



A Tabletop Role-Playing Game System

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Printables



Ruleset PDF



<https://savingthrowsretreat.com/ealdsmyth/printables/>

<https://savingthrowsretreat.com/ealdsmyth/>

Eald Smyth



Character
Creation

Name	Age
Character Trait Goal	

Will

Fear

Lore

Fame

Fate



Dice Checks

- 1-Crit Failure**
- 2-5 Failure**
- 6-10 Mix Failure**
- 11-15 Mix Success**
- 16-19 Success**
- 20 Crit Success**



 Inventory

<p>Skill ○ Readied</p> <p>+1 Threshold</p> <p>+2 Ascension</p> <p>+3 Finality</p>	<p>Exceptional Item:</p> <p>+1 Threshold</p> <p>+2 Ascension</p> <p>+3 Finality</p>
<p>Skill ○ Readied</p> <p>+1 Threshold</p> <p>+2 Ascension</p> <p>+3 Finality</p>	<p>Exceptional Item:</p> <p>+1 Threshold</p> <p>+2 Ascension</p> <p>+3 Finality</p>
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StoryNotes: relationships / goals

StoryArc

<p>Background Quest</p> <p>Background Power</p>	<p>Threshold Quest</p> <p>Threshold Power</p>
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/ clues



Ascension Quest

Finality Quest

Ascension Power

Finality Power

Getting Started

Ealdsmyth steps away from this top-down, individual-centric design philosophy. Building simple Characters that grow through their Motivations and Skills allow the adventuring party to grow together at each Player's unique pace. There is no need to bring a written background to Ealdsmyth. Role-playing with the group as a storytelling activity refocuses internal conflict to the conflict in the World. This sets the group up for mutual success. One does not "win" a role-playing game. One grows and gains from real relationships based in mutuality and respect.

You should come to an Ealdsmyth game with as many Character ideas as you like. Play them as mechanisms that craft epic story, not a measure of your success or not as a Player.

It All Starts With a Name

The choice to make a new name for yourself or to use a variation of your real name is important. Role-play has psychological depth to it, and playing "yourself" has value, as does trying on someone new. Use the Skeleton to sketch the vision of your Character.

Age

Choose your Character's age, or roll for it: $4d10+10$

Hearts

Every Character begins with 6 Hearts. Hearts reflect a Character's ability to sustain physical and psychological damage. When a Character has zero Hearts, roll on the Destiny Table (page 34) and follow its direction.

Armor

Your Armor Score is determined by adding up the Armor levels of any Primary or Secondary Armor pieces in your inventory. Armor represents your ability to deflect, dodge, or evade incoming Violence.

Gold Pieces

There is one currency that we call Gold Pieces. All Characters begin with 3d6 Gold Pieces (GP).

Character Traits

Choose or roll for a single Character trait on the following page. Character traits affect how the Player role-plays the Character's choices and attitudes. When used in role-play, Character Traits may offer varying bonuses to your character. Talking to your Steward about how to use your Character Trait may advance Motivations or Skills. For instance, using a Character Trait in conjunction with a Motivation at the right time in the story may lead to greater narrative success that doesn't require a die roll to Level Up.

Choose one, or roll 1d20 for a
Character Trait from the following list:

1. Strategist. You always have a plan for everything.

2. Altruist. You're always eager to help a good cause.

3. Administrator. Your skills are unsurpassed when it comes to managing others.

4. Entertainer. You're the spontaneous life of the party.

5. Inventor. Your thirst for knowledge is unquenchable.

6. Revolutionary. You possess the ability to mesmerize those who hear you speak.

7. Helper. You're charismatic but always eager to please.

8. Literalist. You're confidently, unapologetically yourself.

9. Conqueror. If you can't find a way, you'll make one.

10. Comedian. Your free spirit always finds a reason to smile.

11. Tinkerer. You're a confident experimenter and master of tools.

12. Chameleon. You slip in and out of societal roles with ease.

13. Thinker. You cannot resist an intellectual challenge.

14. Statistician. You're a reliable, fact-minded scholar.

15. Artist. You're flexible, energetic, and eager to try something new.

16. Anti-Hero. You seek to run from a dark past, though it colors your worldview.

17. Idealist. Though you're quiet, you tirelessly inspire others.

18. Protector. You're dedicated to the mission of protecting the ones you love.

19. Thrill Seeker. You're very perceptive, enjoying life on the edge whenever possible.

20. Innocent. You embody all that is wholesome, though your inexperience makes you naïve.

Skill

Choose one, or roll 1d20 for one Skill from the following list. Turn to page 37 to learn more about Skills and how to upgrade, customize, and use them in a game session.

1. Friendship	11. Nature
2. Tinkering	12. Investigation
3. Climbing	13. Acting
4. Concealment	14. Reading
5. Crafting	15. Wrestling
6. Deception	16. Driving
7. Hunting	17. Sneaking
8. Escape	18. Tracking
9. Diagnosing	19. Languages
10. Tumbling	20. Drawing

Exceptional Items

Each Character may identify up to 3 Items that are important enough to be called “Exceptional.” Exceptional Items Level Up when used.

Story Notes

Story Notes are important facts and adventure hooks that help tie your Character to the Story, and they reflect an important Player decision that may (or may not) affect their development. Stewards and fellow Players identify Story Notes as the Game progresses.

Background & Background Quest

Choose or roll 1d20 for a Background from the list on page 16. A Character’s background informs a Background Quest, which could represent unresolved conflict or unmet goals, or it could continue the story of how your character “Got Here.” The Background quest grants a Power or Ability upon completion.

Threshold Quest

Choose a Threshold Quest for your character. Following the principles of *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell, your Character is beginning a journey toward their ultimate Fate. What is the personal quest that drove them to “cross the Threshold” into adventure? This Quest should be attainable and reasonable: “find a sword,” rather than “save the world.”

Backgrounds

1. Alchemist

11. Ranger

2. Artisan

12. Mercenary

3. Burglar

13. Merchant

4. Soldier

14. Sage

5. Construction

15. Outlaw

6. Acolyte

16. Performer

7. Gambler

17. Rebel

8. Explorer

18. Smuggler

9. Herbalist

19. Servant

10. Hunter

20. Sorcerer

Starting Inventory Tables

Players may roll 1d20 for one Item from each of the tables below, or choose the best option for their Character's story. Players may also choose an Item freely instead of rolling.

Toolkits

Choose or roll 1d20 for a toolkit. Then, decide what items might be found in it. Use your toolkit to define your Character's interests. Some suggestions:

1. Alchemy Kit	6. Mystic's Bag	11. Disguise Kit	16. Artist Kit
2. Specialist's Toolkit	7. Bag of Tricks	12. Healer's Kit	17. Scholar Kit
3. Lockpicks	8. Explorer's Kit	13. Diviner's Kit	18. Tinker's Kit
4. Arsonist Kit	9. Herbalist Toolkit	14. Demon Hunter Kit	19. Technology Toolkit
5. Carpentry Tools	10. Hunter Kit	15. Mapmaking Toolkit	20. Metalsmith Toolkit

Trinkets

Choose or roll 1d20 for a Trinket.

