OREGON GAME PROJECT CHALLENGE



Competition Manual

2023-2024

17th Annual Oregon Game Project Challenge

www.ogpc.info

Theme

Forests grow with underbrush competing for light, fast-growing softwood trees soon dominate the precious sky, eventually, hardwood trees reach upward and monopolize the sunlight until they die and the process starts all over again.

Water goes from the water table into lakes and rivers, evaporates into the air, is rained down on the land, and runs back into bodies of water.

The moon endlessly transitions from a new moon to a full moon and back again. Meanwhile, its motion and the rotation of the Earth combined to form an even more complex pattern of high and low tides.

Over decades, the economy appears to be on a fairly consistent trajectory of growth. But when we look more closely, things appear much more dynamic. Business activity periodically passes through periods of expansion - where activity grows rapidly - followed by recession - where activity decreases.

Various spiritual traditions believe in some form of reincarnation. Where existence is not limited to a single lifetime, but is instead a progression of birth, growth, and death throughout which a being slowly evolves.

Many aspects of the natural world and human activity operate in looping patterns. Patterns where there is constant change, but those changes follow a predictable sequence - cycles.

The Oregon Game Project Challenge theme for 2023-2024 is Cycles.

Using the Theme

This year's theme asks you to explore one or more Cycles. Teams should be creative in their interpretation and attempt to represent the theme in all aspects of a submission - gameplay, story, art, and sound.

Aspects of cycles to consider:

- Every cycle involves repetition that is predictable.
- They are not necessarily perfectly predictable. There may be variations from cycle to cycle in the events or duration.
- Although cycles return to similar states, that does not mean there is no underlying trend. Many cycles drive a gradual overall progression in a system.
- Cycles often involve cause-and-effect changes, where each part of the cycle drives a transition to the next.

- Multiple cycles may be interconnected in ways that create even more complex patterns - the simple elliptical orbits of the planets combine to form what appears to be a complex dance in the night sky.

"Change is the only thing that is constant." - Heraclitus

Date and Location

The Main Event is where teams show off their creations to other teams and where judging takes place. It will take place at **Western Oregon University** on May 18th. Teams usually arrive at about 8:30 and are there until about 4-4:30.

Entries & Project Rules

Entries

An entry to OGPC consists of a game, a completed Team Management System (TMS) profile, and often, other supporting documents (work logs, concept sketches, storyboards, etc…). The term "game" is not strictly defined. However, the judging does look for certain elements: interaction with a player, use of art, etc…. So if a team chooses to make something like a digital story, or a text-based adventure, they may not be eligible for certain achievements or awards.

The game a team brings to the competition does **NOT** have to be a final product ready for publishing. It is quite common for games to be only partially done by the Main Event. Although a finely polished game will have an advantage in some scoring areas, partially complete projects can score well and even win awards.

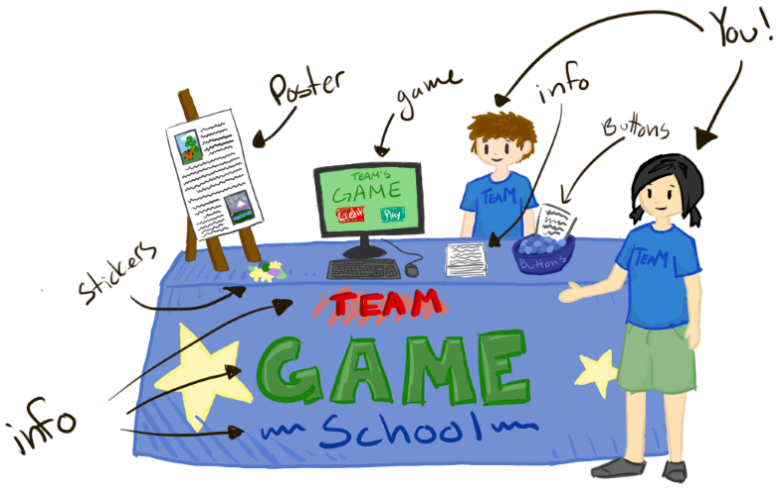
Games should incorporate the season's theme. Creative interpretation of the theme is allowed, but teams that have made no attempt to incorporate the theme may be disqualified from awards.

Teams may use any tools to develop their project. We maintain a list of Resources with links to popular game development tools.

Project Restrictions

Space

Teams will be presenting their projects on a table (~3’ x 6’). The entire project must fit on the table and the 2’-3’ feet directly in front of the table. No room-scale VR; no home- made cockpits; etc… These space restrictions allow us to accommodate as many teams as possible and guarantee each team the same space to display their work.



Computers & Power

Teams must bring one or more computers to display their projects with. (Having two is nice as one can be the dedicated “play” machine, while the other is used to show off code, art, and other project artifacts.)

Western Oregon University will be setting up a special electrical system for the event. Each team will have an extension cord with a single outlet. You may bring a power strip to plug in multiple devices.

There is no specific watt limit, but there definitely are practical limits as to how much power each of the 60 teams can use without tripping a circuit breaker. If there is an electrical problem in your area, and you have power-hungry hardware, you may be required to stop using some of it (turn off some monitors or a power-hungry PC).

