Laid off from a studio: a 14-day plan

You just got laid off. Here are your next two weeks, one day at a time.

Every day has four parts. One thing to do, and it takes under an hour. A template you can copy. The mistake most people make on that day. And a "Done when" line, so you know when you can stop.

Do the day. Then close the laptop. That's the whole system.

If this applies to you

Read this first. Skip anything that doesn't fit your situation.

- **You're on a work visa.** Do this before anything else on this page. Find out exactly how long you have, talk to an immigration lawyer, and build the search around that clock. Every other day bends around it.
- **You're still working out your notice period.** Use the time while you're still on the inside. Connect with colleagues and partners, ask for recommendations, back up any work you're allowed to keep, ask what you're allowed to name or show later, and say your goodbyes before your email goes dark.
- **You think your NDA means you can't show anything.** Read what it actually says. The restriction people imagine is usually way wider than the one they signed. Know the real line before you cut work from your resume or your posts. If it's unclear, ask HR or a lawyer before you share anything.
- **A recruiter you've never heard of messages you right after the layoff news.** Verify them before you send anything. Scammers watch layoff announcements because they know people are vulnerable. Check the person, the studio and the role on the studio's own site.
- **You need income before the right role shows up.** Take a bridge job. A stable role outside games or in an adjacent field is fine. Call it what it is, a bridge and not a panic grab, and keep running this plan around it.

Day 1: Breathe and save your evidence

Do this (under an hour): Don't apply to anything today. Spend 45 minutes saving the proof of your work that you're allowed to keep, while you still can. Your own performance reviews. Kudos messages sent to you. Notes on features you shipped. Portfolio pieces you have permission to show. Your termination letter. Nothing confidential, and nothing that belongs to someone else. Then request your LinkedIn data export. It can take a day to arrive, and you'll need it on Day 7.

Template, say this to yourself:

> *This was budget math, not a verdict on my work. Someone else made a spreadsheet decision. It doesn't erase the years of good work I did.*

The common mistake: Reading the layoff as proof that you were the problem. You weren't. Layoffs are business decisions made in meetings you weren't in. Right behind that one: panic-applying in survival mode, and posting something angry on LinkedIn. Don't do either today.

Done when: Your proof folder exists, the export is requested, and you've sent zero applications.

Day 2: Money and paperwork

Do this (under an hour): Do the money math on paper, not in your head. List your monthly costs, your savings, your severance, any benefits, and the date your health coverage ends. Divide to get your runway in months. Then set a floor, the minimum your household needs, and have that conversation with whoever shares your budget. File for unemployment if you're eligible. If you haven't signed the severance agreement yet, read every clause before you do.

Template, the runway sheet:

> *Monthly must-pay costs: [amount]*
> *Cash on hand plus severance: [amount]*
> *Monthly income still coming in, like unemployment benefits: [amount]*
> *Runway in months, cash divided by what costs exceed income each month: [number]*
> *Health coverage ends: [date]*
> *My floor, the minimum income I can accept: [amount]*
> *I'll plan this search for twice as long as I think it will take.*

The common mistake: Signing fast without asking. Packages can often be pushed. Ask about a longer severance period, extended health coverage, outplacement support, a mutual non-disparagement clause or a narrower non-compete. Have a lawyer look at it. Check how the payout affects your benefits and any stock. And don't start a new job while the negotiation is still open if that would void the package. The other mistake is skipping the runway math and deciding on vibes. Even a generous package has a trap. It kills the urgency, and the search drifts.

Done when: Your runway number is written down, unemployment is filed if you qualify, and you know exactly what you are and aren't signing.

Day 3: Pick your target

Do this (under an hour): Before you touch your resume, draw your target box. One role, named the way job postings name it. One segment of the industry. Ten named studios. Put well-funded and recently funded studios near the top, because they often hire before they post. Leave your old studio off the list for now. Studios often can't rehire laid-off staff for a while, so don't build your plan around going back. Torn between two lanes? Pick one for now. Clarity comes from action, not more analysis.

Template, the target box:

> *Role, in the market's words: [role title]*
> *Segment: [genre, platform, studio size]*
> *My ten studios: [studio 1] through [studio 10]*
> *Why I'm exceptional for them, in one line: [your line]*

The common mistake: Building your resume for the last job instead of the next one, because you never picked the next one. Also: applying to everything with the same materials, and chasing whatever got posted today.

Done when: You can say your target role and three of your ten studios out loud without hedging.

Day 4: Inventory your wins

Do this (under an hour): Before you write a single resume line, list every win from your last job. Ask yourself two questions. If I had never been there, what would be missing? What would have broken if I'd been out for a week? Rate your confidence from 1 to 10, write down your first three concrete wins, then rate it again. Then keep the list going. Stuck? Message one former teammate and ask what they remember you doing.