Trinkets may be made Exceptional, or they could provide just the right object to make a good story in the right moment. Some suggestions:

1. The Key	6. Jewelry	11. Musical Instrument	16. Religious Idol
2. Inscribed Bucket	7. Rune Stone	12. Old Image	17. Baked Goods
3. Unusual Mirror	8. Carved Glyph	13. Spyglass	18. Map to Somewhere
4. A Model of a Thing	9. Locked Chest	14. A Mysterious Liquid	19. Unopened Letter
5. Madman's Journal	10. Knapsack (+5 slots)	15. A Child's Toy	20. "Mythical" Creature Part

Hooks

Choose or roll 1d20 for a Hook.

Hooks are story prompts for Skills, Background or Threshold quests, or Character Traits. Share with your Steward your ideas for how a Hook can be used by your Character.

1. A Found Object	6. Something Ancient	11. An Oddity	16. A Local Legend
2. Your Mamaw's Inheritance	7. Something from another land	12. A Locket with a stranger's image	17. Your Family's Dark Secret
3. Something you stole a long time ago	8. Working Crystal Ball	13. Compass that points somewhere	18. A Note Begging for Help
4. A rumor	9. Enigmatic Totem	14. Your Geepaw's Thingamajig	19. A Fragment of Poetry
5. A stone from the sky	10. An Old Map	15. A Riddle	20. A Painful Memory

Weapons

Choose one or roll 1d20.

1-6	<p>Threshold Weapon. You figured it out on your own. (Knife, War Club, Sling, Brass Knuckles, etc.) (D6 Damage)</p>
7-12	<p>Ascended Weapon. Someone taught you the basics. (Short Sword, War Hammer, Small Firearm, Hunting Bow, etc.) (D8 Damage)</p>
13-18	<p>Finality Weapon. You have training on how to use this. (Long Sword, Polearm, Battle-Axe, Firearms, Crossbow, or any of the previous categories.) (D10 Damage, 2Handed)</p>
19-20	<p>A Unique Magic Item. See Steward. (Energy Sword, Vorpall Sword, Excalibur Junior, DL-44 Heavy Blaster, etc.) Damage Varies</p>

Bonus Items

You may reroll on a previous list or choose what fits you.

1-6	7-12	13-18	19-20
Trinket	Toolkit or Mundane Item	Armor or Weapon	A Unique Magic Item, see Steward.

Primary Armor

Choose one or roll 1d20. Add to your Armor Score.

1-6	No Armor. Instead, roll on the <i>Bonus Item Table</i> .
7-12	Threshold Armor, +1 Simple, maybe old, basic protection, but nothing fancy.
13-18	Ascended Armor, +2 Basic, standard issue for your genre, but well made.
19-20	Finality Armor, +3 High end, specialized armor, maybe a family heirloom. Unusual, special.

Secondary Armor

Choose one or roll 1d20. Add to your Armor Score.

1-6	No Armor. Instead, roll on the <i>Bonus Item Table</i> .
7-12	Threshold Armor, +1 A Shield, A Helmet, one specific piece.
13-18	Ascended Armor, +2 Compliments your primary Armor.
19-20	Finality Armor, +3 Specialized Armor, a prototype, or extraordinarily magical/scientific.

The cover art features a collage of characters. In the top left, a muscular, tattooed man with a large, spiked shoulder piece. In the center, a bearded man in a grey coat holding a revolver. Behind him, a wizard with long white hair and a blue robe, surrounded by a blue energy field. In the foreground, a woman with glowing blue eyes and a glowing blue arm. In the bottom left, a small, green, antlered creature. The background shows a cityscape and a large orange sun.

Eald Smyth

Ruleset

“People grow through experience if they meet life honestly and courageously. This is how character is built.”

Eleanor Roosevelt

“Good character is not formed in a week or a month. It is created little by little, day by day. Protracted and patient effort is needed to develop good character.”

Heraclitus

Introduction

The Mechanics chosen in the Ealdsmyth system each undermine a common trope in the Tabletop Role Playing Game community. As long-time players and “Masters” of the World’s Greatest Role Playing Game, we felt we could do better. Rules determined the Story, and arbiters of rules became the gatekeepers of the Narrative. Each of our core mechanics addresses one of the misuses and abuses of communal storytelling based on our 50 years of experience with gaming.

Before we get to that, however, we need to be clear so as not to make the same mistake as the systems we are trying to evolve beyond. In Ealdsmyth, the catalyst for play is the Steward. Stewards manage or look after the Player’s collective narratives. The Game World is a negotiation between the Steward and the Players. In other systems, the “Master” gives permission to ignore or re-interpret the rules system. But it is still the master, the one who is invested in the rules system in the first place, who grants agency to a player. This fundamental concept is produced by a culture built on

dominance and not mutuality. We want mutuality. We want negotiation.

We want Players to challenge “why” a thing is in the game so we can make it better together by wrestling with the mechanics. We also believe that this is why so many games being designed today are “rules light” and “player-centered.” We want to gather with other Players and play a game without the tension caused by one of us being the “master” of the narrative.

Game mechanics are the methods and rules agreed to by the players of a game to confine and define the spectrum of possibility in a game simulation. In Ealdsmyth, we have chosen philosophies and mechanics that put the Story first and the Character second, the Player third, and the Steward in support of them all.

Philosophy

The following design philosophies direct this game.

The Story of the World. The point of Ealdsmyth is to craft a Story with a capital S in a World we mutually create. Player choices affect the World, which is an active character in our Story. The Steward builds trust among players to engage their personal goals and the party’s goals within the World. We assume the party is a team that works to build the best Story possible for themselves and for the World they live in.

Player Choice. Moments of action and decision-making build both the Character and the Story. All

Players (both Stewards and Characters) should feel empowered in their play and freedom to produce an effect and take responsibility for their actions within the Story. We assume Players are heroes, and that all actions have realistic consequences.

Motivations are not inherently good or evil. There is not a “correct” choice in this game. A Player’s choice informs the story based on their motivation, not a universal alignment assigned at “birth.”

Classless Characters. Skills define what a character can do. Equipment defines how a character can do it. The more you play and succeed, the better you become. Organic growth is based on gameplay and choices more than a skill tree or prescribed route.

The Steward. There is no space for a top-down, Game Master heirarchy in Ealdsmyth. Rather, the Steward of the Story manages the Story and their player’s care. Stewards operate sometimes for the player’s benefit, and sometimes for the World’s benefit, but always for the Story’s benefit.

