

Equity Videogames Recommended Minimum Rate Card for AAA Games

The following information details minimum rates recommended by Equity in the absence of collectively bargained agreements. These rates are intended for use on AAA Games (Games that are created and released typically by mid-size or major publishers; usually anything that cannot be classified as "indie.")

The rates are recommended minimum fees and are negotiable between a performer (or their agent) and the engager. We encourage AAA, indie and low budget productions to contact Equity to discuss these rates and other contractual arrangements.

Voiceover	
Voiceover	Minimum £300 per hour
Voiceover with Headcam/ Facial Reference	Minimum £350 per hour
Ensemble Record	Minimum £800 half day/£1200 full day
Atmospheric/Walla	Minimum £200 per hour
Usage Buyout	Any time up to 4 hours: 200% of Basic Session Fee (BSF) Beyond 4 hours: additional buyout - minimum 25% of BSF
Integration	Should be agreed on a project by project basis. Minimum 75% of total aggregate earnings.
Likeness	Subject to negotiation, dependent on size of game and role.
DLC	Minimum fees as above. New buyout will apply if a year or more has passed since recording the original.
Sequel	Considered as a new project, subject to increased fees for returning characters and new buyout
Overtime	Pro rata every 30 minutes
Promotion	Agreed hourly rate plus minimum £800 usage
Vocally Stressful Sessions	Max 2 hours per session. Sessions should be scheduled at the end of the working day, preferably end of the week.
MoCap/P-Cap	
Motion Capture	Minimum £650 per day
Performance Capture	Minimum £850 per day
Usage Buyout	Minimum 30% of accrued total aggregate earnings OR Standalone buyout dependent on distribution of project and size of role - no lower than 30% of accrued total aggregate earnings.
Integration	Should be agreed on a project by project basis. Minimum 75% of total aggregate earnings.
Likeness	Subject to negotiation, dependent on size of game and role.
Overtime	Pro-rata every 30 mins
Rehearsal	50% of agreed daily session fee (not included in usage buyout)

Other	
Travel and Accommodation	<p>Travel, accommodation and per diems are negotiated dependent on both talent and studio location.</p> <p>When a performer is required to travel for more than 2 hours per recording or shooting day, accommodation, expenses and appropriate per diems should be covered by production.</p>

Definitions

AAA (Triple-A):

Games that are created and released typically by mid-size or major publishers; usually anything that cannot be classified as “indie.” Atmospheric voices: No more than 300 scripted/recorded lines that do not further the story (also known as ‘World Building Voices’).

DLC (Downloadable Content):

Additional digital content or expansions that can be downloaded and added to a video game after its initial release.

Ensemble Record:

A group of principal performers (usually up to 4 people) working together in a voiceover studio.

Headcam:

Also referred to as HMC’s (head mounted cameras) Headgear used in voiceover and performance capture, to capture the facial movements of the performer. This allows developers to create more lifelike and emotionally expressive characters.

Indie game / independent video game:

Loosely defined as a game made by a single person or a small studio without any financial, development, marketing, or distribution support from a large publisher, though there are exceptions.

Integration:

The process of incorporating artificial intelligence systems and algorithms into a video game. A pre-purchase / integration fee should be paid when a developer, studio or publisher wishes to hold performance data in their ‘library’ for potential re-use on future projects. If an integration fee is not paid upfront at point of contracting, then the performance may only be used within the project(s) specified in the contract.

Likeness:

The visual representation of an actor in a video game, achieved through scanning, modeling and motion capture.

Motion Capture: This term covers body capture only. The recording of physicality by a professional performer. The performance is recorded as data which is then processed to create an altered and/or enhanced image of human or non-human forms.

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Performance Capture:

This term covers the recording of physicality (as above) as well as voice and facial performances using a head-mounted camera (HMC). The facial performance is for animation reference and guidance only and this does not include performer likeness.

Sequels:

Sequels in games are follow-up titles or subsequent entries in a game series or franchise. They continue the story, gameplay mechanics and overall theme and/or setting of the original game. Sequels build on the success of the original game and are an essential part of franchise branding.

Usage Buyout:

A compensation agreement between the performer and the game development studio or publisher. This agreement stipulates that the performer will receive a one-time payment for their work in the game, and in exchange, they relinquish any ongoing or residual rights to additional compensation, such as royalties or usage fees, for the use of their voice or likeness in the game.

Equity does not endorse the practice of universal buyouts of original material. We acknowledge that this is the common model currently in the videogames industry. However, this practice does not align with the work of performers in other industries nor does it respect the long-term contribution of performers. Going forward, we would like to work constructively with the industry to establish a framework for where performers benefit financially in the success of a game/franchise.

Voice and Facial Capture:

The recording of a vocal performance in a voice studio or performance capture volume, plus capture of the facial performance using a head-mounted camera (HMC). No body performance captured.

Walla:

Unscripted voices not assigned to a specific character that do not further the story (also known as 'World Building Voices').

FAQ ON EQUITY'S RATE CARD

£300 per hour for voiceover seems high?

£300 per hour (minimum) is reflective of the current, global, agreed rates for voice work. We believe it is a fair rate given the demands and intensity of voice performance in video games, not to mention the revenue and profit video games generate.

Isn't this higher than the SAG-AFTRA rate?

The rates are structured very differently

All SAG-AFTRA sessions are booked in blocks of 4 hours, no matter the amount of lines (vocally strenuous sessions are max 2 hours, paid for 4 hours).

The SAG-AFTRA payment for a 4-hour block is \$1023.75 (£800.19) - known as 'Scale'. That's equivalent to £200 per hour in a 4-hour session.

