What is the Summer of Unreal?

Epic Games has commissioned Escape Studios to create a **free, pan-European Unreal Engine training course for animators and computer graphics artists.**

As the UK's only Authorized Training Center for Unreal Engine, Escape Studios is known for its series of boot camps, short courses and conference panels dedicated to the software. In the summer of 2020, Escape famously delivered a four-week boot camp for the UK VFX industry, reskilling 150 furloughed artists with the help of Framestore, DNEG, and Cinesite.

The four-week Summer of Unreal course (taught in English) is open to professionals working in the animation, motion graphics and VFX industry.

The curriculum is perfect for the leisurely pace of the holiday period. It's designed to give learners plenty of time to experiment and practice—and catch some sun—taking them from beginner to confident, real-time expert. The Summer of Unreal specifically focuses on the animation pipeline but would also be useful for VFX and motion graphics artists, as well as producers and directors, who are looking to understand how Unreal Engine could fit into their workflows.

Escape Studios is teaming up with several European centres of excellence to ensure the curriculum is industry standard:

- **Animation Workshop in Denmark**
- **La Salle URL in Spain**
- **ArtFX in France**
- **ScreenSkills Ireland**
- **Crater Studios in Serbia/East Europe**

The course will feature daily workshops covering all the major aspects of using Unreal Engine interspersed with practice time, teamwork, as well as demonstrations and masterclasses from some of Europe's premier companies and artists showing how they use real-time technology in their work.

Participants are expected to sign up for the month but will find plenty of time within the structure to catch up with personal commitments.

Participants will be able to collect digital badges for each day and will gain a certificate of attendance from Escape Studios and Epic Games when they reach an attendance rate of at least 80%.

Although the Summer of Unreal programme is completely free, there is a voluntary option to give back to the industry via a donation to diversity and inclusion champions ACCESS:VFX at the end of the course.

Is this a full-time course and what are the hours?

The online course is delivered live and paced leisurely over four weeks.

Daily hours are 9:30 AM until 15:30 PM (UTC+1 UK time). Most training will take place in the morning between 9:30 AM and 12:30 PM, with project work and practice scheduled for the afternoons. Weekends are free. For planning purposes, lunch will last an hour, starting at 12:30 PM (UTC+1 UK time).

What are the entry requirements for this course?

This course is primarily aimed **at professionals currently working in the animation industry or in peripheral roles,** so VFX and motion graphics artists are also eligible to apply.

You need to have at least two years industry experience working in a relevant role in animation, layout, previs, lighting, rendering, production editorial or creative. A link to your LinkedIn profile, IMDb account, or website may be requested.

This course is also open to **tutors and educators**. Priority will be given for higher education, but applications from further education and gymnasia-style schools will also be considered.

Unfortunately, this course is **not open to students or alumni**. Please do not apply unless you are already working in the industry.

What will I learn in this course?

The course is for beginners. It teaches Unreal Engine through the perspective of the CGI and animation industries, rather than cinematography, virtual production, or games. You will learn how to integrate real-time workflows into your current practice, from foundational elements to higher-level assets.

Four weeks is a huge chunk of my summer! Can I just attend certain days I'm interested in?

The Summer of Unreal is a complete practical course. We've designed it to allow plenty of personal time outside of instruction periods for other commitments. However, Epic Games has asked us to prioritise those who can commit to the spirit of the complete course. We will be giving digital badges each day to all attendees and anyone who has attended 80% of the classes on completion will receive a certificate.

As there will be team-based activities, it's important that you commit to the course, as your absence might impede others in the group.

So, we ask that you only apply if you are willing to sign on for the full duration of this course.

What are the technical requirements for this course?

You will need to be familiar with standard 3D software and graphics.

You will also need your own PC or Mac and a solid internet connection. It's probably a good idea to check your specs for running Unreal Engine. **You can find official system requirements here. Unreal Engine will work even on much older systems, but it is recommended that you have a bare minimum of a GTX 770 or equivalent. If in doubt, download the software and try it out.** While there may be support on the course for technical software questions, we will be unable to help with your hardware problems.

