



# OREGON GAME PROJECT CHALLENGE

## Competition Manual

2021-2022

15<sup>th</sup> Annual Oregon Game Project Challenge

[www.ogpc.info](http://www.ogpc.info)

# Theme

Many organisms cooperate within their own species - packs of wolves, schools of fish, even colonies of microorganisms benefit from the collective behavior of individuals. However, not all cooperation is limited to like organisms. The natural world is full of examples of individuals of different species working together in mutually beneficial ways. Oxpecker birds ride around on the backs of large mammals like rhinos and consume ticks and other parasites that would otherwise plague the rhino. Their alarm calls help alert the rhino to possible dangers like approaching humans. Honeybees consume the nectar produced by flowering plants and in the process transmit genetic material from one plant to another, helping the plants reproduce.

Humankind and computing are increasingly seen as forming similar interdependent relationships. For most of our history, machines have simply been tools made and used by humanity. But now, the most advanced machines now sometimes seem like distinct entities that work with humans to solve problems. Currently, even powerful artificial intelligences depend on human oversight and guidance. But that is rapidly changing as machines become more and more capable of learning and acting on their own. In the future imagined by movies and books, this trend continues until AIs have their own drives and are full-fledged partners of humans.

This season, we invite teams to explore relationships formed by different organisms, or machines and organisms, working together for mutual benefit. The theme of OGPC Season 15 is:



## SYMBIOSIS

We invite teams to build a game exploring the idea of mutually beneficial **Symbiosis**. Teams should be creative in their interpretation and attempt to represent the theme in all aspects of a submission - gameplay, story, art, and sound.

# Theme Details

In modern biology, Symbiosis is a term that describes many kinds of relationships between organisms - some mutually beneficial and others that only benefit one party. For the purposes of this challenge, we want to focus on the type of relationship known as **Mutualism** - where both parties of the relationship benefit.

Think about how you can explore the cooperation of unlike individuals in a game. Strive to make the player experience this cooperation in meaningful ways. Can you tell a story involving symbiosis? Can you craft gameplay where the player must make use of symbiosis to accomplish goals? How can your art and sound reinforce the idea of different things working together for common gain?

If you choose to focus on machine/human symbiosis, make sure to focus on machines that can work independently and have (or seem to have) their own mind or drives. A human using a powerful tool like an airplane or electron microscope is not symbiosis. But when the machine can operate on its own to make decisions and is an active participant in the human-machine relationship, then there is a potential for something that can be described as symbiosis.

## Main Event

### Date and Location

The Main Event is where teams show off their creations to other teams and where judging takes place. It will take place at **Western Oregon University** on May 14th. Teams usually arrive at about 8:30 and are there until about 4-4:30.

Assuming we are able to have an in-person event, teams must be present to participate in the competition. A team that is not able or willing to attend may add an entry to the Team Management System, and provide a web playable game and videos so that others can check out their project, but will not be able to participate in judging or the competition.

# COVID

It is impossible to predict exactly what the pandemic will look like in May. We are hoping that with the increased availability of the vaccines and promising results of new anti-viral treatments, the situation will continue to improve and that a physical event, with appropriate precautions taken, can be held safely. We strongly believe that a big part of what makes OGPC special is the chance for teams to get together to share their work in person and are eager to get back to that format.

While any large gathering of people inherently has some risk we will be doing our best to space groups out further from each other than in years past. We will also be looking to follow guidelines from the Oregon Department of Health and Education as well the policies of our host, Western Oregon University.

Assuming guidelines still call for indoor masking, we will be strictly enforcing those rules and will not be allowing eating or drinking in the gym area.

Western Oregon University requires vaccines for their students and staff, but not for visitors attending an on campus event. However, it is possible that policy may change (UofO, OSU, and many other universities currently require vaccines for visitors). In that case, attendees would have to show proof of vaccination (or possibly a recent negative test result) to attend the event.

Should it become impossible to safely put on an in-person event, we will revert to an online format similar to the last two years.

We recognize that not everyone will agree with our path. Some will believe that we should remain virtual for another year. Others will not like that we cannot promise admittance to unvaccinated students. If our event does not work for you this year, we apologize, and ask you to recognize that we can't possibly make everyone happy. We hope you will rejoin us in future years.

# Entries

## Entries

An entry to OGPC consists of a game, a completed TMS profile, and often, other supporting documents (work logs, concept sketches, storyboards, etc...). The term “game” is not strictly defined. However, the judging does look for certain elements: interaction with a player, use of art, etc.... So if a team chooses to make something like a digital story, or a text based adventure, they may not be eligible for certain achievements or awards.

