

Mastering Your GM-Fu 2007



Warm Up – Be Flexible and Agile in Session Prep

Online tools to help you prep for your next session.

- Name Lists and Generators
 - Name Lists (http://www.treasuretables.org/wiki/index.php?title=Name_Lists)
 - Serendipity (<http://nine.frenchboys.net/index.php>)
 - Fantasy Name Generator (<http://www.rinkworks.com/namegen/>)
- Maps
 - Map Prep (http://www.treasuretables.org/wiki/index.php?title=Map_Prep)
 - Google Maps (Street View)
 - Google Earth (3d Cities)
 - Perry-Casteneda Map Collection - a variety of different maps (<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/>)
 - Wizards of the Coast Map Gallery (<http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=dnd/arch/ag>)
- Artwork/Visual Imagery
 - NeverWinter Nights Portrait Gallery (<http://nwwvault.ign.com/View.php?view=Portraits.List>)
 - Elfwood (<http://elfwood.lysator.liu.se/>)
 - Map Prep (http://www.treasuretables.org/wiki/index.php?title=Image_Prep)
 - Public Domain Listing (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Public_domain_image_resources)
- Plots and Adventure Seeds
 - The Big List of RPG Plots - S. John Ross (<http://www.prismnet.com/~sjohn/plots.htm>)
 - Random Plot Encounter table - Matt Turnbull, RPGnet (<http://www.rpg.net/news+reviews/columns/fillinthegap05sep05.html>)
 - Random sci-fi plots - Matt Turnbull, RPGnet (<http://www.rpg.net/columns/fillinthegap/fillinthegap17.phtml>)
 - Adventure Seeds (http://www.treasuretables.org/wiki/index.php?title=Adventure_Seeds)

Defend Yourself – Social Contracts and Group Dynamics

Questions you should ask your group, and answer collectively:

1. What is the overall style of the game you're going to run? Swashbuckling, gritty, dark, family-friendly, apocalyptic, high fantasy/heroic, investigative, political, romantic, etc.?
2. What are the GM's responsibilities?
 1. Contacting all the players if the game is canceled?
 2. Setting a location for each session?
3. What are the players' responsibilities?
 1. Contacting the GM if they cannot make it to the session?
 2. Knowing the rules of the game?
4. How much chatter at the table is acceptable?
5. Rules for laptops
 1. Is web surfing allowable during the game?
 2. Is IMing other players allowed?
 3. May a player IM the GM?
6. What supplements are going to be allowed in the campaign? Any published book, a select list?
7. Rules for dice mishaps

1. What to do with leaning/cooked dice?
2. What to do with dice that fall off the table?
8. How much gore or violence is too much?
9. How comfortable is the group with suggestive and sexual plotlines or scenes in the campaign?
10. How realistic is the campaign? Will every action have a consequence, or will small things be passed over for the larger plots?
11. Does the party need to be a cohesive team, or is intra-party conflict allowed?
12. If the game is online, will there be an offline component?
13. Can players talk to each other about their characters' actions before they are taken? ("Joe, don't move there; move over here, so I can get the flank.")
14. Is the party good-aligned, evil, etc.?
15. Rules about talking at the table: anything you say your character is saying, must speak in first person as your character, etc.
16. How will rule disagreements be handled? (GM makes a table ruling to keep game going, but comes up with an official ruling later?)
17. Are there any house rules?
18. Can players RetCon their characters during the campaign?

Going on Offense – Take the Initiative to Make the Game More Fun

- Background Music
 - Soundtracks (One favorite soundtrack site: <http://www2.mikseri.net/artists/?id=48147>)
 - Free Music (<http://www.radiorivendell.com/>)
- Props
 - Parchment Documents
 - How to age paper with tea (<http://tinyurl.com/2176fj>)
 - Use paper ripping to make rough edges (<http://tinyurl.com/yvdy4k>)
 - Items for Specific NPCs (cane, goblet, hat)
- Using your Voice (<http://www.treasuretables.org/2007/06/your-voice-is-your-most-important-gming-tool>)
 - Develop voices or speech patterns for NPCs
 - Make sound effects
 - Speak softly to build tension and louder to build excitement
 - If you can't "do voices," use mannerisms, gestures or posture instead
- Make it Personal: Use characters' backgrounds to hit 'em where they live
- Take the Game on the Road: Once in a while, change venues. "I used to run an occasional Vampire session in a downtown coffee house on a Friday night, so that the players would get a feel for the environment and setting."
- Jazzing up Combat
 - Use tiles and color maps
 - Use counters and miniatures
 - Be the cheerleader: Get excited for the ups and downs of combat.
 - Recap the battlefield: At the end of a turn, give an overview of what just happened; be as descriptive as possible.

Mastering Your GM-Fu was run by Zachary Houghton, Vicki Potter, Martin Ralya and Phil Vecchione.

Zachary Houghton writes RPGBlog (currently under renovation); Vicki Potter is an editor for Tabletop Adventures (www.tabletopadventures.com); Martin Ralya runs Treasure Tables (www.treasuretables.org); Phil Vecchione runs DNaphil.com (www.dnaphil.com) and also designed the GM-Fu logo. The "Official d2" tokens were made by Dragonfire Laser Crafts (www.dragonfirelaser.com).

Thank you for attending "Mastering Your GM-Fu!" This seminar wouldn't have been possible without you, our fellow GMs, and we hope you learned some useful things and had a great time.