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# Abstract

Steam is a digital distribution platform developed by Valve Corporation, which offers digital rights management (DRM), multiplayer gaming, video streaming and social networking services. Steam provides the user with installation and automatic updating of games, and community features such as friends lists and groups, cloud saving, and in-game voice and chat functionality. The software provides a freely available application programming interface (API) called Steamworks, which developers can use to integrate many of Steam's functions into their products, including networking, matchmaking, in-game achievements, micro-transactions, and support for user-created content through Steam Workshop. Though initially developed for use on Microsoft Windows operating systems, versions for OS X and Linux were later released. Mobile apps with connected functionality with the main software were later released for iOS, Android, and Windows Phone devices in the 2010s.

The Steam platform is the largest digital distribution platform for PC gaming, estimated in 2013 to have 75% of the market space. By 2017, users purchasing titles through Steam totaled roughly $4.3 billion, representing at least 18% of global PC game sales. By early 2018, the service had over 150 million registered accounts with a peak of 18.5 million concurrent users online. The success of the Steam platform has led to the development of a line of Steam Machine microconsoles, as well as the SteamOS operating system.

**History**

Before implementing Steam, [Valve Corporation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valve_Corporation) had problems updating its online games, such as [*Counter-Strike*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counter-Strike_(video_game)); providing patches would result in most of the online user base disconnecting for several days. Valve decided to create a platform that would update games automatically and implement stronger [anti-piracy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copy_protection#Anti-piracy) and [anti-cheat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-cheat) measures. Through user polls at the time of its announcement in 2002, Valve also recognized that at least 75% of their users had access to high-speed Internet connections, which would only grow with planned Internet expansion in the following years, and recognized that they could deliver game content faster to players than through retail channels. Valve approached several companies, including [Microsoft](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microsoft), [Yahoo!](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yahoo!), and [RealNetworks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RealNetworks) to build a client with these features, but were declined.

Steam's development began in 2002, with working titles for the platform being "Grid" and "Gazelle". It was publicly announced at the [Game Developers Conference](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Game_Developers_Conference) event on March 22, 2002, and released as a beta the same day. To demonstrate the ease of integrating Steam with a game, [Relic Entertainment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relic_Entertainment) created a special version of [*Impossible Creatures*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impossible_Creatures). Valve partnered with several companies, including [AT&T](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AT%26T), [Acer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acer_Inc.), and [GameSpy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GameSpy" \o "GameSpy). The first [mod](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mod_(computer_gaming)) released on the system was [*Day of Defeat*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Day_of_Defeat).

The client was officially released out of beta on September 11, 2003, for which it was mandatory to use with [*Counter-Strike*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counter-Strike_(video_game)) version 1.6. At the time, Steam's primary function was streamlining the patch process common in online computer games. Steam was an optional component for all other games. Between 80,000–300,000 players tested the system while it was in its beta period. The system and website choked under the strain of thousands of users simultaneously attempting to play the latest version of *Counter-Strike*. In 2004, the [World Opponent Network](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Opponent_Network) was shut down and replaced by Steam. The online features of games which required World Opponent Network ceased to work unless they were converted to Steam.

Around that time, Valve began negotiating contracts with several publishers and independent developers to release their products, including [*Rag Doll Kung Fu*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rag_Doll_Kung_Fu) and *[Darwinia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darwinia_(computer_game)" \o "Darwinia (computer game))*, on Steam. Canadian publisher [Strategy First](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategy_First)announced in December 2005 that it would partner with Valve for digital distribution of current and future titles. In 2002, the managing director of Valve, [Gabe Newell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabe_Newell), said he was offering mod teams a game engine license and distribution over Steam for US$995. Valve's [*Half-Life 2*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Half-Life_2) was the first game to require installation of the Steam client to play, even for retail copies. This decision was met with concerns about software ownership, software requirements, and issues with overloaded servers demonstrated previously by the *Counter-Strike* rollout. During this time users faced multiple issues attempting to play the game.

Beginning with *Rag Doll Kung Fu* in October 2005, third-party games became available for purchase and download on Steam, and Valve announced that Steam had become profitable because of some highly successful Valve games. Although digital distribution could not yet match retail volume, profit margins for Valve and developers were far larger on Steam. Large developer-publishers, including [id Software](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Id_Software), [Eidos Interactive](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eidos_Interactive), and [Capcom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capcom), began distributing their games on Steam in 2007. By May that year, 13 million accounts had been created on the service, and 150 games were for sale on the platform. As of 2014, the total annual sales on Steam are estimated at $1.5 billion. Since 2007, Valve has continued to expand Steam's functionality and services for consumers and developers.

