Apprentice writers for Zombies, Run! game

Naomi Alderman, novelist and games designer, is looking for an early-career writer to train in writing for the award-winning game Zombies, Run!, which she co-created with Six to Start. Zombies, Run! is about to start its ninth season; it's known for excellence in storytelling and has attracted guest writers including Elizabeth Bear, Margaret Atwood and Joanne Harris.

What's on offer

The successful applicant will receive 25 days of training in writing for Zombies, Run! over 4-6 months (depending on your availability) from autumn 2019 onwards. Training will include practising and receiving feedback on: writing episode and radio scripts, storylining episodes, brainstorming story arc, rewriting after constructive critical feedback on your writing, and giving critique on other people's scripts.

For this work you will be paid £2,000, plus reasonable travel and accommodation if needed. You will be credited on the game as "writing trainee". Naomi does not anticipate being able to use any of the scripts you produce during training, but if any of them are used you'll be paid an additional script fee in line with that paid to other writers on the game, and your name will be credited as a writer or co-writer of that episode.

Naomi works in a number of areas of writing and will be happy to mentor you and advise you on how to form a career as a writer. The exact shape of this is hard to predict, but Naomi will respond to your interests.

What's expected of you

This is not a full-time opportunity, but if your writing is good it should lead to continuing paid work on Zombies, Run!. The idea is for the trainee to come out of the process able to take on a good chunk of Zombies, Run! writing in the future.

We know that - like many early-career writers - you'll probably need to make a living at the same time as training on this game. So many of those 25 training days will not need attendance in person. However, you will need to able to make 10 weekdays available in autumn and winter 2019 to attend in person in London and potentially elsewhere in the UK. The remaining days you'll be writing alone (welcome to the world of the professional writer) and you can complete your training on evenings and weekends if you need to. We'll try to work around what you need.

We expect you to be professional: always arriving on time and delivering work *exactly* when you say you will (our deadlines are tight; "your deadline is 9am on Tuesday" means it's in my inbox by 8.59am on Tuesday), working to a tight brief without straying, making work of the best standard you can, taking critique like a pro (even when it stings) and committing to rewriting until you get it right.

If your work is of a good standard when you've finished your training, Naomi would expect to be able to commission writing, rewriting and storylining work from you on future seasons of Zombies, Run! for which you'll be paid script fees and day rates in line with those paid to other writers on the game. Naomi will retain copyright of your work, but you will be given credit or joint credit for every script by you in the game.

Who we're looking for

We're looking for someone who is excited about making a career as a writer, is interested in games writing, and wants to learn. It'll really help if you love Zombies, Run!, but that's not a necessity. It's more important that you want to be an excellent writer. Just make sure that you've played the game and understood how it works before you apply.

Zombies, Run! may be a smartphone fitness game, but it lives and dies by the quality of its storytelling. We do not "wrap a story around" a pre-existing gameplay experience and hope it fits. The storytelling is the experience. We take our work very seriously, and we're looking for a committed and professional person who wants to learn how to make excellent work and is willing to take critique, go back and do it again, submit a fresh draft, take more critique, go back and do it again.

This opportunity is open to UK-based writers, or writers who are easily able to travel to the UK at short notice.

Zombies, Run! prides itself on being the most diverse zombie running game in the world, and we're always looking to increase diversity in representation and in our staffing. With that in mind, we would be especially delighted to hear from writers of colour and writers with disabilities for these opportunities. Scripts will be blind-read by us in the first instance.

We welcome all applicants regardless of race, sex, age, ethnicity, ability or disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, size or any other personal attributes. Although we have described this as an opportunity for an early-career writer, if you're excited to train with us and are of any age or at any stage in your career we'd love to hear from you.

How to apply

Send an email to zombiesruntrainee2019@gmail.com by 5pm UK time on 12th August with the following either pasted into the body of the email, as web links, or as attachments in Word, .pdf or plain text files only:
1) your CV
2) a link to or copy of a game you've created. This could be any sort of game, including a puzzle (send the solution with it), a Twine game, rules for a board game or card game, or a scenario for an RPG.
3) A half-page scene-by-scene summary of an original Zombies, Run! mission you have invented, followed by two consecutive scenes of this mission featuring the characters Sam, Janine and Amelia. Each scene should be a page in length. The setup, goal and location of the mission are up to you. We will expect you to show good understanding of the character voices - writing in authentic character voice is an essential part of working on the game.
Don't worry about:
- having an encyclopaedic knowledge of the character canon backstories
- what season the story comes in
- finding a mission idea we've never done any elements of ever before.
Do worry about:
- making the mission something that works for the Zombies, Run! format
- making sure the characters sound like themselves.

(By sending us these pages you acknowledge that we've probably already had this idea for a mission and scenes and if something similar crops up in the game in the future it's because we already had it in the pipeline.)

Applications that don't contain all three of these components will be deleted without being read.

If you have questions, you can email zombiesruntrainee2019@gmail.com, but please note that all the information you should need is in this document and available by playing the game, and if you ask a question to which the answer is already here that will disqualify you. We will not be answering questions about "how to write for Sam, Janine and Amelia" or "how to write a game" – we're looking for you to use your initiative on this.

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www.naomialderman.com