Retro Game Dev 2026

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

Espacio TEC is a non‑profit organization made up of retro‑computing enthusiasts, whose objective is the preservation of hardware, software, accounts, their dissemination and historical research.

Within the framework of its public promotion programs—and on the occasion of the Vintage Computer Festival Latam 2026 (VCF Latam)—it calls for participation in **Retro Game Dev 2026,** a retro video-game development contest that seeks to celebrate creativity, innovation and the passion for programming on classic platforms.

We invite a broad spectrum of enthusiasts, professionals and amateurs of game programming and design, including but not limited to:

1. **Game designers:** Professionals and amateurs who develop video games, whether independently or as part of teams, with an interest in creating experiences inspired by the aesthetics and mechanics of retro games.
2. **Programmers and programming enthusiasts:** People with knowledge of programming languages (such as C, Assembly, BASIC, or modern languages adapted to retro platforms) who wish to explore or recreate the magic of classic video games.
3. **Retro‑computing hobbyists and aficionados:** Enthusiasts of vintage computers and consoles (such as Commodore, Amiga, Atari, ZX Spectrum, MSX, NES, among others) who want to experiment with development on these platforms.
4. **Technology and design students:** Youth over 13 years old, enrolled in educational institutions or self-taught, interested in game programming, graphic design or video-game music.
5. **Digital artists and musicians:** Pixel-art creators, chiptune musicians or sound-effect designers who wish to contribute to retro game development with their artistic skills.
6. **Independent developers:** Creators working on personal projects or in small indie studios, interested in experimenting with the constraints of retro platforms.

The "Retro Game Dev 2026" contest consists in the design and programming of a video-game capable of running on one of the retro platforms listed below. The submitted game must be an original creation by the participants. The game must be unpublished—that is, it must not have been awarded in another contest or published on any platform.

General Requirements:

- Contestants must be **over 13 years of age** (minors must present legal guardian authorization).
- **Argentine citizens (by birth or naturalization) as well as foreign** residents in Argentina or from anywhere in the world may participate.
- Individual or team projects are accepted, provided they comply with the technical and thematic bases of the contest (detailed below).
- Games must be developed for specific retro platforms (for example, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum, Atari 2600, NES, or similar. See the full list below) or compatible emulators. Modern tools may be used for the development process.

CATEGORIES

There is a single category covering all known and yet-to-be-known video-game possibilities. Participants must develop a game that embodies the aesthetics, limitations and play style of retro video games from the 1970s to the 1990s, infused with contemporary technologies and knowledge.

Theme and mechanics:

Choice is free, spanning genres such as:

- **Open world (Sandbox):** Unrestricted exploration in interactive environments.
- **Strategy (RTS and turn-based):** Resource management and tactics in real or turn-based time.
- **Shooters:** First-person (FPS) or third-person (TPS) action.

- **Role-playing games:** RPG, ARPG or immersive narratives with character progression.
- **Simulation and sports:** Realistic or stylized experiences, from flight simulators to retro sports.
- **Puzzles and board games:** Logical challenges, puzzles or adaptations of classic board games.
- **Action-adventure:** Combination of exploration, narrative and dynamic combat.
- **Survival and horror:** Tension and resource management in hostile environments.
- **Platformers:** Jumps, obstacles and agile mechanics in the style of the classics.
- **Other innovative genres:** Proposals that fuse styles or create new experiences, always respecting the retro spirit.

Prohibited Contents and Other Disqualification Cases

No content is allowed that includes any kind of offensive expressions, political propaganda, racism, explicit sex or insults to specific persons by name or implicitly but unequivocally at the jury's discretion. If any such case is detected, Espacio TEC will request the participant(s) to correct it within five (5) days; otherwise the project will be disqualified and may not participate in the contest.

Language

Games may be submitted in any language as long as it is not central or indispensable to the gameplay experience. Otherwise, an English version must be provided.

JUDGING CRITERIA

Submissions will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Playability: Fun factor, game mechanics and overall player experience. A good game must capture attention from the start and should not require thirty minutes before becoming engaging.

Authenticity: The extent to which the game captures the look, feel and limitations of the chosen platform.

Creativity: Originality of concept, design and use of platform-specific features. Creating a non-clone game is harder and will be rewarded.

Technical achievements: Efficient use of hardware resources, stable performance and absence of critical bugs that prevent a real play experience.

Thematic cohesion: Rewarded will be gameplay innovations based on the chosen theme and ability to address that theme.