### **Software delivery and maintenance**

Steam's primary service is to allow its users to [download games and other software](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Online_distribution) that they have in their virtual software libraries to their local computers as game cache files (GCFs). Initially, Valve was required to be the publisher for these titles since they had sole access to the Steam's database and engine, but with the introduction of the Steamworks [software development kit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Software_development_kit) (SDK) in May 2008, anyone could potentially become a publisher to Steam, outside of Valve's involvement to curate titles on the service.

Prior to 2009, most games released on Steam had traditional [anti-piracy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copy_protection#Anti-piracy) measures, including the assignment and distribution of [product keys](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Product_key) and support for [digital rights management](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_rights_management) software tools such as [SecuROM](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SecuROM" \o "SecuROM) or non-malicious [rootkits](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rootkit). With an update to the Steamworks SDK in March 2009, Valve added its "Custom Executable Generation" (CEG) approach into the Steamworks SDK that removed the need for these other measures. The CEG technology creates a unique, encrypted copy of the game's executable files for the given user which allows them to install it multiple times and on multiple devices, and make backup copies of their software. Once the software is downloaded and installed, the user must then authenticate through Steam to de-encrypt the executable files to play the game. Normally this is done while connected to the Internet following the user's credential validation, but once they have logged into Steam once, a user can instruct Steam to launch in a special offline mode to be able to play their games without a network connection. Developers are not limited to Steam's CEG and may include other forms of DRM and other authentication services than Steam; for example, some titles from publisher [Ubisoft](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubisoft) require the use of their [UPlay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UPlay" \o "UPlay) gaming service, and prior to its shutdown in 2014, some other titles required [Games for Windows – Live](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Games_for_Windows_%E2%80%93_Live), though many of these titles have since transitioned to using the Steamworks CEG approach.

In September 2008, Valve added support for Steam Cloud, a service that can automatically store saved game and related custom files on Valve's servers; users can access this data from any machine running the Steam client. Games must use the appropriate features of Steamworks for Steam Cloud to work. Users can disable this feature on a per-game and per-account basis. In May 2012, the service added the ability for users to manage their game libraries from remote clients, including computers and mobile devices; users can instruct Steam to download and install games they own through this service if their Steam client is currently active and running. Some games sold through retail channels can be redeemed as titles for users' libraries within Steam by entering a product code within the software. For games that incorporate Steamworks, users can buy redemption codes from other vendors and redeem these in the Steam client to add the title to their libraries. Steam also offers a framework for selling and distributing [downloadable content](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Downloadable_content) (DLC) for games.

In September 2013, Steam introduced the ability to share most games with family members and close friends by authorizing machines to access one's library. Authorized players can install the game locally and play it separately from the owning account. Users can access their saved games and achievements providing the main owner is not playing. When the main player initiates a game while a shared account is using it, the shared account user is allowed a few minutes to either save their progress and close the game or purchase the game for his or her own account. Within Family View, introduced in January 2014, parents can adjust settings for their children's tied accounts, limiting the functionality and accessibility to the Steam client and purchased titles.

In accordance with its [Acceptable Use Policy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acceptable_Use_Policy), Valve retains the right to block and unblock customers' access to their games and Steam services when Valve's Anti-Cheat (VAC) software determines that the user is cheating in multiplayer games, selling accounts to others or trading games to exploit regional price differences. Blocking such users initially removed access to his or her other games, leading to some users with high-value accounts losing access because of minor infractions of the AUP. Valve later changed its policy to be similar to that of Electronic Arts' [Origin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origin_(digital_distribution_software)) platform, in which blocked users can still access their games but are heavily restricted, limited to playing in offline mode and unable to participate in Steam Community features. Customers also lose access to their games and Steam account if they refuse to accept changes to Steam's [end user license agreements](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/End_user_license_agreement); this occurred in August 2012. In April 2015, Valve began allowing developers to set bans on players for their games, but enacted and enforced at the Steam level, which allowed them to police their own gaming communities in customizable manner.

