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How To Sell A Game On Steam

Lee Stanton (https://www.alphr.com/author/arch/)   December 26, 2020

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Whether you're an up-and-coming game developer or experienced video game enthusiast, Steam presents one of the best platforms for you to make good money selling your game. However, it can take quite a while before you can finally market your game on Steam, and the process can be a little bit daunting.

In this article, we are going to discuss how you can sell a game on Steam, as well as break down things you're allowed to do on the platform and those things you can't.

Why Steam?

Steam has been in existence for over 15 years. It was initially launched by Valve solely for the purpose of distributing updates for their games. These days, the platform has grown and now accommodates games from third parties.

Steam boasts more than 100 million users and over 20 million concurrent users, numbers that would excite any game developer around the world. In addition, there are more than 3,400 games on the platform. It is estimated that Steam controls more than 75% of the online video games market. As a testament to Steam's resounding success, the platform now also sells its own branded gaming consoles and controllers.

How to Sell a Game on Steam

Currently, you can only sell a game on Steam if you're the official owner or developer. You can't sell a game you bought from Valve – Steam's parent company – or from third parties. Steam's business policy is based on the same principle as renting a house for

life by making a single lump-sum payment: You get exclusive rights to use the house and can enjoy all the associated benefits, but you can't turn around and sell it to anyone.

Has it always been this way? In the past, the rules on Steam were a bit different. Once you bought a game on the platform, you had the option to add it to your inventory before adding it to your library. This meant it was possible to sell the game by fetching it from your inventory, "gifting" it to another Steam user, and receiving payment from them for it via a third-party service such as Venmo or PayPal.

These days, Steam no longer offers an inventory option. At the point of purchase, you're required to declare whether you're buying the game for your own use or as a gift for some other user. If it's for personal use, the game goes directly to your library. If you're buying it as a gift, Steam sends it to the recipient's library immediately.

How to Resell a Game on Steam

As we mentioned, it is not possible to resell a game on Steam at the current time.

However, the situation may change later. Indeed, a French court recently found fault with Steam's policy and ruled that users should be free (https://www.eurogamer.net/articles/2019-09-19-french-court-rules-steam-users-have-right-to-resell-their-games) to resell their games. In its ruling, the court dispensed with the notion that Steam sells subscriptions and ruled that it actually sells game licenses. As a result, the court said, it is only fair to allow users to distribute these licenses by selling them if they so wish.

However, the decision has yet to be implemented as Valve has filed an appeal. As of this writing, no ruling on the appeal has been made and it is difficult to predict whether the original decision will be overturned.

Are there resell loopholes? Certainly. But they are all fraught with risks. For starters, you can choose to open multiple accounts, one for each game. That way, it would be easy to resell any game that no longer excites you while continuing to play the rest through the other accounts. Alternately, you can go the all-or-nothing route by selling your entire Steam account. Steam considers either of these alternatives against their rules, and you risk having your account disabled permanently.

Either of these arrangements would pose other serious challenges. If you choose to sell the entire account, for instance, it might be difficult to find a suitable buyer and lock in a good price if you have a large portfolio of games.

How to Sell a Game You Made on Steam

To sell a game you've developed on Steam, there are several steps:

