

# DIY: DELETE IT YOURSELF

A guide for creating transient game spaces

By Louie Roots / Bar SK

First some theory:

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## **1. What is delete?**

Delete is a conceptual event, based around videogames that are created only to exist for a very short time, usually around 5 hours. They can include a jam, an exhibition, a party, a ceremony, anything as long as the games are celebrated during their short life spans. Originally I ran it as an 8 hour jam in a small bar, followed by a 5 hour exhibition open to the public, and then at midnight we destroyed everything. They're a transient space, and the games should be created specifically to take advantage of that space, because delete is not about destruction, it's about creation.

## **2. Why is delete important?**

Delete is a new type of space within contemporary videogames, focused entirely on a single instance of a videogame and it's relation to the physical space it inhabits. It's not a space for any of the metrics we usually associate with videogame success; number of players, replayability, longevity, commercial success. Instead it poses a very unique question; what happens when videogames know they're going to die?

Delete challenges the common practice of backing up and archiving anything digital, saving it because it doesn't take up physical space. (actually btw, it does take up physical space, even on the cloud, it requires servers and infrastructure and power to stay in existence) So I've found some people have strong reactions to the idea of deleting anything. I'm not saying everything needs deleting, (although yeah burn it down) but I think there's room in videogames culture for more than one space. If you don't want to delete your work, I highly recommend that you don't delete your work, it's honestly that simple, this space isn't for everyone.

Delete also challenges the common practice of game jams. If you want to spend a weekend making a game that's entirely up to you, but if you think putting it online and forgetting about it is somehow different to just straight up deleting it you're having a laugh. The games made for Delete have a purpose, an audience, and a life. And you can take photos, recordings, videos, articles and social media posts if you really want to add something to your portfolio. These games are just as valid as any other, and probably more interesting (shots fired).

Overall this space was made to promote different design thinking in videogames. It can be applied to current videogame spaces such as expos or events, but also it doesn't have to. We all know videogames are way too homogenous, recycling the same stuff and circle jerking itself into oblivion. Delete should be external to that and look outside the "industry" into any interactive and experiential art forms, and if that doesn't sound like your jam then that's totally okay.

### **3. But why should I make one?**

Because they're amazing. And you might not be able to come to Melbourne for the next one. So I urge you to consider making your own for/with your community. It's not my thing, I don't want to run them, but if you have cash then get in touch, I can be tempted.

### **4. What are the most important factors of delete?**

The most important part of delete is playing the games. It doesn't have to be a massive event, it can be a small group of friends at a house, but I strongly believe the first thing to organise is the play time. These games deserve a good exhibition, and that might be a classroom or a nightclub, but you need to put effort into getting people there, informing them and encouraging them to play.

Humanising the games is important to me and my audience. I enjoy having the jam during the day directly before the event so people can come and see the creation process, and the artists can transition from creator to observer in the same space. Showing the audience the person behind the art drives home the impact of the destruction, especially when they stick it out until midnight and can personally pull the trigger on their game.

Deleting the games is also important, but less so. It can be cathartic, it can be a display, or it can be secret. It can leave artefacts, like images, text or video. It can be recorded or photographed. It can have its own twitter account. The game will be deleted, it was made to be deleted, but the concept lives on, even if it's terrible.

## 5. A step by step example:

This is an example of the Delete events held at Bar SK in Melbourne.

**Prepare.** Set a date, create a poster, put it out on social media and ask potential artists to email/DM about applying. Talk to friends about getting someone to cover the event, either a photographer or journalist, this step is optional but worth asking around about. (see appendix for articles about delete)

**Promote.** Reach out and advertise in groups that might be interested. Create a hashtag. Talk about it. Look for different artists.

**Jam.** Open the space for jammers early, provide some coffee, they'll need it. Some will go straight for beer, that's okay, they'll need that too. Keep involved with the artists, try to get a feel for what they're doing and assign them a spot to display it as early as possible. Let them know the tech available and any advice you have for putting games in the spot. Also offer to help create set dressing or controllers to aid in the display. Take photos and post about it.

**Display.** Let attendees know what's happening, pointing out the artists and encouraging they buy them drinks. Make sure the games are playable without guidance. Encourage discussion and recording of the games. Make sure everyone is having fun.

**Destroy.** This will depend on the games, but destroy them as ceremoniously as possible. Smash any controllers, tear up any papers, topple the horse god. Record it. Allow people time to decompress afterwards. Discuss with attendees and artists. Record notes and document. Have that beer.

## 6. The exhibition.

As I've mentioned this part is the most important. This is the main thing you're creating, the games are just to fill this space.

I'd suggest using whatever you have at your disposal for this. To begin with, see what space you can use for free, ideally keeping it free entry. Maybe it's a bar, or maybe it's a backyard, an office, any space you can set up for a day and not have to worry too much about rain.

Use the community! Ask the people who are interested in making the games or coming to see them, maybe they know spaces available? The more you can involve the community the better, and that goes for everything in games tbh.

On the flip side, you may need to make decisions that some people don't like! It may be on a bad date for someone, or it may be at a licenced venue and exclude younger people. It's up to you to make that call, because it's impossible to make a space for everyone, and that's okay.

## 7. The artists.

Encourage different artists! If you have dev friends who want to join, that's cool, but ask them to put the word out to any friends outside of games they might have. Spread the call out far and wide, if your community is anything like Melbourne you should be surprised at the diversity of applicants.

Ideally get people to form their own teams, but I've found it's usually easy to group up people who don't have a team, seeing as you're only dealing with a handful of artists. Encourage weird pairings!

Ask them what they want to see from the event. Tell them what you require of them. Ask if they want to be there the whole day. Ask if they need anything specific from you. You're now organising a game jam so don't worry, just keep up communication and things will be okay.

Speak to them as they jam and let them know what the other artists are doing. Offer feedback and if they need more, it's your job to go ask more people. Again, keep communication up and it'll be fine.

## 8. Keeping and deleting.

If you've got artists who are genuinely excited to make temporary things, you should have no trouble destroying them. There's no rules about what's kept and what goes, it's up to the artists and the game. If they want to rebuild it after the event that's up to them. If they want a recording of the playthrough then go for it. If they want every action spat out into a text file they can keep then sure. It's important to remember that less is more, but try telling artists that.

If you want to record the event, I would personally try to record it as subjectively as possible. The games are gone, so remember your time with them. Talk to guests and artists and see what they thought, write it up and put it online to show the world what can exist. The amount you document everything is totally up to you, in fact maybe you prohibit photos and documentation, actually that's pretty cool.

When it comes time to delete things, try to get the artist to click that button. See if you can break a cheap keyboard. Or smash some clay sculptures. Or rip up some notes. It will depend on the venue but this is the perfect opportunity to throw that tv out of the hotel window.

Then **celebrate**.

## 9. Appendix

Write ups of the first two events by the amazing David Rayfield:

<https://raygunbrown.com/2016/11/22/delete-four-games-created-and-destroyed-in-one-day/>

<https://www.kotaku.com.au/2018/06/a-game-exhibition-where-everything-is-destroyed/>

Me saying similar stuff about delete at GCAP18:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJHHk7VoQJ4>

My contact info:

Louie Roots

[louie@barsk.com.au](mailto:louie@barsk.com.au)

@SK\_Louie or @SK\_BarSK

Bar SK 90 Smith St Collingwood VIC 3066