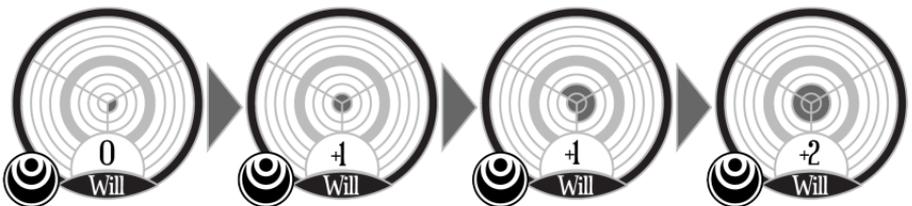
Brave Space. In today’s world, “safe space” is impossible to guarantee. But we strive to create Brave Space instead. In brave space, it is okay to take risks, be vulnerable, show emotion, and make mistakes. Brave space requiries authenticity, vulnerability, and bravery.

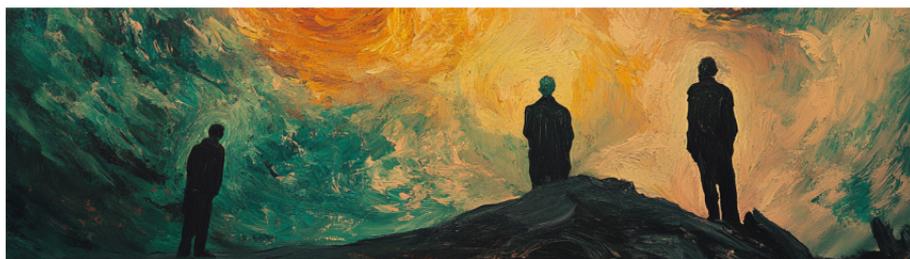
Mechanics

Progress Wheels

In real life, the more we practice something, the better we get. In most games, this is a universal quality known as experience. But we want to give a player more choice over what they develop. Anything of consequence is assigned a wheel. Wheels break the progression of time, experience, challenge, and ascension of Character development into smaller segments that are achieved by agreement among the table. When a Character succeeds on a dice roll or attempts something in the story that is particularly meaningful, they fill a segment of the relevant Wheel. Wheels make the evolution of a character a cyclical spiral, not a linear progression.

If a player wants to be the best archer the land has ever seen, a wheel lets them focus on that and nothing else. There are Wheels for Motivations, Skills, and Exceptional Items.





Modifiers, not equations, support your dice rolls.

Leveling Up any Motivation changes the Motivation's modifier. *Example:* Leveling Up a sword's construction and quality increases its modifier from 0 to +1. When this sword is used so that its construction and quality are diminished, its modifier decreases from +1 to 0.

We did not want any arcane equations or tables to refer to as one Levels Up. Once the Wheel is full, it produces a cumulative +1 modifier that is added to the current modifier of the Motivation, Skill, Item, or Power. The more we successfully use a mechanic, the better we get.

D20 Dice Checks represent a spectrum of possibilities of success and failure. This is universal and not determined by an author, expert, or master.

1 Critical Failure

2-5 Failure

6-10 Mixed Failure

11-15 Mixed Success

16-19 Success

20 Critical Success

There are various ways to use dice in Ealdsmyth:

Will: Roll (d20 plus Modifier) to determine the outcome of your immediate goal within your current situation and scenario.

Fear: Roll (d20 plus Modifier) to determine if you can overcome or are subject to your character's Fear.

Lore: Roll (d20 plus Modifier) to determine if your knowledge of or experiences in the World informs the Story in this moment.

Fame: Roll (d20 plus Modifier) to determine how the world responds to your actions.

Fate: Roll (d20 plus Modifier) to determine if your actions change the course of your Character's destiny.

Skill: Roll (d20 plus Modifier) to determine a successful use of your Skill.

Item: Roll (d20 plus Modifier) to determine a successful use of an Exceptional Item.

Violence: Roll the appropriate die assigned to your weapon/magic to inflict violence upon the World.

Motivated Skill/Item/Violence: Add a d20 to your Skill/Item/Violence Check to determine *how* motivated the action is. Fearful Violence with a knife would roll a d20 and a d6, for example. This allows players more chances to Level Up Motivations and other Mechanics.

Critical Success and Failures

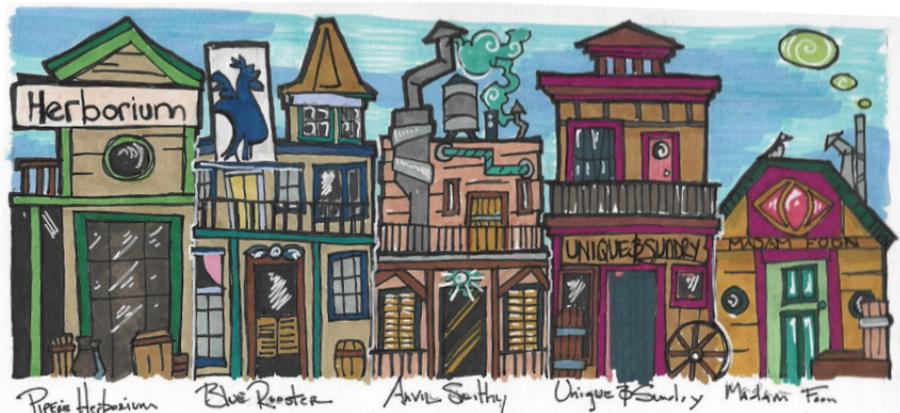
A "Critical" roll occurs when a player rolls the highest or lowest value on the die. (Examples: a 1 or a 20 on a d20, a 1 or 4 on a d4) When this happens, the Player tells the tale of their Critical Failure or Success. The Steward responds to a Critical with, "Tell me the story of..."

Group Dice Checks

When players help each other with an action that requires a Dice Check, they succeed or fail together. (Example: Two players are trying to convince a wizard to accept their case. One rolls a 5 [failure] on their Fear check to overcome their fear of talking to a wizard. The other rolls a 12 [success] on their Lore check to remember information that could convince the Wizard to help them. In this case, the Lore check convinces the wizard to take the case, and both players succeed. One fills one segment of their Fear Wheel, and the other fills one segment of their Lore Wheel.)

Motivations

Motivations are how your character interacts with the World and, therefore, the story. We use five: Will, Fame, Fear, Lore, and Fate.



WILL

“Wanting something is not enough. You must hunger for it. Your motivation must be absolutely compelling in order to overcome the obstacles that will invariably come your way.”

Les Brown



Will is the force of action that imposes your Character's goals upon the world at large through pure effort or power. Players who Level Up Will want their Character to achieve their goals.

Filling one Wheel ring Levels Up Will with a cumulative +1 modifier.

Examples: Wrestling an adversary to the ground, solving a complex puzzle, climbing a wall, striking an opponent.

FEAR

“We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light.”

Plato

Fear is the force of action that embodies your character's sense of self-preservation. Fear is not a sign of weakness. Fear is a means of survival. Fear can lead one to behavior that is erratic or self-serving. Players who Level Up Fear make keen sacrifices to avoid undesirable consequences.