### **User interface**

Since November 2013, Steam allows for users to review their purchased titles and organize them into categories set by the user and add to favorite lists for quick access. Players can add non-Steam games to their libraries, allowing the game to be easily accessed from the Steam client and providing support where possible for Steam Overlay features. The Steam interface allows for user-defined shortcuts to be added. In this way, third-party modifications and games not purchased through the Steam Store can use Steam features. Valve sponsors and distributes some modifications free-of-charge; and modifications that use [Steamworks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steam_(software)" \l "Steamworks) can also use VAC, Friends, the server browser, and any Steam features supported by their parent game. For most games launched from Steam, the client provides an in-game overlay that can be accessed by a keystroke. From the overlay, the user can access his or her Steam Community lists and participate in chat, manage selected Steam settings, and access a built-in [web browser](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_browser) without having to exit the game. Since the beginning of February 2011 as a beta version, the overlay also allows players to take [screenshots](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Screenshot) of the games in process; it automatically stores these and allows the player to review, delete, or share them during or after his or her game session. As a full version on February 24, 2011, this feature was reimplemented so that users could share screenshots on websites of [Facebook](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook), [Twitter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twitter), and [Reddit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reddit) straight from a user's screenshot manager.

Steam's "Big Picture" mode was announced in 2011; public betas started in September 2012 and were integrated into the software in December 2012. Big Picture mode is a [10-foot user interface](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/10-foot_user_interface), which optimizes the Steam display to work on high-definition televisions, allowing the user to control Steam with a gamepad or with a keyboard and mouse. Newell stated that Big Picture mode was a step towards a dedicated Steam entertainment hardware unit. SteamVR, a [virtual reality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtual_reality) (VR) Big Picture interface, was introduced in beta in January 2014. The SteamVR mode enables the user to operate the Big Picture mode and play any game in their Steam library with a virtual theater displayed through the VR headset, the equivalent of looking at a 225-inch television screen, according to Valve. The mode was first introduced in beta for the [Oculus Rift](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oculus_Rift) headset and later expanded in March 2015 to support the [HTC Vive](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HTC_Vive), a VR unit developed jointly with Valve, with the feature to be publicly released shortly after the Vive's public launch in April 2016. In-Home Streaming was introduced in May 2014; this allows users to stream games installed on one computer to another—regardless of platform—on the same home network.

The Steam client, as part of a [social network service](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_network_service), allows users to identify friends and join groups using the Steam Community feature. Users can use text chat and [peer-to-peer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peer-to-peer) [VoIP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voice_over_IP) with other users, identify which games their friends and other group members are playing, and join and invite friends to Steamworks-based multiplayer games that support this feature. Users can participate in forums hosted by Valve to discuss Steam games. Each user has a unique page that shows his or her groups and friends, game library including earned achievements, game wishlists, and other social features; users can choose to keep this information private. In January 2010, Valve reported that 10 million of the 25 million active Steam accounts had signed up to Steam Community. In conjunction with the 2012 Steam Summer Sale, user profiles were updated with Badges reflecting the user's participation in the Steam community and past events. [Steam Trading Cards](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steam_Trading_Cards), a system where players earn virtual trading cards based on games they own, were introduced May 2013. Using them, players can trade with other Steam users on the Steam Marketplace and use them to craft "Badges", which grant rewards such as game discount coupons, emoticons, and the ability to customize their user profile page. In 2010, the Steam client became an [OpenID](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OpenID) provider, allowing third-party websites to use a Steam user's identity without requiring the user to expose his or her Steam credentials. In order to prevent abuse, access to most community features is restricted until a one-time payment of at least US$5 is made to Valve. This requirement can be fulfilled by making any purchase of five dollars or more on Steam, or by adding at the same amount to their wallet.

Through Steamworks, Steam provides a means of server browsing for multiplayer games that use the Steam Community features, allowing users to create lobbies with friends or members of common groups. Steamworks also provides [Valve Anti-Cheat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valve_Anti-Cheat) (VAC), Valve's proprietary anti-cheat system; game servers automatically detect and report users who are using [cheats](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cheating_in_online_games) in online, multiplayer games. In August 2012, Valve added new features—including dedicated hub pages for games that highlight the best user-created content, top forum posts, and screenshots—to the Community area. In December 2012, a feature called Game Guides, where users can upload text and images detailing games and game strategies in the same manner as [GameFAQs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GameFAQs" \o "GameFAQs) was added. Starting in beta in December 2014 and publicly released in January 2015, the Steam client allows players to [broadcast video streams](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Streaming_media) to the public or Steam friends while playing video games.

In September 2014, Steam Music, a built-in [music player](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_audio_player_software), was added to the Steam client, allowing users to play through music stored on their computer or to stream from a locally networked computer.

