WEB3 INTERNET CAFE

GAME REVIEW ACADEMY

Handbook · Critical Play & Creator Journalism Program

"Building Credible Critics. Creating Trustworthy Coverage."

16 SECTIONS	4 WEEKS	1 STANDARD

CONFIDENTIAL — FOR ENROLLED CREATORS ONLY

POLOMOLOK, SOUTH COTABATO

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What Makes a Good Game Review

> *A review is not a verdict handed down. It is a case, built from evidence, that a reader can check for themselves.*

The Six Pillars

- **1. EVIDENCE** — conclusions built on what the game actually does
- **2. ANALYSIS** — turning evidence into a claim a reader can follow
- **3. PERSPECTIVE** — judgment calibrated to the game's intended audience
- **4. CRAFT** — writing precise enough to be trusted and quoted
- **5. INTEGRITY** — disclosure, consistency, and independence from pressure
- **6. VOICE** — a recognizable point of view readers choose to follow

The Claim Chain

A claim needs a chain: **CLAIM → EVIDENCE → ANALYSIS → IMPLICATION.**

The One-Sentence Test

If you can't summarize your verdict on this game in one sentence, you haven't finished thinking about it yet. Write that sentence first — everything else in the review should defend it.

PUBLISHING SAFETY FRAMEWORK

Before publishing: (1) Have I disclosed everything relevant? (2) Could this claim be checked and found false? (3) Would I defend this exact sentence in a year? (4) Does this treat the developer's work fairly? If NO to any — revise before you publish.

THE GOLDEN RULE OF REVIEWER COMMUNICATION

Before publishing a sharp line, ask: “Does this serve the reader's understanding, or just my own satisfaction in saying it?” When the answer is the reader — publish it. When the answer is only yourself — cut it.

SECTION 1

Welcome to the Game Review Academy

Vision

To become the Philippines' leading academy for credible game critics — training players to turn firsthand experience into writing and coverage that readers, developers, and the industry can trust.

Mission

Game Review Academy exists to close the gap between playing games and writing about them professionally. We provide the method, the mentorship, and the publishing platform that aspiring critics need to grow from opinionated players into working reviewers.

Our Space	A physical Academy hub in Polomolok, South Cotabato, Philippines
Our Purpose	Reviewer training, critical writing, and games-media literacy
Our Network	Partner cafés and creator programs across the Philippines
Our Platform	W3IC Media Network — where every graduate's first bylines run, reaching readers nationwide

The Academy itself is one physical room in Polomolok — that is where the training happens. What graduates publish travels far beyond it: bylines run on the W3IC Media Network, and the standard they're trained to is the same one used across W3IC's growing partner-café network nationwide.

Why This Academy Exists

There are thousands of players in the Philippines with strong opinions about games — and almost none of them have been taught how to turn an opinion into a review anyone should trust. This academy was built to close that gap.

- Most “reviews” are reactions, not analysis.
- Most critics stop at “good” or “bad” and never say why.
- Most gaming coverage collapses without a repeatable method.
- Most outlets avoid writers whose judgment they can't verify.
- Game Review Academy teaches the method that makes judgment verifiable.
- Every graduate leaves with a portfolio, not just a hot take.
- Our reviewers are trained to inform readers — not just entertain them.
- Rigor is the rarest skill in games media. We make it standard.

> *A review is not a verdict handed down. It is a case, built from evidence, that a reader can check for themselves.*

— Aervin Espaldon, Founder — Web3 Internet Cafe

A Message From the Founder

When we built our first creator program, I noticed the same gap kept showing up in a different form: players who could talk about games for hours but couldn't yet explain, in writing, why a game worked or didn't. The Game Review Academy is our answer. Every critic who joins us already has the opinions. Our job is to give them the method that makes those opinions worth reading. This handbook is that method. Study it. Apply it. Defend your conclusions with evidence, every time.

— Aervin Espaldon, Founder & CEO

SECTION 2

The Modern Game Criticism Landscape

> *Anyone can finish a game. Not everyone can explain what finishing it proved.*

Why Game Review Is a Real Discipline

Games media reaches audiences at a scale most entertainment coverage would envy — outlet reviews, YouTube critique, and independent newsletters all shape what millions of players buy, avoid, and recommend. Publishers court reviewers before launch. Platforms surface review scores in the storefront itself. A review is not a side note to a game's release; for many players, it is the deciding factor.

Where Reviewer Credibility Comes From

TRAIT	WHAT IT MEANS	CATEGORY
Evidence	Conclusions traceable to specific, describable moments in play	Foundational
Consistency	The same standard applied across genres and franchises	Trust
Context	Judged against genre, audience, and platform — not a personal default	Fairness
Transparency	Disclosed access, playtime, and any conflicts of interest	Integrity
Craft	Writing that is precise enough to be quoted and defended	Readability

Opinion vs. Analysis

A REACTION	A REVIEW
Reaction to one playthrough	Pattern across a full session or more
“I didn't like it”	“Here is what created the dislike, and when”
Judged against personal taste	Judged against the game's own intended experience
Hard to disagree productively with	Invites the reader to check the evidence
Expires with the next hot take	Holds up months later, and gets cited
Write one review a stranger could use to decide, and you've done more for your credibility than a hundred reactions ever will.	

Long-Term Career Mindset

- Think in a body of work, not a single review. Consistency is the credential.
- Every published review is a portfolio piece. Treat it like one.
- Your credibility is built one verifiable claim at a time.
- Outlets and studios invest in critics whose judgment they can predict.
- The goal is not a viral score — it is a reputation readers return to.

SECTION 3

The Academy's Core Architecture

Four frameworks. One system. This section is the map — read it before anything else, and return to it whenever a later section feels disconnected from the rest.

