsound.org) database!

Although no new articles are posted - it's in hibernation at the moment - it's still a **treasure trove of information.**

Mark Kilborn compiled an extremely useful document with
Film/Game Audio Resources: (link removed due to Google policy changes).

“This was created for @FullSail #FullSailHOF attendees,
but it's for anyone interested in **game audio or sound design** who wants it.
I hope it's useful!” – Mark Kilborn, 2019

Presley Hynes' (@PHrequencies) site: [freeaudioresource\(dot\)notion\(dot\)site](http://freeaudioresource(dot)notion(dot)site)

Also check out this related article:

The Ultimate Guide to Becoming a Video Game Composer in 2024
[composercode\(dot\)com/how-to-become-a-composer-for-video-games](http://composercode(dot)com/how-to-become-a-composer-for-video-games)
it's an exceptionally good read by Matt Kenyon from ComposerCode

FOR VOICE ACTORS:

Master-list of everything you need to know in the pursuit of the craft, from answering questions like; How do people find work? What are the pros and cons of P2P sites? Why do I need to invest financially? How much money could I make? and lots, lots more:

<http://voiceacting.boards.net/thread/1389/get-voice-acting-mega-thread>

Recommended Videos:

[GDC's Audio Bootcamp XVII: Reel Talk - Common mistakes you're making in your reel.](#)
[Speakers: Kevin Regamey and Matthew Marteinsson](#)

[Breaking into the Game Audio World with Alison Ho and Kristen Quinn](#)

<https://www.gdcvault.com/play/1023498/Audio-Bootcamp-Why-I-Rejected>

<https://www.gdcvault.com/play/1020345/Why-You-Didn-t-Get>

Incredibly generous people offering to help **people of color** with **game audio mentoring**:

<https://twitter.com/GDoCEXpo/status/1267236931219357702?s=20>

[International Game Developers Association's panel:](#)

"Being Black in Game Audio" - hear first-hand about navigating a game audio career while black. Panel 1

Featuring: [@WilbertRoget](#) [@perennialcoop](#) [@chasebethea](#) [@MrHassanSan](#)

<https://www.twitch.tv/videos/659462011>

Panel 2 Featuring: [@DevlonSamuels](#) [@Schematist](#) [@JoeSua4711](#) [@Slide20XX](#)

<https://www.twitch.tv/videos/662039979>

IGDA eJam: <https://www.twitch.tv/videos/662278822>

[PowerUpAudio - Twitch](#) @PowerUpAudio has an amazing show called Reeltalk on Twitch,

Watch all you can from [GDC Vault](#) [PAX east](#), [Develop:Brighton](#), and other audio-related talks from major game festivals. Watch Audio Deep Dives and Audio Livestreams on game studios' Youtube and Twitch accounts. Do your research!

Hone your sound design skills by watching [INDEPTH Sound Design Youtube channel](#).

And tutorials by [Marshall McGee](#).

Bjorn Jacobsen's [Cujo Sound](#).

Check out [Ryan Stunkel's Blipsounds](#)

[Paul Virostek's Creative Field Recording](#)

[Akash Thakkar's](#) free tutorials and courses on his Youtube channel.

[Braden Parkes](#), Audio Editor at Source Sound LA, recently started uploading videos

Follow [George Vlad's](#) field recording adventures.

Recommended Books:

HUGE Amazon Wish List I compiled with books relating to Game Audio:

[Game Audio books list](#) compiled by Florian Titus Ardelean

Not available on Amazon: Rob Bridgett's books:

- [Game Audio Culture](#)
- [From the Shadows of Film Sound](#)
- [100 Unusual, Novel and Surprising Ways to be a Better Sound Designer in Video Games](#)

Recommended Podcasts:

[Beards, Cats and Indie Game Audio](#) [#bcaiga](#) [@mattesque](#) deals game audio and also touches on news and trends

[Tonebenders Podcast](#) [@TheTonebenders](#) - lots and lots of useful info and awesome guests

[Game Audio Hour](#) [@gameaudiohour](#)

[Gameaudio Podcast](#) [@gameaudiopodcst](#)

[THE SOUND ARCHITECT PODCAST](#) <https://www.thesoundarchitect.co.uk/>

[Soundbytes Podcast](#) [@soundbytes_p](#)

[Soundworks Collection](#) [@soundworksvideo](#)

[Twenty Thousand Hertz](#) [@20korg](#)

Working Class Audio - [WCA Podcast](#)

Paul Virostek [@paulvirostek](#) started the [The Creative Field Recording Podcast](#)

[The Field Recording Show - Resonance Extra](#) is another new podcast for field recordists,

[The A Sound Effect Podcast | A Sound Effect](#) [@asoundeffect](#) - unfortunately stopped airing

[InsertCredit Podcast](#) [@InsertCreditPod](#) - stopped airing,

[Sound Design Academy](#) [@sdasound](#) - stopped airing,

[Sound Design: From Star Wars to Shark Week](#) - stopped airing,

[Izotope's The New Audio Podcast](#)

The Sound Design Show

Podcasts for music composers:

[Beyond The Playlist](#) by Hammond Chamberlain @JHammondC -

He also co-hosts [Soundography Podcast](#) @TheSoundography

[Rhythm and Pixels – Video Game Music Podcast](#) @Rhythm_n_Pixels is also awesome!

