



Game Crediting Guide

Draft 8-5 Beta

April 2007



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/>

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

USE OF THIS GUIDE

RULESETS

INCLUSION RULES

ATTRIBUTION RULES

USAGE RULES

METHODOLOGY

QUESTION AND ANSWER

APPENDIX

I – IGDA STANDARDIZED ROLES

II – FUTURE INITIATIVES

III – CONTRIBUTORS

IV – CONTACT & FEEDBACK

About the International Game Developers Association (IGDA)

The International Game Developers Association is a non-profit professional society that is committed to advancing the careers and enhancing the lives of game developers by connecting members with their peers, promoting professional development, and advocating on issues that affect the developer community. For more information on the IGDA, please visit www.igda.org.

(Note: This guide is still in beta form: readers are encouraged to send all feedback to the IGDA Credits Committee. See Appendix IV below.)

Introduction

In the game industry, it is often said that “you’re only as good as your last game”. Unfortunately, many members of the industry have a hard time proving what their last game was due to the largely arbitrary crediting methods used by their employers.

Far from following a set of coherent, logical crediting standards, game credits are often inconsistent from game to game, even within the same company. Employees are often mislabeled, unlabeled, or left off, though they may have given years of their life to bring a game to market. In fact, a 2006 IGDA Game Writers Special Interest Group survey revealed that 35% of respondents (48 out of 134) either “don’t ever” or “only *sometimes*” receive official credit for their efforts.

The IGDA Credit Standards Committee is providing this set of guidelines to assist in the crediting process. The mission of the IGDA is to advance the careers of game developers and we believe that employers effectively and accurately assigning credits are crucial to that process.

Use of This Guide

This Guide outlines a set of rules to be used in assigning credit for team member contributions. Rules that are marked as optional can be applied at the discretion of the team. In developing this set of rules, the Committee discussed several existing practices and whether or not each precedent was worth advancing. Precedent that is not discussed within this guide should not be assumed as good precedent.

The annotations under some rules are provided as a courtesy in this beta stage. As this Guide is still in beta form, readers are encouraged to send all feedback to the Committee. See Appendix IV below.

Rulesets

Studios are encouraged to adopt rulesets for crediting to govern topics of **inclusion** (who gets credit), **attribution** (what credit people get), **usage** (how they get credit), and **methodology** (procedures for collecting credits).

IGDA Game Crediting Guide – Draft 8-5 Beta

The following rules represent proposed *standards* (“must” rules) and proposed *guidelines* (optional/suggested rules, reasoning, or methodology). Some guiding principles in the development of these rules are:

1. Credits are to reflect the role served, not the condition in which the role was served. In addition, rather than reflect how well a person performed his or her role, credits should reflect only the position held on the team.
2. In deciding between two strongly supported but opposing points of view pertaining to a particular rule, an attempt is made to weigh the potential size of groups that could be harmed and the degree of potential damage from that harm in either case.

Inclusion Rules

INCL.1 – Any person, contractor or employee, who has contributed to the production of the game for at least 5.0% or 30 days (whichever is least) of the project’s total workdays in development must be credited.

- 1-1. Time on project is to be counted in days the position is held, not hours worked.
- 1-2. For Leads, it is permissible to omit the ‘Lead’ designation from the credit if the person spent less than 50% of the project’s total workdays in development in a Lead role.
- 1-3. For non-Leads, if the contribution consists of less than 40% or eight months (whichever is least) of the project’s total workdays in development, then the credit may be listed in a lower tier, e.g. “Additional Programming.”

a. While credits have been just as controversial for who *is* included as much as who was *not* included, the more manageable solution is to adopt an inclusive philosophy. Given the nature of intermittent activity in the development process, a simple threshold may not be so unreasonable. Special consideration should not be provided for “crunch days” when determining the number of days for an employee’s contribution to a project. If there are rewards for “crunch,” there is no incentive to reduce it, and there are other ways to reward crunch without affecting crediting practices.