This handbook contains several frameworks that can look, at first glance, like separate ideas: a Method, a set of Pillars, a Scorecard, and a 4-Week program. They are not separate. Each one exists to serve the next.

HOW THE PIECES FIT TOGETHER

THE METHOD is how you review — the seven-stage process you run on every game.

THE SIX PILLARS are the qualities that make a review credible — what the Method is supposed to produce.

THE SCORECARD measures how well a reviewer demonstrates those qualities — in a single review, and across a body of work.

THE 4-WEEK ACADEMY is the training system that builds all of it, one deliverable at a time.

Put simply: the Method tells you what to do, the Pillars tell you what “good” means, the Scorecard tells you how close you got, and the 4-Week Academy is where you practice all three until they become instinct.

The Review Method

Every review produced at the Academy — from a first observation log to a final publishable piece — follows the same seven-stage process. Skipping a stage is the single most common reason a review collapses under questioning.

> *Four weeks. One method: Play, Understand, Observe, Question, Evaluate, Explain, Improve.*

STAGE	WHAT YOU DO	WHAT IT PRODUCES
1. PLAY	Experience the game the way its intended audience would — enough hours to see past the opening.	Firsthand experience worth writing about
2. UNDERSTAND	Learn the genre, audience, systems, and the experience the game is trying to create.	Context to judge it fairly
3. OBSERVE	Record what actually happens during play — specific, checkable, separate from opinion.	An evidence log
4. QUESTION	Ask why the game creates the experiences you observed.	Working explanations to test
5. EVALUATE	Decide whether the game succeeds or fails at what it is trying to do.	A defensible claim
6. EXPLAIN	Turn the judgment into a clear, evidence-supported piece of writing.	A draft review
7. IMPROVE	Take feedback, revise, correct, and publish a stronger version.	A publishable review

Notice what this is not: it is not "play the game, then write your opinion." Four full stages — Understand, Observe, Question, Evaluate — sit between playing a game and forming a verdict. Every one of the Six Pillars in Section 4 is really a set of habits for doing one or more of these stages well.

The Learning Loop

Every major skill in this handbook — Evidence, Analysis, Perspective, Craft, Integrity, Voice — is taught the same way, because lecturing about a skill and building it are not the same thing:

- LEARN — understand what the skill is and why it matters.
- PRACTICE — apply it to a real game, in a real session.
- FEEDBACK — a mentor identifies exactly where it broke down.
- REVISE — fix it, specifically, using that feedback.
- DEMONSTRATE — produce work that proves the skill is there.

Section 4 walks through all six skills using this loop. Section 13 shows where each loop lands on the calendar.

SECTION 4

The Six Pillars of a Reviewer

The qualities that make a review credible — and the loop the Academy uses to build each one from scratch.

1. EVIDENCE — conclusions built on what the game actually does

2. ANALYSIS — turning evidence into a claim a reader can follow

3. PERSPECTIVE — judgment calibrated to the game's intended audience

4. CRAFT — writing precise enough to be trusted and quoted

5. INTEGRITY — disclosure, consistency, and independence from pressure

6. VOICE — a recognizable point of view readers choose to follow

PILLAR 1

EVIDENCE

Definition

Evidence is the practice of tying every conclusion in a review back to something that actually happened in play — a specific mechanic, moment, or repeated pattern the reader could go verify themselves.

Why It Matters

Readers cannot check your feelings, but they can check your evidence. A review built on evidence survives disagreement; a review built on vibes doesn't.

The Learning Loop

STEP	HOW IT WORKS FOR EVIDENCE
LEARN	Understand the difference between an observation (what happened) and an interpretation (what you think it means).
PRACTICE	Play a game with notes open and log specific moments as they happen, not from memory afterward.
FEEDBACK	A mentor reads the log and flags any entry that is vague, unsupported, or actually an opinion in disguise.
REVISE	Rewrite the flagged entries until each one names an exact moment a reader could go find.
DEMONSTRATE	Produce one claim, fully supported by three or more logged observations.

Daily Habits & Growth Checklist

DAILY HABITS	GROWTH CHECKLIST
◆ Log specific moments during play, not just after finishing.	✓ I recorded at least three specific examples that support today's notes.
◆ Separate what happened from what you think it means.	✓ I can name the exact moment, not just the general feeling.
◆ Track patterns across a full session, not one memorable spike.	✓ I distinguished observation from interpretation in my notes.
◆ Note the exact mechanic or design choice behind each reaction.	✓ I checked whether one bad moment was actually a repeated pattern.

Exercise — Weak Observation vs. Strong Observation

Every observation should be specific enough that another player could go verify it. Compare:

WEAK OBSERVATION	STRONG OBSERVATION
"The combat feels bad."	"Enemies flinch-cancel out of their telegraph animation on Hard, so the 1.2-second warning window sometimes shows for under half a second."

OBSERVATION	INTERPRETATION → IMPLICATION
Enemy attacks after a readable 1.5-second telegraph.	The game gives the player enough reaction time → combat feels demanding but fair.

Practice: play 20 minutes of any game and write five observations using this structure — before writing a single opinion.

Example

A reviewer who writes "combat feels unfair" instead pinpoints the exact encounter where enemy damage spikes without warning — and confirms it happens on three separate runs.

Common Mistakes

- × Writing "this game is boring" without saying what creates the boredom.
- × Judging the whole game from the first twenty minutes.
- × Letting one frustrating session stand in for the full experience.
- × Quoting your own memory instead of your notes.

PILLAR 2

ANALYSIS

Definition

Analysis is the practice of turning a pattern of evidence into a claim about why the game creates the experience it does — the bridge between what you observed and what you conclude.

Why It Matters

Evidence alone is a list. Analysis is what turns the list into an argument a reader can follow, check, and disagree with productively — instead of a verdict they can only accept or reject.

