

Start a team; Manage your project; Improve your creativity; Design your game; Learn C#; Build a video game in XNA; Find investors; Market and release your games; Everything you need to take a game from concept to complete.

Indie Game Development with C# & XNA

From Concept to Complete

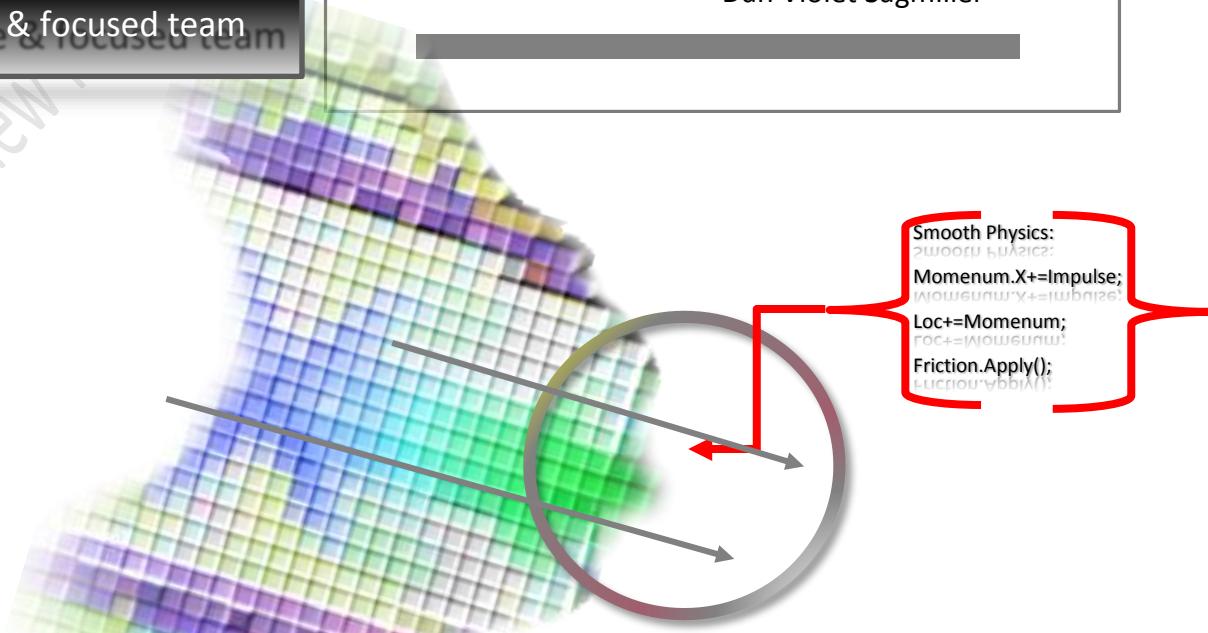
Version 1

Dan Violet Sagmiller



Build a creative & focused team

Review / Revision from



As of 2013-09-26, this book is formally released free of charge by Learn Build Play (<http://www.LearnBuildPlay.com>). The author, Dan Violet Sagmiller, had been busy finishing this late in 2012 and going through review phases in the beginning of 2013. In February Microsoft quietly announced they were no longer supporting XNA or to release updates. A sad day for many XNA fanatics.

Fortunately, MonoGame (<http://www.monogame.net/>), the open source Mono.Net version of XNA works as well as ever, runs on more operating systems and for most intensive purposes, supports the same XNA code. Recently Dr. T (Dr. Tim Chamillard) released a coursera course on XNA, (<https://class.coursera.org/gameprogramming-001/class>) which had over 22,000 students in it. Clearly there is still a strong community desire for XNA.

Please feel free to make sure you have the latest version of the book and all of the source code at LearnBuildPlay.com.

Indie Game Development

With C# and XNA

From Concept to Complete

By Dan Violet Sagmiller

This book teaches you everything from designing your game, to learning to program it, to managing your team, and finally releasing it.

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Who is this book for?

I tried to make sure this covered many groups well, but its ultimate target is anyone with some free time and for freelance groups starting out. Your typical Indie developers, though not limited to programmers.

Ages

This book is based off of materials I have used for teaching college classes to kids most commonly, but also adults. (Regarding programming, kids and adults usually learn at the same pace, but kids tend to be more excited.)

Gender

It would seem that most game developers and most game players tend to be male. But that separation has been rapidly closing. Most video games also appear more male audience focused. Keep that in mind for your game design. Indie developers tend to thrive by finding a niche market that is underserved. It would be quite intelligent to make games that are either gender neutral or geared towards a female market.

In regards to this book, it makes no difference.

Backgrounds

This book is mostly geared towards beginners, perhaps a bit of experience, but probably not running a successful game development company already.

Despite that, and the beginner's programming section, almost EVERY developer can learn from this. As a developer who's held senior positions at major companies and also having worked in numerous project teams all over the country, I've seen a wide variety of successes and failures for teams, projects and individuals. This book tries to impart some of the wisdom I have gathered, to all levels of skill.

Is this book only useful to those *planning to program the games*?

While this book is geared towards those who want to be programmers, it covers many areas of game development, including a large section devoted to properly designing a game, another sizable section devoted to managing and supporting a freelance/indie team and another section at the end regarding release, testing, getting investors and marketing the product.

This book can be valuable to those wanting to be valuable to a game development team, whether or not you intend to program.

Introduction (Read Me First!)