INCL.2 – Credit is retained by any person who leaves the company or project prior to the project’s completion, provided they pass Rule INCL.1.

b. Typically, there is no resistance to this idea until a person with a solitary credit, usually a Lead, realizes he or she must share billing with an ex-contributor.

IGDA Game Crediting Guide – Draft 8-5 Beta

INCL.3 – Credit is retained by any person who is fired or who has engaged in illegal activity not related to their contribution to the project, provided they pass Rule INCL.1.

c. Getting fired is a human resources issue that should have nothing to do with crediting projects. For example, while a few U.S. Representatives have been convicted of criminal activity and removed from office, all of them are still acknowledged as having been U.S. Representatives.
d. Past service should always be acknowledged for the record to avoid the possibility of blacklisting.

INCL.4 – “Legacy credit” should be provided in the following circumstances:

- 4-1. For **re-releases** or **acquired properties** that include a previous original work in whole or in part, *all of the original developers* should be credited above any new credit related to the re-release or adaptation, since the work being purchased by the consumer is fundamentally the original content for all intents and purposes.
- 4-2. For **ported** games, credits should show the whole original team at the top, followed by the whole team of the ported version at the bottom, since the work being purchased by the consumer is fundamentally the original content for all intents and purposes.
- 4-3. For **expansion packs**, credits should show the whole expansion team at the top, followed by the whole team of the original game at the bottom, since the work being purchased by the consumer is specifically the expanded content.
- 4-4. For **sequels** or **franchise installments**, credit should be provided to the *person* responsible for creating the original concept, idea, or design known as the “intellectual property.”

Example 1: A North American company acquires a 15 year-old Japanese game and upgrades the graphic style from 8-bit to 16-bit; the original 8-bit Japanese developers should receive credit, including the artists. This credit may be supplemented with new credit for new work (e.g., for added dungeons etc.).

Example 2: In Ubisoft’s *Rayman Raving Rabbids*, a credit states that the game is based on the characters of Michel Ancel.

INCL.5 – *[Optional]* Credit may be provided to those who have contributed to the original creation of tools, art, programming, sound effects or other assets that are continually used within an ongoing game franchise.

INCL.6 – *[Optional]* Any person who has contributed to the production of the game for less than 5% of the project’s total workdays in development (or 30 days, whichever is least) may be provided with credit in a “Special

Thanks” section, which may be tiered with an “Additional Special Thanks” section.

Attribution Rules

ATTR.1 – Credit must include a name and role, not just a name. Several names may be grouped under one role if it sufficiently defines the role of each person being credited and clearly indicates the discipline of work. Refer to the disciplines in ATTR.9.

ATTR.2 – *Credits for work in like disciplines should be grouped together* (e.g., Art credits together, Audio credits together).

2-1. Where a conflict arises between Rule ATTR.2 and Rule ATTR.5, Rule ATTR.2 should prevail.

2-2. As an *[optional]* exception to rule ATTR.2, credits for up to five [5] especially noteworthy team members may be listed first, before all other credits, to signify the key visionary team. Credits under this option should replace the equivalent credits in the main section for the individuals concerned. The five maximum corresponds to the number of main disciplines (Design, Programming, Visual Arts, Audio, Production) listed in ATTR.9, although a strict one-per-discipline correspondence is not required.

2-3. As an *[optional]* exception to rule ATTR.2, credits in one game worked on by two geographically separate teams (e.g. different studios) who are both doing creative work (e.g. Design work in France, Programming in Russia), development credits may be divided by company but this is not recommended. Instead, like disciplines should be grouped together with the company name appearing in parentheses after each name or not at all. If the latter is chosen, separate credits should be added for each company without reference to individuals (e.g. a French studio credited for Design, and a Russian studio credited for programming, but no correlation between individuals and their companies).

ATTR.3 – Leads in each discipline should be credited first.

ATTR.4 – (Optional) Senior/junior distinctions should NOT be used in screen credits:

- a) unless the distinction applies to managerial, financial, administrative, executive, marketing, public relations,

IGDA Game Crediting Guide – Draft 8-5 Beta

localization, information technology, and customer support

- b) if the Senior functions in whole or in part as a hands-on Lead, to prevent functional Leads from losing award attributions.