### **Steam Workshop**

The Steam Workshop is a Steam account-based hosting service for videogame user-created content. Depending on the title, new levels, art assets, gameplay modifications, or other content may be published to or installed from the Steam Workshop through an automated, online account-based process. The Workshop was originally used for distribution of new items for *Team Fortress 2*; it was redesigned to extend support for any game in early 2012, including modifications for [*The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Elder_Scrolls_V:_Skyrim). A May 2012 patch for *Portal 2*, enabled by a new map-making tool through the Steam Workshop, introduced the ability to share user-created levels. Independently-developed games, including [*Dungeons of Dredmor*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dungeons_of_Dredmor), are able to provide Steam Workshop support for user-generated content. *[Dota 2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dota_2" \o "Dota 2)*became Valve's third published title available for the Steam Workshop in June 2012; its features include customizable accessories, character [skins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtual_goods), and announcer packs.

As of January 2015, Valve themselves had provided some user-developed Workshop content as paid-for features in Valve-developed games, including *Team Fortress 2* and *Dota 2*; with over $57 million being paid to content creators using the Workshop. Valve began allowing developers to use these advanced features in January 2015; both the developer and content generator share the profits of the sale of these items; the feature went live in April 2015, starting with various mods for *Skyrim*. This feature was pulled a few days afterward following [negative user feedback and reports of pricing and copyright misuse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mod_(video_gaming)#Controversy_surrounding_paid_mods). Six months later, Valve stated they were still interested in offering this type of functionality in the future, but would review the implementation to avoid these previous mistakes. In November 2015, the Steam client was updated with the ability for game developers to offer in-game items for direct sale via the store interface, with [*Rust*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rust_(video_game)) being the first game to use the feature.

### **Steam Greenlight**

Valve's first attempt to streamline game addition to the service was with Steam Greenlight, announced in July 2012 and released the following month. Through Greenlight, Steam users would choose which games were added to the service. Developers were able to submit information about their games, as well as early builds or beta versions, for consideration by users. Users would pledge support for these games, and Valve would help to make top-pledged games available on the Steam service. In response to complaints during its first week that finding games to support was made difficult by a flood of inappropriate or false submissions, Valve required developers to pay US$100 to list a game on the service to reduce illegitimate submissions. Those fees were donated to the charity [Child's Play](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child%27s_Play_(charity)). This fee was met with some concern from smaller developers, who often are already working in a deficit and may not have the money to cover such fees. A later modification allowed developers to put conceptual ideas on the Greenlight service to garner interest in potential projects free-of-charge; votes from such projects are only visible to the developer. Valve also allowed non-gaming software to be voted onto the service through Greenlight.

The initial process offered by Steam Greenlight was panned because while developers favored the concept, the rate of games that are eventually approved by Valve is very small. At the time, Valve acknowledged that this was a problem and believed it could be improved upon it. In January 2013, Newell stated that Valve recognized that its role in Greenlight was perceived as a bottleneck, something the company was planning to eliminate in the future through an open marketplace infrastructure. On the eve of Greenlight's first anniversary, Valve simultaneously approved 100 titles through the Greenlight process to demonstrate this change of direction. While the Greenlight service had helped to bring more and varied games onto Steam without excessive bureaucracy, it also led to an excessively large number of games on the service that make it difficult for a single title to stand out, and as early as 2014, Valve had discussed plans to phase out the Greenlight process in favor of providing developers with easier means to put their games onto the Steam service.

### **Discovery updates**

Without more direct interaction on the curation process, allowing hundreds more games on the service, Valve had looked to find methods to allow players to find games they would be more likely to buy based on previous purchase patterns. The September 2014 "Discovery Update" added tools that would allow existing Steam users to be curators for game recommendations, and sorting functions that presented more popular titles and recommended titles specific to the user, as to allow more games to be introduced on Steam without the need of Steam Greenlight, while providing some means to highlight user-recommended games. This Discovery update was considered successful by Valve, as they reported in March 2015 in seeing increased use of the Steam Storefront and an increase in 18% of sales by revenue from just prior to the update. A second Discovery update was released November 2016, giving users more control over what titles they want to see or ignore within the Steam Store, alongside tools for developers and publishers to better customize and present their game within these new users preferences. By February 2017, Valve reported that with the second Discovery update, the number of games shown to users via the store's front page increased by 42%, with more conversions into sales from that viewership. In 2016, more games are meeting a rough metric of success defined by Valve as selling more than $200,000 in revenues in its first 90 days of release. Valve added a "Curator Connect" program in December 2017. Curators can set up descriptors for the type of games they are interested in, preferred languages, and other tags along with social media profiles, while developers can find and reach out to specific curators from this information, and, after review, provide them directly with access to their game. This step, which eliminates the use of a Steam redemption key, is aimed to reduce the reselling of keys, as well as dissuade users that may be trying to game the curator system to obtain free game keys.

