The Steam Page Optimization Audit

A scored audit you run against your own Steam page before launch

By Piotr Karbowski, Mad Octopus / madoctopus.fun

Why this exists

Your Steam page is the single highest-leverage piece of marketing your game has. Steam will send your future players there from search, Discovery Queue, Curator pages, Wishlist emails, and friend recommendations. Every percentage point of conversion improvement compounds across the entire life of the game.

Most indie Steam pages I review score under 60 / 100 on this rubric. Not because the devs are lazy, because no one ever showed them what "good" looks like across every element. The differences between a 55-point page and an 85-point page often correspond to a 2–3× difference in wishlist conversion at launch.

This audit isn't a checklist. It's a **scoring rubric**. You assign yourself a number per section (0–5), total it, and you get a brutally honest picture of where your page stands.

Be honest. The page doesn't care about your feelings. Players don't either.

How to score

Each of the 20 sections below gets **0–5 points**:

- **0** = Missing or actively bad. Hurts the page.
- **1** = Exists but is the weakest version. Most pages start here.
- **2** = Below average. Functional but unimpressive.
- **3** = Average for an indie launch. Acceptable but no edge.
- **4** = Above average. Helps the page convert.
- **5** = Best-in-class. Standout against your genre comp set.

Total possible: **100 points**.

Grade bands:

- **< 50**, Page needs major rework before launching. You will lose 40–60% of the conversions you could be getting.
- **50–69**, Critical gaps exist. Fixable in 2–4 weeks of focused work. Don't launch yet.
- **70–84**, Solid page. Launch-ready, but specific weak sections are leaving wishlists on the table.
- **85–94**, Strong. Most indie pages don't reach this. Real edge in Discovery Queue.
- **95+**, Best-in-class. Your visual/copy/conversion is doing as much heavy lifting as the game itself.

Score this against a real reference. Open the Steam pages of 3 successful games in your genre side-by-side with yours. Score yours against theirs. Don't grade on a curve.

SECTION 1: Header Capsule (460×215 px) __ / 5

The single most-shown image of your game. Appears in Discovery Queue, wishlist emails, daily deal lists, and Library recommendations.

5-point standard:

- Logo is legible at thumbnail size (try at 184×69)
- One clear visual hook, character, object, or moodscape
- No more than 3 text elements (title + tagline + maybe genre)
- Color palette pops against Steam's dark UI
- Reads in <1 second

Score guide:

- 0–1: Generic, illegible at small sizes, or no clear focal point
- 2: Has a logo but the rest is muddled
- 3: Clear logo, recognizable game element, OK contrast
- 4: All of the above plus a memorable hook (face, silhouette, prop)
- 5: Would stop the scroll. Could be the box art of a physical edition.

__ / 5

SECTION 2: Main Capsule (1232×706 px) __ / 5

Used if Steam ever features you on the front page. Also widely used in user reviews of similar games.

5-point standard:

- Hero shot, not a screenshot
- Logo and key art composed for this exact ratio (not just stretched header art)
- Negative space allows for sale-banner overlays
- High enough resolution to upscale to 4K

Score guide:

- 0: Auto-generated from the header
- 2: Stretched/cropped version of another asset
- 3: Original art, but feels like a screenshot
- 4: Composed specifically for this slot
- 5: Looks like marketing-grade key art (because it is)

`__ / 5`

SECTION 3: Small Capsule (231×87 px) __ / 5

Appears in search results, "More like this," wishlist emails. Often where players decide whether to click at all.

5-point standard:

- Logo is sharp and centered
- Game's genre is implied through visual style
- Readable on mobile screens

Score guide:

- 0: Logo unreadable or cropped weirdly
- 2: Logo readable but visually flat
- 3: Logo plus a single visual element
- 4: Distinct enough that someone could pick yours out of 20 search results
- 5: Iconic. Becomes the game's de-facto thumbnail across the internet.

`__ / 5`

SECTION 4: Library Assets (Capsule 600×900, Hero 3840×1240, Logo 1280×720)

__ / 5

Players who buy your game see these every time they open Steam. Underrated and almost universally ignored.

5-point standard:

- All three assets uploaded (many indies skip Library Logo entirely)
- Library Hero composed for ultra-wide framing
- Library Logo uses transparent background and works on multiple background colors
- Visual identity consistent with capsule art

Score guide:

- 0: None of the three uploaded (default Steam fallback shown)
- 2: Capsule only
- 3: Capsule + Hero
- 4: All three uploaded, decent quality
- 5: All three professionally designed and visually consistent with the rest of the brand

__ / 5

SECTION 5: Trailer, First 5 seconds `__ / 5`

The first 5 seconds determine whether the viewer watches the rest. Steam auto-plays the trailer; if the hook isn't immediate, you've lost them.