Note: The Senior/Junior appellation is entirely appropriate and encouraged for use in resumes and for job advertisements to distinguish seniority.

e. Seniority may be reflected in job titles and resumes but is not recommended for screen credit because it often creates problems in identifying appropriate award recipients for industry and press awards. In many cases, a Senior is denied an award in deference to a Lead because the awards group has no way of determining that a Senior is also functioning as a Lead. Furthermore, there is no industry consistency in whether or not a Senior also functions as a Lead. The intention behind the recommendation to avoid “Senior” in screen credits is more important than the universal application thereof; where there is no possible misconception arising out of the “Senior” credit, this rule need not apply.

f. Refer to Rule ATTR.10 for other hierarchical credit, and see the Question and Answer on this topic in a later section.

ATTR.5 – Development credits should be listed ahead of publisher credits and non-creative or non-technical credits, such as managerial, financial, administrative, executive, marketing, public relations, localization, information technology, and customer support positions. Where a conflict arises between Rule ATTR.2 and Rule ATTR.5, Rule ATTR.2 should prevail.

ATTR.6 – When two or more individuals share an identical credit they are to be listed in order of number of days spent working on the project. If the number of days spent on the project is equivalent, or if there is an extenuating circumstance that renders this approach unworkable (abusive practices such as intentional over-working to get top billing or inaccurate time records), individuals are to be listed in alphabetical order (in such a case, it should be clearly marked within the credits, e.g., “Programmers, in alphabetical order”).

ATTR.7 – In accordance with Rule METH.3, the number of multiple credits for a single individual should be capped in a reasonable manner in accordance with the threshold in Rule INCL.1 without otherwise forcing the individual to disavow significant contributions in any craft discipline.

- 7-1. Where Rule INCL.1 precludes another screen credit (e.g. a role performed in less than 30 days), Rule ATTR.10 may or may not be applicable and should be extremely limited in application.

IGDA Game Crediting Guide – Draft 8-5 Beta

- 7-2. Fewer credits that are broader in scope may be appropriate to limit the amount of roles and contributions that can be claimed, notwithstanding Rule ATTR.1.
- 7-3. Managers supervising multiple disciplines should receive a single managerial/executive/producer credit covering all disciplines.
- 7-4. Leads serving *exclusively* in managerial and/or executive capacities should receive a *single* managerial/executive/producer credit covering all managed disciplines.

Example 1: A hands-on Programmer is promoted in the middle of a game to a Lead Programmer position whose duties are strictly to manage people. This person should receive one credit as “Programmer” and one credit as “Programming Manager.” As an alternative to Programming Manager, Lead Programmer could be used if it does not replicate the screen credit title of anyone else.

Example 2: A jack-of-all-trades designer/programmer/artist is promoted in the middle of a game from a Lead Artist people manager to a Lead Designer people manager. This person should receive one credit as “Manager, Art and Design”, not separate credits.

- 7-5. Leads serving *predominantly* but not *exclusively* in managerial and/or executive capacities should receive a single managerial/executive/producer credit covering all managed disciplines and may also be recognized with *specially created credit* that refers to the discipline of work and does not replicate the screen credit title of anyone else.

g. Multiple crediting is often needed when team members are promoted to a different role in the middle of a project.
h. Beware that multiple crediting can be extremely nebulous and problematic when roles are defined too narrowly within disciplines.

ATTR.8 – *[Optional]* Team approval is required to limit pressure from authority figures to decline credit. An individual is allowed to refuse his or her own credit if:

- a) he or she feels he is not deserving of the credit,
- b) the removal is requested in writing, and
- c) there is a majority of approval from those in-house team members in the affected discipline of credit.