The Learning Loop

STEP	HOW IT WORKS FOR ANALYSIS
LEARN	Understand that a claim needs a chain: CLAIM → EVIDENCE → ANALYSIS → IMPLICATION.
PRACTICE	Take an existing evidence log and build a claim map from it before drafting a single sentence of the review.
FEEDBACK	A mentor checks whether every claim on the map actually traces back to logged evidence, or whether it's a leap.
REVISE	Rebuild any claim that doesn't survive the trace — either with stronger evidence or a smaller claim.
DEMONSTRATE	Produce a claim map that supports the review's central thesis end to end.

Daily Habits & Growth Checklist

DAILY HABITS	GROWTH CHECKLIST
◆ Ask “why” of every strong observation before writing the verdict.	✓ I can explain why, not just what, for each major claim.
◆ Build a claim map before drafting the full review.	✓ Every claim in my map traces to at least one evidence entry.
◆ Test each claim against the counter-case.	✓ I checked whether a counterexample would break my claim.
◆ Separate the game's failure from a mismatch with your own taste.	✓ I can state whether this is a flaw or a preference gap.

Exercise — Opinion, Claim, and Verdict — Three Comparisons

Analysis fails in three predictable ways. Study each pair before drafting your own claim map.

OPINION	CLAIM
"The final boss is unfair."	"The final boss telegraphs its unblockable attack with the same wind-up animation used for a blockable attack earlier, so players are punished for pattern-matching the game's own tutorial."

CLAIM WITHOUT EVIDENCE	CLAIM WITH EVIDENCE
"The pacing drags in the back half."	"Side content stops introducing new mechanics after hour twelve — the remaining eight hours reuse the same three enemy types with only stat increases."

UNSUPPORTED VERDICT	DEFENSIBLE VERDICT
"7/10 — it's fine, some parts are good, some aren't."	"7/10 — the traversal and combat (worth a 9 on their own) are undercut by a story that contradicts its own established rules twice in the final act."

Practice: take one claim from your Week 1 evidence log and run it through all three comparisons before it goes in a draft.

Example

A reviewer notices frame-rate drops only during four-player co-op (evidence), and connects it to the way the game syncs enemy AI across clients (analysis) — instead of simply writing "performance is bad."

Common Mistakes

- × Restating the observation as if it were already an explanation.
- × Skipping straight from observation to verdict with no argument in between.
- × Building the claim map after the draft instead of before it.
- × Treating the first plausible explanation as the only one worth writing down.

PILLAR 3

PERSPECTIVE

Definition

Perspective is the discipline of evaluating a game against what it is trying to be and who it is trying to reach — not only against your personal taste.

Why It Matters

A puzzle game and a shooter can't be held to the same pacing standard. A reviewer who forgets this fails genres and audiences they simply don't play — and misleads the readers who do.

The Learning Loop

STEP	HOW IT WORKS FOR PERSPECTIVE
LEARN	Understand the difference between “not for me” and “not good at what it does.”
PRACTICE	Review a game outside your usual genre and name its intended audience before forming any verdict.
FEEDBACK	A mentor flags any judgment that penalizes the game for not being a different genre.
REVISE	Rewrite the flagged judgment against the genre's own standard instead of your default.
DEMONSTRATE	Produce a verdict that credits or criticizes the game on its own terms — explicitly stated.

Daily Habits & Growth Checklist

DAILY HABITS	GROWTH CHECKLIST
◆ Identify the intended audience before forming a verdict.	✓ I named the intended audience before writing my conclusion.
◆ Ask what experience the game promises, not what you expected.	✓ I compared this game to its genre, not to an unrelated favorite.
◆ Compare against genre peers, not against your favorite game.	✓ I checked whether my dislike was a flaw or a mismatch of taste.
◆ Separate “not for me” from “not good at what it does.”	✓ I described who would enjoy this, even if I didn't.

Exercise — Personal Preference vs. Design Criticism

PERSONAL PREFERENCE	DESIGN CRITICISM
“I don't like turn-based combat, so this system feels dated.”	“Turn order is never shown to the player, so tactical decisions are made blind — a genre convention this game skips without replacing it.”

Practice: pick a game in a genre you dislike. Write one sentence of preference, then rewrite it as design criticism.

Example

A reviewer who dislikes turn-based strategy still credits a tactics game for excellent encounter design, because they evaluate it against what the genre's fans actually value.

Common Mistakes

- × Docking a cozy game points for lacking challenge it never promised.
- × Reviewing a genre you don't understand without saying so.
- × Treating your own preferences as a universal standard.
- × Ignoring the game's stated audience entirely.

PILLAR 4

CRAFT

Definition

Craft is the writing skill that turns evidence and perspective into something readable, quotable, and clear — the difference between a review and a diary entry.

Why It Matters

A brilliant insight buried in a shapeless paragraph helps no one. Outlets and readers reward critics whose writing respects their time.

The Learning Loop

STEP	HOW IT WORKS FOR CRAFT
LEARN	Understand that a sentence's job is to be specific enough to quote and defend.
PRACTICE	Take a paragraph of your own vague writing and rebuild it around one concrete detail.
FEEDBACK	A mentor circles every adjective doing the work a specific detail should be doing.
REVISE	Replace each circled adjective with the exact detail that earned it.
DEMONSTRATE	Produce one paragraph a reader could quote without you needing to explain it further.

Daily Habits & Growth Checklist

DAILY HABITS	GROWTH CHECKLIST
◆ Open with the verdict a skimming reader needs.	✓ My review states its core verdict in the first two paragraphs.
◆ Cut any sentence that repeats a point already made.	✓ I cut at least one redundant sentence today.
◆ Replace vague adjectives with concrete description.	✓ Every strong claim has a specific detail attached to it.
◆ Read every draft aloud before publishing.	✓ I read the draft aloud and fixed anything that stumbled.

