

Working with Actors on Video Games

Best Practices Guide

ACTRA
TORONTO

WHO SHOULD USE THIS GUIDE

ACTRA Toronto is pleased to present the following guidelines to assist Video Game Producers in ensuring Performers are prepared before and after arriving on set or commencing recording.

It is intended to make sure sessions run smoothly and not intended to add requirements.

BEFORE THE SESSION

Lock your script. Send a copy to the Performer ahead of time (a PDF is ideal).

Give context. Who is the character, who are they talking to, what just happened, what do they want?

Describe the physical action (for combat efforts or reactions). Is it a slam or a throw? Gather any art, animatic or reference clips you have. Sending them to the Performer in advance is ideal, but if that is not possible, plan to show them to the Performer at the top of the session.

Bring one creative lead. A writer or creative director who knows the world should join the planning and recording. They can answer questions on the spot and flag takes to revisit.

Decide who gives direction. One voice, not five. If you're not comfortable directing, consider a voice director for your key sessions.

DURING THE SESSION

Start with the references. Show or play your art, animatic or reference clips at the top of the session, even if you sent them to the Performer ahead of time. This sets the mood and helps the Performer understand the game and the character before the first take.

Direct toward what the character wants. Performers do their best work when they have direction. Ask what the character wants from the person they're speaking to, rather than playing a mood or emotion.

Keep notes short, specific and one-at-a-time. Describe the situation rather than the sound. Instead of "more angry," try "he's lying and she's about to catch him."

Make it safe to fail. Performers take more risks when they know a bad take costs nothing. Ask for one more or a different version.

Invite options and listen. If time allows, let the Performer try alternatives and improvise a little. You may find something better than the page.

Respect the voice. Shouts, screams and other vocal extremes strain the Performer. Follow the guidelines for vocally stressful work and build in breaks. (see Appendix A, Guidelines for Vocal Stress and Vocally Extreme Performances, in the agreement)

AFTER THE SESSION

Plan for pickups. Scripts change and quality assurance finds problems. Schedule and budget for pickup sessions up front. The agreement contains hourly pickup rates for this purpose.