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INDIE STUDIO STARTER KIT

Get ready to start your own indie game studio



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The Indie Studio Starter Kit

Welcome to the start of something awesome. You're here because you have passion for games, and not just playing them. You want to build them, fill them and bring them to life. Video games for you are art and fun combined and I want to help you start your indie journey the right way. But the reason I want you to start the right way is because I care.

I'm not going to say I care about you, I don't know you, but I care about what you are doing. I started Going Indie and I built this product because I worry about the future of gaming. Too many games are being made by passionless individuals who are focused on money rather than fun. We need that to change, we need the passion back, we need the excitement back, which is why we need you. The future of game development is individuals like yourself. People who care about and want to make something truly special. It's vital for the future of the industry to have people like you and my hope is to help you start your path the right way.

Now, the process of making a game isn't easy, there will be roadblocks and tough times ahead. You will often feel lost because game development is actually starting a business. You'll have to worry about marketing, legal, accounting, and so much more. The process of making a game is just 1 step out of 100, and I want to help you understand the other 99 steps. Or at least the first 11 to get started.

If you follow every step on this document and checklist, you will come out the other side with a better understanding of who you are, what you want to accomplish in game development, and where to go next.

So let's dive in!

1 Overcome Your Fear

Starting an indie game may feel overwhelming, and that's perfectly normal. I've started multiple companies, I've consulted hundreds of startups/studios, I've been an entrepreneurship professor and you know what, it's still intimidating to start something new. For me and for others. So you're not alone.

The developers of Stardew Valley, Binding of Isaac, Lethal Company and more all faced the same challenges you do now. They feared failure, lacked experience, had limited funds, but they pushed through. And so can you. This is the key to making anything.



You don't need a huge studio or millions of dollars to make something amazing. What you need is vision, grit, and the willingness to learn and improve every day.

Every moment you struggle, you need to think about the indie games that have left a mark on you. Remember those that made you want to take this step, because this journey will challenge you. It will make you angry and frustrated. But it will also drive you, excite you and the satisfaction of making something from nothing is the greatest feeling in the world.

This is your time. Right here, right now. Take that first step and forget your fear.

2 Determine What Drives You

One of the most overlooked steps in starting a project is self evaluation. Assessing your abilities and mentality. You need to take time to reflect on your mindset and what motivates you.

 Don't skip this step! Self reflection is crucial at this stage.

Self-awareness is key to starting. You need to accept there are areas where you aren't talented. Maybe it's coding, art, game design, or marketing. Whatever it is, you need to identify your weaknesses and create a plan for improvement. Whether it's taking courses, practicing skills, or learning from others, you've got to have a plan for self improvement.

You might be thinking, how do I self evaluate? How do I know what I need to work on? Well, I created a self assessment just for this. Go fill it out and it will help you determine what you need to work on.

Click here!



Self Assessment Sheet
Google Sheets

Go to resource





The resources linked in this document are meant to help save you time, money, and headache on your indie development journey. Every resource may be purchased for less than the cost of a new AAA game. See page 24 to view what's included.

Once you have filled that out, you should now know where you have gaps and where you struggle. If you scored low in some areas, that's okay, you can't be amazing at everything. If you feel like the knowledge gap in certain areas is too big to overcome, find a partner. Or, if you can't find a partner, get some funds to pay others to help where you struggle.

The self evaluation sheet is not meant to dissuade but to inform. Becoming an expert takes time, it's okay to not be good in certain categories. I'm a terrible artist so I hired people who are experts. I'm an okay coder, so I watch videos and I practice. So if you feel like you aren't ready because you lack some skills, think again. Everyone has to start somewhere, and you can start now. Be confident in yourself and know what you make matters.

3 Find Your Play Personality

The best and worst thing most aspiring game devs do is make their game exactly as they want. The reason why it's the worst is because they don't talk to other players and they make every feature of the game with themselves in mind. Creating a monstrosity similar to the car Homer designed in the Simpsons. I'll talk about player validation at a later step.



What's interesting though, if you don't make a game that you personally like, the game will struggle. Why? Because if you don't like playing your own game or if you can't find the fun, neither will others.

So you need to understand your own personality and the types of games you like if you are going to make something great. But you need to balance your own likes and desires with what other players want. With that in mind, ask yourself, what do I like? Do you like platformers, RPGs, or puzzles? How about narrative, mechanics, or art? Do you prefer playing alone or with friends?

Knowing what you personally love will help you design games that resonate with players like you.