Exercise — Vague Writing vs. Precise Writing

VAGUE	PRECISE
"The graphics are nice."	"Lighting shifts in real time with the day-night cycle, and character models hold up in the frequent close-up cutscenes."

Practice: find one adjective-only sentence in your last draft and rewrite it with a specific, checkable detail.

Example

A reviewer replaces "the story is weak" with a two-sentence account of exactly where the plot loses coherence — specific enough to quote in a pull-quote.

Common Mistakes

- × Burying the verdict at the very end of a long review.
- × Using five adjectives where one precise detail would do.
- × Publishing a first draft without a read-aloud pass.
- × Structure that wanders instead of building toward a conclusion.

PILLAR 5

INTEGRITY

Definition

Integrity is disclosing how you got the game, how long you played, and any relationship to its makers — and never letting outside pressure change a verdict.

Why It Matters

The moment a reader suspects a review was bought or softened, every review you've ever written loses value. Integrity is the asset that makes the rest of the pillars worth anything.

The Learning Loop

STEP	HOW IT WORKS FOR INTEGRITY
LEARN	Understand what a complete disclosure statement contains: platform, version, playtime, access, conflicts.
PRACTICE	Draft a disclosure statement for a game you've played, before writing a word of the review itself.
FEEDBACK	A mentor checks the statement against the actual access — nothing implied, nothing left out.
REVISE	Fix any gap between what was disclosed and what actually happened.
DEMONSTRATE	Produce a disclosure statement clean enough to publish as-is at the top of the review.

Daily Habits & Growth Checklist

DAILY HABITS	GROWTH CHECKLIST
◆ Disclose review copies, embargoes, and playtime up front.	✓ My disclosure is accurate and visible in today's draft.
◆ Hold the same standard for friends' games as for strangers'.	✓ I did not soften a conclusion because of who asked.
◆ Say no to edits that change your actual conclusion.	✓ I reported my real playtime, not an inflated one.
◆ Flag conflicts of interest before you're asked to.	✓ I flagged any relationship to the developer or publisher.

Exercise — Undisclosed Access vs. Disclosed Access

UNDISCLOSED	DISCLOSED
The review opens straight into the verdict, with no mention of how the copy was obtained.	"Reviewed on PC using a publisher-provided code, 34 hours logged across two playthroughs. No other compensation received."

Practice: write your disclosure statement first, before you write anything else in your next draft.

Example

A reviewer who received an early copy states the playtime and access terms in the first paragraph — before a single opinion is offered.

Common Mistakes

- × Omitting that a review copy or trip was provided by the publisher.
- × Changing a score after publisher pushback.
- × Reviewing a friend's or sponsor's game without saying so.
- × Inflating playtime to sound more authoritative.

PILLAR 6

VOICE

Definition

Voice is the recognizable point of view — tone, values, and taste — that makes a reader seek out your byline specifically, instead of any review of the same game.

Why It Matters

In a field with thousands of reviews for every major release, voice is what makes yours findable, memorable, and worth returning to.

The Learning Loop

STEP	HOW IT WORKS FOR VOICE
LEARN	Understand that voice is a consistent standard, not a persona you perform.
PRACTICE	Write three short pieces across different formats and look for what stayed the same in all three.
FEEDBACK	A mentor names the pattern in your work that reads as accidental rather than deliberate.
REVISE	Decide, deliberately, whether to keep or cut that pattern — then apply the choice consistently.
DEMONSTRATE	Produce a two-line critic bio that accurately describes the lens you now recognize in your own work.

Daily Habits & Growth Checklist

DAILY HABITS	GROWTH CHECKLIST
◆ Define your lane: what genres, and what you evaluate most closely.	✓ Today's writing is recognizably consistent with my past work.
◆ Keep a consistent standard readers can predict review to review.	✓ I can state my critical standard in one sentence.
◆ Write a two-line critic bio you could say from memory.	✓ I published something today outside of a single review.
◆ Publish outside single reviews — round-ups, threads, explainers.	✓ My byline and bio are consistent across every platform.

Exercise — Generic Voice vs. Distinct Voice

GENERIC	DISTINCT
"This game has fun moments and some flaws, like most games."	"The parry window is generous, but there's still no way to remap it off a single button — a gap this reviewer flags in every action game."

Practice: name one lens you keep returning to across your reviews so far, and write one sentence that only you would write.

Example

A critic known for evaluating accessibility in every review — readers who care about that seek out their coverage specifically, regardless of genre.

Common Mistakes

- × Reviewing every genre with no consistent lens or standard.
- × A voice so neutral it could belong to anyone.
- × Never publishing anything shorter or longer than a full review.
- × Copying another critic's angle instead of building your own.

SECTION 5

Reviewer Core Values

Ten values that define what it means to be a Game Review Academy critic.

> *Values aren't the line at the top of your review. They're the score you didn't change when the publisher called.*

Honesty
Your verdict reflects what you actually experienced. No exceptions.

Humility
The best critics revise their first impression when the evidence says to.

Fairness
Judge the game the developer made, against what it set out to do.

Accountability
You own every claim your byline is attached to.

Clarity
A reader should never have to guess what you actually think.

Evidence
Every strong claim is backed by something specific enough to check.

Consistency
The same standard, game after game — even the ones you love.

Curiosity
Understand a game before you judge it.

Independence
Access, friendship, and pressure do not move your conclusion.

Craft
How you write is how seriously your judgment is taken.

SECTION 6

The Reviewer's Voice

How you sound on the page defines your professional credibility just as much as what you conclude.