1. Once you've registered your interest in the service, Steam will send you digital paperwork which you'll need to read and sign.
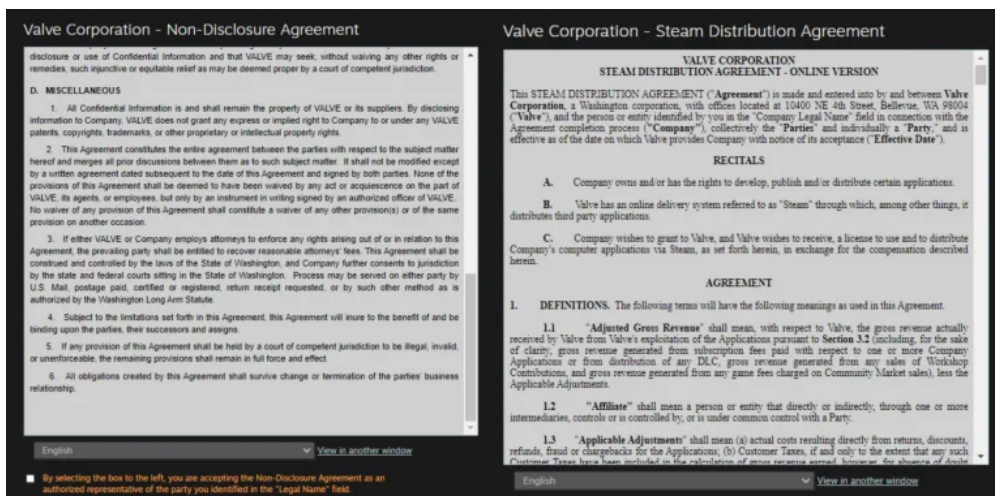
2. You will be asked to pay the app deposit. Payment must be made through a bank account. This is also the account through which the proceeds of your game sales will be processed.
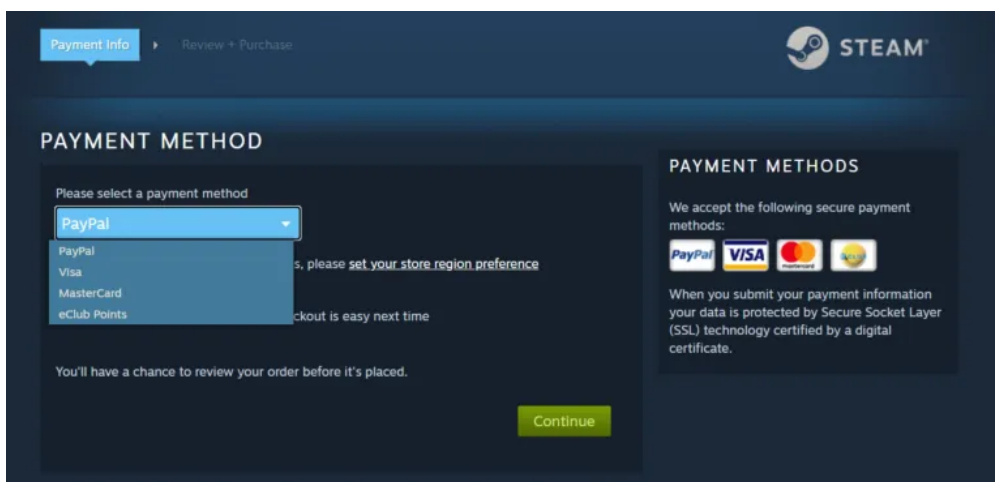
3. You'll then have to complete paperwork with both your bank and the tax authorities. This also gives Steam an opportunity to verify your identity.
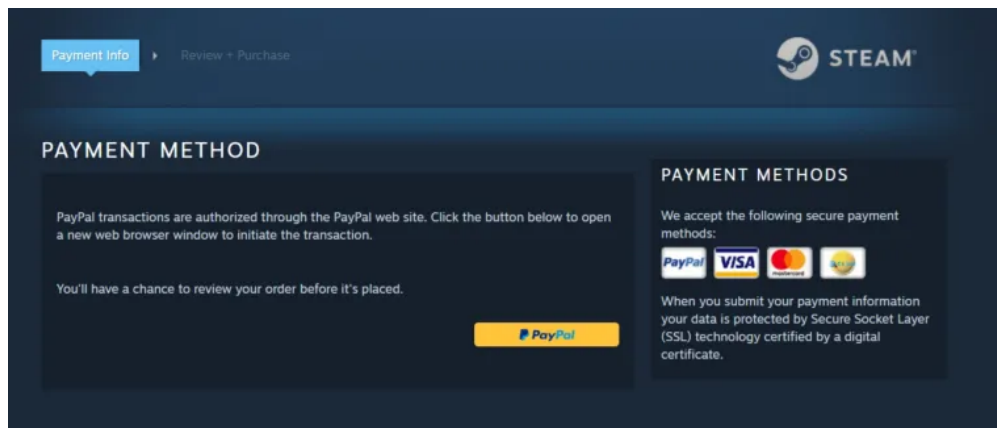
4. At this point, you'll be given access to Steamworks, a set of tools that will help you publish your game on Steam. Steamworks assists with everything from uploading your builds, configuring features, and streaming live demos to setting prices and running discounts.
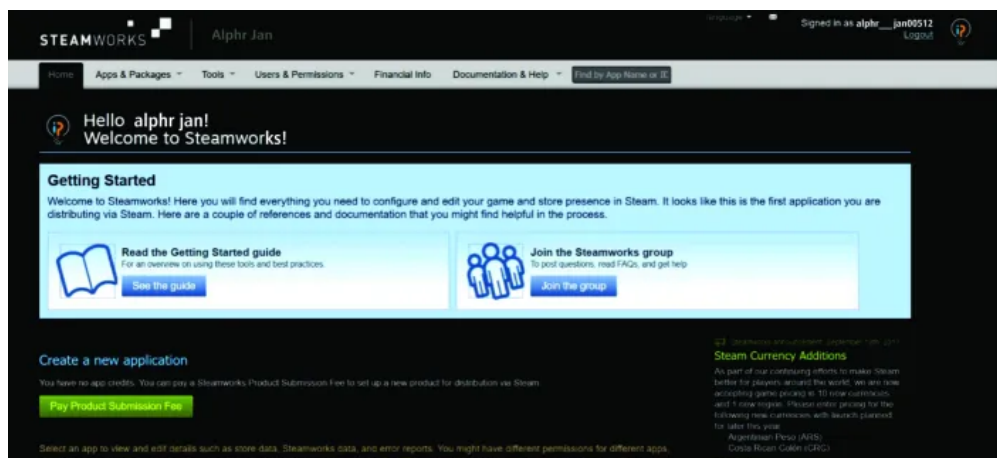
5. You'll then start a test run where Steam runs your game just to make sure that everything checks out, and that all game configurations are correct. This can take between one and five days.