So how do you determine who you are as a player? Well, the best way is to look at your list of games. Most likely you already know what you enjoy and what you don't enjoy. However, if you want to get analytical, if you want to group yourself in a particular way, you should look into play personalities.

What are play personalities? Basically, they lump people into categories to identify different types of play that they may be more naturally drawn to. This study wasn't for video games specifically, but understanding these personalities as an indie developer is crucial because your audience will engage with your game based on how well they align with their preferred play style.

Here's a breakdown of the play personalities and a few game examples:



1. The Joker

Players who enjoy light-hearted, silly play. They love to make people laugh and often enjoy games with humor or ridiculous mechanics.

- Goat Simulator
- Untitled Goose Game
- Thank Goodness You're Here!



2. The Kinesthete

Players who enjoy movement and to engage physically. The Kinesthete might enjoy games that focus on speed, rhythm, or precise control of movement.

- Mirror's Edge
- Celeste
- most VR games



3. The Explorer

Players who love to discover new things, whether it's a physical place, a hidden item, or a story twist. They enjoy open worlds, puzzles, and games that reward curiosity.

- The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild
- Outer Wilds
- Subnautica

 *My primary play personality*



4. The Competitor

Players who are driven by the desire to win or achieve mastery. They seek out games with clear objectives and opportunities to show their skill against others or the game itself.

- Rocket League
- Deadlock
- Street Fighter



5. The Director

Players who enjoy orchestrating events and being in control. They might enjoy strategy games or games where they manage or lead characters, events, or other players.

- The Sims
- RimWorld
- Factorio



6. The Collector

Players who love gathering things, whether it's in-game items, achievements, or experiences. They are drawn to completionism and often enjoy games with lots of collectibles.

- Pokémon
- Animal Crossing
- Dredge



7. The Storyteller

Players who love narrative and immersion. They want to get lost in the world and the characters. They enjoy games with rich stories, complex characters, and emotional depth.

- The Last of Us
- Life is Strange
- Firewatch



8. The Creator

Players who are driven by the joy of creation. They love games that allow them to express themselves, whether it's through customizing characters or building entire worlds.

- Minecraft
- Dreams
- Terraria

Most players fall into more than one bucket of play style. So I would suggest isolating which play personality defines you best and then pick one or two others that somewhat define you. This step is important for the future, because every business needs subject matter experts, and the more you know yourself, the games you like, and the genres associated, the more you will know about your player base and what makes them tick.

*A massive success, but
not a game for everyone*



Balatro

Overwhelmingly Positive | 44,507 user reviews

Rougelike

Deckbuilder

Strategy

Casual

4 Get Organized

Staying organized is critical to maintaining momentum in your project. Organization or lack thereof is the reason tens of thousands of games sit half baked on people's hard drives. Be better. Use tools like Trello, Notion, or a simple spreadsheet to track tasks and projects. Break down large tasks into smaller, more manageable steps.

Not sure how to get organized? Well, you can use my process. I like organizing by category, then object, followed by tasks.

My example

[Category](#) > [Object](#) > [Task](#)

[Art](#) > [Main Character](#) > [Fix left arm](#)

Detailed example

[Category](#) > [Sub-category](#) > [Object](#) > [Task](#) > [Task Details](#)

[Art](#) > [Character Models](#) > [Main Character](#) > [Fix left arm](#)
> [The arm animation on the left arm isn't matching up with the right](#)

Simpler example

[Category](#) > [Fix main character arm animation](#)

If you aren't the most organized person or you don't love taking notes, start with one of the simpler options. It's better to be semi-organized than not at all, and if you are new to project management I created a simple spreadsheet for you.



Project Management Sheet

Google Sheets

[Go to resource](#)

I also created a time management spreadsheet to track how long each project takes to complete.



Time Management Sheet

Google Sheets

[Go to resource](#)

If you struggle to stay on top of your tasks, there are a few techniques you should try such as the Pomodoro Technique, where you work in focused bursts followed by short breaks, or Time Blocking, where you schedule specific blocks of time for different tasks or types of work throughout your day.

Pomodoro Technique

■ = 30 minutes



Time Blocking



There are all sorts of strategies, but I personally prefer time blocking. I know I am most productive in the morning and in the evening. Which is why I save any meetings, family chats, and game time for the late afternoon.

There are so many organization tricks or processes. Adopt mine or craft your own process. It doesn't matter, just get organized before you start.

