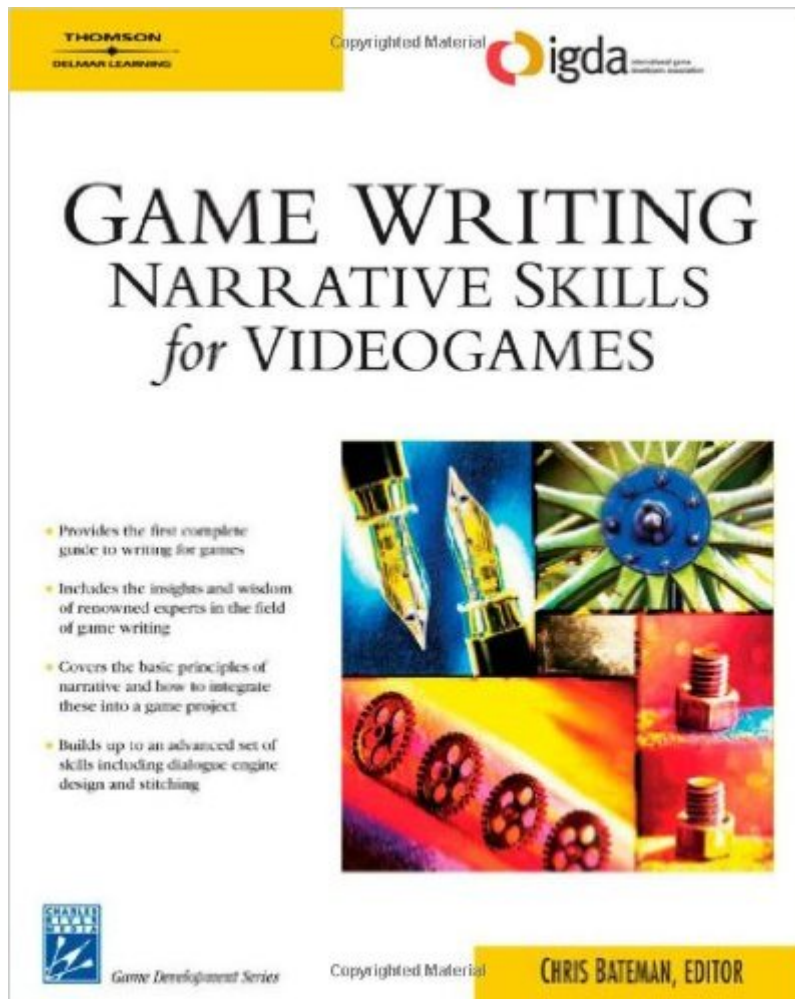


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# Game Writing: Narrative Skills For Videogames (Charles River Media Game Development)



## Synopsis

As computer games become more and more like Hollywood productions, the need for good story lines increases. Research shows that stories are highly valued by game players, so today's studios and developers need good writers. Creating narrative--a traditionally static form--for games is a major challenge. Games are at their heart dynamic, interactive systems, so they don't follow the guidelines and rules of film or T.V. writing. *Game Writing: Narrative Skills for Videogames* addresses these issues and is the first book written to demystify this emerging field. Through the insights and experiences of practicing game writers, the book captures a snapshot of the narrative skills employed in today's game industry. This unique collection of practical articles provides the foundations to the craft of game writing. The articles, written by members of the International Game Developers Association (IGDA) Game Writing Special Interest Group, detail aspects of the process from the basics of narrative and nonlinear narrative to writing comedy for games and creating compelling characters. Throughout the articles there is a strong emphasis on the skills developers and publishers will expect a game writer to have. The book is suitable for both beginners and experienced writers, and is a detailed guide to all the techniques of game writing. This book is an essential read for anyone wishing to get into this exciting field, particularly for new game writers wanting to hone their skills, and film and T.V. scriptwriters who want to learn how to transfer their skills to the games industry.