Template, message to a former teammate:

> *Hey [name], I'm working on my resume and realizing I've forgotten a lot of what we shipped together. What do you remember me doing on [project]? Even one line helps. No pressure.*

The common mistake: Achievement blindness. You say "we" instead of "I." You credit luck. You delete a real number because it looks too good to be believed. Deleting a true number isn't modesty. It's a lie of omission. Underneath all of it is shame, and shame makes you avoid the exact people who would remind you how good you are.

Done when: You have at least 15 wins written down, each with a number or a named game wherever you can.

Day 5: Rebuild the resume

Do this (under an hour): Rewrite the top third first. That's the part that gets read. Lead with recognizable studios and shipped titles. Replace the summary with a highlights section of two to four lines. Then rewrite your bullets from yesterday's list. Say each bullet out loud before you write it, because the spoken version is almost always stronger. Use the real number, even when it's odd. Don't round it into something that sounds made up. If you don't have the exact figure, estimate low and be ready to defend it. Then test every line. Would someone interview you because of it? If not, cut it.

Template, the bullet formula:

> *[Builder verb] + [result with a number] + [how you did it] + [named game, studio or franchise]*
> *Example: Built a [system] that cut [task] time by [37%] across [named title]'s live team.*

The common mistake: Burying your best credential on page two. Listing duties instead of outcomes. Letting AI rewrite your bullets until they sound like the job description. And the sneaky one: rewriting forever. Get one round of outside feedback, then lock it.

Done when: A stranger could read only the top third and tell what you do, at what level, and on which games.

Day 6: Fix LinkedIn

Do this (under an hour): Once your last day has passed, change that job's end date if it still says "Present." Then rewrite your headline, the first two lines of your About section, and your banner. Fill all three Featured slots with your best work.

Template, the headline formula:

> *[Your craft] | [named games or studios] | [engine or specialty] | [one number]*
> *Example: Gameplay Engineer | Shipped [Title A] and [Title B] | Unreal, networked combat | [40M players]*

Template, the About opener (only the first two lines show before "see more"):

> *I [what you build] for [kind of game or player]. Most recently I [your single most impressive result, with a number].*

The common mistake: Leaving the old job up as current so nobody finds out. That hides you from the exact people who want to help. Also: a headline that's just a job title, an About section that opens with "passionate gamer," a headline that lists five different disciplines, or treating the Open to Work banner as your whole strategy.

Done when: Someone who reads only your headline knows your craft and at least one game you shipped.

Day 7: Reconnect with your warm list

Do this (under an hour): Open the LinkedIn export you requested on Day 1. Filter it to former employers and your target studios, and sort it oldest first. Set a 15-minute timer and send seven reconnect messages. No ask. Include people from the studio that let you go. Most of them had no say in it. And connect with the people who were laid off alongside you.

Template, warm reconnect:

> *Hey [name], I was thinking about [a specific project or moment you shared] the other day. Hope things are good on your side. How's [something specific and recent about them] going?*

Template, someone from the same layoff:

> *Hey [name], I was part of the same round at [studio]. Hope you're doing OK. Let's stay connected in case something comes up for either of us.*

The common mistake: Opening with the layoff or a job ask. It reads as pity, or as a referral request in disguise. The one exception is people from your own layoff, where the shared round is the whole point. Also: agonizing over one message for days, and assuming old contacts won't remember you. Most will. Someone who accepted your connection wanted to be connected.

Done when: Seven warm messages are sent and the same 15 minutes is blocked on tomorrow's calendar.

Day 8: Make outreach a daily habit

Do this (under an hour): Set up a tracker with three columns: sent, accepted, replied. Five messages a day, with a floor of one on bad days. When a warm contact replies, tell them plainly what you're looking for, and make helping you easy.

Template, once a contact replies warmly:

> *Honestly, I'm looking at [role] roles at studios like [two or three of your targets]. If anyone comes to mind, I'd love an intro. I can send a two-line summary and my profile so it's zero work for you.*

Template, asking for a favor (send the real ask only after they say yes):

> *This one's a little awkward, so feel free to say no. Could I ask you a quick favor?*

The common mistake: Pulling away from your network right when you need it most, because asking feels like imposing. Flip it. Would YOU be annoyed if a solid former teammate asked you for help? Referrals make the person referring look good, and studios want them. The other mistake: great conversations that end with no ask at all.

Done when: The tracker exists, today's five are sent (or your one, on a bad day), and at least one person knows exactly what role you want.

Day 9: Map the people inside your targets

Do this (under an hour): For each of your ten studios, list people, not just companies. Go in this order: alumni from your past studios, people with your job title, the lead or manager one level up, then recruiters at studios with live roles. Bookmark each studio's careers page in one folder and open it at the same time every day.

Template, one row of your people map:

> *[Studio] | [Name] | [Their role] | [How you're linked: alumni, same title, lead or recruiter] | [Warm or cold] | [Sent yet?]*

The common mistake: Turning research into a hiding place. You profile every person and handcraft the perfect note. It feels diligent. It's avoidance. Speed beats polish here. The other mistake is a spreadsheet full of studios with zero people on it.