The game a team brings to the competition does NOT have to be a final product ready for publishing. It is quite common for games to be only partially done by the Main Event. Although a finely polished game will have an advantage in some scoring areas, partially complete projects can score well and even win awards.

Games must incorporate the season’s theme. Creative interpretation of the theme is allowed, but teams that have made no attempt to incorporate the theme may be disqualified from awards.

**This year, we are not allowing VR games.** Asking people to put on a headset is not compatible with masking and other COVID related protocols. (See Main Event section for COVID information.)

**If possible, we strongly recommend making a game that is web playable.** That way, should there be a need to pivot to a remote competition, judges and other participants would still be able to play your project. If you do not have a web-playable game, you would have to rely on a recorded video demonstration of it.

Teams may use any tools to develop their project. We maintain a list of [Resources](#) that has links to popular game development tools.

There will be wifi available at the main event, but we can’t promise great performance. If you design a multiplayer game that depends on a fast network, we suggest you bring your own router/ethernet setup. Personal hotspots will not be allowed.

## Videos

Each team Entry in TMS has places to upload two videos. Although a team can compete without creating them, the videos are a part of the achievements.

These videos are an important part of selling your work to the judges and making your project accessible to those who can't attend the main event or who in the future want to look back at what you did.

## Trailer Video

This video should be 2 minutes or less and “sell” the game to prospective players. Do your best to emphasize what makes the game fun and unique. You do not have to explain every feature, but try to “tease” all the important elements: the game play, the story, the use of the theme, the art and music, etc...

## Making Of Video

This video should be 5 minutes or less and describe how your team made the project. Think of this as a chance to refine the story you will share with judges at the competition!

Please try to cover the following:

- Who you are. The team members and what they each did.
- How you made the game.
  - What tools did you use?
  - How did you organize and coordinate?
- What parts you are most proud of.
- What challenges you overcame or things you learned while making the game.

## Assets

The Art & Assets judging category focuses on awarding achievements for work that *teams* do. A game with student created art and music is going to score higher than a game that looks sharper because it uses professionally created assets.

However, teams are allowed to use outside assets (art, music, sounds, etc...) that are free and publicly licensed (for instance, under Creative Commons). Teams must respect copyright law and only use resources that they have legal permission to use. **Teams may not commission assets for their game nor use purchased assets.** A good rule of thumb is if a team member did not make it, it must be something that is legally and publicly available so any team could make free use of it.

**Teams must provide a list that identifies where any used assets were obtained and what license they are being used under.** This list can be part of game design documents or a separate item as long as it is accessible when judging is taking place. “Google image search” is not a valid source.

# Rating

**Games must qualify for an E10+ rating on the ESRB scale.** (<https://www.esrb.org/ratings-guide/>) Not only does the competition include 6th graders, there are always younger family members who attend the main event.

E10+ Allows:

- Cartoon, fantasy or mild violence
- Mild language
- Minimal suggestive themes

Not allowed are:

- Blood or realistic violence
- Gambling
- Strong language
- Sexual content

Teams that want to make a game that explores a mature theme in an appropriate way should email [info@ogpc.info](mailto:info@ogpc.info) for prior approval. In no situation will Mature features be approved (realistic violence, sexual content, strong language).

## Team Requirements

Successful teams usually have a blend of skills - art, programming, music, writing, marketing, project management, public speaking.... Recruiting students with a variety of interests and backgrounds is key to filling all the needs of the team.

## Team Size

**A team may have a maximum of 7 members.** This limit is in place to help guarantee every participant feels like an important part of their team, help provide competitive balance, and to make event logistics manageable.

**Teams should have at least 2 members. Schools or organizations bringing 3 teams have a minimum team size of 3.** OGPC is not strictly a game development competition. We are focused on

encouraging students to develop not just technical skills but how to develop a project as part of a team. If a small school only has a few students interested in participating, we want them to be able to participate. But when a school sends a large number of 2-person teams it both deprives students of the experience of working on a team and strains our capacity.

**Students may only be a member of one team.** Playtesting, providing feedback, mentoring, debugging, or otherwise assisting other teams is welcome and encouraged, but each student can be a member of only one team. Teams found to be in violation of this *will not be eligible for awards*.

