Steam is adding support, and more rules, for ‘season pass’ content

Steam is building support for season passes into its platform and setting up rules to help protect buyers from buying ones with unclear promises. Steam published new guidelines urging developers to “think about whether there’s a customer benefit” for purchasing season passes, as reported by SteamDB creator Pavel Djundik.

Season passes have really picked up in popularity and are used mainly in free-to-play or other multiplayer video games that promise digital updates like special costumes and weapons for a fee.

As part of Steam’s new rules for season passes, developers must share a list of items with descriptions customers can expect to receive with the pass. If a DLC drop gets delayed, Steam will let developers reschedule it up to 3 months later. And if developers have to cancel a DLC, buyers must get a refund for the item value.

Steam is also redefining what a season pass is:

> *Because a Season Pass is effectively a DLC pre-purchase, creating a Season Pass on Steam has many of the considerations and restrictions as outlined in the documentation on pre-purchases. For these reasons, we will not offer a Season Pass except in a few rare cases with partners with which we have a well-established relationship and that have a proven track record on Steam.*

Steam also provided a strong disclaimer for developers:

> *If you aren’t ready to clearly communicate about the content included in each DLC AND when each DLC will be ready for launch, you shouldn’t offer a Season Pass on Steam.*

As noted by *Games Radar*, the new rules might be more challenging for indie developers who don’t have a lot of games under their belts to pass Steam’s requirements. They also may not have enough resources to build up a guaranteed DLC list – but in that case perhaps they aren’t big enough to offer a season pass anyway.

https://www.theverge.com/2024/11/21/24302483/steam-season-pass-support-developer-guidelines