

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q: What is DUST?

DUST is an Alternate Reality Game (ARG); an immersive story in which teen players interact with a fictional world by using real world media and skills. The interactive experience unfolds over 6 weeks across multiple platforms, including cell phones, social media sites, printed texts, and the Web as players work together to unravel a mystery that will help them save the world.

### Q: What is an Alternate Reality Game (ARG)?

Alternate reality games are a new genre of interactive storytelling in which players work collaboratively to piece together and advance an adaptive narrative that is integrated into everyday media. Most ARGs have been launched as entertainment and marketing endeavors, but a few have been designed for educational purposes including: “World Without Oil,” “Urgent Evoke,” and “Arcane Gallery of Gadgets.”

### Q: When will DUST be available to play?

DUST will begin in January, 2015 and will run for 6 weeks.

### Q: Who made DUST?

Supported by funding from the National Science Foundation, Brigham Young University, the University of Maryland, and Tinder Transmedia have partnered with NASA scientists to develop DUST.

### Q: Who is the target audience for DUST?

DUST is designed for middle and high school students. It is specifically designed to appeal to girls age 13-15 in particular, as well as minorities including African-Americans and Hispanics. However, all teens are encouraged to play.

### Q: What will players of DUST learn?

Players will learn and practice scientific inquiry skills as they participate in DUST. Players will use social media, mobile apps, and online graphic novels to ask questions, gather evidence, and propose theories and solutions. The science content will focus on deep-time sciences in fields including planetary science, neurobiology, astrobiology, and ethics. All of the learning that takes place in DUST has been carefully reviewed by top educators and scientists in the field, and is inspired by current NGSS standards, particularly those related to scientific inquiry.

### Q: Does it cost money?

DUST is completely free! Teachers and students can use it at no cost both in and out of the classroom.

**Q: How much does a teacher need to prepare?**

The original DUST game is intended as an informal STEM learning experience that does not require direct teacher participation, although we are hoping you will help motivate students to play by promoting the game, running an after-school club, or providing extra credit for participation. In Spring 2015 we will create a standalone, replayable version designed to be used in a classroom setting, which will require preparation, but the January 2015 live game will not.

**Q: How many students can participate?**

DUST is open access and is expected to host thousands of students nationwide. Teachers will be able to register multiple classes and review their progress using a unique login that gives them real-time updates on their students' participation. This will become available at <https://fallingdust.com> prior to game launch.

**Q: How much time does it take in a day?**

Teachers and players can login to DUST at any time and can spend as little or as much time in the game as they want. It is easily accessible outside of the classroom, so teachers can give extra credit or assign game-based homework that saves valuable class time. After-school clubs can work it into a 45 minute or hour-long session. A replayable version designed specifically for in-class gameplay will be introduced in Spring 2015.

**Q: What technologies will be used by players and is any special setup required for in-school use?**

As a transmedia project, many technologies will be used including: social media sites (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Tumblr, Pinterest), mobile apps (including social media apps and custom apps we've designed), the main game websites (<https://fallingdust.com>). If students will be playing DUST in a school or library with internet filtering software, then you will need to see if your technology assistant can turn off blocking of social websites, check that you can access <https://fallingdust.com>, and make sure you have a recent browser running the Unity browser plugin available at <https://unity3d.com/webplayer>. If you have mobile devices, you may also make some available to players and make sure they can install the apps as they are released during the game on iOS and Android platforms. Players can share the same mobile device if desired, and they are not required for gameplay, but they will be fun tools to use.

**Q: Is it safe?**

DUST has been specifically designed to protect players' privacy and safety. It has been reviewed by Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure that all collected information is used solely for research purposes by other educators.

**Q: Where can I sign up and learn more?**

Teachers can register for further notifications today at: <http://dustgame.byu.edu>