If you're into retro gaming: [Legacy Video Game Music Podcast](#)

Joshua Hodge's: [The Audio Programmer](#) @audioprogrammer

Recommended Social Media:

Subscribe to Reddit's Game Audio sub-thread at:

<https://www.reddit.com/r/GameAudio/>

Subscribe to the [Sound Design](#) Stack exchange

Follow Twitter hashtags:

#gameaudio #gameaudiotips #gameaudiodev #gamedev #gamedevpaidme

#GAMEJOBS #gameaudiojobs #GAMEDEVJOBS

Join Facebook Groups:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/181851689212927/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2324932678/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/136133059769967/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/wwisewwizards/>

Join LinkedIn Groups:

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8653596/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/1880187/>

Follow Telegram Groups:

<https://t.me/gameaudiotutorial>

<https://t.me/sounddesign>

<https://t.me/gameandfilmaudio>

Get on Discord!

Get on all the game development, game audio and sound design servers you can find. **Ask around for invite links!**

Get on Reddit's Pro Audio Network Discord, there is a #gameaudio channel and a #sounddesign channel too!

Get into the Breakfast Game Audio Club server if you're in Canada

Game Audio Nexus (ex. Game Audio North), especially if you're in the UK.

NYC Gaming, if you're in... *wait, you should figure that out on your own!*

GameDev Network.

GameDev league

GameDev Community

Game Audio Playthrough

Quarantine Noise Makers

Virtual Audio Con

Blipsounds

Cujo Sound

Unreal Slackers and Official Unity Discord servers have #audio channels

The Audio Programmers discord

Cockos Reaper Users

I'm sure there are many more useful servers I don't know about; please DM if you know any!

There's also a great server for voice actors - called Voice Acting Club - I found many talented voice actors there!

If you find any resources, articles or videos worth adding here, please get in touch with me at florian.ardelean@gmail.com

How to find game audio jobs:

To find jobs, check out the resources scattered throughout the document, and here are some recommendations of my own:

<https://www.linkedin.com/jobs>

Soundlister.com newsletter

<https://www.glassdoor.co.uk>

<https://www.indeed.com>

<https://gamesjobsdirect.com>

<https://gamedevjobs.io>

<https://gracklehq.com/jobs>

<https://gamejobhunter.com>

<https://gamejobs.co>

<https://jobs.gamasutra.com>

As well as this incredible [Google Sheet with GameDev Jobs](#)

Find your local gamedev community and be an active member!

Search using Maps:

<https://gamedevstudios.com>

<https://gamecompanies.com/map>

<https://gamedevmap.com>

Check out what game audio ads look like:

LinkedIn Jobs keeps old job ads. If you save a job, you might be able to still see the ad a year later.

Make the most out of your social media profile picture / avatar

It's a well-known fact that the first impression you make matters. I recommend against using logos or cartoons as avatars - even more so now with the current lockdown situation. People are social animals, they want to see and be near other people. As much as some of us, those a bit on the introverted and/or antisocial side, myself included, dislike this fact, it's a fact of reality, and denying it only means we're doing a disservice to ourselves.

So, to make the best possible first impression your profile picture must say 3 things about you:

- 1. That you're likable;**
- 2. That you're trustworthy; and**
- 3. That you're competent.**

Friends and family are not likely to be honest about your profile picture, so as to not hurt your feelings, so a hack I use is this website, which gives you completely anonymous and brutally honest feedback on these three important things based only on your profile pic and job title:

<https://www.photofeeler.com/>

Photofeeler is free. By giving your opinion (voting) on other people's photos, you earn feedback on your own.

Good luck job hunting!

Afterword

So, why'd you do it, Florian?

Why spend so many hours compiling all this for free, without holding anything back?!

While this might upset some people who offer paid courses for this kind of information - which is otherwise obviously freely available online (if you know where to look) - I'll try to answer:

To put things simply, I don't think the information presented here is enough.
Technique and knowledge are essential, but neither will make you a good sound designer.
It also takes passion, intelligence, creativity, outside-the-box thinking,
talent, imagination, curiosity, ambition, discipline, and drive.

None of which can be taught.

Top these up with knowledge, technique, hard work, patience and experience, and you're there!

Try to take advantage of the time this guide saves you to work on your shortcomings.
First off, recognize that you have them:

We ALL have shortcomings.

The field is so incredibly vast, there's no way you can excel at everything.

Recognize what **your** shortcomings are.

The game audio community is extremely helpful. Seek a mentor and establish which of your shortcomings are worth working on. *Use Nadia's advice to reach out!*

Focus on what matters. Revisit this guide to find what that is!

Have a low ego. Work hard. But most importantly:

Be a nice person.

I don't expect most people will read through this entire document.
Everyone wants fast results with little to no effort. That's not how life works.

If you read this far, you're a lot closer to getting an audio job in a video game studio,
but you've still got your work cut out for you.

Keep at it! It **will** pay off in the end.

(and please DM' me when you get the job!)

- Florian Titus Ardelean, Senior Sound Designer
Last update: October 2025