Art Games

GAME JAM MANUAL

A PROJECT BY GOETHE-INSTITUT, IN COOPERATION WITH MASCHINEN-MENSCH, FUNDED BY THE FEDERAL FOREIGN OFFICE OF GERMANY

MASCHINEN·MENSCH

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GOETHE INSTITUT

Sprache. Kultur. Deutschland.

Content

WHAT IS A GAME JAM?

A game jam can be compared to jamming in music: musicians come together to play music with friends or strangers and improvise tracks. In the case of a game jam it can be programmers, designers, developers but also artists, creatives and musicians. A game jam is usually meant to be an exercise in creativity and teamwork. There are many kinds of game jams such as the *Ludum Dare*, *Global Game Jam* and *Train Jam*. The general idea of all game jams is to be creative without the burden of commercial expectations, to meet and work with strangers and to create and complete a small game, often with an experimental character. There can be a set timeframe like 48 or 72 hours and sometimes a secret theme is introduced in order to guarantee that everybody starts from scratch. You will be surprised by the results that can be achieved; but bear in mind that it will most likely not be a major game and it doesn't have to be. Moreover, though competition can be healthy, the gain of every game jam is community and team building. Helping each other out is kind of the code of honour.

HOW TO ORGANISE A GAME JAM

Application
We recommend establishing some kind of application process in order to give you an overview of the skill sets and backgrounds of the participants and the number of people you have to plan for.

You can also draw up an application form, including the request for (some of) the following helpful information: name, age, e-mail address, phone number, field of interest (graphics, programming, sound design & music, planning, game design, interface design, art), level of knowledge, related skills or experiences, website with work examples, name of company or institution (if applicable), language knowledge, motivation to participate in the game jam. Ask people to bring the equipment they need.

If you want to use the results or at least report about them afterwards, make sure you have the right to do so by acquiring from the participants in written form the right to use the game or pictures/trailers of it.

Age and diversity
Game jams should be open to all ages. We encourage you to reach out to older participants as well. If you have underage participants, make sure you keep them safe. Check your legal obligations in regard to supervision and the health of minors.

Gaming is still mainly a male and sometimes sexist domain. We encourage you to aim for diversity in participants. Your game jam will profit from the broader range of perspectives. In this regard, check our Safe Space Policy at the end of this manual. Regarding ART GAMES, we aim to have creative people like artists, musicians and illustrators at every game jam. Strive for new experiences and experiments.

If you focus on developing digital games in your game jam, make sure to invite enough programmers. Every team should have at least one (and far better two) programmers.

Introduction and name badges

At the beginning of the game jam lay down the rules, explain how the game jam works and introduce your team to make yourselves approachable. If possible, have some people offering inspiring keynote talks. They could be experts, game developers with interesting projects or artists or scientists talking about topics your games could revolve around.

Introduce the schedule of the game jam and the -> Safe Space Policy. If you have one, introduce the secret theme. And let people know if there will be a presentation at the end and if they should produce short trailers for it.

Afterwards, it might help to do an introduction game to break the ice. You can ask people to group themselves according to their areas of expertise in order to make future cooperation easier.

Since most people will be strangers at the beginning, we recommend having name badges ready for everyone to make communication easier.

Official hashtag

Most participants will want to share their work in progress on social media. We recommend having the official hashtag of the respective game jam and, if applicable, the name of your website and social media channels printed and hung easily visible to everyone at the venue.

Recognisable staff

Participants will have all kinds of questions or problems. We recommend that all staff be recognisable and approachable. Introduce yourselves or wear shirts or specific badges.

Language barriers

If the participants of a game jam speak different languages, make sure enough organisers speak all of them in order to enable communication.

Closing event

When the set timeframe is over, offer the participants some time to try out the other games. It is always nice to have a presentation at the end, where each team presents the game they created. Short trailers are ideal for this.

(TECHNICAL) EQUIPMENT

Room and seating

Make sure the room you choose can accommodate the number of participants. Working in one space will encourage exchange and team spirit.

Make sure to have tables set up in a way that fosters collaboration. Rows with multiple tables next to each other or islands of 3-5 tables are recommended, as this reflects the expected team count. Make it easy to move and allow for enough personal space between the tables.

As most of the participants will work and sit for many hours, comfortable chairs are recommended. If possible, allow for a variation of seating. If you can, offer some couches aligned with small coffee tables or beanbags so people can pick their preferred seating.

Wi-Fi

It is essential that all participants have internet access, both for communicating with other participants and for accessing data and information. We recommend having the Wi-Fi login information printed and hung clearly visible for everyone at the venue.