5 Determine Your Time Capacity

It's critical you determine the time you can dedicate to this project. Take a realistic look at your schedule and be honest with yourself and with others. How much time can you commit each week to development? Don't be vague. Pick a specific number or small number range.

- 5 hours per week
- 10 – 15 hours per week

If you're juggling a job, studies, or family, you'll need to carefully plan your hours once you have determined your capacity. Are you working nights or weekends? Can you find an hour or two at work when things get slow? Whatever it is, determine what times and days of the week you will be working and make sure they match up with your hours picked above.

 But remember, balance is critical. Don't forget to maintain your other responsibilities. Adjust your time commitment if necessary, but only if necessary.

Put your time commitment here on your goal sheet and stick to it.



Goal Sheet

Google Sheets

[Go to resource](#)

6 Set Goals

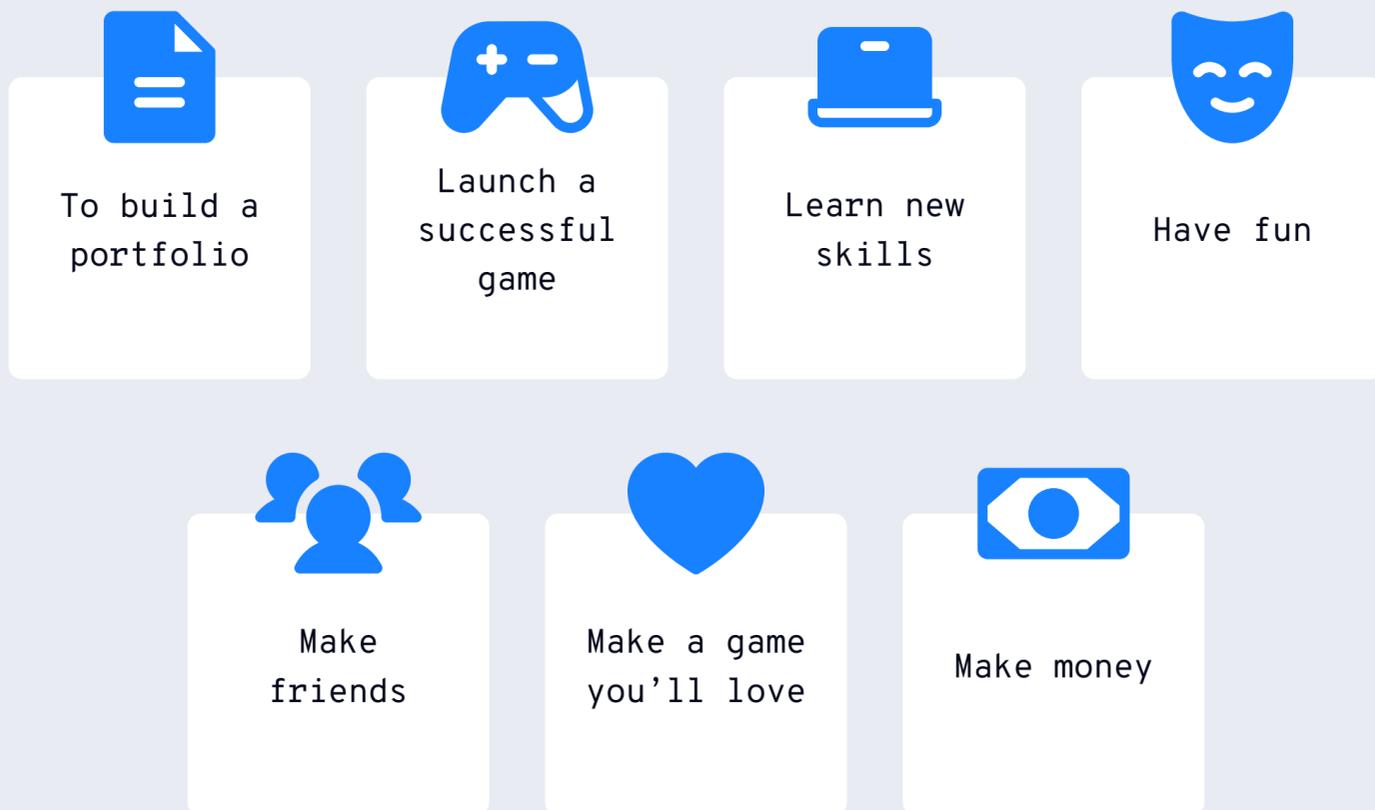
Your goals should align with both your game and personal development. Do you want to launch a game within a year? Do you want to learn a new programming language? Do you want to make a certain amount of money? Goals should influence the game you make and they should be achievable with the resources and time you have.