JURY

Selection, evaluation and awarding will be decided by a single jury of five (5) members—prominent figures in video games and retro computing—appointed at the organization's sole discretion. The list will be available on the Espacio TEC website.

All selection and award stages will be governed by majority vote. The jury's decisions are final and unappealable. Minutes of each jury session will be recorded, signed by its members and supervised by contest authorities. Once signed, decisions are definitive. If, for force majeure, a jury member cannot attend (in person or via videoconference), the organization reserves the right to appoint a replacement or continue with the remaining members. Any circumstance not foreseen in these Rules will be resolved by the jury. Participants may not challenge or recuse jury members.

Submitted games will be tested in emulated environments. Additionally, for experimentation and outreach, Espacio TEC may run them on real hardware.

AWARDS

The awards ceremony will take place at Espacio TEC during VCF Latam 2026, on a date and time to be confirmed on the Website. After submission, games will be available online for public play and voting for a "People's Choice Award."

1 "Grand Prize Espacio TEC VCF 2026"

1 Technological Achievement Award

1 People's Choice Award

Up to 3 Special Mentions

CONTEST CALENDAR

Announcement: June 30, 2025

Registration closes: December 31, 2025

Submissions due: March 15, 2026

Evaluation period: April 2026

Winners announced: April 26, 2026 at VCF Latam 2026

The organization reserves the right to accept or reject entries, modify these bases and conditions, and alter the general course of the contest due to unexpected events or unanticipated circumstances.

REGISTRATION

Registration is via a dedicated form on the Espacio TEC website. Groups or individuals must provide:

+ Personal and contact information
+ Game description (dynamics, controls, platform, etc.)
+ Gameplay instructions
+ Screenshots (if any)
+ Statistical data

COPYRIGHT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Registration implies a sworn statement by participants declaring themselves the legitimate authors of the submitted works/projects. For group or joint-authorship projects, applicants must prove they have authorization from all members/authors to submit and to receive any prize. Participants shall indemnify ESPACIO TEC against third-party claims.

If using third-party assets (images, sounds, music, etc.), proper licenses or author permissions must be secured.

Intellectual property of the finished product (the game) belongs to its authors, but they must deliver to Espacio TEC:
- A complete version of the source code for evaluation
- A compiled version (for compiled languages) or the full program (for interpreted languages) for testing in an open exhibit at Espacio TEC
- A playable demo or full version for public-download distribution via Espacio TEC's site or other media

Espacio TEC may reuse materials for non-commercial, educational or outreach purposes in future exhibits, always crediting the author(s), without any monetary or other claims.

All necessary documentation for project setup (compilation, installation, loading, execution, etc.) must also be submitted.

ACCEPTANCE OF TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Submission implies knowledge and acceptance of these Rules. Failure to comply with any obligation will lead to disqualification and forfeiture of any awarded prize.

Authors of selected and awarded games retain intellectual property rights under Argentina's Law 11.723, but grant the organization permission to use, reproduce, store, adapt, communicate publicly, publish and disseminate the games under these Rules. Participation and registration also grant authorization for use, reproduction, publication and distribution of their likeness and work.

Relatives up to the first degree of jury members, Espacio TEC staff or VCF Latam 2026 organizers may not participate in this call.

ANNEX:

Game Submission

Development Platforms

The following list corresponds to the platforms authorized for the contest. For platforms not listed, contestants must request approval from the organizers:

- Commodore (any 8-bit system)
- Atari 8-bit (including computers and 2600, 5200, 7800 consoles)
- Atari ST family
- Texas Instruments 99/4A
- Amstrad CPC
- Sinclair ZX-80, ZX-81, ZX Spectrum, Spectrum+, Spectrum 128
- Apple II and IIgs
- MSX or MSX-2
- IBM PC 5150, PC-XT 5160, PC-AT or compatibles with 286, 386 and 486 processors, limited to MS-DOS (up to v6.22) or compatibles
- Amiga 500 (ECS, M68000, ≤1 MB RAM, Kickstart 1.2/1.3)
- Amiga 1200 (AGA, M68EC020, ≤2 MB RAM, Kickstart 3.0/3.1)
- Nintendo NES
- Super Nintendo
- Nintendo Gameboy (original)
- Sega Master System
- Sega Genesis/MegaDrive/Nomad
- Sega Game Gear
- Atari Lynx
- Sony PlayStation 1
- Sega Saturn
- Nintendo 64
- Atari Jaguar

Important: Proposals requiring hardware modifications (custom ROMs, MODs, overclocking, special controllers, etc.) will not be accepted.

All games must be runnable in emulated environments (preferably web‑based).