ATTR.9 – *[Optional]* In general, notwithstanding Rule ATTR.2, disciplines are recommended to appear in this order:

- 1. Design/Writing
- 2. Programming/Engineering

IGDA Game Crediting Guide – Draft 8-5 Beta

3. Visual Arts
 4. Audio
 5. Production
 6. Quality Assurance/Testing
- 9-1. In multi-platform development with different teams working on different platforms with some common members between teams, discipline order should prioritize the disciplines that spread most widely among various teams. Remaining disciplines should follow the general proposed order above.
- 9-2. Discipline order can reflect the structure of the teams developing the game, such as a programming-centric studio listing programming credits first. In this way, discipline order should not reflect only the opinion of managers, executives, producers, or administrators.

i. The main purpose in this order is to protect the primary recognition of the “visionary” role. While an industry standard for discipline order should arise at some time, at present there appears to be no overwhelming benefit to such requirements.

ATTR.10 – *[Optional]* Extraordinarily useful or otherwise significant contributions from non-regular or non-active participants on a given project may be recognized with *specially created credit* that refers to the discipline of work and does not replicate the screen credit title of anyone else.

j. Non-regular or non-active participants may include but are not limited to short-term contractors, senior employees working mostly on other projects but making small significant contributions, and individuals who make quick but watershed contributions, such as fixing a critical bug. Specially created credit should not create the sort of confusion identified in the annotation for Rule ATTR.4. In general, hierarchical or specially created credit should be extremely limited.

ATTR.11 – *[Optional]* Use of the IGDA’s set of standardized roles is encouraged. Refer to Appendix I below.

ATTR.12 – Nickname credits are strongly NOT recommended. Where included despite the recommendation, they should appear in quotation marks within a real name (e.g. Nicholas “Wise Man” Sampson).

ATTR.13 - Fictional credits are prohibited unless they are in a separate roster of credits in a style that is markedly different from the actual credits (e.g. Programming, Betty Boop).

Usage Rules

USAG.1 – Credits must appear in the actual game.

- 1-1. If in-game credit is profoundly impractical (e.g. cell phone games), a URL is to be provided indicating where the credits appear online.
- 1-2. Port, expansion, or adaptation/re-release credit should be accessible from a separate menu selection, separate from the original team. Where separate menus are needed, all selections should be visible at one time and should identify the class of credit (e.g. “Original Team Credits”, “Expansion Credits” would both be listed on the menu).

USAG.2 – Credits must not be hidden or locked in the game (e.g., a player may not be required to win the game in order to view credits).

USAG.3 – Printed manual credits, though nice, are not encouraged since long lead times tend to result in out-dated or inaccurate credit by the time a game is ready to ship. Instead, a URL should be provided indicating where the credits appear online, such as a third party industry organization web site. Listing partial credits in a small manual and full credits online is also not encouraged.

1. In order to ensure the historical permanence of the record, the IGDA intends to fulfill the role of a third party industry organization web site for credit records. The IGDA also intends to automatically submit credits it receives to MobyGames, to allow for searching and consistency in the records.

USAG.4 – Individuals have the right to list their credit in their resume (or other appropriate personal reference) in the same manner as it appears in the game or manual, as of the day the product is released by the publisher or 2 years from the last day of a person’s work on a project, whichever is sooner.

Methodology

The following recommendations are meant to aid the implementation of a company approach to formalized crediting for each game project.

METH.1 – Establish Approach: At the start of each project, the team, a representative subset of the team, or the management of the team must establish the crediting approach and rules to be used (e.g., adopting the

IGDA Game Crediting Guide – Draft 8-5 Beta

rules set forth in this Guide, and resolving applicable or pertinent issues presented in this Guide).

METH.2 – Final Review: Team members should be given a chance to review their final credit before the game is finalized.

1. On-site team members should be shown their proposed credits and have at least a two week period to voice concerns or suggest corrections to management before the credits are finalized.
2. All reasonable effort should be used to inform departing or terminated team members of the credit they will receive as a standard part of the process of departure.
3. All reasonable effort should be used to inform contract and similar off-site contributors of the credit they will receive at the time services are rendered.
4. [Optional] A sign-off sheet could be circulated among the on-site team as a record of this process.

METH.3 – The team should establish a cap on multiple credits. Along with management, the team should establish written eligibility rules for multiple credits. Eligibility rules may disqualify contributions of lesser proportion or magnitude.

