

Inside the 'dream job' of a video game tester

[RACHEL GILLET](#), Jun. 10, 2015, 5:25 PM,

<http://www.businessinsider.com/what-its-like-to-be-a-video-game-tester-2015-6>

In the realm of "dream jobs," video game tester ranks pretty highly for a significant number of people.

But if you dream of endless days spent playing your favorite video games, you'll be sorely disappointed.

As an unnamed video game tester explained



during a recent [Reddit AMA](#), success as a QA tester in the video game industry means taking your job seriously and meeting high expectations.

The tester, who goes by the user name [HigherCalibur](#), said he's been working in the industry as a quality assurance tester for about 10 years, and during his time he's worked for several different companies and has been credited on more than 30 game titles.

Here are some questions he answered during the live chat that provide a fascinating glimpse into the world of video game testing. (We've edited questions and responses for clarity.)

Q. What do you do all day?

A. A lot of people ask if all testers do is play video games all day, and that would definitely be a no. While I do work on video games most of the day, I definitely don't play them like a normal, sane person would.

My objective is to break the games in any way possible and to report anything that breaks to people on our programming, design, or art teams (generally referred to as "devs").

For example, I've had to do what is called "matrix testing" for fighting games, which is where you test every character against every character on every stage. Then there's "functionality testing," which means making sure game features work according to design documentation.

I also don't test the game itself all day. I have meetings to attend, emails that need to be sent out and replied to, bugs to report and regress, and all of the other stuff you would assume someone in a normal office job would need to do. I just do it at a place that makes video games.

Q. What does testing look like in a typical day?

A. Usually my day starts out with regression testing, which is when I see if programmers successfully fixed a bug previously found. We get a new build (version) and refer to our bug tracker database to find anything that developers claimed they fixed. Anything fixed gets closed, anything not fixed gets reopened, noted, and sent back to the person who claimed to fix it.

After that, we usually just go through any game features that are a priority to check. These tasks are typically sent down from the production team, since they manage and oversee the project itself. Anything that needs "hands-on" attention at that moment gets it.

Finally, if nothing needs our direct attention, we usually just engage in "open" testing. That depends on the individual tester, to be honest. I personally like doing organic playthroughs using as few cheats or dev commands as possible in order to make sure the user experience is where we want it.

Some folks pound on specific systems. Some folks go through all of the text with a fine-toothed comb. Any bugs we find, we simply write up and send off to the member of the dev team responsible for fixing the particular issue.

Q. What skills do you think are most useful for a QA tester?

A. Being able to keep your cool in a frustrating situation is key. Crunch time is one of the most mentally draining and awful situations you can be in. But if you thrive in stressful situations, then you've definitely got the mental fortitude to handle the job.

You also need to be a very skeptical, analytical person. Never take someone's word for it. If someone says something is working properly, check it anyway.

Being a flexible thinker who's able to pick something apart without knowing what it is or how to make it yourself is also key.

[Natalia Budantseva-Strelka Institute/flickr](#)"Knowing how to communicate with people is extremely important."

Lastly, being able to communicate with different kinds of people is vital.

I've had to learn how to communicate with artists, programmers, and designers, all of whom think very differently and have to be handled in different ways.

Programmers might prefer a blunt, direct approach, but that will typically put an artist into a defensive mindset.

Knowing how to communicate with people is extremely important because you're telling them how something is broken on a daily basis and, if they don't understand what you're trying to communicate, then you're wasting time that could be spent fixing the issue.

Q. What's your favorite game and why?

A. "Mega Man 2." Not only does it have my favorite soundtrack from any of the Mega Man games, but I have very fond memories of playing it with my Dad, passing the controller back and forth between lives, reading off the passwords from the screen after beating a stage so he can put it down in his notebook.

I've always been a huge fan of the "Mega Man" series in general because I like the concept of defeating an enemy to get their powers and using those powers to exploit the weakness of another boss.