Setups that are likely not going to cause an issue:

- 1-2 laptops + an extra monitor or two.
- A low-mid power desktop + a couple of monitors and a laptop.

Setups that are likely to cause issues - **please avoid**:

- High-power desktop gamer PCs. There is NOT going to be power to support a high-end gaming PC. The biggest power draw is usually the graphics card. If your graphics card is a xx80 or xx90 series from Nvidia, or a 6800/6900 XT from AMD, leave that system at home.
- Wall of large monitors. Each monitor - especially ones 27”+ draws a significant amount of power. Trying to set up 5 30” monitors is going to be a large cumulative power draw.
- Pushing the limits in multiple areas. A gaming PC with a 3060 RTX graphics card is probably OK. Bringing 2 large monitors is OK. But doing both could be a problem.

Network

There will be wifi available at the main event, but we can’t promise great performance. There is no wired networking available. If you design a multiplayer game that depends on a fast network between multiple computers, we suggest you bring your own router and set up a local wired network. Personal hotspots will not be allowed.

Game Portfolio Document

Each OGPC project will have a Game Portfolio Document. This document is designed to help students and judges by providing a standardized way to collect and display some of the artifacts that are the evidence for various judging achievements.

We provide a template for the document as a Google doc. You are free to use some other format, but will need to provide a URL (web address) for a viewable copy of the document, so a web-based collaborative document like a Google doc or Office 365 document is going to be easiest. The URL of your document will get added to the team’s Game Portfolio document in the Team Management System.

Part of this document will be completed prior to registering (See Registration below). The rest will be filled in during the season.

Trailer Video

Each team Entry in TMS has places to upload a “Trailer Video”. This video should be 2 minutes or less and “sell” the game to prospective players. Do your best to emphasize what makes the game fun and unique. You do not have to explain every feature, but try to “tease” all the important elements: the gameplay, the story, the use of the theme, the art and music, etc…

This video is an important part of selling your work to the judges and making your project accessible to those who can’t attend the main event or who in the future want to look back at what you did.

Assets

The Art & Assets judging category focuses on awarding achievements for work that ***teams*** do. Teams are allowed to use assets (art, music, sounds, etc…) from other sources that are free and publicly licensed (for instance, under Creative Commons). However, it is important to note that the scoring focuses on assets created by the team - assets from external points are essentially worthless in terms of scoring.

Teams must respect copyright law and only use resources that they have legal permission to use. **Teams may not commission assets for their game nor use purchased assets.** A good rule of thumb is if a team member did not make it, it must be something that is legally and publicly available so any team could make free use of it.

Teams must provide a list that identifies where assets were obtained and what license they are being used under. This should be done in the provided space in the Game Portfolio document.

Assets generated by a freely available (no subscription) generative AI tool may be used, but do NOT count as “team-created” assets. The tool used should be attributed in the Game Portfolio.

Rating

Games must qualify for an E10+ rating on the ESRB scale. (https://www.esrb.org/ratings-guide/) Not only does the competition include 6th graders, but there are always younger family members who attend the main event.

E10+ Allows:

- Cartoon, fantasy, or mild violence
- Mild language
- Minimal suggestive themes

Not allowed are:

- Blood or realistic violence
- Gambling
- Strong language
- Sexual content

Teams that want to make a game that explores a mature theme in an appropriate way should email info@ogpc.info for prior approval. In no situation will Mature features be approved (realistic violence, sexual content, strong language).

Team Requirements

Successful teams usually have a blend of skills - art, programming, music, writing, marketing, project management, public speaking, etc... Recruiting students with a variety of interests and backgrounds is key to filling all the needs of the team.

Coach

Every team must have an adult coach. One person can coach multiple teams.

A coach does not have to be a teacher or a game development expert. Their two main roles are:

1) to be the primary point of contact between OGPC and the team

2) to help a team with logistics and supervise them at the Main Event

Any updates we want to get to teams we will send to coaches and rely on them to inform their teams.

Coaches should NOT be actively involved in creating any part of a project. Providing feedback and mentoring to the team is great. Writing code, creating art, etc… is forbidden.

Team Size and Number of Teams

A team may have a maximum of 7 members. This limit is in place to help guarantee every participant feels like an important part of their team, help provide competitive balance, and make event logistics manageable.

Teams should have at least 2 student members. Schools, organizations, or coaches bringing multiple teams have a minimum size of 3. OGPC is designed to encourage students to develop not just technical skills - it also is intended to help students develop experience collaborating with others.

If a small school only has a few students interested in participating, we want them to be able to participate. But when a school sends multiple 2-person teams it both deprives students of the experience of working on a team and strains our capacity.

Students may only be a member of one team. Playtesting, providing feedback, mentoring, debugging, or otherwise assisting other teams is welcome and encouraged, but each student can be a member of only one team.

Each school/organization/coach can register a maximum of 5 teams. To make sure as many different schools/organizations as possible get to participate, each particular organization is limited to bringing 5 teams.