Valve still recognizes it has a problem with what it calls "fake games", those that are built around reused assets and little other innovation, designed only to generate profit from unsuspecting users. To help assist finding and removing these games from the service, the company plans to add Steam Explorers atop its existing Steam Curator program, according to various YouTube personalities that have spoken out about such games in the past and with Valve directly, including [Jim Sterling](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_Sterling) and [TotalBiscuit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TotalBiscuit" \o "TotalBiscuit). Any Steam user is able to sign up to be an Explorer, and are asked to look at under-performing games on the service as to either vouch that the game is truly original and simply lost among other releases, or if it is an example of a "fake game", at which point Valve can take action to remove the game. Valve also made changes to the trading card system in May 2017 to prevent abuse by "fake games". Valve found that some of the "bad actors" that released these games with trading card support then distributed game codes to thousands of bot-operated accounts that would run the game to earn trading cards that they could then sell for profit; these games would also create false positives that make these titles appear more popular than they really were and would impact games suggested to legitimate players through their store algorithms. Subsequent to this patch, games must reach some type of confidence factor based on actual playtime before they can generate trading cards, with players credited for their time played towards receiving trading cards before this metric is met.

### **Developer features**

Valve offers Steamworks, an [application programming interface](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Application_programming_interface) (API) that provides development and publishing tools to take advantage of Steam client's features, free-of-charge to game and software developers. Steamworks provides networking and player authentication tools for both server and peer-to-peer multiplayer games, matchmaking services, support for Steam community friends and groups, Steam statistics and achievements, integrated voice communications, and Steam Cloud support, allowing games to integrate with the Steam client. The API also provides anti-cheating devices and digital copy management. Developers of software available on Steam are able to track sales of their titles through the Steam store. In February 2014, Valve announced that it would begin to allow developers to set up their own sales for their games independent of any sales that Valve may set. Valve added the ability for developers to sell games under an [early access](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_access) model with a special "Early Access" section of the Steam store, starting in March 2013. This program allows developers to release functional but yet-incomplete products such as beta versions to the service to allow users to buy the titles and help provide testing and feedback towards the final production. Early access also helps to provide funding to the developers to help complete their titles. The Early Access approach allowed more developers to publish games onto the Steam service without the need for Valve's direct curation of titles, significantly increasing the number of available titles on the service.

Developers are able to request Steam keys of their products to use as they see fit, such as to give away in promotions, to provide to selected users for review, or to give to key resellers for different profitization. Valve generally honors all such requests, but clarified that they would evaluate some requests to avoid giving keys to games or other offerings that are designed to manipulate the Steam storefront and other features. For example, Valve said that a request for 500,000 keys for a game that has significantly negative reviews and 1,000 sales on Steam is unlikely to be granted.

### **Storefront features**

The Steam client includes a digital storefront called the Steam Store through which users can purchase computer games. Once the game is bought, a software license is permanently attached to the user's Steam account, allowing him or her to download the software on any compatible device. Game licenses can be given to other accounts under certain conditions. Content is delivered from an international network of servers using a proprietary file transfer [protocol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protocol_(computing)). Steam sells its products in US and Canadian dollars, euros, [pounds sterling](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pound_sterling), Brazilian [reais](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reais" \o "Reais), [Russian rubles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roubles), [Indonesian rupiah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indonesian_rupiah) and [Indian rupees](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_rupee) depending on the user's location. From December 2010, the client supports the [WebMoney](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WebMoney" \o "WebMoney) payment system, which is popular in many European, Middle Eastern, and Asian countries. Starting in April 2016, Steam began accepting payments in [Bitcoin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bitcoin), valued based on the user's geolocation, with transactions handled by [BitPay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BitPay" \o "BitPay). However, Valve dropped the ability to use Bitcoin in December 2017, citing high fluctuation in value and costly service fees that made its use "untenable". The Steam storefront validates the user's region; the purchase of titles may be restricted to specific regions because of release dates, game classification, or agreements with publishers. Since 2010, the *Steam Translation Server* project offers Steam users to assist with the translation of the Steam client, storefront, and a selected library of Steam games for twenty-seven languages. Steam also allows users to purchase [downloadable content](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Downloadable_content) for games, and for some specific game titles such as [*Team Fortress 2*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Team_Fortress_2), the ability to purchase in-game inventory items. In February 2015, Steam began to open similar options for in-game item purchases for third-party games.

