

# VIDEO GAME DESIGN



## OVERVIEW

Applying leadership and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, participants develop a video game that focuses on the subject of their choice. The game must be interesting, exciting, visually appealing, and intellectually challenging. The rating of the game must meet the ESRB rating for E for Everyone.

The game and all required documentation must be submitted on-line, Pre-conference. Semifinalist teams participate in an on-site presentation and interview to demonstrate the knowledge and expertise they gained during the development of the game.

## ELIGIBILITY

One (1) team of two (2) to six (6) individuals per chapter may participate.

## TIME LIMITS

### PRE-CONFERENCE/PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. All components of the chapter's entry (website address URL and documentation PDF) must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. ET on a designated date in mid-May.
- B. The game submitted for evaluation must be greater than three (3) minutes in length of play and must be interactive.
- C. A deduction of five (5) points total will be incurred for a game that completes in under the three (3)- minute time minimum.
- D. The timing of the game segment starts with the first image or sound presented.
- E. Games must be playable from the deadline until the end of the National TSA Conference.

### SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. Ten (10) minutes are allowed for the on-site presentation and interview broken down as follows:
  1. Five (5) minutes for the presentation
  2. Five (5) minutes for the interview

## ATTIRE

TSA competition attire is required for the semifinal presentation/interview.

## PROCEDURE

- A. Participants review the TSA Honor Statement for Competitive Events found in the General Rules and listed in the individual competitive event rules.
- B. Participants design an online game based on the subject of their choice.
- C. Participants record their process through a documentation portfolio.
- D. The game entry (website address URL and documentation portfolio PDF) must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. ET on a designated date in mid-May.
- E. The submission information and deadline will be provided in January on the [TSA website](#) under *Competition Updates*.

## REGULATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Students will work to develop their leadership and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the process of preparing for and participating in this TSA competitive event. The development and application of those skills must be evident in their submission, demonstration, and/or communication pertaining to the entry.

### PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. All online game submissions must be a hyperlink to the online game and be accessible for evaluation by the deadline posted on the [TSA website](#) under *Competition Updates*. Participants may choose the hosting site, but the hyperlink must point directly to the entry.
- B. Entries received, or changes made to submitted entries after this deadline will not be judged.
- C. The URL must point to the team's entry. Entries that require a software download, running an executable file (.exe), or request that access be granted will not be judged.

D. Video Game:

1. Must be a hyperlink to the online game.
2. Must be the original work of the team.
3. Work that is not created by the team must have proper documentation, showing copyright permissions and/or license for usage in the game segment.
4. When creating the game, the game must be free of any weapons or violence as stated in the general rules.
5. Game instructions must be clear and understandable.
6. Judges must be able to play the game to the third (3rd) level.
7. The game submitted for evaluation must be greater than three (3) minutes in length of play and must be interactive.
8. A deduction of five (5) points total will be incurred for a game that completes under the three(3)-minute time minimum.
9. The timing of the game segment starts with the first image or sound presented.
10. Games must be playable from the submission deadline until the end of the National TSA Conference.
11. Bonus points may be awarded for exceptional game features or content.

E. The Documentation Portfolio

1. The portfolio must include the following pages in a multi-page PDF document with pages in this order:
  - a. Title page with the event title, the conference city and state, the year, and the team's identification number; one (1) page
  - b. Table of contents; pages as needed
  - c. Purpose and description of the game, the target audience, including market research, explanation of how the game is unique, and a detailed explanation of how to play the game, including a list of control functions; two (2) pages

- d. A hand-drawn or digitally sketched storyboard that depicts the design concept of the video game (No screenshots of the game will be permitted as part of the storyboard); pages as needed
- e. A link to a video (a URL to a video hosted on a service of the team's choice that does not require any download or authorization), maximum two (2) minutes in length, of one (1) student demonstrating how to play the game with appropriate voiceover to include which buttons to press and actions to complete to make each move necessary to complete at least three (3) levels; one (1) page
- f. Student Copyright Checklist (see 2026 & 2027 Forms Appendix); pages as needed
- g. Permission letters for the use of copyrighted material, if applicable; pages as needed.
- h. Work Log (see 2026 & 2027 Forms Appendix); pages as needed

F. Judges score the entries.

- G. A list of twelve (12) semifinalist teams (in random order) is posted on the first full day of conference.

### SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. Participants from each semifinalist team report at the time and place stated in the conference program to sign up for a presentation/interview time.
- B. Semifinalist teams report to the assigned time and place for the presentation/interview.
- C. The team may bring one (1) device (laptop preferred) to be used by the team during the presentation. The laptop must be fully charged as no access to electricity will be provided. TSA will not provide access to WiFi or guarantee that a team provided hotspot will operate.
- D. No projection devices are permitted during the semifinal round.
- E. Participants make a presentation to the judges about their video game and respond to questions.

- F. Semifinalists do NOT have access to electrical power/outlets during the event.
- G. The presentation shall not last longer than five (5) minutes.
- H. Judges will ask questions up to five (5) minutes following the presentation.
- I. The top ten (10) finalists are announced at the TSA conference awards ceremony.

## EVALUATION

### PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. The first three (3) levels of the game
- B. The documentation portfolio
- C. Up to ten (10) bonus points may be added by the judges for exceptional game features, or for content showing exemplary education and social value.

### SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. The presentation
- B. The interview

Refer to the official rating form for more information.

## TSA HONOR STATEMENT

All work must be created and completed by individual competitors or teams. Plagiarism, the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) software, copyright violation, cheating, and falsification of information are prohibited. Participants may NOT use any generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Google Gemini, GitHub Copilot, etc.). Any attempt to gain an unfair advantage will not be tolerated. Competitors at any level of TSA competition understand and agree to abide by the TSA Honor Statement.

If it is determined that a student violated the TSA Honor Statement, a rules violation of twenty percent (20%) will be incurred.

## STEM INTEGRATION

This event has connections to the STEM areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

## LEADERSHIP AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS

This event provides opportunity for students to build and develop leadership and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills including but not limited to – Communication, Collaboration/Social Skills, Initiative, Problem Solving/Risk Taking, Critical Thinking, Perseverance/Grit, Creativity, Relationship Building/Teamwork, Dependability/Integrity, and Flexibility/Adaptability

## CAREERS RELATED TO THIS EVENT

This competition has connections to one (1) or more of the careers below:

- Animator
- Audio Engineer
- Computer Programmer
- Game Designer
- Game Play Tester
- Professional Gamer
- Writer

# VIDEO GAME DESIGN

## 2026 & 2027 OFFICIAL RATING FORM

### MIDDLE SCHOOL

Judges: Using minimal (1-4 points), adequate (5-8 points), or exemplary (9-10 points) performance levels as a guideline in the rating form, record the scores earned for the event criteria in the column spaces to the right. The X1 or X2 notation in the criteria column is a multiplier factor for determining the points earned. (Example: an "adequate" score of 7 for an X1 criterion = 7 points; an "adequate" score of 7 for an X2 criterion = 14 points.) A score of zero (0) is acceptable if the minimal performance for any criterion is not met.

#### Go/No Go Specifications

- Before judging the entry, ensure that the items below are present; indicate presence with a check mark in the box.
- If an item is missing, leave the box next to the item blank and place a check mark in the box labeled ENTRY NOT EVALUATED.
- If a check mark is placed in the ENTRY NOT EVALUATED box, the entry is not to be judged.

- PDF of the documentation portfolio was submitted  
 Video game is accessible and playable online  
 ENTRY NOT EVALUATED