But setting goals is always easier said than done. We all like to make goals, but most people rarely follow through. So how do you make goals and stay consistent?

Well, if you are following along, you've already done half the work. When making goals you need to understand yourself and understand your time commitment. Most people make goals without any regard to how they are going to achieve them or the time it will take. Which is why they last a week before losing focus and commitment.

So if you have skipped the steps above, go back and do them. If you have finished those steps, you are ready to set some goals.

When you make goals you need to remember why you got into game development in the first place. Ask yourself, what do I hope to achieve? Is it:



There is a reason you got into game development and your goals should reflect this reason. If you want to make friends and learn new skills, great. But then make sure your goals reflect that desire. Don't say you want to make friends and then have every goal centered around money. That's not to say you don't have a goal to make money, but if your core desire is to make friends, most of your goals should be things like:

- Attend 5 game jams.
- Join 10 Discord communities.
- Talk with 1 person in those communities each day.

Goals that actually push you to accomplish your reason for starting.

Use this spreadsheet to make goals and make sure to follow the SMART process. I didn't invent it, but the process is tried and true. Make sure every goal is SMART.

Specific: Clearly define what you want to accomplish.

Measurable: Include metrics that allow you to track progress.

Achievable: Set realistic goals based on your skills and available time.

Relevant: Ensure your goals are directly aligned with your desires.

Time-bound: Assign deadlines to your goals.

Achievable **Specific** **Time-bound**

I will finish all the map tiles for the lava map by January 15th.

Measurable



Goal Sheet

Google Sheets

[Go to resource](#)

Once you have set goals, you are now ready to ideate your game.

7 Make a List of Game Ideas

Most people when they start a project, start with an idea in mind. Something usually similar to what they already know (which is discussed in step 3). People often get married to this idea and don't explore other possibilities, forgetting that the best ideas don't come from inspiration but perspiration.

So if you truly want to make something great, you need to open your mind and think outside the box. Create a list of ideas and really try to find something unique.

How do you find something unique? Start by considering the games you love to play and think about what makes them great. Look for gaps in the market, or ways you could innovate on existing games or genres.

Why was Stardew Valley so successful? Because Concerned Ape took a pre-existing genre that hadn't gotten much love in a while and made something fresh.

Why was Minecraft so successful? Because they innovated so much on the sandbox genre that it became game unlike any other.

Why was League of Legends so successful? Because they took a game that was inaccessible and they made it accessible.



Idea Generation Sheet

Google Sheets

[Go to resource](#)



Revived a neglected genre and brought new features to it.



Innovated on the survival genre, and popularized voxel graphics.



Brought the gameplay loop of the DOTA Warcraft 3 mod to the masses.

All these factors should be considered in what I like to call the ideation phase, and the goal of this phase is to find the best game idea.

Start by brainstorming a variety of concepts and put them in a list. Then ask yourself: What genre do I understand the most? What game mechanics do I enjoy? What skills do I have?

With these questions in mind use a spreadsheet or doc to formalize your ideas and analyze their feasibility. Write down every one you have and make the descriptions simple. Just the basic concept is all you need.

- Lethal Company but medieval times and single player.
- Stardew Valley but in space and people raid your farm now and again.
- Hollow Knight but in the style of the show Over the Garden Wall.

Seems simple I know, but examples like this really work. “Hollow Knight, but in the style of the show Over the Garden Wall”, was the one sentence inspiration for Layers Deep by Tall Order Games, and they raised \$51,000 on Kickstarter.



Layers Deep

Release Date: To be announced

Metrovania

Exploration

Hack and Slash

PvE

Using examples like this will clearly define the idea in your mind and others. If you can't explain the idea simply, then it isn't a good idea or you need to refine it. Value that can't be explained simply, can't be built simply.

Use page 12's spreadsheet to write down all your ideas. Once you have a decent list, you can go through and pick the ones you like best for the next step.

8

Get Player Feedback

The most important thing you can do as a game developer is get player feedback. At every stage you should be seeking validation.

If you completed the previous step correctly, you should currently have a few game ideas that you're excited about. These ideas should have a short one sentence explanation of what they are and you now need to take those ideas to people in your life, your community, and the broader internet.

Whenever I tell people this, the most common response is, "what if people steal my ideas?"

My response is: they won't.