> *The page doesn't perform for you — it exposes exactly how clearly you're thinking. Make sure it exposes the best version of your judgment.*

Lead With the Verdict

Readers skim before they commit. State your core judgment in the opening, then earn it across the piece. Don't make readers hunt for what you actually think.

Specific Over Sweeping

“The combat is satisfying” says nothing. “Enemy telegraphs give just enough time to punish, not to relax” says everything. Specificity is what separates a critic from a fan.

Structure the Argument

Open loop, build evidence, close the loop. A review is an argument, not a diary — every section should move the reader's understanding forward.

Score With Discipline

If you use a score, be able to defend the exact number against the exact number one point higher or lower. A score you can't defend is a guess wearing a costume.

Cite What You Played

Name the platform, version, patch, and playtime. Unstated conditions make a review impossible to compare against anyone else's.

Edit for Density

Cut the sentence that restates a point already made. A tight 800 words beats a padded 1,500 — readers reward the writer who respects their time.

Read It Cold

Come back after a break and read your draft as a stranger would. Anything that requires you to remember context to understand is a sentence that needs rewriting.

Separate Description From Verdict

Tell the reader what the game does before telling them whether it works. Conflating the two is the fastest way to lose a skeptical reader.

Own the Disagreement

When you know most outlets loved a game you didn't, say so directly and explain the gap — don't bury the disagreement in hedges.

Consistency Is the Brand

The best critics aren't performing a persona — their standard just holds, review after review, until readers can predict it.

PRO TIP: THE ONE-SENTENCE TEST

If you can't summarize your verdict on this game in one sentence, you haven't finished thinking about it yet. Write that sentence first — everything else in the review should defend it.

SECTION 7

Building Reader Trust

Trust isn't built by a single great review. It's built one verifiable claim at a time, across every review you publish.

> *Your readers are not an audience. They are the people deciding whether your byline is worth their next twenty minutes.*

- **Disclose Up Front**
  State your access, platform, and playtime before the verdict. Readers who see this first trust everything that follows more.
- **Answer The Comments**
  Respond to genuine pushback with evidence, not defensiveness. A critic who engages builds more trust than one who disappears after publishing.
- **Revisit Your Calls**
  If a patch changes the game, say so — publicly, and attached to the original review. Revision is not weakness; silence about being wrong is.
- **Show Your Work**
  Where useful, describe the specific run, build, or session that produced a claim. Readers trust conclusions they can trace.
- **Admit The Limits**
  Say plainly when you didn't finish a mode, or didn't play multiplayer. An honest gap is more credible than a silent one.

- **Stay Consistent**
  Apply the same bar to a beloved franchise as to an unknown indie. Readers notice — and remember — the first time you don't.
- **Correct Errors Visibly**
  A clearly marked correction earns more trust than a quietly edited paragraph.
- **Credit Your Sources**
  Attribute data, comparisons, or context pulled from elsewhere. Readers and other critics both notice when you don't.
- **Explain The Score**
  Never let a number stand alone. A score without reasoning is an opinion pretending to be a measurement.
- **Publish On A Rhythm**
  Irregular, unpredictable output erodes trust as fast as inconsistent standards do. A cadence readers can count on is part of the credibility.

SECTION 8

Communication Guide

Write like a professional. Disagree like a colleague.

> *The words you choose determine whether a disagreement reads as analysis or as an attack.*

INSTEAD OF	SAY INSTEAD
"This game is trash."	"The systems here undercut what the game is trying to do, and here's where."
"The devs clearly didn't care."	"Several systems feel unfinished — here's what's missing and where it shows."
"Everyone loving this is wrong."	"My experience differs from the consensus, and here's the specific gap."
"Don't buy this game."	"For [audience], this is worth it; for [audience], the flaws below will matter more."
"This is the best game ever made."	"This is the strongest entry in the genre this year, for these specific reasons."
"Skip the tutorial, it's pointless."	"The tutorial runs long relative to what it teaches — expect to skip ahead by minute ten."

THE GOLDEN RULE OF REVIEWER COMMUNICATION

Before publishing a sharp line, ask: "Does this serve the reader's understanding, or just my own satisfaction in saying it?" When the answer is the reader — publish it. When the answer is only yourself — cut it.

SECTION 9

Code of Conduct

Standards that define the Game Review Academy critic community.

> *Every review you publish becomes a permanent part of your record. Write accordingly.*

What Reviewers Should Do

- ✓ Disclose review copies, embargoes, travel, and any developer relationships.
- ✓ Play enough of a game to support the conclusions you publish.
- ✓ Represent Web3 Internet Cafe with accuracy and professionalism.
- ✓ Report conflicts of interest to program administration before publishing.
- ✓ Credit data, quotes, or comparisons pulled from other sources.
- ✓ Correct errors visibly rather than quietly editing them away.
- ✓ Respond to genuine reader pushback with evidence, not hostility.
- ✓ Meet agreed embargoes and publishing deadlines.

What Reviewers Should Not Do

- × Publish a verdict on a game you have not substantially played.
- × Accept payment, gifts, or favors in exchange for a specific score.
- × Harass developers, fellow critics, or their communities.
- × Plagiarize another outlet's analysis, phrasing, or data.
- × Misrepresent your access, playtime, or platform.
- × Change a published verdict due to outside pressure without disclosing why.
- × Share embargoed information before the agreed release time.
- × Publish content that violates outlet or platform terms of service.

WHY EVERY REVIEW AFFECTS YOUR RECORD

The internet has a long memory. A rushed verdict, an undisclosed conflict, or a plagiarized line can define a critic's reputation for years. Reviewers who build lasting careers treat every byline as permanent evidence of their judgment.