Filling one Wheel ring will Level Up Fear with a cumulative +1 modifier. Examples: A character overcomes their fear of horses to mount upon one and escape.



LORE

“People do not seem to realize that their opinion of the world is also a confession of character.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson



Lore is the summation of the stories and mythologies your Character tells themselves about the World. It is a measure of how well they think and know about the World. Players who Level

Up Lore do so to broaden their worldview or to better understand the Lore of the world. Filling one Wheel ring Levels Up Lore with a cumulative +1 modifier. Examples: A character deciphers ancient text because of its similarities to a local temple’s carvings, and tells the story of a lost tribe that lived in these parts.

FAME

*“The martyr cannot be dishonored.
Every lash inflicted is a tongue of fame;
every prison a more illustrious abode.”*

Ralph Waldo Emerson



Fame is what the World knows and thinks about your Character. Fame

can be advantageous or detrimental when Leveled Up, depending on the Player’s causal agency. Players who Level Up Fame want to intensify their reputation to alter how the world responds to them. Filling one Wheel ring levels up Fame with a cumulative +1 modifier.

Examples: A Character wants information from a tavern owner. Their higher fame modifier makes gaining the tavern owner's trust easier because the tavern owner might have heard a positive (or intimidating) story about the character.

FATE

"Remember upon the conduct of each depends the fate of all."

Alexander the Great



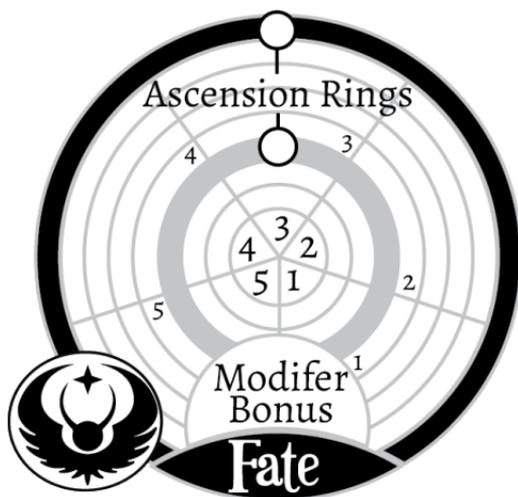
Fate is the Story's power to guide your Character to their ultimate destiny. Players who level up Fate throw caution to the wind and trust that everything will fall into place as it should in the World. They trust the World's, and their Steward's, response to their destiny. Filling one Wheel ring levels up Fate with a Boon. The Steward and the Player negotiate the best boon for the Character. Examples of Boons (Choose or roll 1d4):

- 1.** New Skill or Exceptional Item
- 2.** Complete a Story Arc quest that has proven to be difficult.
- 2.** A +1 modifier to add to any Motivation, Skill, or Item
- 4.** Double your Heart total.

Boons are always negotiable. What does your Character need to more completely live into their Destiny?

Ascending a Motivation.

At the fulfillment of the fifth (grey ring) and tenth (black ring) ring of a Motivation Wheel, a Character Ascends the Motivation. The Steward and the Player negotiate the best Ascension for the Motivation. For example: On completion of their fifth ring, a player Ascends their Will Motivation. They talk with their Steward, and together decide that the Character now has one automatic success on a Will check, once per game session to show how determined they are.



Destiny

When we reach zero Hearts, we are not immediately declared deceased, nor do we begin a series of Dice Checks to determine what happens to us. In real life, we have no idea what happens to us, and the Destiny Table is an attempt to reflect that. Roll on the table to determine what outcome, usually neither “good” nor “bad,” occurs when you reach a point of exhaustion, unconsciousness, or inability to continue as you had before.

Destiny Table

1. Lasting Scar: You will recover in one hour, but you have been scarred. Roll 1d6 for scar location: 1: Neck, 2: Hands, 3: Eye, 4: Chest, 5: Legs, 6: Ear.

2. Haunted: You will recover in one hour, but the experience has caused lasting trauma. Describe this as a Story Note that will affect your Character in the future.

3. Knocked Sense: You will recover in one hour, but something has changed in you: Roll 1d4, add a +1 Modifier to:
1: WILL | 2: FEAR | 3: LORE | 4: FAME

4. Miraculous: You have died, but some hidden part of your psyche is enlightened or revealed. Return your Hearts to maximum, and discuss with your Steward what has changed.

5. The Sight: Set a 20 minute timer. Role Play your Character being able to see the Unseen, the Unknown, the Other, spiritual, scientific, metaphysical, supernatural world.

6. Stunned: Set a 20 minute timer. Role Play your Character as shell-shocked, distant, and foggy-brained.

7. Disabled: Set a 20 minute timer. Choose sight or sound. You cannot use this sense.

8. Ghosted: You have died. But your Spirit may continue playing and affect the world.

9. Mortal Wound: You are incapacitated and out of action. You die in one hour unless your wound is tended by a healer.

10. Sundered: An appendage is torn off, crippled or rendered useless. Roll 1d6:
1-2: a finger. 3: a hand. 4: an arm. 5: a foot. 6: a leg. Discuss with your Steward how this affects gameplay.

11. Doomed: Somehow you survived. The next time you roll on this table, roll 1d4 instead of 1d12.

12. Death: You have died. Tell us the story of your Character's Death.

Inventory

Characters have an arrangement of inventory slots. Most items take up one slot, while small items can be bundled together in Kits that narratively make sense. Slots are abstract and can be rearranged. Bulky items take up two slots and are typically two-handed (2H) or awkward to carry. There are always creative ways to expand inventory in the game: chests stowed in safe places, carts purchased in-game, or leaving items with trusted NPCs, for example.

Exhaustion

How to become Exhausted:

1. Using Magic Items
2. Being deprived of a crucial need (such as food or rest) for more than a day.
3. Narrative situations. Example: hiking through wetlands, climbing, running for extended periods, etc.

When Exhausted: Write “Exhausted” to an Inventory slot. Exhaustion occupies one slot and lasts until you are able to recuperate (such as a full night’s rest in a safe spot). If you have no Inventory slots available to hold Exhaustion, you become incapacitated, your Hearts fall to zero, and you must roll on the Destiny Table.

Exceptional Items

You may set apart up to three Exceptional Items that are unique to your Character. Each time your Character succeeds on an Item Check, a segment of the

Exceptional Item's Wheel is filled. If the Item is a weapon, a Violence Dice Check will also fill an Item's Wheel. The decision to make an item Exceptional is permanent. You may only carry three Exceptional Items at any time. There are three levels of proficiency for every Item:

1. Threshold: an ability that is mundane and everyday.

(+1 Modifier to Dice Checks pertaining to this Item)

2. Ascension: an ability or power that has a single magical or supernatural effect.

(+2 Modifier to Dice Checks pertaining to this Item)

3. Finality: Story-altering power, but limited use.

(+3 Modifier to Dice Checks pertaining to this Item)

Exceptional Item:

+1	Threshold
+2	Ascension
+3	Finality

Skills

Skills are any specialization that your Character has proficiency in. Players begin with one known Skill (Choose or roll on the Skills table). Players may describe a known Skill however they wish.