In all the years I have helped companies, not a single person or company during the validation stage has had their idea stolen. Why?

1. Ideas aren't special, they are just ideas.
2. Most people will never do the work to make that idea a reality.
3. People usually prefer their own ideas over others. "Why make what John is making when I can make what I want to make."
4. Your idea in another person's mind looks different to them than it does to you. So even if they "steal it" the end product will look very different.

So go talk to everyone about your different game concepts. Get feedback and not just positive feedback. Learn everything you can and tweak those ideas as you learn. Validation is about learning and changing, not just validating what you like.

If you aren't sure how to get feedback, here are some questions you could ask when validating your ideas with players:

Start by asking a discovery question. Something like:

1. What type of games do you typically enjoy, and why?
This will help you know what game ideas to pitch them.
2. Does this game concept sound interesting to you? Why or why not?
This question will help you know if your idea is interesting at a base level to your target market.

Once you have validated if the person is the target for your specific idea, ask these questions:

3. Are there any specific features you would expect or want in a game like this?
4. Are there specific themes or art styles (dark, whimsical, sci-fi) that you'd expect in this type of game?
5. What platform do you primarily play on or would prefer when playing this type of game? (PC, console, mobile)
6. What would make this game stand out to you among similar titles?
7. What attracts you the most when buying new games like this? (story, mechanics, visuals, etc.)

Ask more questions than what I have listed. Ask as much as you can and I would suggest interviews over surveys. Interviews will always give you a better insight than a survey. But a survey is better than nothing.

Here is a survey you can use now to start:



Player Survey
Google Form

[Go to resource](#)

Now, if done correctly, these questions should help you isolate if the individuals you are interviewing are part of your target market. The information you get from them will give you insights into what games and features they like and don't like, and maybe, their feedback will reveal some gaps in the market.

People will tell you what they want if you ask. So ask, and after you are done talking to as many people as possible, go back through your list of ideas and look at the feedback you got. Then use what they said to help you pick the one idea that feels the best.

If you followed this step correctly, you should now have a game idea validated, and better understand it's strengths and weaknesses!

9 Pick Your Game and Your Player

If you haven't realized yet, picking the "right" game is about getting as much data as you can on what your target gamers want, mixing that with what you like, and adding some unique elements to make it stand out.

In simple terms, find what you and others find fun and then make it unique.

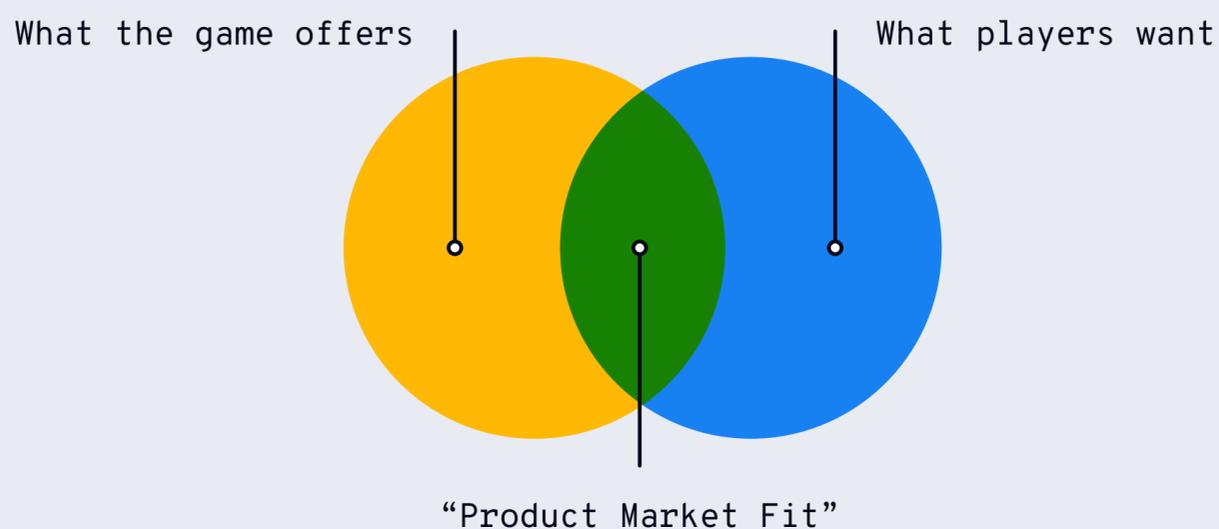
Here's the formula:

other player's definition of fun + your fun + unique flavor = potential success

Now this formula is just a theory of mine so I wouldn't take it as gospel. However, the theory stems from my experience as a software start up consultant and the biggest concern of most start ups is product market fit.