Power supply

The most common issue at a game jam is limited power supply. Make sure that there is at least one power supply available to each table. In addition, spare multiple plugs are essential in case participants need additional power supply for monitors, smartphones or other technical equipment. Ask yourself if the power supply you need could lead to problems with the venue.

Network and USB cables

Not everybody will have a Wi-Fi card on their computers, so it is absolutely essential to have some network cables ready for them. Have them already hooked up to your network to make it easy for participants to have internet access.

In case participants forgot to bring cables, it would be good to have a selection of various USB cables ready. These include Standard/Standard and Standard/Micro.

USB drives and spare batteries

If possible, stock some USB drives that can be lent to participants in case they need to transfer data from one computer to another.

Another good thing to have is spare batteries. Wireless mice, keyboards or other peripheral accessories can run out of batteries, and being prepared for this situation is a nice gesture on your part.

Brainstorming equipment

To support participants in the initial brainstorming phase, <u>some</u> of the following equipment is recommended:
- Coloured pens
- Blank paper in different sizes, post-it notes, index cards
- Flipcharts
- Lego bricks or toy building blocks

- Board game counters or various other board game pieces

Presentation equipment

For final or in-between presentations, it is necessary to have a projector or large TV setup. Participants should be able to use the equipment themselves, so a remote should be available. In addition, the setup should include loudspeakers and HDMI/VGA/Display port adapters.

Extra: Depending on the size of the venue and number of participants, it is recommended having at least one microphone setup available.

WELL-BEING OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Overnight stay

Many participants will not be able to make it home or might even prefer to stay and sleep only a few hours before continuing work. We recommend the following:

- Have some blankets ready or advise the participants in advance to bring sleeping bags.
- Create a sleeping area. It need not be a separate room, but it should preferably be away from the working space and the noise. Try to dim the lighting.
- If possible, have some beanbags or even yoga mats on the floor.

Relaxation area

Sometimes participants will need to take a break from jamming and will seek comfortable areas to relax. If possible, provide some couches, coffee tables or beanbags. This area need not be separated from the working area. On the contrary, it is even helpful to place it at the centre of your venue so it can function as a social meeting space.

Hydration

Many participants will neglect staying hydrated. Make water accessible to them by providing glasses or cups. Have some bottles of water available throughout the venue and in sight of participants. In addition, have some kitchen towels ready as well, as spilled water can be dangerous around electronics.

Catering

Catering will be provided for participants on site with plates and cutlery. If possible, catering should provide alternatives for the major diets, vegan and vegetarian. Labels for specific allergies such as nuts should also be provided.

In addition to water, snacks should be accessible all the time. Vegetables and fresh fruits like bananas or apples are preferable, as they are healthy and compatible with all kinds of diets. Have plates and napkins available.

If you can cater to different diets, ask people in the application about theirs.

Trash cans
Trash cans should be placed throughout the venue to minimise litter.

Lighting
Flexible lighting conditions can massively improve the well-being of participants. One small desk lamp per table is preferable. If this is not feasible, allow participants to adjust the light of their working areas.

SAFE SPACE POLICY

The Safe Space Policy is a widely accepted code of conduct that will assure anyone who has been harmed or harassed, online or off, that your space is safe for them, and that you have taken their needs into consideration. Introducing all participants to the Safe Space Policy will be part of the introductory talk. To increase awareness of the Safe Space Policy, printouts with the following text should be prominently displayed on walls throughout the venue:

> [Official name of the game jam] is dedicated to providing a harassment-free social experience for everyone, regardless of gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, age, religion or game preferences. We do not tolerate harassment of participants in any form. Anyone violating these rules will be expelled from the venue at the discretion of the organisers. Harassment includes verbal comments that reinforce social structures of domination related to gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, age, religion, sexual images in public spaces, deliberate intimidation, stalking, following, harassing photography or recording, sustained disruption of talks or games, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome sexual attention. Participants asked to stop any harassing behaviour are expected to comply immediately. If a participant engages in harassing behaviour, the organisers may take any action they deem appropriate, including warning the offender or expulsion from the venue. If you are being harassed, notice that someone else is being harassed, or have any other concerns, please contact an organiser or volunteer immediately. The staff will be happy to help participants contact security or police, provide escorts, or otherwise assist those experiencing harassment to feel safe for the duration of the event. We value your attendance. We expect participants to follow these rules at all our venues and social events.[1]

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[1] This anti-harassment policy is based on the example policy from the Geek Feminism wiki, created by the Ada Initiative and other volunteers. The policy is licensed under the Creative Commons Zero license. It is public domain, so feel free to copy, edit and use it. This version of the Safe Space Policy was kindly provided by berlingamescene.com

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