5-point standard:

- A specific, surprising, or distinctive visual in the first 3 seconds
- Music kicks in within first 2 seconds
- No studio logo card on its own, overlay it during action
- No splash screen, no fade-in from black
- Tags / "wishlist now" CTA do NOT appear at the start

Score guide:

- 0: First 5 seconds is a studio logo or splash screen
- 2: Some gameplay shown but no clear hook
- 3: Gameplay visible immediately
- 4: Hook is clear within 3 seconds
- 5: Could be a 5-second TikTok and still sell the game

`__ / 5`

SECTION 6: Trailer, Length and pacing __ / 5

5-point standard:

- 60–90 seconds total
- Cuts every 1.5–3 seconds on average
- One clear "what makes this game different" beat
- Music drops or shifts ~75% of the way through
- Ends with: release date + "Wishlist now" CTA + logo
- Never shows the same scene twice

Score guide:

- 0: Trailer is 3+ minutes, or under 30 seconds
- 2: Right length but pacing drags
- 3: Right length, OK pacing, hook is buried mid-trailer
- 4: Right length, strong pacing, ends well
- 5: Could not be cut shorter without losing impact

__ / 5

SECTION 7: Screenshots, Quantity and order

__ / 5

You can upload up to 13. The first 4 are visible without scrolling on most resolutions.

5-point standard:

- 8–12 screenshots uploaded
- First 4 are the strongest, no exceptions
- Variety: 2 combat/action, 2 exploration, 2 character/UI, 2 setting/atmosphere
- No menu screenshots in the first 4 (or anywhere unless the menu is iconic)
- No duplicates or near-duplicates

Score guide:

- 0: Fewer than 4 screenshots
- 2: Right quantity, but order doesn't lead with strength
- 3: Strong first 4, weaker middle/end
- 4: All 12 are strong, ordered intentionally
- 5: Every screenshot pulls weight. None feel like filler.

__ / 5

SECTION 8: Screenshots, Quality and resolution `__ / 5`

5-point standard:

- All at 1920×1080 minimum, 2560×1440 preferred
- No JPEG compression artifacts
- UI is final (not placeholder or debug)
- No watermarks, no dev overlays
- Color-graded for impact (post-processing applied)
- No window chrome, mouse cursor, or HUD elements that shouldn't be there

Score guide:

- 0: Some screenshots are clearly low-resolution or compressed
- 2: Resolution fine, but feels like raw captures
- 3: Looks like the actual game with no embarrassments
- 4: Slight color grading or staging applied
- 5: Looks like marketing material, not a game capture

`__ / 5`

SECTION 9: Animated GIFs `__ / 5`

Steam supports animated GIFs in the screenshot block. Most pages don't use them. This is free conversion uplift.

5-point standard:

- At least 3 GIFs in the screenshot rotation
- Each shows gameplay (no menus, no splash screens)
- 4–8 seconds each, perfectly looped
- Under 8 MB each (Steam's limit)
- Demonstrates a mechanic the screenshots can't (motion, timing, scale)

Score guide:

- 0: No GIFs
- 2: 1 GIF
- 3: 2–3 GIFs, decent quality
- 4: 3+ GIFs, all showing distinct mechanics
- 5: GIFs are the page's strongest assets. Each tells a tiny story.

`__ / 5`

SECTION 10: Short description (max 300 characters) `__ / 5`

The description that appears in wishlist notification emails, store search results, and Discovery Queue cards. The single most-read piece of copy on your page.

5-point standard:

- Leads with the hook, not the studio name or the lore
- Uses a strong verb in the first 8 words
- Genre / setting is clear by the second sentence
- Reads in under 15 seconds
- Doesn't use marketing fluff ("immerse yourself", "epic adventure", "unforgettable")

Score guide:

- 0: Generic; could apply to 100 other games
- 2: Specific but buried hook
- 3: Hook is in the first sentence
- 4: Hook + genre + tone, all in <200 chars
- 5: A player can quote it back to a friend after one read

`__ / 5`

SECTION 11: Long description, Structure __ / 5

The full "About This Game" section. Players who scroll here are seriously evaluating you.