VIDEO GAME DESIGN (60 points)			
CRITERIA	Minimal performance	Adequate performance	Exemplary performance
	1-4 points	5-8 points	9-10 points
Creativity and Artwork (X1)	The game lacks creativity and originality; little effort is evident in the quality of the artwork.	The game is original and exhibits adequate creativity and artistic quality.	The game is original, highly creative, and well crafted; artwork and graphics contribute to the enjoyment of the game.
Technical Skill (X1)	The game lacks evidence of programming skills.	The game shows some evidence of programming skills.	The game shows strong evidence of programming skills.
Storyline/Flow of the Game (X1)	The game follows little or no storyline; there is little to no logical flow to the game.	The game follows a storyline and flows adequately from one (1) scene/level to another.	The game is well-organized and flows smoothly from one (1) scene/level to the next, enhancing the game play.
Game Mechanics (X1)	The game lacks appropriate use of game mechanics; little feedback is provided to the player, the controls are difficult to use, and/or the objectives of the game are unclear.	The game has adequate use of game mechanics and there is some evidence care in the design of player feedback, objectives, or player controls.	The game has exemplary use of game mechanics and there is evidence of significant consideration placed on the design of player feedback, objectives, and controls.
Overall Appeal (X2)	Playing the game is not enjoyable, dull, and/or monotonous; interacting in game play is a struggle.	The game is somewhat interesting, easy, and enjoyable to play; most game design concepts are incorporated.	The game is innovative and entertaining; design principles are incorporated, which make playing the game easy and enjoyable.
<b>VIDEO GAME DESIGN SUBTOTAL (60 points)</b>			

Record scores in the column spaces below.

Record scores  
in the column  
spaces below.

<b>DOCUMENTATION PORTFOLIO (70 points)</b>			
<b>CRITERIA</b>	Minimal performance	Adequate performance	Exemplary performance
	1-4 points	5-8 points	9-10 points
<b>Portfolio Components</b> (X1)	Portfolio is unorganized and/or is missing three (3) or more components.	Portfolio is missing one (1) or two (2) components and/or is loosely organized.	Portfolio has all required components in order and is well organized.
<b>Game Directions, Control Functions, and Market Research</b> (X1)	The game explanation is difficult to follow; no market research is provided; functions provided are illogical or incorrect.	The game directions can be followed and generally sync with overall workings of the game; some market research is provided; most control functions match the functions of the game.	The game explanation is easy to follow, market research is thorough, and control functions clearly match the game functions.
<b>Storyboard</b> (X2)	The storyboard is sloppy, disorganized, and incomplete and/or does not follow overall flow of the game design.	The storyboard is generally organized and includes aspects and overall scenes of the game.	The storyboard is complete, concise, neat, and follows the overall flow of the game.
<b>Video</b> (X2)	The video is missing details and content and appears to be lacking information; minimum effort appears to have been given.	The video provides adequate information and includes some of the necessary information for completing the three levels.	The video is clear and concise and includes all of the necessary information for completing the three (3) levels
<b>Work Log</b> (X1)	Log is poorly organized and/or incomplete.	Log is adequately detailed and organized and contains most of the required components.	Log is well documented and contains all the required components.
<b>DOCUMENTATION PORTFOLIO SUBTOTAL (70 points)</b>			

<b>TIME DEDUCTIONS</b>
A deduction of five (5) points total will be incurred for a game that completes under the three (3) minute time minimum.
Rules violations (a deduction of 20% of the total possible points for the above sections) must be initialed by the judge, coordinator, and manager of the event. Record the deduction in the space to the right.
Indicate the rule violated: _____

<b>PRELIMINARY SUBTOTAL (130 points)</b>
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Record scores  
in the column  
spaces below.

<b>SEMIFINAL PRESENTATION/INTERVIEW (50 points)</b>			
<b>CRITERIA</b>	Minimal performance	Adequate performance	Exemplary performance
	1-4 points	5-8 points	9-10 points
<b>Organization</b> (X1)	Participants seem unorganized and unprepared for the presentation; illogical explanation of the game is presented.	Participants are generally prepared for the presentation; explanation of the game is communicated and generally organized.	The presentation is logical, well organized, and easy to follow; the game explanation is communicated in an organized and concise manner.
<b>Knowledge</b> (X2)	Participants seem to have little understanding of the concepts in their project; answers to questions may be vague.	Participants exhibit an understanding of the concepts in their project.	Participants show clear evidence of a thorough understanding of their project.