For those that don't know what product market fit is, it's just a measurement term for how well a product meets the needs of its target audience.

Game studios have the same concerns as start ups, they want to know if they have product market fit, or game market fit.



In my experience, the companies that did the best job finding product market fit had three things:

1. The founder was part of the industry and had the pain points personally they were trying to solve.

Meaning, they were part of their own target audience.

2. The founder talked with as many people in their industry as possible before building their product. So that they knew what was wanted on a deep level.

Basically, the best founders know all the barriers to entry.

Demand barrier

└ Is there enough demand for your game?

Legal barrier

└ Are there any legal issues that may come up when making your game? (copyright, patents, etc.)

Financial barrier

└ Is the game you want to make financially viable?

Technical barrier

└ Is it technologically possible to make the game you want to make?

Cultural barrier

└ Is the game culturally viable in the market you are targeting?

And third:

3. Through their research, the founder discovered a need that wasn't being met and they determined there was a unique opportunity to provide something new to the market.

Will this guarantee success? No. There is no such thing as guaranteed success. But if you nail every piece of the formula, from my experience, you'll have the best chance to find game market fit.

Now, going back to the equation, what's easy to determine is "your fun". Who knows you and your preferences better than you? Maybe Google or Steam, but you're up there. Also, if you did step 3 and you reviewed the play personalities, you should have a more tangible understanding of your type of "fun".

That said, nailing "player's fun" is more difficult. You should know how to get feedback from players if you followed step 8. But gathering feedback on ideas is different than nailing your playerbase and there is a tried and true process, it's called a persona doc.

For those that have never used a persona doc, it's a doc that helps identify the types of players who will play your specific game. It's essentially a tool that all companies use to define their target audience more clearly. If filled out correctly, the doc will help guide devs decisions on game design, marketing, and overall player experience. For indie devs, the persona doc can be particularly important as it ensures your limited funds are used effectively.

I have used multiple variations of persona docs for different companies but here is a structure for indie studios:

1. **Basic Demographics:** Covers the essential background information about the player, like age, gender, location, education, job status, and income. The reason this info is important is because it helps you understand the player's general background.

Questions:

- What is the age range of your player base?
- What's the targeted gender and what's the gender spread?
- Are there specific regions or countries you're targeting?
- How many hours do they work and what's their income class?
 - └ (This helps understand the spending and time capacity)

2. Gaming Preferences: Includes the types of games your players enjoy (genres, styles, themes), platforms they prefer (PC, console, mobile), and specific features or mechanics they like or dislike. The reason you should understand players' gaming preferences is because it will give you insight into what players are looking for in a game, like design, mechanics, and art.

Questions:

- Do your players enjoy action, puzzle, adventure, or RPG games?
- Are they PC gamers, console players, or mobile users?
- Casual vs. hardcore, single-player vs. multiplayer, narrative vs. combat.

3. Motivations: The reasons why players enjoy gaming. Do they play for relaxation, competition, exploration, socialization, or a combination of a few. Understanding motivations will help you create features and experiences that tap into why your players are drawn to your game, which will help you design better experiences.

Questions:

- What drives them to play games?
 - └ (Escape from reality, social interaction, competition, story-driven experiences)
- How do they want to feel when playing?
 - └ (Relaxed, excited, challenged)

4. Challenges/Pain Points: Identifies the main frustrations or issues of your target playerbase, such as: time constraints, difficulty spikes, or lack of meaningful progression. Understanding your players' pain points will help you understand what might prevent a player from enjoying your game, allowing you to address these concerns directly to create a smoother, more enjoyable experience.

Questions:

- What do they dislike in similar games?
 - └ (Overly complicated mechanics, simplistic art style, microtransactions)
- What would prevent them from trying your game?
 - └ (High difficulty, price point, lack of features)

5. Player Personality: Categorize your target players by assigning them specific play personalities. Just as you analyzed your own personality on step 3, apply a similar approach to identify what appeals to your target player base.

6. Gaming Habits: How often do your players play, how long is their play sessions, when do they like to play, and do they play alone or with others. Your goal with this info should be to optimize the game's difficulty, length, and social features to align with players' available time and play preferences.