5-point standard:

- Uses Steam BBCode for headers and bullet points (not just plain text)
- Includes at least 1 GIF embedded mid-description
- Has a clear "key features" bulleted block
- Includes a one-paragraph "About the developer" section
- Length: 600–1500 words (not 200, not 3000)
- Mobile-readable: short paragraphs, real headings, visible bullets

Score guide:

- 0: A single wall of text, no formatting
- 2: Has paragraphs but no headers/bullets
- 3: Formatted with headers, mostly readable
- 4: Headers + bullets + 1 GIF + dev section
- 5: Reads like an editorial article, scannable in 30 seconds or readable in detail

__ / 5

SECTION 12: Long description, Voice and specificity __ / 5

5-point standard:

- First-person dev voice (or strong author voice) somewhere in the copy
- Specific mechanics named, not abstract concepts ("permadeath roguelike with branching dialogue", not "deep replayability")
- One concrete differentiator vs. comp titles
- No buzzwords ("revolutionary", "immersive", "unparalleled")
- No exclamation marks unless they're earned

Score guide:

- 0: Pure marketing speak, indistinguishable from AI copy
- 2: Some specifics, but clichés dominate
- 3: Sounds like a real human wrote it
- 4: Has personality. You can hear the dev's voice.
- 5: The copy itself is a selling point. Players quote lines from it.

__ / 5

SECTION 13: Tags and genre `__ / 5`

Tags are how Steam's algorithm understands what your game is. 80% of Discovery Queue placement comes from tags.

5-point standard:

- All 20 tag slots filled
- Top 3 tags chosen strategically (not auto-suggested)
- Genre matches the most-searched primary tag
- No "indie" used as a primary tag (every indie game uses it; it's meaningless)
- Tags reflect both genre and aesthetics ("Pixel Art", "Hand-Drawn", "Cute" etc.)
- No misleading tags (don't tag "Open World" if you're not)

Score guide:

- 0: Fewer than 10 tags, or tags don't match the game
- 2: 10–15 tags, top 3 are weak
- 3: All 20 filled, top 3 are decent
- 4: Top 3 are strategic and tightly competitive
- 5: Tag strategy is itself a competitive advantage. Could ace a Steam Tag SEO audit.

`__ / 5`

SECTION 14: System requirements __ / 5

Underrated. Bad system reqs cause refunds.

5-point standard:

- Both minimum AND recommended specs filled
- Specs are tested on actual hardware (not estimated)
- OS support claims are honest (don't claim Linux if you haven't tested in 6 months)
- Storage size is accurate
- Network requirements stated if multiplayer

Score guide:

- 0: One row of minimum specs, vague
- 2: Min and recommended, but copy-pasted from another game
- 3: Honest specs, tested
- 4: Includes notes (e.g., "Tested on Steam Deck, 60fps on medium")
- 5: Steam Deck Verified status applied for or earned

`__ / 5`

SECTION 15: Languages declared __ / 5

You can only claim a language if you actually support it. Lying here = refunds + negative reviews.

5-point standard:

- All claimed languages are 100% supported (not partial)
- Interface, subtitles, and audio columns marked accurately
- At least 3–5 languages supported at launch (English + 2–4 others most impactful: Simplified Chinese, German, Brazilian Portuguese, Russian, French)
- Localization quality is reviewed by native speakers, not raw machine translation

Score guide:

- 0: English only, AND it's badly written
- 2: English only, well-written
- 3: 2–3 languages, decent quality
- 4: 4–6 languages, native speaker reviewed
- 5: 6+ languages including high-impact non-English markets

__ / 5

SECTION 16: Pricing and regional pricing __ / 5

Default-suggested regional pricing leaves money on the table. Manual regional pricing meaningfully boosts revenue from emerging markets.

5-point standard:

- Base price calibrated against comp set (within ±20% of similar games)
- Regional pricing manually adjusted for Russia, LATAM, Turkey, India, China (where applicable)
- Launch discount strategy decided (10% is typical; rewarded by Steam visibility)
- Bundle strategy mapped out (prior games, demo→full bundle, friend gift bundles)

Score guide:

- 0: Auto-pricing only, no thought given
- 2: Base price OK, regional defaults
- 3: Manual regional pricing for 2–3 markets
- 4: Full regional strategy + launch discount + planned mid-cycle discount cadence
- 5: Pricing strategy reviewed against actual sales data from comparable games

__ / 5

SECTION 17: Demo __ / 5

If your game can have a meaningful demo, it should. Demo data is the single best pre-launch signal you'll get.

5-point standard:

- Demo exists and is live (or clearly scheduled)
- Demo length: 15–45 minutes of polished play (not 5 min, not 4 hours)
- Demo has its own short trailer
- Demo first 60 seconds are exceptional
- In-demo prompt for wishlist + feedback channel (Discord/forum)
- Demo participated in (or is scheduled for) a Steam Next Fest

Score guide:

- 0: No demo and no plan for one
- 2: Demo planned but not built
- 3: Demo live, decent quality
- 4: Demo + Next Fest participation + clear feedback loop
- 5: Demo converts >25% of players to wishlists. Game-changer for momentum.