Done when: Every target studio has at least three named people on your map.

Day 10: Start conversations

Do this (under an hour): Send connection requests to ten people from your map, each with a short note and no ask. For any live role you want, check the posting is real, then apply on the studio's own careers site instead of one-click apply. Then message someone on that team for advice, not a referral. Don't wait on a contact before you apply, because roles close. And expect a lot of silence before you hit send. Silence is math, not a verdict.

Template, cold connection note:

> *Hi [name], I'm a [role] who's worked on [named title or studio], mostly on [specialty]. Always good to know more [discipline] people at [studio].*

Template, advice on a live role:

> *Hi [name], I just applied for the [role] opening on your team. Any advice on what the team really needs that the posting doesn't say?*

Template, a question once you're talking:

> *What would a big win look like for your team this year?*

The common mistake: Searching only through applications. Think about how you got your past jobs. If a person was involved, why is this search all cold applications? Also: opening with "I'm looking for a job," and quitting after the first ten go quiet.

Done when: Ten requests are sent and logged, along with any applications you made on a studio's own site.

Day 11: Post about your work

Do this (under an hour): Open your resume. Pick the hardest thing you shipped that you're cleared to talk about. If you're still waiting to hear what you can share, pick a different problem today. Write one post that teaches how you did it. Answer three questions: what problem did you solve, what surprised you, and what would you do differently? Put the hook in the first two lines. Post it within 24 hours of writing it.

Template, the post skeleton:

> *[Hook: the problem in one line]*
> *On [project type], we hit [problem]. Here's what I tried, what broke, and what finally worked: [three short beats].*
> *What I'd do differently next time: [one line].*
> *[Optional: a question for your readers]*

The common mistake: Never posting it. Drafts that never go out. Waiting for the right moment. Hiding behind an NDA you haven't actually read. You can't post the asset. But if your NDA allows it, you CAN write about how you work without naming what shipped. Not sure what it allows? Ask before you post. And skip the pity post. Saying you're available is fine, as long as the post names your work, your target and your proof.

Done when: One post is live. You don't have to love it.

Day 12: Departure story and interview practice

Do this (under an hour): Write a short answer to "Why did you leave?" State it plainly. Take no blame and assign none. Then pivot to the work. Record yourself giving that answer plus two common interview questions, and listen back.

Template, your departure answer:

> *My team was part of a [studio-wide or company-wide] layoff in [season]. I'm proud of what we shipped on [project], especially [one result]. Now I'm looking for a [target role] where I can [the specific thing you do well].*

The common mistake: A long backstory before the answer. Two different versions of the story. Grievances leaking in. Also: never reviewing your own interviews, and reading silence after an interview as a verdict. Studios often can't give feedback at all.

Done when: You can say your departure answer in under 30 seconds, it's the same every time, and you've listened to one recording of yourself.

Day 13: One skill, built in public

Do this (under an hour): Pick one small build you can finish in about a week. If you have a skill gap, make the build close it. No obvious gap? Build something that shows off your strongest skill. Bonus points if it shows you using AI tools to speed up your own craft. Studios are starting to ask about AI in interviews, and "here's what I built" beats "I've tried a chatbot." Announce the build in a post today. Post the result when it's done.

Template, the learning-in-public post:

> *This week I'm building [small thing] in [tool] to see if it can speed up [specific part of my craft]. I'll share what worked and what didn't by [day].*

The common mistake: Polishing your craft in private instead of being visible. Months of relearning tools and quietly sharpening can end with zero interviews to show for it. Collecting certificates is the same trap. It feels like preparation. It's avoidance.

Done when: The build is scoped to one week and the announcement post is live.

Day 14: Show up where your people are, and set the week-three rhythm

Do this (under an hour): Leave five thoughtful comments on posts from people at your target studios or in your discipline. Join one Discord or community channel for your craft. Then write next week's rhythm: your daily outreach number, posts per week (one this week, two next week, three after that), and a recurring check-in with an accountability partner who doesn't live with you. Mute the doom-scroll accounts while you're at it.

Template, the weekly rhythm card:

> *Daily: [number] connection requests and [number] warm messages, at [time]. Floor: one.*
> *Weekly: [number] posts, [number] comments a day, one check-in with [your accountability partner].*
> *Funnel: [applications] to [conversations] to [screens] to [interviews]. Which stage is leaking?*
> *Weekly log: problems I solved, things I made, things I learned, things I taught, and the wins I reported to [your accountability partner].*

The common mistake: Treating the end of week two as the finish line. Once the first wave of support goes quiet, isolation creeps in. People who feel isolated stop reaching out, so book the check-ins today while it's still easy. The other mistake is letting the daily habit slide once the first rush wears off.

Done when: Five comments are posted, and the rhythm card and your first check-in are both on your calendar.

That's two weeks. You're not starting over. You're running a system now, one day at a time.