Users of Steam's storefront can also purchase games and other software as gifts to be given to another Steam user. Prior to May 2017, users could purchase these gifts to be held in their profile's inventory until they opted to gift them. However, this feature enabled a [gray market](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gray_market) around some games, where a user in a country where the price of a game was substantially lower than elsewhere could stockpile giftable copies of games to sell to others, particularly in regions with much higher prices. In August 2016, Valve changed its gifting policy to require that games with VAC and Game Ban-enabled games to be gifted immediately to another Steam user, which also served to combat players that worked around VAC and Game Bans, while in May 2017, Valve expanded this policy to all games. The changes also placed limitations on gifts between users of different countries if there is a large difference in pricing for the game between two different regions.

The Steam store also enables users to redeem store [product keys](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Product_key) to add software from their library. The keys are sold by third-party providers such as [Humble Bundle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humble_Bundle) (in which a portion of the sale is given back to the publisher or distributor), distributed as part of a physical release to redeem the game, or given to a user as part of promotions, often used to deliver [Kickstarter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kickstarter) and other crowd funding rewards. A [grey market](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grey_market) exists around Steam keys, where less reputable buyers purchase a large number of Steam keys for a game when it is offered for a low cost, and then resell these keys to users or other third-party sites at a higher price, generating profit for themselves. This caused some of these third-party sites, like [G2A](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G2A), to be embroiled in this grey market. It is possible for publishers to have Valve to track down where specific keys have been used and cancel them, removing the product from the user's libraries, leaving the user to seek any recourse with the third-party they purchased from. Other legitimate storefronts, like Humble Bundle, have set a minimum price that must be spent to obtain Steam keys as to discourage mass purchases that would enter the grey market.

In 2013, Steam began to accept player reviews of games. Other users can subsequently rate these reviews as helpful, humorous, or otherwise unhelpful, which are then used to highlight the most useful reviews on the game's Steam store page. Steam also aggregates these reviews and enables users to sort products based on this feedback while browsing the store. In May 2016, Steam further broke out these aggregations between all reviews overall and those made more recently in the last 30 days, a change Valve acknowledges to how game updates, particularly those in Early Access, can alter the impression of a game to users. To prevent observed abuse of the review system by developers or other third-party agents, Valve modified the review system in September 2016 to discount review scores for a game from users that activated the product through a product key rather than directly purchased by the Steam Store, though their reviews remain visible. Alongside this, Valve announced that it would end business relations with any developer or publisher that they have found to be abusing the review system.

During mid-2011, Valve began to offer [free-to-play](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free-to-play) games, such as [*Global Agenda*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Agenda), [*Spiral Knights*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiral_Knights) and [*Champions Online*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Champions_Online); this offer was linked to the company's move to make [*Team Fortress 2*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Team_Fortress_2) a free-to-play title. Valve included support via Steamworks for [microtransactions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microtransaction) for in-game items in these titles through Steam's purchasing channels, in a similar manner to the in-game store for *Team Fortress 2*. Later that year, Valve added the ability to trade in-game items and "unopened" game gifts between users. Steam Coupons, which was introduced in December 2011, provides single-use coupons that provide a discount to the cost of items. Steam Coupons can be provided to users by developers and publishers; users can trade these coupons between friends in a similar fashion to gifts and in-game items. Steam Market, a feature introduced in beta in December 2012 that would allow users to sell virtual items to others via Steam Wallet funds, further extended the idea. Valve levies a transaction fee of 15% on such sales and game publishers that use Steam Market pay a transaction fee. For example, *Team Fortress 2*—the first game supported at the beta phase—incurred both fees. Full support for other games was expected to be available in early 2013. In April 2013, Valve added subscription-based game support to Steam; the first game to use this service was *[Darkfall Unholy Wars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darkfall_Unholy_Wars" \o "Darkfall Unholy Wars)*.

In October 2012, Steam introduced non-gaming applications, which are sold through the service in the same manner as games. Creativity and productivity applications can access the core functions of the Steamworks API, allowing them to use Steam's simplified installation and updating process, and incorporate features including cloud saving and Steam Workshop. Steam also allows [game soundtracks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Video_game_music) to be purchased to be played via Steam Music or integrated with the user's other [media players](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_media_player). Valve have also added the ability for publishers to rent and sell digital movies via the service, with initially most being video game documentaries. Following [Warner Bros. Entertainment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warner_Bros._Entertainment) offering the [*Mad Max*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mad_Max_(franchise)) films alongside the September 2015 release of the [2015 game based on the series](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mad_Max_(2015_video_game)), [Lionsgate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lionsgate) entered into agreement with Valve to rent over one hundred feature films from its catalog through Steam starting in April 2016, with more films following later. In March 2017, [Crunchyroll](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crunchyroll) started offering various [anime](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anime) for purchase or rent through Steam. With the onset of [Steam Machines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steam_Machine_(hardware_platform)), the Steam storefront also includes the ability to purchase Steam Machine-related hardware.