METH.4 – [Optional] Regular Review: It is recommended that the credit records be reviewed by the team upon completion of major project milestones. Records should be updated to reflect only cumulatively significant role changes and additions.

METH.5 – [Optional] Designated Credits Keeper: It is recommended that a team member be appointed to keep and maintain the credit records, including the change logs, from the start of a project. A producer or manager is usually the most appropriate person.

METH.6 – [Optional] Accessible Credit Records: It is recommended that credit records and change logs be accessible to all team members in a place that does not require a request to obtain the information, such as a .txt file on a local server, or a wiki page.

Question and Answer

Q: Why aren't there more strict inclusion rules to prevent people from getting undeserved credit?

A: While more detailed qualification rules could be developed on a per company basis, the Committee believes that it may be counter-productive and that simple rules are preferred for standardization at this early stage of the process.

Q: Why is seniority mostly inappropriate in crediting terms?

A: For comparison, credits in the motion picture industry do not credit writers and directors any differently for debut work or career longevity. In the game industry, these terms serve only to confuse what is a leading contribution. For example, a Lead who serves only in a managerial capacity would be mistaken for contributing more than a Senior who performed hands-on work. Conversely, if a Lead contributes a significant hands-on role, the implication would be less so if a Senior is credited not for work on a given title but for overall company seniority while working mostly on other projects. When the temptation exists to give Senior credit to a substantial hands-on leading contributor, the credit should be attributed as a Lead along with any other Leads. This is consistent with the film industry which credits a Director and 1st Unit Assistant Director. Note that the distinction does not mean that the Director has had a longer career than the 1st Unit Assistant Director.

Q: Who should be considered the creator of an original concept, idea, or design known as the “intellectual property”?

A: Where that credit attempts to identify a creator, such as “Created by,” caution should be exercised. Whereas television, as a similar precedent, usually assigns “Creator” credit to the original writers of a pilot episode, it does not assign such credit to a technical craftsman, such as a film or tape editor, who serves as the “glue” for the project similar to a game programmer. Studios granting legacy credit may or may not want to observe this distinction.

Q: Are there viable alternatives to the ordering of disciplines?

A: Design-centric studios may want to use the order exactly as proposed, while programming-centric studios may opt for a slight alteration preferring top billing for programmers. However, in all cases, the source of the primary creative “vision” should come first. Consider that special effects movies do not list the special effects artists first and instead follow an industry standard.

Q: If sorting credits by “days spent on project” is too time-consuming to calculate, is alphabetical ordering really the best option?

A: Various alternative sorting methods are quite commonplace, and precedent to that effect is easy to find. However, additional sorting methods aren’t much better. Criteria such as who has worked at the company the longest, who has since left the company, and who worked during crunch and who didn’t... all seem out of place in the context of crediting. Companies can have other, more appropriate ways to recognize achievement or contributions in these alternative areas. Credits are to reflect actual roles served, not the conditions in which the role was served.

Q: What is a reasonable credit cap, and do caps exist in the film industry?

A: Though arbitrary in nature, a three-credit cap per small-team project or a three-credit cap per discipline in a large-team project with many narrowly defined roles may be an appropriate guideline. For comparison, motion picture screenwriters only receive credit for writing at least one-third of a screenplay, with the exception of foreign films (e.g. “Children of Men”) and non-union work. Also, due to the overly broad definition of a Producer, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in recent years has resolved to credit only three Producers for a Best Picture nomination. However, this example refers to three or more different persons with shared credit, not a single person with multiple unshared credits. In any case, this reference highlights an arguably effective, arbitrary solution to an issue arising out of credit excess. In addition, the solution is exercised even in cases where the excess itself may be genuinely deserved or justified.

IGDA Game Crediting Guide – Draft 8-5 Beta

Q: Why should I give credit and effectively advertise my team for other jobs?