Acquiring New Skills

Players begin play with three empty Skill Slots. Skills may be added to or dropped from existing Skill Slots. Players can acquire additional empty Skill Slots:

- as a Fate Boon
- as a Story Arc Rewards

Players may claim a new skill in an empty Skill Slot in the following ways:

- Between game sessions, learn from another player with a greater proficiency in the Skill.
- Combine existing Skills into a new Skill, eliminating the pre-existing Skills.
- Acquire a new Skill as a result of a successful Motivation Dice Check in a Game Session, with the support of the Character's team and Steward.

Leveling Up Skills

There are three levels of proficiency for every Skill:

1. Threshold: an ability that is mundane and everyday.

(+1 Modifier to Dice Checks pertaining to this Skill)

2. Ascension: an ability or power that has magical effects.

(+2 Modifier to Dice Checks pertaining to this Skill)

3. Finality: Story altering power, but limited use.

(+3 Modifier to Dice Checks pertaining to this Skill)

Each successful Dice Check using the Skill fills a segment of the Skill's next level Wheel. After three

successful uses of the Skill, the Threshold ability becomes an Ascension Power, and it receives a +2 modifier to future Dice Checks with the Skill. After three successful uses of the Ascension Power, the Character reaches Finality in the Skill, and receives a +3 modifier and a power that can alter the Story.

Example: Greg’s “Drawing” Skill adds “Cartography” as an Ascension, allowing his Character to see what the Steward imagines of the local area when Greg Succeeds on a Skill Check. When Greg reaches Finality, he is able, once per session, to draw a map of the area Near him and the real world shifts to match his drawn world.

Ready Skills

You may possess and upgrade as many Skills as you like, but you may only take three Readied Skills into your game session.

Skill	<input type="radio"/> Readied
+1	Threshold
+2	Ascension
+3	Finality

Magic

In most RPG systems, magic is a game mechanic that grants Players the ability to bend reality through their Characters. In Master Hierarchies, this dynamic sets up the Player to make changes to the world against their Game Master. We felt that this was a frustrating relationship and have attempted to form a magic system that:

1. Is available to all Players, regardless of background or specialization.
2. Does not create conflict or tension between the player and Steward.
3. Is fully customizable and limited only by what is realistic within the World.
4. Can grow organically with the Character's Story Arc, not responding to independent Leveling Up.

Magic in Ealdsmyth is designed to empower and motivate players. Magic represents the accumulation of power from a supernatural source and does not have moral value. As such, the Ealdsmyth magic system is unique in that it levels with Characters organically without using lists of spells that affect game mechanics.

To do this, we rely heavily on the work of Joseph Campbell and the monomyth. Joseph Campbell's "*The Hero's Journey*" is a pattern that appears in many narratives and is characterized by a protagonist embarking on an adventure, facing and overcoming

crises, and then returning transformed. In Ealdsmyth, we use three steps of the Hero's Journey to guide magical progression.

Threshold

A hero crosses the Threshold by answering the call to adventure. Threshold abilities and powers are simple, mundane, and for beginners.

Ascension

The Ascension is the point in the Hero's Journey where the Character is reborn and transformed with newfound strength or resolve. Through Ascension experiences, the hero has gained a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them.

Finality

The Finality represents a hero's journey back into their previous life, facing a final challenge along the way. The Hero's final act is bringing wisdom that benefits their community. Finality is not easy, as the hero must integrate their transformed self into their previous life. Some heroes might experience the end of life as they know it. Finality represents the end of the Hero's Journey.

The Concepts of Threshold, Ascension, and Finality are woven into Ealdsmyth's Skill, Exceptional Item, and Story Arc mechanics, offering Players three unique

ways to manifest magical abilities. This is a way to bring into Ealdsmyth spells and abilities from other TTRPG systems in order to build your singularly unique Character.



Magic: Skills

When a Character gains a Skill, they gain a Threshold simultaneously. Thresholds are simple, mundane powers that help the character by adding +1 to rolls. When a Character Succeeds three times with a Threshold, their Skill Levels Up into an Ascension, which is a single magical or supernatural effect within the larger category of the Skill itself, offering +2 to Skill Dice Checks. Three successful uses of the Ascension, and the Skill gains a Finality. This is the ultimate expression of the Skill, gives +3 to Skill Dice Checks, and is powerful enough that it should only be used once per gaming session. This progression is an unlocking of Ascension and Finality, not a replacement. When a Skill is Leveled Up to Finality, both Ascension and Threshold abilities are also available for use in a game session within reason. An example of magic, using the Nature Skill:

Threshold: Know Nature. Allows the Character to identify plants, animals, geology, and other elements of nature.

Ascension: One with Nature. Allows the Character to communicate with and control aspects of Nature.

Finality: Nature's Champion. The Character is most comfortable in Nature and can speak freely with animals, plants, and Nature Spirits (whatever that means in your World). The Character can be given quests, secrets, and arcane knowledge about the natural world not accessible to others.

Magic: Exceptional Items

When a Character designates an item as an Exceptional Item, they open up the item's ability to Level Up and gain magical abilities. The Threshold is simple and mundane and offers +1 to Dice Checks using the item. This applies to Violence Checks using weapons, and Armor Scores for Primary and Secondary Armor. After three successful uses of the Threshold, an Ascension is identified and adds a layer of magical ability to the item along with +2 to Dice Checks. Three successful uses of Ascension Levels Up the Exceptional Item to its Finality, which is the ultimate expression of the item's power. This power can be magical or supernatural in nature.

An example of Exceptional Item magic, using a Dagger:

Threshold: Monster Alert. The dagger glows when it is Near or Far from Goblins.

Ascension: Molten. The dagger glows red-hot when it touches metal and can melt other metals.

Finality: Sentience. The dagger's name is Scorch, and it now has a history, knowledge, and goals.

Magic: Story Arc

When a Character is created, a Background and Threshold Quest are identified to begin the Character's Story Arc. The Story Arc represents the scope and sequence of the Character's life and affect on the world as their Story unfolds.

The Threshold Quest should be:

1. Related to the Background.
2. Simple enough to accomplish within a few game sessions.
3. Related to the Character's reason for crossing the Threshold and choosing a life of Adventure.

When the Threshold Quest is achieved, the Character unlocks a Threshold power or ability. The Threshold is completely negotiable and can be any sort of magical expression that makes sense to an entry-level Character. Simultaneously, or soon after, the Player identifies an Ascension Quest, which represents the point at which the Character has Ascended to a new strength or resolve.

On completion of the Ascension Quest, the process repeats, unlocking an Ascension power and a Finality Quest. The Finality Quest represents the Character's penultimate fate: acquiring the magic sword to defeat the Big Bad Evil Guy or learning the magic necessary to save the world.