Most well-known/seasoned games performers receive 2x, 3x, etc. of scale. Celebrities can name their price.

Agents in the USA usually take a 10% commission on top of the scale fee agreed with the performer.

SAG-AFTRA Principal roles also have an Aggregate Payments schedule that increases with the amount of hours in the booth. This is a bonus payment, not usage, and leads to principal performers adding around \$1000 to their fee by their 5th session and \$2100 by their 10th.

In addition to this, SAG-AFTRA demands a 16.5% Health/Retirement contribution on top of the accrued fee.

Why do I have to pay more for Headcam sessions?

Head-mounted cameras (HMC) are used to capture facial movements during performance to aid animation. They can be uncomfortable, as well as tiring for the eyes. Working with this additional equipment allows developers to create more lifelike and emotionally expressive characters, and should carry a premium.

Why are Atmospheric/Walla sessions set at a lower rate?

Atmospheric and Walla sessions are part of the world-building of a game, giving actors the opportunity to work for several hours on giving voice to non-playable characters (NPC) and crowds/creatures. It is also one of the segments of our industry most threatened by AI.

Why is there no half day rate for mocap/pcap?

It can take up to 2 hours for performers to be put into a suit, fitted with a headcam and calibrated to a motion capture system, before shooting can begin. Once this time is factored in, along with the time required to get out of the suit etc at the end of shooting, and travel, performers are then engaged for a large portion of the day and unable to book other work.

Why is overtime accrued every 30 minutes?

Overtime accrues a fee as it can have an impact on many factors including other engagements or travel for a performer. By charging a fee every 30 minutes, studios, performers and agents are able to keep a tab on the additional time and keep it to a minimum where possible.

Some studios used to have a habit of scheduling performers for overtime on a regular basis, whether or not that extra time was actually required. This practice made it challenging for performers to effectively plan their day.

USAGE

The Buyout Usage fee for VO seems high. Why is that?

For any work up to and including 4 hours, a buyout usage fee of 200% of the Basic Session Fee (BSF).

Beyond the initial 4 hours, the performer receives an additional buyout equivalent of a minimum 25% of BSF. This equates to an additional £75 per hour for a minimum voiceover rate.

Example calculations for usage based on the minimum voiceover session fee of £300.

Example calculations for usage based on minimum voiceover rate

Hours of work	Session fee	Total session fee	Initial buyout	Additional buyout	Total buyout	Total package
1	300	300	600		600	900
2	300	600	600		600	1200
3	300	900	600		600	1500
4	300	1200	600		600	1800
5	300	1500	600	75	675	2175
6	300	1800	600	150	750	2550
7	300	2100	600	225	825	2925
8	300	2400	600	300	900	3300
9	300	2700	600	375	975	3675
10	300	3000	600	450	1050	4050
11	300	3300	600	525	1125	4425
12	300	3600	600	600	1200	4800

For hours 1 to 4, the buyout is 200% of the session fee.

For hours beyond 4, the additional buyout is 25% of the session fee per hour worked beyond 4 hours.

In the UK in the mid-1990s, the agreed buyout for performers was set at £500 if they recorded 50 lines or more. However, despite the significant evolution of the performer's role in video games over the past three decades, the buyout has not kept pace with these changes and has even decreased in some cases.

But the SAG-AFTRA agreement does not pay a buyout or residuals for VO in games.

That is true, but their sessions fees are much higher than those in the UK and many well-known games performers earn 2x, 3x or more of the published session rate (Scale), because it is negotiable.

SAG-AFTRA Principal roles also have an Aggregate Payments schedule that increases with the amount of hours in the booth. This is a bonus payment, not usage, and leads to principal performers adding around \$1000 to their fee by their 5th session and \$2100 by their 10th.

What is 'Integration' and 'Likeness' and why is the rate so high?

Likeness is when a Performer's face/body is scanned, modeled and captured for use in a game. Integration is when the data for that likeness/performance is held in a library for use in other projects by the developer, studio or publisher.

A.I is one of the biggest threats to performers today. We must ensure that a performer has the ability to protect their image, voice and performance. If you want to purchase the likeness of a performer, we must have clarity in what it will be used for, and consent given by the performer.

Why is a new Usage Buyout charged for DLCs and why do we need to renegotiate rates for sequels?

DLCs (Downloadable content) provide developers and studios with a cost-effective method to introduce additional content after the initial game release, allowing them to maintain premium pricing. Typically, DLCs are created for games that have achieved significant sales success, and as such, performers should receive fair compensation for their contributions.

Sequels often build on the success of the original game. Many times the characters that are brought back have contributed to that success. Is the role larger in this game? Does the character have a fan following? Negotiation is needed.

Why is there a rate for Promotion?

Material recorded in a session can be used by the client but anything recorded for trailers, conventions, expos, etc, are deemed as promotion and advertising and therefore charged separately.

The rates set by SAG-AFTRA for promotion are higher than the rates set by Equity.

Why are Vocally Stressful Sessions maximum 2 hours at the end of the day/week?

Limiting vocally stressful game recording sessions to 2 hours safeguards a performer's health, maintains performance quality, and ensures long-term vocal well-being by preventing strain and potential injuries, while also optimizing efficiency and recovery between sessions.

Scheduling these sessions at the end of the day minimizes disruptions to other work, and end-of-week sessions allow performers to recover fully over the weekend.

SAG-AFTRA caps vocally strenuous sessions at 2 hours, paid for 4 hours.

For any questions on the above recommended minimum rates contact games@equity.org.uk