Accountability Process

STAGE	RESPONSE
First Incident	Private review with program director
Second Incident	Formal written warning and mandatory mentorship
Third Incident	Temporary suspension from publishing schedule
Severe Violation	Immediate removal from program

SECTION 10

Publishing Safety & Integrity

Protecting your credibility before it costs you everything.

> *A verdict without disclosure is not a review — it's an unverified claim wearing a review's format.*

- **Your Published Record**
  Every review, score, and comment reply is permanently indexed and archivable. Ask before publishing: "Would I defend this exact wording in a year?"
- **Embargo Discipline**
  Breaking an embargo — intentionally or by accident — can end access to future review copies for the entire outlet, not just you.
- **Access Risk**
  Publishers track which critics stay independent under pressure. A single softened score for access reasons can be traced and cited for years.
- **Quote Integrity**
  Never state as fact what you didn't personally verify in play. A single fabricated or copied detail undermines every claim around it.
- **Privacy**
  Never publish a developer's or colleague's private communications without consent, even when it would strengthen a point.

Real-World Warning Patterns

- × A critic lost access to a publisher after an undisclosed conflict of interest surfaced post-publication.
- × A rushed review published before a day-one patch was cited for months as evidence of a game's launch state — even after the patch fixed the issues.
- × A reviewer's paraphrase of another outlet's analysis was flagged as uncredited and retracted.

× An off-hand line in a review, stripped of context, was clipped and used to misrepresent the overall verdict.

PUBLISHING SAFETY FRAMEWORK

Before publishing: (1) Have I disclosed everything relevant? (2) Could this claim be checked and found false? (3) Would I defend this exact sentence in a year? (4) Does this treat the developer's work fairly? If NO to any — revise before you publish.

SECTION 11

Review Formats & Content Strategy

The critics who plan their coverage build a body of work. The rest just publish reactions.

> *A format is not a shortcut around the method. It's a container for the same evidence, sized to fit the moment.*

FORMAT	STRATEGY
FULL REVIEW	Complete verdict after substantial play. The core credential — every other format builds toward this one.
EARLY IMPRESSIONS	First-hours coverage published ahead of a full review. Clearly labeled as provisional, not final.
COMPARATIVE	Head-to-head against genre peers or franchise predecessors. Rewards readers deciding between options.
PATCH RE-REVIEW	Revisiting a verdict after major updates. Builds long-term trust that scores reflect the current game.
DEEP DIVE	Single-system analysis — combat, narrative, economy. The most citable, shareable long-form format.
ROUND-UP	Short verdicts across several releases in one piece. High output, lower depth per entry.
EXPLAINER	Teaching readers a mechanic, genre, or design pattern. Builds the most durable, evergreen traffic.
RETROSPECTIVE	Revisiting an older game with today's context. Demonstrates range and historical fluency.

Short-Form Distribution Strategy

PLATFORM	FORMAT	STRATEGY
X / Threads	Verdict thread	Lead with the one-sentence verdict. Thread the evidence.
TikTok / Reels	30–60 sec vertical	Hook on the strongest specific claim in the first 2 seconds.
YouTube Shorts	Under 60 sec	One striking clip, one sentence of analysis, link to full review.

SECTION 12

Growth Framework

Sustainable credibility is a system, not a lucky review.

> *Consistency is not glamorous. It is the most powerful credibility-building force in criticism.*

Daily Habits

- Play with notes open — record specific moments as they happen.
- Read one published review from a critic you respect.
- Revise one paragraph from yesterday's draft for density.
- Reply to one piece of genuine reader feedback.
- Draft one specific, checkable claim for tomorrow's piece.

Weekly Habits

- Review analytics: read time, completion rate, shares.
- Re-read one of your own reviews from a month ago — revise the weak points.
- Study one respected critic's structure in your genre.
- Set three specific publishing goals for next week.

Monthly Habits

- Audit your scoring history for consistency across genres.
- Update your critic bio and portfolio with recent work.
- Reach out to one potential collaborator or outlet.
- Publish one long-form deep dive beyond a standard review.

Key Metrics to Track

METRIC	WHAT IT MEASURES	TARGET
Completion Rate	% of readers who finish the review	> 50%
Return Readers	Readers who click a second byline from you	> 25%
Citation Rate	Times your review is linked or quoted elsewhere	1+ per month
Correction Rate	Published errors requiring visible correction	< 1 per quarter
Publishing Cadence	Reviews published per month	4+ monthly

SECTION 13

The 4-Week Review Academy

Your transformation timeline — built around capability, not just a busy calendar.

> *Four weeks. One method: Play, Understand, Observe, Question, Evaluate, Explain, Improve.*

Every week below follows the same shape: a learning objective, a central skill from the Six Pillars, hands-on exercises, one real deliverable, a feedback checkpoint, and a scorecard checkpoint that measures whether the skill actually landed. Nothing on this calendar is busywork — every session exists to produce one of the deliverables.

The Assessment Loop

The Scorecard in Section 14 isn't only used at graduation. It runs four times, so every critic can see — in numbers, not just impressions — exactly where they started and how far they've moved.

WEEK	CHECKPOINT	PURPOSE
Week 1	BASELINE	Establish the critic's starting level before any coaching.
Week 2	FORMATIVE	Catch weaknesses while there's still time to fix them.
Week 3	DEVELOPMENT	Measure progress and target what's still weak.
Week 4	FINAL	Evaluate demonstrated competence against the Week 1 baseline.

Week 1 · Experience and Evidence

Objective	Learn to observe game play with precision and separate observation from interpretation.
Central Skill	Evidence
Exercises	Weak-vs-strong observation drill; Observation → Interpretation → Implication logging.
Deliverable	A structured observation log with at least 15 specific, evidence-grade observations from one game session.
Feedback Checkpoint	Friday Coaching & Review — mentor flags any entry that is vague, unsupported, or interpretation disguised as observation.
Measurable Assessment	BASELINE scorecard — Evidence, Analysis, and Research & Context categories, to establish each critic's starting point.