Some companies may cite unsolicited recruiters as the reason for their failure to give credit. However, unsolicited recruiters generally seek out only top talent and management, with little impact on the larger workforce. Due to this tendency, as well as the fact that the larger workforce statistically turns over or burns out in an average of 5 years according to the IGDA's own Quality of Life Survey, the "unsolicited recruiters" excuse does not seem to hold water. Therefore, failing to give credit for this reason is akin to throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Due to this fact, industry leaders and top talent are encouraged not to let themselves become the excuse for a lack of proper crediting.

Appendix

I – IGDA Standardized Roles

Crediting in games has become a hot topic in recent years. As development teams grow bigger and outsourcing becomes more prevalent, the informal crediting procedures used in the past become increasingly insufficient to describe each developer's exact role within the development process.

Additionally, the non-standard naming procedures for job titles that have thus far characterized the free spirit of the gaming industry have now become a liability for those who wish to prove their skills when moving from one company to another. A movement to standardize crediting procedures and titles has never been more needed.

At present, the IGDA Credits Committee has created an initial list of Credit Names that comprises a broad survey of the many and varied roles in the industry. Though it can change daily, the current list is extremely granular.

The development community is encouraged to revise this list at:

http://www.igda.org/wiki/index.php/IGDA_Credits_and_Awards_Committee

Future versions of the list will likely include recommendations on which Credit Names should be preferred by studios wishing to conform to an emerging industry standard. However, Rule ATTR.11 will remain optional, as there are no plans to require the use of recommended Credit Names in order to conform to Credit Standards.

II – Future Initiatives

Credits Certification Program

A long-term goal for the IGDA is to establish a Credits Certification Program. This effort will assist companies committed to rewarding their employees with a fair crediting environment.

An "IGDA Certified Crediting" logo will be developed for studios following the rules set for in this Guide. This logo can be included at the bottom of their credits and on their website (e.g., for recruiting purposes "we offer IGDA crediting" as an employee benefit).

Industry Award Attributions

To date, few award programs require mandatory credit attributions for all award categories.

As part of the IGDA's mission to advance the careers and promote the achievements and recognition of its members, the IGDA Credit Standards Committee will leverage this Guide and the Credits Certification Program to encourage all peer-based and press-based game industry awards to mandate attributions. These programs include but are not limited to the [IGDA](#), [AIAS](#), [GANG](#), [NAVGTTR](#), [CAEAA](#), [BAFTA](#), [IGF](#), [Zeebys](#), [GMCA](#), [TEC](#), [WGA](#), [Golden Satellite](#), [GPhoria](#), [SpikeTV](#), [MTV](#), [Nickelodeon Kids' Choice](#), [X-Play](#), and [GameSpot](#). In the future, the Committee will assist in attributions for all programs wishing to properly credit individuals for their achievements and in this capacity may provide incentives to all parties to adopt the Credits Certification Program.

For more details on Game Developers Choice Awards' rules and attribution process, view online:

<http://www.gamechoiceawards.com/rules.htm>

III – Contributors

The following people contributed to the development of this Guide. After the committee chair, contributors are listed in alphabetical order.

- John Feil (committee chair) – Snowblind Studios/IGDA
- Thomas J. Allen – National Academy of Video Game Testers and Reviewers Corp.
- David Berk – MobyGames
- Jim Charne – Law Offices James I Charne

IGDA Game Crediting Guide – Draft 8-5 Beta

- Jason Della Rocca – IGDA
- Garner Halloran – Red Storm Entertainment
- Reid Kimball – RBK Design
- Rob Lim – MobyGames
- Brian Reynolds – Big Huge Games/IGDA
- Hannes Seifert – Games That Matter Productions
- Andi Smithers – Sony Online Entertainment
- Stephane Vaillancourt – CODECO

IV – Contact & Feedback

Further details on the IGDA’s credit and recognition advocacy efforts can be found online:

<http://www.igda.org/credit/>

The IGDA Credit Standards Committee can be contacted via [credits at igda dot org](http://www.igda.org/credits). Input and feedback on this draft and any implementation in whole or in part, or lack thereof, of the rules presented in this guide are strongly encouraged. Frequently asked questions will be compiled on the credits wiki page.