Mac users should ensure they have the correct XCode version.

What if I've never used Unreal Engine before?

You don't need to have any experience in Unreal Engine before taking this course. However, you must have experience with the basics of 3D computer graphics or animation.

Is the course free?

Yes, as long as you fit within the course requirements. Epic Games has commissioned Escape Studios to run the curriculum and want to ensure that as many working animation/CGI professionals in the European animation and related industries get a chance to learn and adopt it.

What happens if I can't make all the classes?

We recommend people sign up for the duration of the course to get the complete experience; like most classes, it continues to build as it goes on. We recognise that some people who have used Unreal Engine before may want to focus on certain areas. However, this course is designed for learners who want a complete experience and to emerge with self-created assets and a clear direction for how they might adopt Unreal Engine in the future.

How does the group project work?

We anticipate that groups will be a mix of ability and experience. We intend to mix people with different roles together, so they can collectively support each other and collaborate on creative themes. Before you join the Summer of Unreal programme, we'll ask you a few questions about your role and area of expertise (e.g. animation, producer, modeler, artist) so we can get a good spread of people across each group.

We will use Discord throughout the course, which is a forum that can help you organise and collaborate with the rest of your team. **There is a strong emphasis on groups being self-organising and inclusive.**

Are all the classes in English?

All teaching and group work will be delivered in English.

I'm based outside of Europe, can I join?

We have to prioritise European citizens (including the UK) due to Epic's funding requirements.

Are we taking participants from EU states only?

No, just people within European borders (including the UK).

How do I book my spot?

The easiest way is to apply through the site of whichever partner is closest to you.

For example, if you are based in the UK, apply to Escape Studios. If you are based in Spain, apply to La Salle, Serbia - apply to Crater, French - apply to Art FX, Danish, apply to Animation Workshop and so on.

But what if I am not from one of the partner nations?

In this case, we advise you to apply to the nearest one. For example, if you are based in Slovakia, we would advise you to apply via Crater Studio in Serbia. If you are in Portugal, we would advise you to apply via La Salle and so on.

You can make an application, in theory via any of the partners, but please do not apply to more than one.

What platform do you use for this course?

We will be delivering the course on Zoom and Discord, but teams may choose other software as well (e.g. Slack)

When do I receive joining link/s?

If you are selected for the course, you will receive a link from the partner you sign up with. We will be letting people know if they are successful as soon as possible—we appreciate that you have to organise this course around your life and other commitments. **You may not get the actual link to the course until**

a few days before it starts, but you will get the confirmation that you have been successful as soon as your application has been approved. So, in some respects, there is an element of "first come, first served" (as long as you meet the necessary requirements).

What's the size of the 'class' / how many attendees do you expect per course?

Epic has commissioned us to welcome over 1,000 participants. We want to create a European community of animators joining together to work on fun collective projects, sharing previous experiences and new ideas. This is not a broadcast style course where you passively listen. Everyone gets involved in the creativity.

Will it be harder to learn with so many students involved?

We believe part of our ongoing success with teaching online, at scale, is because of the discipline we have developed.
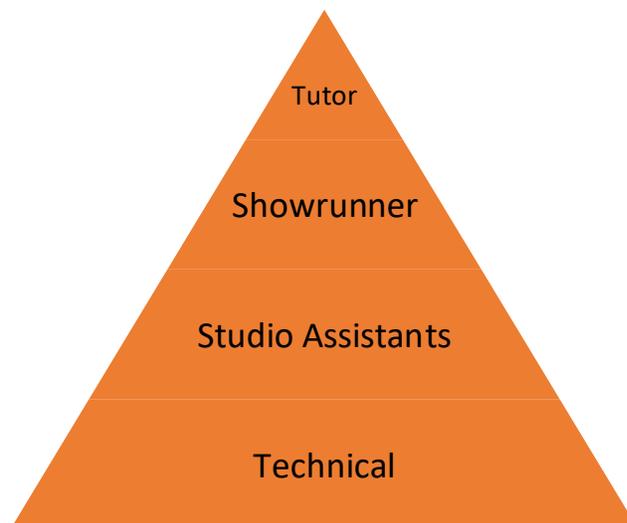
Through a series of 'mass' teaching projects, Escape has developed a teaching style that can easily address large groups of people. Simply 'broadcasting' or instructing is not enough to ensure learning takes place for the wide range of adult audiences we cater for.