Once the Finality Quest is accomplished, the character gains Finality, which is a quintessential power or ability

necessary to meet the Character's ultimate fate. Finalities are typically used only once in the Story Arc, and they represent the end of the Character's Story (or maybe the end of their life if it is appropriate.)

Magic: Consumable Magic Items

At some point in the Story, it makes sense for Characters to acquire simple magic items that are not exceptional. Potions, wands, scrolls, baubles, and any other dream of the Steward and Players fall into this category. Consumable Magic Items may be loot, plunder in ancient tombs, or the MacGuffin needed to complete a quest. Consumable Magic Items have a single use and cause the Character to suffer one Exhaustion after using. The item is typically destroyed in use. The options for what Consumable Magic Items can do are infinite.

Magic: Recipes

Recipes are mini-quests that are very expensive and hard to find in the world. Stewards give recipes as an answer to interesting, unique, or out-of-the-box ideas that do not fit other categories. If you can think of it, you can craft it. The general equation for a Recipe is:

A Thing + A Skilled Master + A Wild Card

Violence

In Ealdsmyth, we are concerned about the results that come from choosing Violence. Choosing Violence could mean throwing a marble at your buddy to get his attention, or it could be aiming your firearm at a

creature of the World. Violence is physical, verbal, magical, spiritual, or emotional. Hitting someone with a rock (d4) does damage similar to insulting someone's character (also d4).

Turns

Turns are organized by the order of Players around the table in a clockwise direction, beginning at the Steward's immediate left. Opponents who surprise Characters take their turn first (The Turn begins with the Steward).

Characters who surprise opponents take their turns first (Steward goes last). In contested situations, the table decides together which side goes first.

Movement

Close. You are Close to an object or Character of the World when you are within or near arm's reach to it. When you are Close, you may interact freely with the object or character. (Attack, use, speak to, etc.) When you do not move, two actions can be taken. (Examples: load and fire a firearm, or break the leg off a chair and attack a Close enemy)

Near. Movement relatively "Near" you takes half a turn. This is not a hard and fast calculation. In Ealdsmyth, we do not like counting squares or coming up five feet short of a goal. "Near" is a negotiation with your Steward.

Far. Two Near moves would equal a Far move. When

you move a Far distance, you do not have time or energy to make an Action, and your turn is over. Far moves may also include climbing, swimming, navigating rough terrain, etc.

Action Economy

Examples of Actions: Activating a mundane item, attacking, reloading a firearm, setting a trap, or some other reasonable activity.

On their turn, a Character may:

- Move Near and take one Action
- Move Far and take no Actions
- Not move and take two Actions.

Each round, Players declare what their Characters are doing before any dice are rolled. If a character's Action affects the story, a Motivation Check is rolled.

Each round a player may also engage in a minor action or "Free Action." A Free Action is decided by the Steward. It is important to the moment, but not enough to warrant taking an Action away from the Action Economy.

Armor

Before calculating damage to Hearts, subtract the target's Armor value from the result of doing Violence. Worn or carried armor provides a bonus defense (e.g. +1 Armor), but only while the item is held or worn.

Attacks

Step One: The attacker rolls their Weapon Die as shown in this table:

d4	Hands, Rocks, Clubs, Improvised Weapons, Insults
d6	Long Knives, War Clubs, Pistols, Dynamite (Area of Effect)
d8	Long Swords, Hunting/Bearded Axes, Hunting Bows, Rifles
d10	Polearms, Sledges, Shotguns, Psychic Attacks, Heavy Crossbows, Sniper Rifles
d12	Magical Attacks

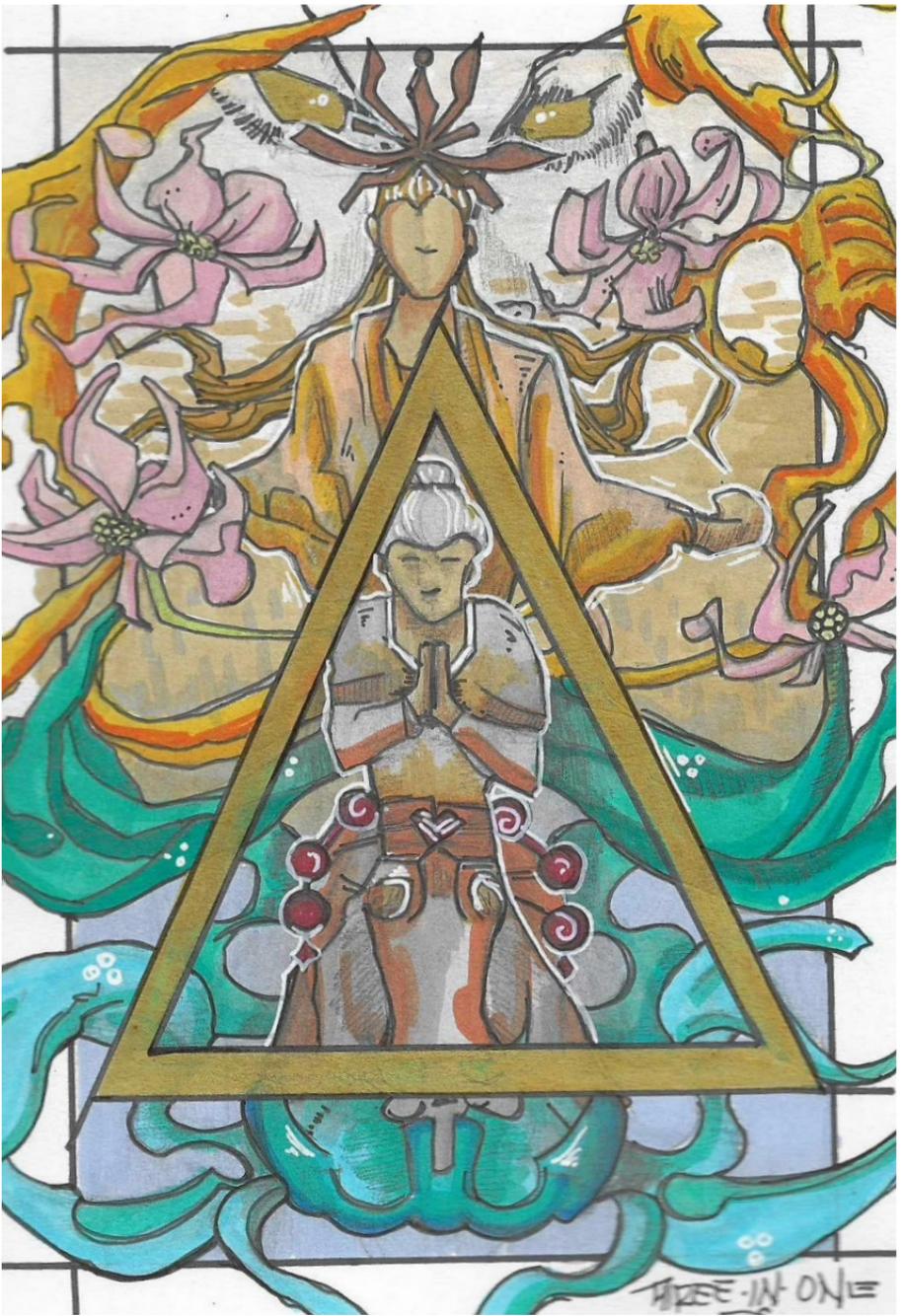
Step Two: Add Modifiers to your Weapon Die roll from buffs or Exceptional Items, etc. The Steward could suggest adding a Motivation Modifier in an appropriate narrative situation as well.

