

Student Exercise: The Game Dev Scenario Builder

Your Persona

Meet Alex Chen - Indie Game Developer

- **Background:** Graphic designer with 2 years experience, zero game dev experience
 - **Goal:** Launch first indie game in 12 months
 - **Budget:** \$12,000 (personal savings)
 - **Skills:** Strong art direction, basic marketing knowledge, can't code
 - **Weakness:** Never managed a project, doesn't know game engines
 - **Motivation:** Wants to quit day job and go full-time indie
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Your Scenario

Alex wants to make "**Neon Ronin**" - a 2D action platformer set in cyberpunk Tokyo.

Game Concept:

- Single player, 5 levels
- Fast-paced sword combat with bullet-time mechanics
- Pixel art + neon aesthetic
- Target platform: Steam (PC only for now)
- Price point: \$9.99

The Challenge: Alex needs to create a realistic production plan but doesn't know where to start. That's where YOU (and AI) come in.

Your Prompts (Use These with Your AI Assistant)

Prompt 1: The Budget Reality Check

I'm Alex, an indie developer with \$12,000 and no coding skills. I want to make a 2D action platformer called "Neon Ronin" with 5 levels, releasing on Steam

in 12 months. Help me create a realistic budget breakdown. What roles do I need to hire? What are realistic costs for each? Where can I save money?

****Your Task After AI Responds:****

- Pick ONE cost estimate the AI gives you (like "pixel artist hourly rate")
- Google it yourself to verify
- Write 2-3 sentences: Was the AI accurate? What did you find?

Prompt 2: The Timeline Builder

I'm making a 2D platformer with 5 levels in 12 months. I have no coding experience but I'm a strong art director. Create a month-by-month production timeline. What should happen in months 1-3? 4-6? 7-9? 10-12? What are the major milestones?

****Your Task After AI Responds:****

- Identify ONE milestone that seems too optimistic
- Write 2-3 sentences explaining why and how you'd adjust it

Prompt 3: The Asset Strategy

I have \$12,000 budget and want to use 80% premade assets to save time and money. For a cyberpunk pixel art platformer, what assets should I buy vs create custom? Where can I find affordable asset packs? What's the smartest way to allocate my art budget?

****Your Task After AI Responds:****

- Find 3 REAL asset packs online (Unity Asset Store, itch.io, etc.)
- List their names, prices, and links
- Write 2-3 sentences: Would these actually work for "Neon Ronin"?

Prompt 4: The Risk Assessment

I'm a first-time indie developer making a game in 12 months with limited budget. What are the 5 biggest risks that could derail this project? For

each risk, what's a realistic way to prevent or handle it?

Your Task After AI Responds:

- Pick the risk YOU think is most likely to happen to Alex
 - Write a short paragraph: Why this risk? What would YOU do differently than the AI suggested?
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The 45-Minute Challenge Structure

Minutes 1-10: Choose ONE prompt and ask your AI assistant

Minutes 11-25: Read the AI response, do your research task (Google verification, find real assets, etc.)

Minutes 26-40: Write your response/analysis based on what you learned

Minutes 41-45: Review and add your "AI Collaboration Notes" (see below)

AI Collaboration Notes Template

At the end of your work, answer these 4 questions:

1. **What did the AI do well?** (1-2 sentences)
 2. **What did the AI get wrong or oversimplify?** (1-2 sentences)
 3. **What did YOU add that the AI couldn't know?** (1-2 sentences)
 4. **If you were actually Alex, would you trust this AI advice? Why or why not?** (2-3 sentences)
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What You'll Learn

By the end of this 45-minute exercise, you'll understand:

- How to ask AI strategic questions (not just "tell me everything")
- How to verify AI information against reality
- How to think critically about AI suggestions

- ✓ How real indie game budgets and timelines work
 - ✓ The difference between AI as a tool vs AI as a crutch
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Pro Tips

DON'T:

- Copy-paste AI responses without thinking
- Skip the research/verification step
- Assume AI knows current prices or trends
- Trust AI for creative decisions (Alex's art style, game feel, etc.)

DO:

- Ask follow-up questions if AI is vague
 - Google at least ONE thing the AI tells you
 - Think about what Alex specifically needs (not generic advice)
 - Add your own insights based on what you've learned in this course
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Why This Works

You're not just learning about game development. You're learning a process you can use for ANY project:

1. Define the problem clearly (Alex's constraints)
2. Use AI to generate options/frameworks
3. Research to validate AI claims
4. Apply critical thinking to make decisions
5. Document what worked and what didn't

This is how professionals use AI in 2025.

Pick your prompt and start. 45 minutes on the clock. 

Remember: Alex is counting on you to give realistic advice, not fantasy scenarios. Think like a consultant, not a dreamer.