6. At this point, you're all set, and product distribution starts.
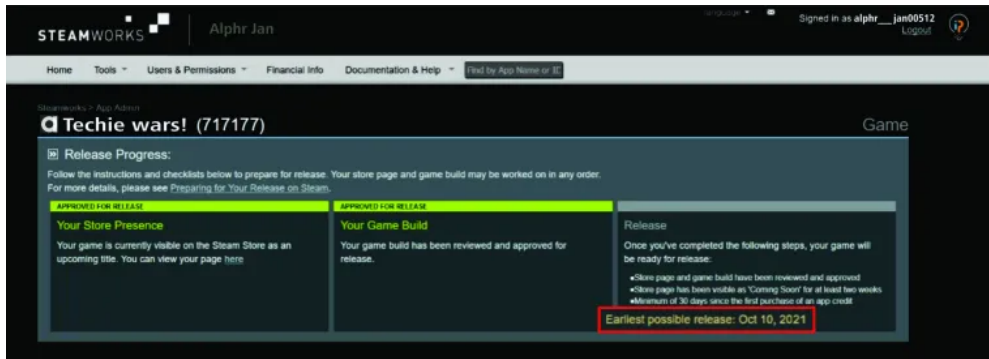
Steam has put in place measures to increase the chances of your store page having a great start. For instance, you are required to put up a "Coming Soon" page at least two weeks before the official launch to ensure that you build your audience. In the lead-up to the launch, your game is bound to generate discussion and Steam gives you an opportunity to interact with potential buyers. These things will help you to generate some momentum.

How to Sell a Game for Money on Steam

To make money from your product on Steam, there are several things you need to do.

First, it's important to set up your Steam page early. This will help you nurture a community of interested parties, the same way boxing promoters grow an audience in the lead-up to a match. If you can come up with a captivating trailer, that's all the better. In addition, having a detailed developer profile is crucial. Also, showcase your portfolio as much as possible, making sure to mention all your projects, past and upcoming.

Supporting a wide range of languages can also help you to sell your game to more people. English and Chinese are the two most commonly used languages (https://www.gamesindustry.biz/articles/2020-01-08-simplified-chinese-is-now-the-dominant-language-among-steam-users) on Steam.

How to Sell an Indie Game on Steam

If you're an indie developer, selling your game on Steam can help you achieve more than just earning a living. It can help you overcome funding problems and provide you with a platform to generate enough money to take your skills to the next level, possibly going triple-A on your next project.

To ensure that your indie game sells well, be sure to set a price that's neither too high nor too low. A good start would be looking at the pricing of similar projects on the platform. As the old marketing strategy goes, it's better to start at a below-average price point and climb up than start high and come crashing down. What's more, you might want to customize your game and use more precise game tags to ensure that your indie game stands out, and it's noticed by your intended audience.

Additional FAQ

Can You Get Free Money on Steam?

Yes. There are several ways to do this. For instance, you can seek out apps or software that reward users with cash when they sign up. Rakuten or Swagbucks would be good examples. You earn money in form of Amazon gift cards, which you can then redeem to buy Steam gift cards. Alternately, you can participate in surveys sponsored by GrabPoints or PrizeRebel to earn free codes on Steam Wallet.

Do I Need a Company to Sell Games on Steam?

Strictly speaking, you don't need a company to sell games on Steam, particularly if you're selling low-risk games and creating your own assets to avoid getting sued for infringement. However, forming a company comes with the benefit of limited liability, which ensures that your personal estate is insulated in the event you're sued or develop problems with tax authorities.

Can You Sell Game Gifts on Steam?

Unfortunately, game gifts can't be sold on Steam. Any attempt to sell a gift is a violation of the Steam-User Agreement, and you may end up losing your account.

How Do You Disown a Game on Steam?

You can disown a game in three simple steps:

• Visit the Steam Support page using your Steam account.

• Select the game you'd like to disown, scroll down the page, and check the search box at the bottom.

• Check the option to "Permanently Remove Game."

How Much Does It Cost to Sell a Game on Steam?

To sell a game on Steam, you'll be charged a one-time nonrefundable fee of $100. However, the fee may be recouped in full once your game has earned at least $1,000 in gross revenue.

Unleash Your Skills

If you're a game developer, Steam offers you a chance to earn from your skills and expand your product range. With this information, nothing prevents you from jumping right in to set up your Steam page and get your product moving. What do you love most about Steam as a marketplace for your product? Are there marketing hacks you'd like to share with fellow developers? Let's engage in the comments.
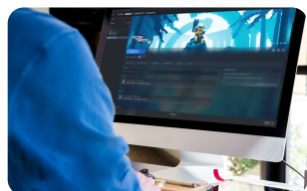
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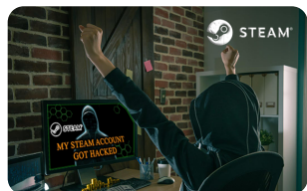
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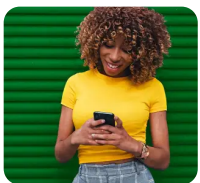
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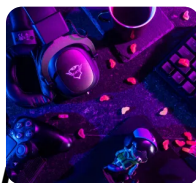
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