DAY	SESSION	FOCUS
Monday	Orientation	The Review Method, walked start to finish
Tuesday	Guided Play Session A	Practice observation logging on a shared title

DAY	SESSION	FOCUS
Wednesday	Guided Play Session B	Practice separating observation from interpretation
Thursday	Workshop Day	Group critique of first observation logs
Friday	Coaching & Review	1:1 feedback on evidence quality
Saturday	Peer Exchange	Critics trade logs and cross-check evidence
Sunday	Weekly Recap	Review what evidence-gathering revealed this week

Week 2 · Analysis and Perspective

Objective	Build defensible claims from evidence and evaluate games fairly against genre and audience.
Central Skill	Analysis and Perspective
Exercises	Claim-map building; personal-preference-vs-design-criticism drill.
Deliverable	One claim map, one review outline, and one review thesis — a partial draft, not a rushed full review.
Feedback Checkpoint	Friday Coaching & Review — mentor traces every claim on the map back to logged Week 1 evidence.
Measurable Assessment	FORMATIVE scorecard — Analysis and Perspective categories, scored while there's still time to fix what's weak.

DAY	SESSION	FOCUS
Monday	Genre & Audience Lab	Practicing the Perspective pillar across genres
Tuesday	Claim Mapping Workshop	Building CLAIM → EVIDENCE → ANALYSIS → IMPLICATION maps from Week 1 logs
Wednesday	Outline & Thesis Lab	Drafting a review outline and one-sentence thesis
Thursday	Workshop Day	Peer edit for claim strength and structure
Friday	Coaching & Review	Structure and argument-strength session
Saturday	Peer Exchange	Blind read-throughs and feedback
Sunday	Weekly Recap	Review what analysis revealed this week

Week 3 · Craft, Voice, and Integrity

Objective	Structure and write a publishable draft with full disclosure and a consistent voice.
Central Skill	Craft, Voice, and Integrity
Exercises	Vague-vs-precise writing drill; disclosure statement drafting; mock editorial defense.
Deliverable	One complete review draft with full disclosure, plus one structured revision of that draft.
Feedback Checkpoint	Friday Coaching & Review — mentor scores voice consistency and disclosure completeness.
Measurable Assessment	DEVELOPMENT scorecard — Craft, Voice, Integrity, and Reliability & Professionalism, compared against the Week 1 baseline.

DAY	SESSION	FOCUS
Monday	Voice Lab	Finding and tightening a consistent critical voice
Tuesday	Disclosure Workshop	Practicing integrity and disclosure standards
Wednesday	Full Draft Under Publishing Conditions	One complete review draft, written to the full Method
Thursday	Guest Critic Spotlight	Q&A with a working reviewer
Friday	Coaching & Review	Voice and integrity review
Saturday	Special Peer Event	Mock editorial desk — pitch and defend a verdict
Sunday	Structured Revision	Revise the Wednesday draft using the week's feedback

Week 4 · Revision and Publication

Objective	Defend judgment under critique, revise, and prepare one publication-ready review and portfolio.
Central Skill	Revision and Responsiveness
Exercises	Unsupported-vs-defensible verdict check; peer defense of the final verdict.
Deliverable	One final publishable review and a complete review portfolio (see Final Portfolio, below).
Feedback Checkpoint	Cohort Showcase Day and the Final Coaching Session.
Measurable Assessment	FINAL scorecard — full 100-point evaluation, compared against the Week 1 baseline for measurable improvement.

DAY	SESSION	FOCUS
Monday	Final Review Polish	Publish-ready draft, full Method applied

DAY	SESSION	FOCUS
Tuesday	Editorial Pass	Structural and line-edit pass on the final draft
Wednesday	Portfolio Assembly	Final polish plus assembly of the full review portfolio
Thursday	Cohort Showcase Day	All graduates present their final reviews
Friday	Final Coaching Session	Full program debrief
Saturday	Graduation Publication	Cohort reviews go live on the W3IC Media Network
Sunday	Awards & Celebration	Recognition night

The Final Portfolio

Certification is not "write a review and publish it." Every graduating critic submits a complete portfolio that shows not just the verdict, but how they arrived at it.

COMPONENT	WHAT IT SHOWS
1. Final Review	The publishable article itself.
2. Evidence Log	The observations that support every claim in the review.
3. Claim Map	CLAIM → EVIDENCE → ANALYSIS → CONCLUSION, for the review's central arguments.
4. Disclosure Statement	Platform, version, playtime, access, and any conflicts of interest.
5. Revision History	What changed after feedback, and why.
6. Reflection	What the critic initially believed, what the evidence changed, and what they learned.

The goal isn't "I wrote a review." It's "I understand how I arrived at this review" — that's the actual educational value of the Academy.

Week 4 Graduation

Graduation Publication	All graduates' final reviews publish live on the W3IC Media Network.
Portfolio Review	Each critic receives a formal written review of their 4-week body of work.
Best Improvement	Awarded to the critic who showed the most growth from Week 1 baseline to Week 4 final score.
Sharpest Evidence	Awarded to the review with the strongest evidence-to-claim ratio.
Readers' Choice	Voted by early readers — the critic they want to see more of.
Pathway Forward	All graduates receive a personalized publishing plan and mentorship access.

SECTION 14

Reviewer Evaluation Scorecard

Ten categories. Ten points each. One hundred points total — the same instrument used at every checkpoint in the program.

> *A scorecard that can't add up to a clean 100 can't be trusted to measure anything else, either.*

The Scorecard measures how fully a review demonstrates the Six Pillars, plus four categories that capture the reviewer's process and professionalism. It is not only a graduation instrument — it is used four times across the program, as described in Section 13's Assessment Loop, so growth is measured in points, not impressions.