Step Three: Subtract the target's Armor score.

Step Four: Deal the remaining total to your opponent's Heart total. If the target's Heart total reaches or exceeds zero, deal with the consequences of your actions. If necessary, the Steward will roll on a Creature Destiny Table to determine the outcome.

Healing

Resting for an hour in-game restores all lost Hearts, but it leaves the party exposed to danger. Stewards may roll on a random events chart to determine the result of resting. Wounds and conditions that occur from rolling on the Destiny Table may require in-game, magical, or narrative elements to heal.



Steward Training

Safeguarding Gaming

Roger Speer

The first rule of safeguarding is always to “Do no harm.” Harm is “deliberately inflicting physical injury.” We will add “emotional injury” to this definition. We are responsible for the emotional and physical safety of our Players.

Identifying an Incident

The paramount attitude of safeguarding is awareness. We are on the lookout for incidents. An incident is an event, condition, or situation that does one or more of the following:

- Risks members’ emotional and or physical safety
- Attracts negative attention or reputation to the community
- Impairs the operation of a community
- Disrupts regularly scheduled activity

Types of Incidents

When you are in a gaming environment, it is surprising how regularly incidents arise, particularly with youth and young adults. Arguments, challenges to rules, challenges to the arbiter of the rules, and emotional outbursts at unexpected events in the game are normal occurrences. Even among adults, frustration and negotiation are common. When a risk, negative attraction, impairment, or disruption occurs in the community, the next step is to define what kind of

incident it is. Most safety protocols in the workplace identify the following spectrum:

- 1. A Traumatic Event** is physical and/or emotional harm that threatens life as we know it.
- 2. An Adverse Effect** is the result of something done or left undone that causes harm. Although harm is not caused directly, it has happened nonetheless.
- 3. A Near Miss** is an incident in which trauma does not occur, but the possibility of trauma was present and therefore needs to be brought to the community's attention.
- 4. A Red Flag** is a situation in which no Traumatic Events, Adverse Effects, or Near Misses were experienced, but the potential for a possible incident is present.

Gaming events naturally encourage transient players and new faces. In my experience, I did not see many of the same participants twice in a row. Keeping a written record of incidents will help identify individuals who display behaviors that require a caring response. Writing the incident up on the day it occurs will free up bandwidth for other tasks. Anytime you find yourself in an incident at your game, you should write it up that day.

Tools

Multiple tools may help prevent and respond to incidents. The following list is the top half dozen that helped when running DnD, game nights, and online gaming sessions.

1. Set Policies before you start, and edit often. It's amazing how few communities maintain active policies. One definition I learned of policies was "standards learned the hard way." Creating and maintaining a central document of policies is a great tool to use in forming community covenants and codes of conduct when gaming in a community.

2. Create a Covenant and/or Code of Conduct. A covenant is a behavior agreement that is signed or adhered to upon entrance to a community. Punitive responses to covenantal breaks or misconduct are usually not helpful in today's society. Covenants are effective in steering conversations about behaviors, beliefs, and reconciliation when needed.

3. Establish a communications matrix. Set standards for safe communication within the community. One of the most popular safe communication standards in the gaming culture is an X-card. Every player has a card with a big letter X on it. At any point during the game if something someone is doing makes them uncomfortable; or it triggers a negative emotion, a trauma response, or any negative response, the person holds up their X-card and the group takes a break. Check in with the person privately and then follow the incident protocol.

4. You all live in a fishbowl. The best tool to communicate to all participants and leaders is the following mantra: *Avoid even the appearance of*

impropriety. This is similar to the idea of not doing anything that your fairy grandma would not approve of and applies to all levels of participants in a community. After some time with the intentional use of these practices, the community becomes self-regulating. Players look out for each other's emotional and physical safety, and the Gaming Covenant is upheld by all people equally.

5. Respond in the moment. There can be no learning if the debrief of an incident happens so far from the event that details are lost. It is OK to stop the game and respond to behavior at any point. This way, the community can own behavior, learn the belief that drives the behavior, respond with kindness and compassion, set new standards or remind of existing ones, and reconcile. This must be a response to the incident, not a response that occurs later in the week or in another space. Any hurt that is done in the minute needs to be honored, addressed, and shown to the group. The group needs to know that respect and reconciliation are foundational practices for your community. I cannot stress this enough. Online gaming is brutal. Playground play is brutal. However, it is only brutal because there is not a leader present who can address the harmful behavior and model a mature, structured response to an incident at the moment. Be vigilant, and respond in the moment.

6. Teachable moments should be clarifying, not

punitive. Our singularly greatest adversary when safeguarding is embarrassment. When something is said or done that causes harm to another person, a typical emotional response is for both parties to feel embarrassed, humiliated, guilty, or shamed. A punitive response typically exacerbates these negative emotions. A clarifying response managed with compassion and understanding can lead to positive formation and character development.

7. Brave Space vs Safe Space. It is impossible to promise a safe space in today's society because we as leaders cannot promise that the behavior of everyone in the room will be safe. Nor do we know what "safe" means to everyone. Most times, we don't know an environment is not safe until we are exposed to it. Every time we try to set up a safe space, the question must always be "Safe for whom?" There will always be someone, regardless of our best intentions, who will not feel 100% safe 100% of the time in our spaces.

However, brave spaces allow vulnerability, growth, and mutual respect to be modeled. Brave spaces allow us to respond to incidents in ways that empower growth from every person. Safeguarding is not about being on guard. Safeguarding is about being flexible and honest with big emotions and managing disruptive behavior.



Communal Storytelling vs Egoistic Railroading

Roger Speer

What makes a Good story?