In conjunction with developers and publishers, Valve frequently provides discounted sales on games on a daily and weekly basis, sometimes oriented around a publisher, genre, or holiday theme, and sometimes allow games to be tried for free during the days of these sales. The site normally offers a large selection of games at discount during its annual Summer and Holiday sales, including [gamification](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gamification) of these sales to incentive users to purchase more games.

# List of vocabulary

initially - [ɪ'nɪʃ(ə)lɪ] - первоначально

estimate – ['estɪmeɪt] – приблизительно подсчитывать, прикидывать

roughly – ['rʌflɪ] - грубо

poll – [pəul] – список избирателей

retail – ['riːteɪl] - розничная продажа, розничный

creature – ['kriːʧə] – существо, создание

mandatory – ['mændət(ə)rɪ] – обязательный, принудительный

choke – [ʧəuk] – душить

strain – [streɪn] – напряжение, натяжение

simultaneously – [ˌsɪm(ə)l'teɪnɪəslɪ] – одновременно

cease – [siːs] – прекращать

rollout – [ˈrəʊlaʊt] – массовый выпуск

annual – ['ænjuəl] – ежегодный

expand – [ɪk'spænd] – расширять

sole – [səul] – единственный, одиночный

curate – [kjuə'reɪt] – курировать

assignment – [ə'saɪnmənt] – назначение

measure – ['meʒə] – мера

transition – [træn'zɪʃ(ə)n] – переход

relate – [rɪ'leɪt] – относиться, иметь отношение

appropriate – [ə'prəuprɪət] – свойственный

redemption – [rɪ'dempʃ(ə)n] – выкуп

tie – [taɪ] – лента, шнурок

accordance – [ə'kɔːd(ə)n(t)s] – согласие, соответствие

retain – [rɪ'teɪn] – держать, удерживать

infraction – [ɪn'frækʃ(ə)n] – нарушение

occur – [ə'kɜː] – происходить, совершаться

enact – [ɪ'nækt] – предписывать

enforce – [ɪn'fɔːs] – принуждать, вынуждать

free-of-charge – [friːɔvʧɑːʤ] - бесплатный

keystroke – [ˈkiːstroʊk] – нажатие клавиши или кнопки

definition – [ˌdefɪ'nɪʃ(ə)n] – определение

jointly – ['ʤɔɪntlɪ] – в содружестве, совместно

regardless – [rɪ'gɑːdləs] – независимо от, не думая о, невзирая на

peer-to-peer – [ˌpɪətə'pɪə] – пиринговый

conjunction – [kən'ʤʌŋkʃ(ə)n] – соединение

emoticon – [ɪ'məutɪˌkɔn] - смайлик

expose – [ɪk'spəuz] – подвергать действию, экспонировать

credentials – [krɪ'denʃlz] – удостоверение

abuse – [ə'bjuːs] – оскорбление, надругательство

fulfill – [ful'fɪl] - выполнять

proprietary – [prə'praɪət(ə)rɪ] – собственнический

accessories – [ækˈsesəriz] – вспомогательная аппаратура

misuse – [ˌmɪs'juːs] – неправильное использование, плохое обращение

consideration – [kənˌsɪd(ə)'reɪʃ(ə)n] – размышление, обсуждение

pledge – [pleʤ] – поручительство

inappropriate – [ˌɪnə'prəuprɪət] – несоответствующий

submission – [səb'mɪʃ(ə)n] – подчинение

conceptual – [kən'sepʧuəl] – концептуальный

garner – ['gɑːnə] – запасать

pan – [pæn] – подвергнуть резкой критике, задать жару

favored – ['feɪvəd] – благодатный, пользующийся преимуществом

eventually – [ɪ'venʧuəlɪ] – в конце концов, в конечном счете

acknowledged – [ək'nɔlɪʤd] - признанный

perceive – [pə'siːv] – воспринимать, понимать

excessive – [ɪk'sesɪv] – чрезмерный

bureaucracy – [bjuə'rɔkrəsɪ] – бюрократия

revenue – ['rev(ə)njuː] – доход, выручка

alongside – [əˌlɔŋ'saɪd] – недалеко, поблизости

dissuade – [dɪ'sweɪd] – отговаривать

vouch – [vauʧ] – ручаться

confidence – ['kɔnfɪd(ə)n(t)s] – вера, доверие

honor – ['ɔnə] – честь

clarified – [clarify] – осветлённый

evaluate – [ɪ'væljueɪt] - оценивать

fluctuation – [ˌflʌkʧu'eɪʃ(ə)n] – качание, колыхание, колебание

untenable – [ʌn'tenəbl] – непригодный для жилья

opt – [ɔpt] – выбирать, предпочитать

substantially – [səb'stæn(t)ʃ(ə)lɪ] – в основном, по существу

stockpile – ['stɔkpaɪl] – запас, резерв

humble – ['hʌmbl] – скромный

reputable – ['repjətəbl] – уважаемый, достойный уважения, почтенный

embroiled – [ɪm'brɔɪl] – втянутый, вовлеченный