While direct instruction—approaches that are structured, sequenced, and led by teachers—makes sense for smaller classes where the teacher receives visual or auditory feedback to pace appropriately, that

same feedback can be disruptive at scale. For instance,one student in trouble can derail the tutor's attention and cause delays and wider dissatisfaction amongst the rest of the class.

Escape has developed a way of working with large audiences that attempts to bring some of the intimacy and community that feedback and communication afford to smaller groups. There is a relationship to the tutor that allows for personalised teaching, which is very important for a group of, say, adult learners. We have developed what we call a 'filtration pedagogy.'

This means that between the tutor and the learner are invisible mediators, or 'agents in the crowd' whose job it is to assess issues and challenges that learners are having and pass that up the chain, where they are aggregated and either solved or presented to the tutor.

In our filtration pedagogy, the following agents act as an important interconnected team.

The Tutor
At Escape, our tutors are experienced in teaching Unreal Engine and are aware of the challenges that different learners may have. They temper their teaching style to the clientele. Teaching a group of undergraduates is different from teaching a conversion course to animation professionals at scale.

Our tutors are also aware of the challenges large-scale classes bring for the learners. So they provide time for 'spaced practice,' and recognise that they still need to 'teach for the single screen'—meaning they need more exposition and repetition of key actions. The result is more retention by the learner.

The Showrunner
We always employ one 'showrunner.' It's their job is to assess the temperature of the crowd by monitoring discord and chat channels, and then guide the tutor. This often involves asking for clarification of terms, or interpretation of nomenclature—things that the tutor might miss online. The job of the showrunner is to speak for the people. The showrunner is employed for their wider expertise, so it is important they don't mirror the tutor's skills. As an advocate for the students, they are learning too. They ask the questions that the learners are too shy to ask. They translate terms from one idiom to another, interjecting when confusion is noted.

As part of the need to personalise learning, the showrunner will also credit exemplary work and bring it to the attention of the tutor, or outline more problematic work in order to highlight common mistakes that can be commented on for the benefit of the wider group.

Studio Assistants
The showrunner is also fed information from a number of studio assistants (SAs) who supervise certain groups or portions of the class. Their role is to rapidly deal with any technical or functional issues. If the students' software is malfunctioning or they missed a crucial step, the SA can get them back on track. It

is not however a purely technical role, the SA can repeat certain key aspects of the teaching to small groups or single learners. We know that it is easy to lose learners online without this support.

Technical Assistant

This role is about ensuring there is equity in software terms amongst the attendees. This role is purely a technical brief.

There is a communication or 'filtration' of messages through these roles, ensuring that the feedback the tutor receives is relevant to a range of people. This means rather than stopping to be distracted by one vocal learner whose issues may only be specific to them, the tutor is flexible and can respond effectively to feedback, giving a more personalised learning experience.

Most importantly, we recognise through our teaching that our learners can teach themselves via the community we provide, so we spend time socialising our learners into ways of collaborating together. Working in teams is an important part of our teaching, and very much a passport to rewarding work in the screen industries.

Is the course going to be recorded? / Can I re-watch the lesson?

Many sections will be recorded but only made available to course members for a limited time after the Summer of Unreal ends. We are not marketing or selling on any recorded material. It is there to help the attendees catch up or revisit parts of the course to improve their learning.