## Affiliation and Divisions

The competition is split into Middle School and High School divisions. Despite the titles, teams are **not** required to be affiliated with a school or other group. Students who are not competing as part of a school need to register in the division appropriate to their academic grade level/age. **MS:** 8th grade and below (13 and under), **HS:** 9th grade and above (14 and above).

If a team has one or more HS aged students (either in grade 9 or above, or 14 or older), they must register in the HS division.

## Coach

**Every team must have an adult coach.** One person can coach multiple teams.

A coach does not have to be a teacher or be a game development expert. Their two main roles are: 1) to be the primary point of contact between OGPC and the team; 2) to help a team with logistics and supervise them at the Main Event.

Any updates we want to get to teams we will send to coaches and rely on them to inform their teams.



# TMS & Registration

## Team Management System

The OGPC Team Management System (<https://tms.ogpc.info>) is the portal that teams use to register and show off their work to the OGPC community and judges. Every team must have an entry on the site and all team members must be listed on their team's entry.

Here is an outline of what needs to happen:

- The coach makes an account on TMS and creates an Entry for each team for the season
- The coach invites team members to join (or invites a student to be the student lead and that student invites the other members)
- Team members create accounts and accept the invitation
- The coach uses the system to pay the registration fee
- The team maintains their TMS profile throughout the season - completion of the profile is part of the judging

## Registration

A team can make an Entry on TMS and setup individual accounts without registering for the actual competition.

Registration to participate in the Main Event costs \$50. (Coaches - if coming up with the registration fee is a problem for your team, please talk to us about a waiver.)

Registration will be limited - we anticipate being able to accommodate about 50-60 teams.

# Judging: Scoring Summary

## Overview

Games will be evaluated at the main event by a panel of judges consisting of volunteers. These volunteers are a mix of software and game industry professionals, university students and professors, and other community members.

Judges will evaluate each game in five categories: Programming, Game Design, Art and Assets, Theme and Style, and Management. These scores are determined by how many achievements the team accomplished - a list of the possible achievements is released at the start of the season.

Earning achievements helps the judges determine the winners in each category. Achievements are not the final determiner for any award - they are a way for judges to do an initial ranking of teams and for teams to understand what judges are looking for. In each category, the judges will select a winner in both HS and MS divisions.

In addition to the category awards, there are also several overall awards given to teams that display outstanding work in all categories. Each team can only win one award with the exception of Player's Choice.

## Overall Awards

The overall awards are given to recognize teams that excel across all five areas of judging or produce an otherwise remarkable game. These awards are awarded separately in each division - there will be both a MS and HS Best in Show, Judges' Choice, and Rookie winner.

### **Best in Show**

This award goes to the team that created the best overall project, weighing all categories equally. Games that receive Best in Show excel in all categories, usually completing all achievements in at least one category.

### **Judges' Choice**

This award is given entirely at the judges' discretion. It could be to break a tie or to recognize a noteworthy game that did not receive an award for whatever reason. This award could also go

to a game that the judges thought was really fun or technically impressive regardless of performance in other areas.

## Rookie

This award goes to the highest-ranking new team (***neither the coach nor any team members have participated in OGPC before***). Returning teams often know what they are doing from the start, whereas new teams may need a few months to get a rhythm down. This award recognizes the hard work of a new team that still manages to shine.

# Category Awards

Teams are awarded a Category Award to recognize hard work in one realm of game design and creation. The following is a basic overview of each category:

## Programming

This category focuses on the technical side of creating a game. Games winning the Programming Award display responsible development practices and significant technical knowledge. Choice of platform or programming language does not matter - what does matter are the team's demonstrated use of abstractions, development of algorithms, source control, and documentation.

## Game Design

This category focuses on the process of designing a game. Judges look at game mechanics, design documents, and prototypes to see how a team's game evolved and grew over time.

## Art and Assets

This category focuses on the visuals and audio of the game. Sound effects, music, animations, models, and sprites are examples of items being judged as part of this award.

## Theme and Story

This category focuses on the execution of the season's theme and story writing. Judges will evaluate teams on their attempt to follow the theme as they interpret it through game mechanics, art, and story. Judges award more achievements for having a consistent story, character development, and for communicating the theme through mechanics and gameplay rather than only intro, cut-scenes, or static images with text.

## **Management**

This category focuses on students' interactions with each other and with other teams. Teams must demonstrate how they have organized and planned and how all members contributed to the development process. Winning teams will have a consistent brand and put on a professional presentation at the main event.

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