discourage – [dɪs'kʌrɪʤ] – лишать мужества, силы духа, не поощрять

aggregate – ['ægrɪgeɪt] – объединять

further – ['fɜːðə] – дальнейший, добавочный, затем

alter – ['ɔːltə] – изменять

remain – [rɪ'meɪn] – оставаться

levy – ['levɪ] – сбор, взимание

incurred – [ɪn'kɜː] – понесенный (о расходах)

incorporate – [ɪn'kɔːp(ə)rət] – обьединенный

gamification – [geɪmfi kā′shən] – геймификация

incentive – [ɪn'sentɪv] – побуждение, стимул

subsequent – ['sʌbsɪkwənt] – последующий, более поздний

# List of the questions to the text

1. What is Steam?

2. By whom is Steam developed?

3. What functions does Steam provide?

4. Is Steam the largest digital distribution platform?

5. What problems had Valve faced before implementing Steam?

6. Did Valve decide to create a platform that would update games automatically?

7. When did Steam`s development begin?

8. What companies did Valve partner with?

9. What did Relic Entertainment create to demonstrate the ease of integrating Steam?

10. Was Steam`s primary function streamlining the patch process common in online computer games?

11. Why was the system and website choked?

12. Why did Valve begin negotiating contracts with several publishers and independent developers?

13. Was Valve`s Half Life 2 the first game to require installation of the Steam client to play?

14. Did third-party games become available for purchase and download on Steam?

15. When did large developer-publishers begin distributing their games on Steam?

16. Who was required to be the publisher for these titles?

17. What had traditional anti-piracy measures?

18. What does the CEG technology create?

19. Must the user authenticate through Steam to de-encrypt the executable files?

20. Can a user instruct Steam to launch in a special offline mode to be able to play their game without a network connection?

21. Are developers limited to Steam`s CEG?

22. What has transitioned to using the Steamworks CEG approach?

23. How can a Steam Cloud store saved game and relate custom files?

24. What must use the appropriate features of Steamworks for Steam Cloud to work?

25. Can users disable this feature?

26. When did Steam add the ability for users to manage their games libraries from remote clients?

27. What can users instruct Steam?

28. What does Steam offer?

29. With whom does Steam introduce the ability to share most games?

30. Why does Valve retain the right to block and unblock customer`s access to their games?

31. Does Steam allow for users to review their purchased titles?

32. What games can players add to their libraries?

33. Was Steam`s “Big Picture” mode announced in 2011?

34. Was “Big Picture” mode optimized to work on high-definition televisions?

35. Why was the mode expanded in March 2015?

36. Is the Steam client a part of a social network service?

37. Can users use text chat and peer-to-peer VoIP with other users?

38. What was originally the Workshop used for?

39. Would Steam users choose which games were added to the service trough Greenlight?

40. How many titles did Valve simultaneously approve on the eve of Greenlight`s first anniversary.

41. Did developers add tools that would allow existing Steam users to be curators for game recommendations?

42. When was second Discovery update released?

43. Can curators set up descriptors for the type of games they are interested in?

44. With what update did Valve increase the number of games shown to users via the store`s front page?

45. What is Steamworks?

46. What features does Steamworks provide?

47. Are developers able to request Steam keys of their products?

48. Does the Steam client include a digital Storefront?

49. Can users of Steam`s storefront purchase games and other software as gifts to be given to another Steam user?

50. When do less reputable buyers purchase a large number of Steam keys?