Affiliation and Divisions

The competition is split into Middle School and High School divisions. Despite the titles, teams are **not** required to be affiliated with a school or other group. Students not competing as part of a school need to register in the division appropriate to their academic grade level/age. **MS**: 8th grade and below (13 and under), **HS:** 9th grade and above (14 and above).

If a team has one or more HS-aged students (either in grade 9 or above, or 14 or older), they must register in the HS division.

TMS & Registration

Team Management System

The OGPC Team Management System (https://tms.ogpc.info) is the portal that teams use to register and show off their work to the OGPC community and judges. Every team must have an entry on the site and all team members must be listed on their team's entry.

Here is an outline of what needs to happen:

- The coach makes an account on TMS and creates an Entry for each team for the season
- The coach invites team members to join (or invites a student to be the student lead, and that student invites the other members)
- Team members create accounts and accept the invitation
- The team maintains its TMS profile throughout the season - completion of the profile is part of the judging

TMS entries are how we keep track of who is planning on participating in a given season. If you do not make an entry, we will not know how to communicate with you!

Registration

Making a TMS entry does NOT register a team for the Main Event. To register for the Main Event, a team must:

1) Have a TMS entry with at least 2 student team members (at least 3 if more than one team is coming from a particular school/coach).

2) Make a copy of the Game Portfolio document template. Complete Part I - the game design document (this can be a draft). Add the link to your Game Design document to your TMS entry in the provided place. Make sure that the document is viewable by anyone!
Here is a sample of what we are looking for. It is OK if there are parts that are yet to be determined. It is OK if plans change later. We are not evaluating this for quality - we are just looking for evidence that you have at a rough plan for what you are starting to work on.

3) The coach should then send an email to register@ogpc.info with the school and team name.

Every week, we will issue permission to register teams that have completed these steps. Once your team gets permission, you will be able to complete your registration by paying the $50 registration fee through TMS.

Registration will continue until we reach the participation cap of 60 teams (45 max HS). If in a given registration window, there are enough requests to go past the registration cap, the following criteria will be used to award spots:

- Teams from a school/coach that currently do not have any other teams will get preference over additional teams from a school/coach with existing entries.
- If there are less than 20 MS teams, MS teams will get preference over HS teams.
- All other factors equal, we will randomly select teams.

Our space and logistical constraints are real. We wish we could support every team who was interested in participating, no matter how late they waited to register, but that is not possible. Once your team(s) are formed and have begun work, try to get registered as soon as possible.

Judging: Scoring Summary

Overview

Games will be evaluated at the main event by a panel of judges consisting of volunteers. These volunteers are a mix of software and game industry professionals, university students and professors, and other community members.

Judges will evaluate each game in five categories: Programming, Game Design, Art and Assets, Theme and Style, and Management. These scores are determined by how many achievements the team accomplished - a list of the possible achievements is released at the start of the season.

Teams earn points based on the achievements completed. These serve to help judges identify the best projects in each of the judging areas and those that excelled across all areas. They are not the final determinate for any award. Awards are always given at the judges' discretion.

Separate awards and recognitions are given in the MS and HS divisions (i.e. there is both a MS Best in Show and a HS Best in Show). Generally, each team can only win one award with the exception of People's Choice.

Overall Awards

Awards are given to recognize teams that excel across all areas of judging or produce an otherwise remarkable game. Examples of awards typically given include:

Best in Show

> This award goes to the team that created the best overall project, weighing all categories equally. Games that receive Best in Show excel in all categories, usually completing all achievements in at least one category.

Judges' Choice

This award is given entirely at the judges' discretion. It could be to break a tie or to recognize a noteworthy game that did not receive an award for whatever reason. This award could also go to a game that the judges thought was really fun or technically impressive regardless of performance in other areas.

People's Choice

This award is voted on by the participants of OGPC. As you check out other teams' projects, you will get a chance to vote for your favorites.

Rookie

This award goes to the highest-ranking new team (***neither the coach nor any team members have participated in OGPC before***). Returning teams often know what they are doing from the start, whereas new teams may need a few months to get a rhythm down. This award recognizes the hard work of a new team that still manages to shine.

Category Awards

The five judging categories also serve as the basis for recognition and awards.

Programming

This category focuses on the technical side of creating a game. Games winning the Programming Award display responsible development practices and significant technical knowledge. Choice of platform or programming language does not matter - what does matter are the team's demonstrated use of abstractions, development of algorithms, source control, and documentation.

Game Design

This category focuses on the process of designing a game. Judges look at game mechanics, design documents, and prototypes to see how a team's game evolved and grew over time.

Art and Assets (Sponsored by Liquid Development)

This category focuses on the visuals and audio of the game. Sound effects, music, animations, models, and sprites are examples of items being judged as part of this award.

Theme and Story

This category focuses on the execution of the season's theme and story writing. Judges will evaluate teams on their attempt to follow the theme as they interpret it through game mechanics, art, and story. Judges award more achievements for having a consistent story, character development, and for communicating the theme through not just the story, but also through mechanics, gameplay, and art.

Management

This category focuses on students’ interactions with each other and with other teams. Teams must demonstrate how they have organized and planned and how all members contributed to the development process. Winning teams will have a consistent brand and put on a professional presentation at the main event.

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