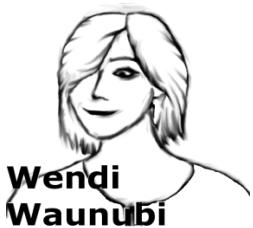
This book takes you on a journey of designing, managing building and releasing a video game. Along the trip, a couple of key characters will stand out. The characters I selected tend to represent key aspects of contributors in game projects. Let's get introduced.



Hello! I am Mark Moneybags. I am here to make sure this makes money. We've all got bills to pay. If you don't make money, you won't be able to survive in this business *OR* find an investor.



Hey, I'm Kathy Konfident. I've made a bunch of games before, though I might not be available often. I've done it all and know what works and what doesn't. If I happen to stop in, I recommend you pay close attention.



Who's Wendi? This girl! I'm Wendi Waunubi. I don't have a lot of skills, but I'm really interested in this project. I'd love to help out if you can find anything for me to do. I'll stop in to see how things are going. Good luck!



I'm Daron Donagry. I've got some ideas for all sorts of stuff. Like this morning, I tied my shoe laces together for a race so one leg would help pull the other one and I should move faster. Hmm... I mostly fell down though...

And finally you get me, Dan Violet Sagmiller, your friendly papery narrator (Or 'pixelly', if this is a digital copy). I'll be your guide through this adventure and provide the training you need to build a game, if these other characters let me.

Each person on your real team will be a mixture of all these characters. (Sorry team, but you're all rather one dimensional) It is important to understand that just because someone has a bad idea, doesn't mean everything they do will be a bad idea. And similarly, just because someone seems like an expert (including me) doesn't mean they are always right. (Shhhh. Don't tell Kathy that.)

And so it begins...

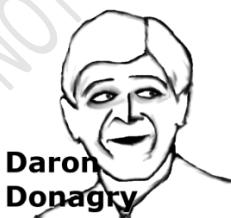
Somewhere, you got the idea it might be fun to make a game, a 2D space shooter, like the classic Galaxian. You mention it to a few friends.



Hey! I like galaxian. Your building a game like it? That sounds AWESOME! Count me in.

**Wendi
Waunubi**

I just learned how to program a button and when you click on it, the background color changes. How cool is that?! I'm going to start programming the game right now!



**Daron
Donagry**



Let's wait on programming for now. I think we need to get this designed a little better first. I've seen a lot of projects fail because they didn't have a good plan.

Kathy's right. Before you just go diving off into code, you should make sure you've got a few things in order, like what your game is. Fortunately, the first section of this book is all about Game Design.

Game Design

What is a Game Design, why do you need one and how do we make it effective? Well, a game design is an outline of the game; what it is about, what is in it and so on. Unless it is a very tiny game, that you can finish alone and in less than a day, you should have a Game Design Document to keep everyone on track. We are going to make it effective by creating something that *WILL* be read, is not overly detailed and gets to the point *fast*.



This should really be about an overview and not details. You want to convey the feeling and flow of the game play. But not fill a book with every possible interesting thing you can think of.

Your best bet to make money on this is to figure out an uncommon niche for your game. Larger companies stick to plans they know will work, tend to rely on vast resources, and won't experiment as much as you can.



One of the most commonly overestimated resources is media. (Images, 3D models, etc...) Unless you have several skilled artists with more time available than the rest of your team, it would be best to plan for very little graphics

This next section will help you work out the details of good game design. Starting with the chaos of brain storms .

Brain Storming Session

We've all had ideas about an interesting game or product, but often it stays just that, *an idea*. The brain storming session lets you convert a lot of chaotic, undeveloped ideas into rich, focused plans.

Normally I wouldn't have put much guidance on the creativity part, because that can weaken it, but I do have some advice for running a good brain storming session; one where you get a lot of value out of it.

For the Host

As the host of the meeting, it's your job to get everyone together and make the meeting worthwhile. Here are some tips to get it started.

1. Send out written invitations.
 - a. I know it might sound corny, but I'm mostly referring to an email, or a sheet of paper, or even a note card that gives a light overview of what will be covered.
 - i. No one should come into a brain storming session needing to ask what it's all about.
 - b. Try to give some time, so people have time to think of good ideas. Anywhere from a few hours to a couple days, typically not more than 2 days, so people don't start to forget about it. The worst thing is for this to lose velocity or interest, because people couldn't express the exciting ideas and they drifted away.
 - c. Also tell them to bring a notepad (either paper or laptop) for keeping their notes or ideas so they don't forget them when others are talking.
2. Hold back your Super-Plan, for the first 10 minutes
 - a. Naturally, you may have already come up with some ideas you think are brilliant, and most likely are. But if you start off the meeting with that, you often stifle creativity and reduce the combined creative effort to just one person, you.
 - i. Instead start with a light plan, something not ridiculously low quality, but something that leaves a lot of room for improvement. People will feel more open to suggest ideas and come up with interesting ways to fix it.
 - b. The key is to realize that the game will be better with more minds on it. The more creativity you can get from other people, the more they will be inspired to help out with it and you'll be more likely to have active participants.
3. Silence does not need to be filled.
 - a. Often, a moment of silence happens and as the host, you may feel like the meeting has become stagnant, feeling the urge to say something.
 - b. But this is a brain storming session and people tend to think better when their mouth is shut.
 - c. If it remains quiet for a while, simply looking people in the eye for a moment, often gets them verbal again.
4. Don't let one person hog the time. (including you)

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