

51* things every game student should know

Or “Things that really irked me while marking”

Kaye Elling
twitter@K_0
2013



Vertex (Singular)

Vertices (Plural)

NOT: vertexes, vertise, verities,
verticy, vertisee, vertex's,
vertees, virtons or virgins.

Quad: face with 4 sides

Triangle: face with 3 sides

Polys: can refer to either

Polycount: the maximum number of triangles allowed. Even if quads are used.

(This is an initiative test: Roll a D20 now. Bonus points if you know how many triangles are in a D20.)

Your portfolio is only as good as
the **Worst** piece of work in it.

If in doubt, leave it out.

Polycount: It's a target, not a limit:

If the brief requires 15,000 triangles, you won't win the ***AMAZING FRUGALITY AWARD***[®] with 1500.

**You may love to play games, but that
doesn't make you a developer.**

I love to eat dinner, but that doesn't make me a chef.

Developers don't say “**mobs**”.

They say:

NPC

Enemy

AI

Bot

Unless they're Notch.

Are you Notch?

No you are not.

Use the open briefs in your university modules strategically.

History & Conventions: *The History of the JRPG*

Environment Design: *JRPG Cathedral*

Technical Specialisation: *Weapon economies in JRPGs*

Industry Analysis: *RPG Developers in Japan*

Character Development: *RPG Samurai*

Working Game Demo: *漆を塗る the RPG*

Elective module: *Japanese Language 101.*

If your portfolio looks like this, how many entry level jobs are you qualified for? In your country?

Game development is a team sport
for Geeks.

This means communication.

With grammar-Nazis.

*“...the different ways they done it like in the
game play and the scenes ad the props”*

...is not communicating and will incur their wrath.

Studying game development at university is still university study.

(citation needed)

Damn right it is (Elling, 2013).

Using the Harvard Method.

Elling, K., *100 Things Every Game Student Should Know*(1st ed), University of Bradford, 2013

Don't break the fourth wall in assessments.

“But I think there will be enough material on the web to use to get a decent amount of information to produce an essay to a high enough standard to pass this.”

The development equivalent of this is:

“Dear Sony, we think we can find enough ideas from other games to pass your submission requirements.”

...said no successful developer ever.

Everyone loves creativity by typo

“You can customise your character with scaring.”

“To scare your character, press ☒! Trololol!”
laugh the developers at your job application.



The things you say, may say more
about you than you realize.

*“There is much greater depth in Alice:
Madness Returns than in the original Alice In
Wonderland by Lewis Carroll.”*

0_0

If an applicant's portfolio is bad enough, developers will save the work to a **GALLERIE ABOMINATI**.

When they need cheering up they will gather round to look at it and laugh.

Do **NOT** be that applicant.

Read the brief.

No, seriously:

READ.

THE.

BRIEF.

Already read the brief? **READ IT AGAIN!**

**Do not make the
viewer do this when
looking at your work
online.**

Your first year at uni should be really tough.

This is where you learn how to learn, how to self motivate, and generally get your **** together.

(make sure you have your **** together by the end of this year, or repeat the process at significant financial cost).

CROPPING
|S REALLY
|MPORTANT

Understand Brightness & Contrast

INVEST IN A SCANNER

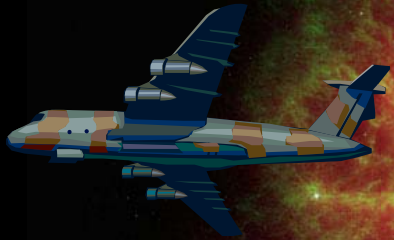
DON'T LET FORMATTING OVERWHELM YOUR
WORK.

IT MAKES YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE OVERCOMPENSATING

BECAUSE YOU ARE.

And it's often extremely ugly

AARGH, AARGHH, MY EYES!



Be inclusive: Don't assume the developer reviewing your portfolio is male.
Or white.

Avoid: Porn elves. Undressed or under-dressed women. Unfeasibly large or gravity defying breasts (on anyone). Knicker shots. Brutalized or dehumanized women with sexual overtones. Homicidal 8-year old girls (especially in ghost or AI form). Any and all over-used, limiting and frankly borderline racist stereotypes of criminal men from non-white racial backgrounds including triads, yakuza, mafia, bloods or crips (especially if they are also rappers), insurgents and/or terrorists, middle-class British villains as voiced by Alan Rickman, working class British villains as voiced by Jason Statham, French mimes as voiced by no-one, impoverished Mexican villagers with strong regional accents and apparent limited access to grooming products, education or any kind of empowerment.

All of the above still applies if the characters are in zombie form.

Basic terminology. You really should know this:

Q&A:

Questions and answers

QA:

Quality Assurance

Also:

Usability Testing:

Getting targeted user feedback and player responses to gameplay.

Quality Assurance:

Bug hunt. 

Your second year at uni should be really tough.

This is where you learn the majority of the required skills for your discipline.

Know what that discipline is.

Also:

Quality Assurance:

A completely viable way to get your foot in the door in a games company.

But be aware that not all companies have a path to dev from QA.

Ask first.

If your work takes longer to load
than it does to view, you're
wasting everyone's time.



Including your own.

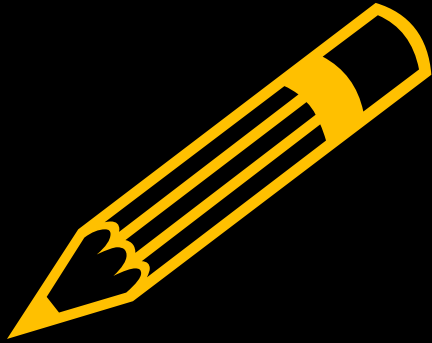


Most developers work in shared spaces and use headphones. Even Leads & Managers.