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### SEMIFINAL PRESENTATION/INTERVIEW (50 points) – continued

<b>Articulation</b> (X1)	Communication of the design process is unclear, unorganized, and or illogical; leadership and/or 21 <sup>st</sup> century skills are not evident.	Communication of the design process is somewhat logical and clear; leadership and/or 21 <sup>st</sup> century skills are somewhat evident.	Communication of the design process is clear, concise, and logical; leadership and/or 21 <sup>st</sup> century skills are clearly evident.
<b>Team Participation</b> (X1)	The majority of the delivery is made by one (1) member of the team; the partner(s) may be disengaged in the presentation.	Team members are generally engaged in the presentation, though one (1) member may take on more responsibility than the other(s).	All team members are actively involved in the presentation and responses to questions; there is shared responsibility among team members.
<b>SEMIFINAL PRESENTATION/INTERVIEW SUBTOTAL (50 points)</b>			

Rules violations (a deduction of 20% of the total possible points for the above sections) must be initiated by the judge, coordinator, and manager of the event. Record the deduction in the space to the right.

Indicate the rule violated: \_\_\_\_\_

### SEMIFINAL SUBTOTAL (50 points)

Record scores  
in the column  
spaces below.

### BONUS (10 points)

<b>CRITERIA</b>	Minimal performance	Adequate performance	Exemplary performance
	1-4 points	5-8 points	9-10 points
<b>Bonus Points</b> Unique and exceptional features (X1)	The game demonstrates some unique and exceptional features and/or exemplary educational value.	The game is very good but limited in uniqueness.	The game is outstanding and unique.

To arrive at the **TOTAL** score, add any subtotals and subtract rules violation points, as necessary.

**TOTAL (180 points)**

Comments:

I certify these results to be true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

JUDGE

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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## EVENT COORDINATOR INSTRUCTIONS

### PERSONNEL

- A. Event coordinator
- B. Judges:
  - 1. Preliminary round, two (2) or more
  - 2. Semifinal round, two (2) or more (preferably the same judges from the preliminary round).

### MATERIALS

- A. Coordinator's packet, containing:
  - 1. Event guidelines, one (1) copy for the coordinator and for each judge
  - 2. TSA Event Coordinator Report
- B. One (1) extension cord for the semifinalist evaluation team
- C. One (1) power bar with surge protection for semifinalist evaluation team, as needed
- D. Laptop computer with high speed Internet capability
- E. Tables and chairs for event coordinator, semifinalist judges, and participants

### RESPONSIBILITIES

#### PRE-CONFERENCE

- A. National TSA will collect entries until 11:59 p.m. ET on a designated date in mid-May. The results will be shared with the CRC manager, event coordinator, and assigned judges.
- B. Review entries as they are submitted to the designated online storage utility.
- C. Manage communication and pre-conference evaluation (at least two [2] or more judges should be recruited earlier in the year). Coordinate with the Judge Manager.
- D. Judges determine the twelve (12) semifinalists.
- E. Create a sign-up sheet for semifinalists.

### AT THE CONFERENCE

- A. Attend the mandatory event coordinator's meeting at the designated time and location.
- B. Report to the CRC room and check the contents of the coordinator's packet.
- C. Review the event guidelines and check to see that enough personnel have been scheduled.
- D. Inspect the area or room in which the event is to be held for appropriate set-up, including room size, chairs, tables, outlets, etc. Notify the event manager of any potential problems.
- E. Ensure the judges have access to the online judging system.

### PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. On the first full day of the conference, post a list of the twelve (12) semifinalists in random order.

### SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. At least one (1) hour before the event is scheduled to begin, meet with judges, and review time limits, procedures, regulations, evaluation, and all other details related to the event.
- B. No more than two (2) semifinalists representatives report at the time and place stated in the conference program to sign up and participate in the on-site presentation/interview.
- C. Up to six (6) representatives report at the assigned time and place for the presentation/interview.
- D. Manage completion of the presentations/interviews.
- E. Decisions about rules violations must be discussed and verified with the judges, event coordinator, and the CRC manager to determine either:
  - 1. To deduct twenty percent (20%) of the total possible points in this round
  - 2. To disqualify the entry

The event coordinator, judges, and CRC manager must initial either of these actions on the rating form.
- F. If necessary, manage security and the removal of materials from the event area.