`__ / 5`

SECTION 18: Community features `__ / 5`

Steam's community features are visibility multipliers most indies leave at the default settings.

5-point standard:

- Steam Community Hub enabled and actively moderated
- Achievements implemented (more is better up to ~30–50)
- Steam Trading Cards enabled
- Steam Cloud support if applicable
- Discord linked prominently
- Steam Workshop or modding support, if relevant

Score guide:

- 0: All defaults, nothing customized
- 2: Achievements only
- 3: Achievements + Community Hub active
- 4: All of the above + Discord linked + cards
- 5: Community features are themselves part of the value proposition

`__ / 5`

SECTION 19: Reviews / awards / press block

`__ / 5`

The "What others are saying" section that appears at the top of mature Steam pages. If you have coverage, show it.

5-point standard:

- 3+ external review quotes with publication logos
- Quotes are short (<15 words), specific, and link to source
- At least one festival/award badge if applicable
- Quotes rotated occasionally (don't let 2-year-old quotes get stale)

Score guide:

- 0: Empty section or no coverage block exists
- 2: 1 quote with no source
- 3: 2–3 quotes from real outlets
- 4: 3+ quotes plus 1 award/festival badge
- 5: A wall of credible quotes that does heavy social proof work

`__ / 5`

SECTION 20: Update cadence visible on page

__ / 5

Steam shows the date of your last announcement. Players check this. A page that hasn't been updated in 6 months looks abandoned, even if the game launches in 2 weeks.

5-point standard:

- Steam announcement posted within the last 30 days
- Pinned announcement summarizes current state of the game
- "What's coming next" announcement exists somewhere
- Recent announcements have screenshots/GIFs (not just text)
- Frequency: at least 1 announcement per month minimum

Score guide:

- 0: Last announcement is 3+ months old
- 2: Recent announcements but they're thin (no media)
- 3: Monthly cadence, decent quality
- 4: Bi-weekly cadence, every post has fresh media
- 5: Page feels alive. Players can see the team is shipping.

`__ / 5`

YOUR TOTAL: __ / 100

Where you stand

Under 50: Don't launch. Spend the next 4–8 weeks fixing the lowest-scoring sections (especially capsule, trailer hook, screenshots, and short description). Each one of those four sections is worth 5–15% conversion uplift on its own.

50–69: Launch-deferrable. Pick the 4 lowest-scoring sections and rework them. You'll move 15–25 points in 2–4 weeks of focused work.

70–84: Launch-ready, but specific sections are leaving wishlists on the table. Pick your 3 weakest and fix them.

85–94: Strong. You're outperforming most indie launches. Hold launch date.

95+: Best-in-class. The page itself is no longer the bottleneck, community building, press outreach, and post-launch updates are where to focus.

How to use this audit

1. **Score yourself today.** Be brutal. The page doesn't care.
2. **Save the date and the score.** Re-audit monthly.
3. **Prioritize by impact, not effort.** A 1 → 4 jump on Header Capsule is worth more than a 4 → 5 jump on Update Cadence.
4. **Get a second opinion.** Send your page link to a fellow dev (or to us, we'll review for free, see below) and ask them to score it. Their numbers will differ from yours.
5. **Compare against your top 3 comps.** Audit *their* pages too. Notice where they beat you.

Common mistakes I see

"My game is too unique to fit this rubric."

Every dev believes this. Every dev is wrong. The rubric doesn't care about your game's vibe, it measures whether your page communicates that vibe clearly.

Skipping the small capsule. *It's literally what search results show. Half of indie devs treat it as an afterthought.*

Trailers that open with a studio logo. Worst opening 5 seconds possible. Cut the logo.

Walls-of-text long descriptions. No headers, no bullets, no GIFs. Players bounce in 3 seconds.

Default regional pricing. You're leaving 10–30% revenue on the table in markets like Russia, LATAM, Turkey, and SEA.

Stale announcements. A 6-month-old "Hello world!" announcement signals abandonment. Post something. Even "we're heads down finishing the game" is better than silence.

Want a free audit of your actual Steam page?

Mad Octopus reviews indie Steam pages every week, for prospective partners, for friends, for devs we'd never sign. We do them for free because:

1. Honest external eyes catch what you can't.
2. We see hundreds of pages a year. Patterns are clear to us that aren't to a solo dev.
3. We get a feel for where the industry is heading.

If you'd like a quick, honest, no-pitch audit, link us your page at madoctopus.fun or post it in our Discord. We'll respond within a week with a scored audit and the top 3 things to fix.

If we love the game, we'll talk about working together. If we don't, you still get the audit.

, *Piotr*