Questions:

- Do they prefer short bursts of gaming, or longer sessions?
- When do they play? (Weekends, after work, on commutes)
- Do they prefer subscriptions, free to play, or one time purchases?

7. Put Yourself In Their Shoes: This section is unique compared to the others but it's in my opinion, the most important. For this part, you need to imagine the player and their day to day life. Consider what they're looking for emotionally when playing your game and why. Make up something to really drive home who your player is. All this is, is a simple empathy exercise, but often, this exercise will help you understand what your player when they go to sit down and play your game.

On the next page is an example of a persona doc:



Chris

- Boring job so he wants to feel excitement.
- Talks with people all day, wants alone time.
- Stressful life, wants to decompress.
- Doesn't like to go out at night, prefers staying indoors.

Play Personalities



Storyteller



Explorer



Collector

Demographics

- Age: 26
- Location: USA
- Gender: Male
- Marital status: Single
- Income: \$75K

Psychographics

- Motivation:** Prefers immersive storylines and character development
- Challenges:** Often frustrated with games that require constant online play or those that have complex combat mechanics. He prefers playing solo with games full of lore and simple mechanics.
- Playstyle:** Likes to explore at his own pace, hates time limits
- Gaming Preference:** PC gamer, enjoys open-world RPGs

You probably don't need to go too deep on the section "In their shoes". Might derail you from the broader target audience, but it's one of my favorite exercises. There's few things more valuable than putting yourself into the lives of your customers.

Now that you know what a persona doc is, go fill out yours here:

**Persona Doc**
Custom Template [Go to resource](#)

If you don't have enough information to fill it out, you didn't talk to enough people. So go talk with more players and research more games. More data the better. That said, You'll never have all the data you need, and I don't want you to get analysis paralysis. Just find enough data that you can make a reasonable inference on the type of player you are targeting and why they'll find your game fun.

10 Create a Budget

Developing a game costs time and money. Every project I have ever done always takes longer and cost more than what I expected. However, one of the best ways to counteract those rising unexpected costs is a budget. A simple budget that limits your spending and informs you where money should be allocated can do wonders.

Here is the link to fill out your budget:

**Budget Sheet**
Google Sheets [Go to resource](#)

Click here!



The spreadsheet linked above will automatically calculate everything for you and inform you if you are on budget or exceeding budget.

But before you fill it out, understand how a budget can help you make your game:

1. Resource Management

Most Indie developers have little to no money to spend. So a budget helps prioritize spending to make sure you are allocating funds efficiently to art, programming, marketing, software tools, and personal needs during development.

2. Avoid Overspending

Without a budget, it's easy to overspend on certain aspects of game development, which can lead to running out of money before the game is finished. Not good.

3. Money for Marketing

Most indie devs are so focused on development that they overlook the importance of a marketing budget. It's more difficult than ever to get your game noticed amongst all the titles out there. A little money for marketing could go a long way.

4. Forecasting Income and Expenses

A budget helps forecast when money will be coming in. Which can help you plan different phases of development.

5. Publishers and Investors

If you plan on raising money or getting a publisher, they will want to see your budget. It demonstrates that you understand the financial scope of your project and have a plan for completing it within your means.

What makes up a budget for indie devs:

- Development costs
- Art and design
- Audio
- Music
- Marketing
- Website (if you're building a site to promote your game)
- Legal (copyright, trademarks, contracts)
- Distribution costs/platform fees
- Emergency fund

Example of a Simplified Indie Game Developer Budget (for a small team):

Category	Estimated Cost
Development costs	\$10,000
Art and Design	\$4,000
Audio	\$2,000
Marketing	\$1,500
Website	\$500
Legal	\$1,000
Distribution/Platform fees	\$1,000
Emergency fund	\$1,000
Total	\$21,000

11 Start Tracking Your Costs

At this point in the process, you are probably realizing that building an indie game is like starting a business and when you start a business, it's essential that you keep accurate records of all your costs.

Why? Because of taxes.

So you need to do some basic accounting. Nothing crazy, just income and expense tracking.

Here's some quick definitions of income and expenses for those brand new to accounting:

Income

Income is money coming into your business. Your income might come from game sales, crowdfunding, or content creation.

Expenses

Expenses are all the costs required to develop, market, and operate your studio. This includes software, contractors, marketing, equipment, and any operational costs. Just think, am I buying this to make my game, or is it to benefit myself? If for development, then you can expense it.