**From the Editor: Tips and Tricks** *Game Writing* was the first book by the IGDA Game Writing Special Interest Group, and remains its most popular. For writers new to games it's an indispensable guide, and for experienced writers it's full of tips and tricks from some of the industry's most successful game writers. Here are a few extra tips for anyone interested in writing for games.

**Stories Don't Make Games.** A lot of people say to me, "I've got this great idea for a game..." and proceed to tell me a plot outline for a story. Many of the stories I hear would work better as a book or a film than a game, but even in the cases that would make a great game, there's nothing I can do to make that story become a game. Videogame projects are big business, and unlike movies, they don't begin life as a story outline. The story is something that is either developed along with the game, or that is added later. You can't start with a story and expect to finish with a game.

**If a Job's Worth Doing...** So you can't have your great story idea turned into a game. What should you do instead? The short answer is: find a way to make your own game. If you aren't a programmer, this probably means teaming up with someone who is, or using off-the-shelf game creator software. Don't worry too much about the quality of your first game, because if you want to be a professional game writer you're committing to work on lots of games, and you should try to learn from every project you work on. If you only want to work on big-budget videogames, then

game writing might not be for you. Start Small! It may sound obvious, but don't try and run before you can walk. A lot of people working on their first game story have plans to create an epic forty-chapter role-playing game with myriad twists and turns. But seriously, are you really going to be able to make a game that big as your first project? Try writing your game story as a novella or a screenplay first. If that sounds like a lot of extra work, then you're not ready to work on a game that big, because writing a game script is more work than writing a book or a screenplay. Instead, aim for something much smaller--a short story, or the equivalent of one episode of a TV show. You'll have a better chance of finishing what you start. What Does the Player Do? Creating stories is harder work than most people give credit, and game stories have an extra problem--the player has to have something to do. You need to make sure that events in your story imply activities that the player will enjoy doing, otherwise, you're not really making a game at all. How Much Can the Player Do? Also, you have to be realistic about how much choice you can offer the player. You might want to allow the player options at every step of the plot--but then you'll need to develop and test all of the possibilities that this implies. This is a lot of work! Fortunately, Game Writing has many ideas that will help you think about empowering players without generating extra work. Game writing can be rewarding work, but it is still work, and anyone who hopes to succeed in this exciting and challenging field needs to be prepared to rise to the challenge. There's no better place to start than Game Writing: Narrative Skills for Videogames. Chris Bateman Founder, IGDA Game Writing Special Interest Group Editor, Game Writing: Narrative Skills for Videogames

## **Book Information**

Series: Charles River Media Game Development

Paperback: 336 pages

Publisher: Cengage Learning; 1 edition (July 3, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1584504900

ISBN-13: 978-1584504900

Product Dimensions: 9.3 x 7.4 x 0.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (6 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,003,888 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #6 in [Books > Computers & Technology > Programming > Software Design, Testing & Engineering > Localization](#) #728

in [Books > Computers & Technology > Games & Strategy Guides > Game Programming](#) #1215

## Customer Reviews

This is a good book. It suffers from having multiple authors in that it lacks the consistent tone that most writing books have, but all the writing is still good. It is focused on the interface between the writer, the game, and the team, and is long on cautionary points. It will be of value to anyone who is writing, producing, or leading all or part of a game team, particularly if they lack practical experience. If you are only interested in a book about writing for games, Lee Sheldon's 'Character Development and Storytelling for Games' is probably a better choice, but if you are intending or actually writing game, or working with a game writer, this is a good read and a potentially vital resource.

I decided to start the development of an idea I had for a video game and this material has proven to be very useful in the process. If you are a self taught developer, this is the way to go in terms of developing your story, script and other documentation for the development of your game.

Computer games are becoming more like Hollywood productions, requiring good plots and valued story lines which use good narrative styles. In Chris Bateman, Editor's Game Writing: Narrative Skills for Videogames are practical articles on how to do so, written by members of the International Game Developer's Association and covering all kinds of game writing, from comedy to plots. A 'must' for any video or computer game writer. Diane C. Donovan California Bookwatch

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