Scoring Categories

#	CATEGORY	PTS	WHAT IT MEASURES
1	Evidence	10	Conclusions traceable to specific, checkable moments in play.
2	Analysis	10	Claims that follow logically from the evidence, not leaps past it.
3	Perspective	10	Judgment calibrated to the game's genre, audience, and intent.
4	Craft	10	Writing precise, structured, and clear enough to quote and defend.
5	Integrity	10	Complete disclosure and independence from outside pressure.
6	Voice	10	A consistent, recognizable point of view across the work.
7	Research & Context	10	Accurate genre, franchise, platform, and comparative context.
8	Responsiveness & Revision	10	How well feedback is absorbed and drafts measurably improve.
9	Reliability & Professionalism	10	Deadlines met, conduct upheld, communication handled well.
10	Overall Review Quality	10	How effectively evidence, analysis, perspective, craft, integrity, and reader usefulness combine into one complete review.

TOTAL: 100 POINTS

Consistency is deliberately not its own line item. It is not a single skill you can demonstrate once — it is the thread evaluated across every category, every week, because a reviewer's standard either holds across a whole body of work or it doesn't. Scoring it separately would double-count the same signal the other ten categories already capture.

Score Interpretation

RANGE	TIER	MEANING
90–100	ELITE	Program completion with featured critic status.
75–89	ADVANCED	Program completion with mentorship access.
60–74	DEVELOPING	Program completion with a structured improvement plan.
45–59	EMERGING	Extended program track recommended before certification.
0–44	NEEDS WORK	Full program restart recommended.

How the Scorecard Is Used

CHECKPOINT	CATEGORIES IN FOCUS	PURPOSE
Week 1 — Baseline	Evidence, Analysis, Research & Context	Establish a starting score before coaching begins.
Week 2 — Formative	Analysis, Perspective	Surface weaknesses while there's time to correct them.
Week 3 — Development	Craft, Voice, Integrity, Reliability & Professionalism	Measure progress against the Week 1 baseline.
Week 4 — Final	All ten categories	Full evaluation, compared against the baseline for certification.

WHY BASELINE-TO-FINAL COMPARISON MATTERS

Certification is not a pass/fail snapshot of Week 4 alone. Every graduate's Week 1 baseline score is kept on file and compared directly against their Week 4 final score — that comparison is what proves measurable improvement, not just a final number in isolation.

SECTION 15

Certification Requirements

The minimum standard for Game Review Academy certification.

> *Excellence is not a destination. It is a direction. Certification means you are pointed the right way.*

Attendance

- ✓ Minimum 90% attendance across all scheduled sessions.
- ✓ All absences communicated to program director at least 2 hours in advance.
- ✓ No more than 2 unexcused absences for the full program duration.

Publishing Progression

One excellent review is more educational than twelve rushed reviews. Certification is measured against a realistic, escalating body of work — not a fixed quota of full drafts every week.

WEEK	REQUIRED OUTPUT
Week 1	Observation logs and short analytical exercises.
Week 2	One structured review outline, claim map, and partial draft.
Week 3	One complete review draft and one structured revision.
Week 4	One final publishable review.

- ✓ Drafts submitted within 24 hours of the scheduled deadline.

Professional Conduct

- ✓ Zero code of conduct violations resulting in formal warnings.
- ✓ Positive feedback from at least one peer critic or mentor.
- ✓ Demonstrated ability to handle disagreement professionally in public.

Peer Participation

- ✓ Active participation in workshop days throughout the program.
- ✓ Constructive engagement during peer exchange sessions.
- ✓ Minimum 10 substantive peer-review comments given across the program.

Measurable Improvement

- ✓ Measurable improvement in at least 3 scorecard categories, comparing the Week 1 baseline score to the Week 4 final score.

- ✓ Submission of at least one self-edited revision of an early draft.
- ✓ Willingness to implement coaching feedback across drafts.

Publication Readiness

- ✓ At least one review meeting the full publication standard by Week 4.
- ✓ Correct, complete disclosure on every submitted review.
- ✓ A complete Final Portfolio submitted — final review, evidence log, claim map, disclosure statement, revision history, and reflection.
- ✓ Working portfolio and byline profile in place by Week 3.

CERTIFICATION CONFIRMATION

Critics who meet every requirement above receive: (1) an official Game Review Academy Certificate, (2) featured placement on the W3IC Media Network, (3) priority access to future program seasons, (4) mentorship pathway access, and (5) a $W3IC token reward for program completion — confirmed by the program director against the Week 4 final scorecard and completed Final Portfolio.

SECTION 16

The Reviewer's Pledge

A commitment to evidence, integrity, and craft.

> *I, the undersigned, as an enrolled critic in the Game Review Academy, do solemnly pledge the following:*

I will treat every review as a case built on evidence — not a reaction dressed up as a verdict. I will not publish a conclusion I cannot defend.

I will uphold honesty, fairness, and independence in every review I publish. My byline reflects not only my own judgment, but the reputation of everyone at W3IC.

I will pursue continuous improvement with humility. I will treat correction as part of the craft, not an attack on it.

I will write for the reader deciding whether to spend their time and money — not for the loudest reaction in the comments.

I will represent Web3 Internet Cafe with professionalism and pride. In every review, thread, and byline — I am a reflection of this institution.

I understand that credibility is built over hundreds of small, checkable claims. I commit to making the honest one, even when it costs me access.

This pledge is not a contract. It is a standard I set for myself. And I accept the responsibility of living up to it.

Critic Name	Date

Signature	Mentor
Program Director	W3IC Seal
The internet has enough hot takes. Build coverage that matters. — Web3 Internet Cafe — Game Review Academy	