Keep the volume on your showreel consistent.

And try not to assume that everyone <3s Skrillex.

Having one of
these is a
minimum
requirement.



At all times.

Attention to detail.

It matters.

“I’m really good at ideas. That’s what I want to do in the team; be the guy who has the ideas.”

Join the queue.

At the back.

Behind the guy who can draw, the girl who can code and the ones who can write, plan, create, evaluate, debug, submit and deliver.

They’ve got ideas, too.

Your final year at uni should be really tough.

**If it isn't almost
breaking you,
you're not working hard
enough.**

**Dependencies are
important, so don't pretend
they don't exist.**



Nobody gets everything right first time.

No-one likes to do work more than once, but that's the only way you can improve it!

<<<Expand your horizons>>>

Just because it doesn't have the word GAMES in it, doesn't mean it's not going to inspire, inform or be useful to you every day for the rest of your creative life.

This is especially true of non-electronic information such as:

- Books
- Museums
- Art
- History

A good rule of thumb for selecting work for your portfolio is this:

“If someone who didn’t know me saw this work, would they think I was a serial killer?”

**NOT OFFICE
FRIENDLY:
REJECT**

**When opportunity
knocks do NOT ignore it
because you're catching
up on crap you should
have done ages ago.**

**That's how regrets are
born.**



Project management: **Not just for managers!**

Tokenism: the practice or policy of making no more than a token effort or gesture.

~~Token effort.~~

~~Token female.~~

~~Token changes.~~

~~Token comments.~~

~~Token QA practice.~~

~~Token documentation.~~

Does not belong in development practice of any kind.

At a job interview, remember that you're being interviewed by a professional <insert discipline here>, not a professional interviewer.

You can distract them from any awkward moments with shiny work!*

* This does work. "I've brought my sketchbooks, would you like to see them?" is like baubles to kittens.

Change requests require change.

You may get asked to change something
many, many, many, many, many, many,
many, many, many, many, many, many,
many, many, many, many, many, many,
many, times.

Deal with it.

Txt spk

Duz not luk gud on ur work.
Like eva.

All-nighters may make you feel like a real developer, but they make it less likely that your work will be good enough to become one.

Get some sleep, you'll need it.

When you get some feedback:

Heed it.

Act on it.

Don't ask for more feedback until you've acted on all of the last lot you received.

Otherwise you're all talk.

Get used to benchmarking your work.

Your target is:

INDUSTRY STANDARDTM

KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THAT MEANS.

“Dear Sir or Madam,
I’m a recent graduate and am very keen on getting a job
in the games, animation, visual effects, pre-visualisation
or web industries...”

Signed by reject #732

Target each application to that job only:

- **Cover letter**
- **CV / resume**
- **Showreel**

SCOPE

Sometimes you just have to reduce it.

SCOPE

But be sure to do so in a scalable way.
Otherwise you end up delivering

SCOP-

Which is crud.

If your game idea starts with the story it's not a game idea. Stories in games are optional.



THE WORLD IS A DARK PLACE. THE
GOVERNMENT CONTROLS OUR
EVERY MOVE! WHEN
OVERCROWDING HITS CRITICAL,
THE SECRET POLICE JUST
“DISAPPEAR” US! AND ALL THE
WHILE I FEEL LIKE I’M FALLING INTO
THE VOID OF DISPAIR...

You don't need anyone's permission to make games.

You don't have to wait for "an assignment" to learn something.

Go learn something now.

Well?

Go on then!

The office is not like the internet, no matter how relaxed the office environment may feel.

DO NOT:

Troll. Look at porn. Talk about porn. Bring porn in. Talk about anyone as if they were in porn. Use porn terms/slang. Talk about your sexual conquests (real or imagined) in shared spaces. Create random sexually explicit content, even in lunch hours or overtime. Display nudie calendars, lad-mags or “page 3” on your desk. Have/own tentacle porn action figures.

Many game developers find their life-partner in the office. Just think about that for a minute.

If game development isn't

YOUR PASSION

**and you think it's tedious and boring after all,
pick a new industry immediately.**

We won't judge you. OK, well maybe just a little bit.
But honestly: It's your life. You need to live it.

*** (#52)Personal hygiene.**

Is not a “lifestyle choice” when working in teams.

Body odour is NOT a viable way of keeping managers away from your desk*.

*** No matter how tempting that can be during crunch.**

Kaye Elling is the grizzled veteran of nearly 13 years of game development in the UK. She's developed on pretty much every game console from the PS1 to the Xbox 360, as a Character Artist, Art Lead, Art Manager, and Project Manager. Some of the companies where Kaye has worked include Gremlin Interactive, Sony Computer Entertainment, and Blitz Games Studios where she shipped many games in the Premier Manager series, the Bratz series, helped out on Formula 1 and had a whole ton of games canned before release including some ****really good ones she still can't tell you about****. In 2008 she got tired of the volatile nature of the industry and went to teach at the University of Bradford. Shortly afterwards the coalition government was elected and started to decimate that sector too. She is very sorry about this, and it is probably not all her fault. The games courses that Kaye runs at Bradford University cover games art and game design, and many of the survivors of these courses go on to lead rich and fulfilling lives. Some of them even in the games industry at places like Frontier, Climax, Ninja Theory, Jagex, Lionhead and EA. If you are interested in studying on one of our games courses at Bradford (we have games code courses too but Kaye doesn't do code), you can contact ugadmissions@scim.brad.ac.uk, because direct contact with Kaye is best avoided unless you can appease her capricious nature with chocolate, LOLcats or live puppy webcams. Especially when marking.