Categorizing expenses is crucial when doing taxes because it ensures compliance with tax laws. Tax authorities require accurate recordkeeping, and if you misclassified certain expenses, it could lead to denied deductions or even penalties for tax fraud. To help with this, I created a simple accounting sheet for you to use to track all of your income and expenses.



Accounting Sheet

Google Sheets

[Go to resource](#)

If you really want to do your taxes correctly, you need to categorize your income and expenses. Here are few to consider (all the categories are pre-programmed on the spreadsheet, including 30+ expenses categories)

Income Categories

- **Game Sales:** income from game sales (e.g., Steam, Epic Games Store, itch.io).
- **Crowdfunding:** funds raised through platforms like Kickstarter or Patreon.
- **Sponsorships/Partnerships:** payments from partners, game publishers, or sponsors.
- **Social Media Content:** earnings from content platforms where you're sharing development progress, playthroughs, or related content.

Expense Categories

- **Development:** salaries, freelancer payments, software licenses.
- **Marketing:** advertising costs, social media campaigns, press kits, influencer payments.
- **Art & Design:** art, UI/UX design, animations, and asset purchases.
- **Sound:** music, sound effects, and voice-overs.
- **Legal:** legal fees, trademarks, copyrights, and contracts.
- **Platform Fees:** store distribution fees.
- **Miscellaneous:** unexpected or one-time costs.

The Accounting Sheet is meant to help you track everything tax related. But, if you are getting serious, I would highly suggest accounting software. Filing your taxes gets so much easier with an accounting software and we are partners with Freshbooks. So you can use our link to get a huge discount.



Accounting Software
Freshbooks

Get a discount

Conclusion

Congratulations! You've just taken the first major steps toward starting your indie game studio. By completing this PDF, you're ahead of most aspiring game developers.

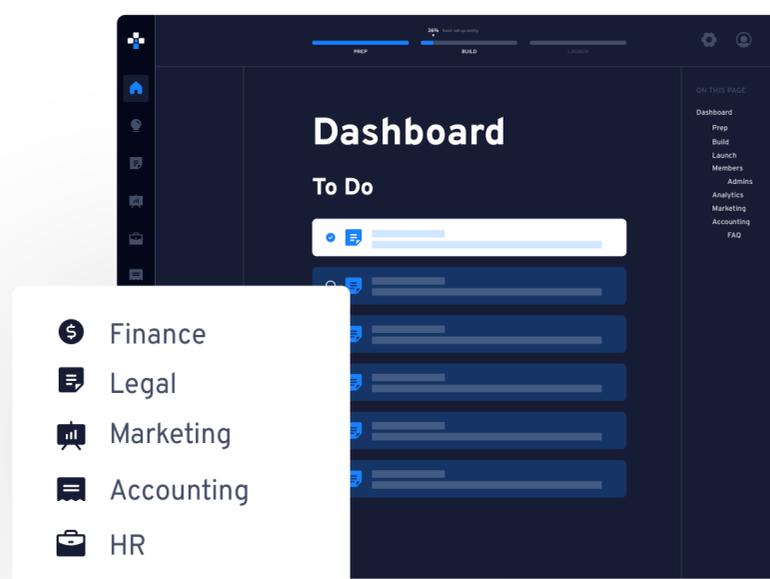
The resources linked in this document are meant to help save you time, money, and headache on your indie development journey. Every resource may be purchased for less than the cost of a new AAA game.

Resources
Self Assessment Sheet
Project Management Sheet
Time Management Sheet
Idea Generation Sheet
Goal Sheet
Player Survey
Persona Doc
Accounting Sheet
Total: \$59

Remember, the steps I've outlined here are just the beginning. These are the only first 11 steps of hundreds, but you should now have the tools, insights, and clarity to begin your journey as an indie game developer. The path to creating and launching your game will be filled with stumbling blocks, but you've already set yourself up for success and with this preparation you will be able to turn those stumbling blocks into stepping stones.

What is critical to remember, this PDF was created to help you get prepared, to help you think through the logistics, finances, and ideation. But the real magic happens when you actually start.

If you're ready to officially start your indie studio, to take everything to the next level, go check out <https://www.goingindie.co/>.



We can help you with everything you need including the ever daunting world of legal. Even stuff like setting up your business, equity distribution, and contracts.

This PDF is meant to help you get prepared, where our service over at [goingindie.co](https://www.goingindie.co) is everything you need to start.

Remember, if you are scared, experience is the best teacher. So get to work, make mistakes, learn, and keep going.

Now go make your dream game a reality!

Best of luck,

Cameron Stoker