We are hardwired for storytelling. It is human nature to hear, respond to, and present our stories as part of culture, identity, and religion. Good stories all have some elements in common. Here are a few:

There is one message. The moral of the story is not a trope. It is a necessity. Every story, from *The Lord of the Rings* to The Gospel of Luke, has a message that can be summed in a single sentence and appreciated by its audience. When designing encounters or a multi-session campaign, begin with the one-sentence message called the meta-narrative. Make it personal. Your memories and life experiences are your greatest asset to good storytelling. Anything that illustrates struggles you've experienced, failures felt, triumphs celebrated, love and loss, and barriers overcome makes your story authentic and compelling. You have to be willing to show your vulnerability. Good fiction has threads of reality woven through it, and the most moving stories of the human experience are the ones that resonate with our personal and uniquely lived experiences. While your consumers cannot resonate with the entirety of your story, they will resonate with something of it. But whenever possible, choose your

story rather than imagine telling someone else's. And if you do tell someone else's story, then make sure you spend enough time with them to collect data: the who, what, when, where, and why of the story. This way, your fiction is woven into and through their lived experiences.

You are not the hero of the meta-narrative. The key to communal storytelling's effectiveness is inclusion. When we bring others into a narrative as heroes, they invest and find moments of joy from the engagement. When you make yourself the hero, or a god, you eliminate the opportunity for others to be the hero with you. Remove yourself from the meta-narrative, and make room for the Other. This is why we refer to the "Game Manager" as a Steward, not a Master. Stewards manage, safeguard, and nurture the story that belongs to the table at large, to all players. Moving away from the language of supremacy and control is good practice in every situation today.

Know the audience. Generational theory, cultural theory, cultural history, local folklore, and empathetic listening are paramount to presenting stories that open hearts and care for others. How you play is how you live. This means that role-playing is a vital component of the formation and development of human identity. When we tap into the struggle, heartache, longing, and hope of our audience, we allow them, through

our stories, to "practice" a response to real-life stimuli and situations. We then make space for the audience to come together and create a new story in the role-playing imagination, which then becomes real to the audience in ways that were impossible before our games.

Knowing your audience is vital to change-making and healing both generational wounds and modern ones.

How do we tell stories as a community?

Every time we attempt to tell a story, we call together a community. Storytelling presumes a community of listeners who recognize the experience being relayed, or who can imagine themselves in the story being told. Storytelling is a call-and-response method in which the storyteller calls the community, and then the community responds in resonance, becoming "we" from the experience. Then, "we" respond in kind, letting go of ego and individuality to stimulate the unique development of a worldview in response to the story.

Meaning is made between people. We make meaning when we approach the Other—whether that is another person, place, or viewpoint—and the storyteller, the listener, and the tale create a mental model that makes sense of the world. We create a mental model when we distill an idea, belief, or concept into its simplest understandable form according to our unique experience. Building a mental model then embeds a

memory of the experience within us, and we become one with narrative storytelling so much that it now has meaning.

There are some underlying concepts to understand to make communal storytelling more effective. The first is causal agency. Causal agency is a power we use to take meaningful actions to see the results of our choices. It is another way of describing free will. We possess the freedom to make causes happen in our universe. In response, the universe answers with an effect that affects our perceptions of the universe in reality.

This is known as effectance. The more causal agency we facilitate in our storytelling, the more effectance occurs, and the more the players engage in and take ownership of the story. The simplest form of this is the old Mad Libs books in which the reader makes the story with random word choices. In our case, we are giving the readers a fully informed universe in which to practice causal agency. And we all communally respond to the effectance of each Player's choice.

Communal storytelling comes in two forms: embedded narratives and emergent narratives. Think of embedded narratives as the story I am telling you. It is embedded in this space and time, and I have relayed the emotions and environment that affect my embedded narrative. It is the structure in which the player interacts with the universe I as the storyteller am creating. I then invite the player to engage the embedded narrative in their own way, make a

mental model of it, and then respond with their own experience and memory to create the next step of the embedded narrative. A new narrative emerges when “I” becomes “we.” When “I” becomes “we,” the player is rewarded. Their experience is validated, valued, and incorporated into the communal story. They then become invested in the story’s outcome in ways they could not have before an emergent narrative replaced an embedded one.

How you play is how you live.

Role-playing a character in a narrative affects human identity exploration, experimentation, and formation. This means that when we make room for the Other to engage with our embedded narrative to instigate a new emergent narrative, we have the opportunity to help them evolve into the next best version of themselves. The earlier we include the Other in the story, the more motivation they have in the universe we are creating. This also ultimately results in a highly positive reaction to our story because the Other can discern and judge their involvement with the story, or they can say “This isn’t for me,” and move on. This is vitally important when it comes to building community and providing care for our players. The job of the Game Steward is to provide a non-anxious, unconditionally positive regard to the person being cared for. Without anxiety, the story becomes a sandbox without agenda or needs implanting on it, which in turn means that each player

can uniquely respond to the narrative in the way THEY need to. Unconditional positive regard means that Stewards are oriented to the Other's work to evolve into the best version of themselves. This priority of placing the Player above the Steward in terms of care is how communal storytelling and gaming become a healing moment: the Steward puts aside their power for the sake of uplifting, listening to, and making important the needs of the player.

The Dangers of the Railroad, or Egoistic Game Management

When crafted with care, stories are the work of Spirit that surrounds, penetrates, and binds all living things together.

Stories are what unite our shared human experience. Stories can heal. When we share in communal storytelling, we move beyond our limited point of view into another person's lived experience and memory. This is why the work of the Steward, the one who cares for those in their games, is so vital today.

This is also why "railroading" is so dangerous when used as a primary tactic for those who run Role Playing Games, tabletop board games, and online gaming sessions. Justin Alexander, author of *So You Want to be a Game Master?* describes railroading as when the [Game Master] negates a player's choice [without their knowing it] to enforce a preconceived outcome [of the Game Master's unique design]. Railroading is not necessarily a dirty word in the gaming world.

When you buy a pre-written Adventure for DnD from a publisher, you are playing a railroaded scenario written by professional game designers. Railroading becomes destructive when the person running the game railroads from only their perspective and lived experiences. There is no causal agency and no emergent narrative. In railroaded games, the outcome is only the embedded narrative, and effectance is a product of the one running the game, not the ones playing it. The reason for framing what we do as “care” is that in these scenarios, where a disinhibition effect is in play, stories require vulnerability, and truth-telling leads to personal development. We are not managing a game. We are caretaking the souls of the Other. Our players are not pawns in our world, but people who are hungry for community, authentic relationships, empathy, compassion, and kindness. When I approach gaming in a way that does not meet the needs of my players, the only other option is that the players begin meeting my needs. The Steward is a servant leader to the gaming community.

There is a difference between what we call “rules lawyers” and railroading. Rules lawyers are folks who have managed, by virtue of some superpower, to memorize hundreds of pages of rulebooks and are literal fountains of information about the game. They know the intricacies of the rules of your favorite board game and will point out every discrepancy made while playing it. A rules lawyer will argue the

difference between rules as they were written and rules as intended. A railroader, on the other hand, will use their knowledge of the rules to control the emergent narrative and safeguard their embedded narrative, even at the cost of players' causal agency.

The egoistic game manager, consciously or not, is concerned with the embedded story told from their singular point of view. But what happens if that point of view is clouded by racism, misogyny, phobias, generational wounds, or unhealed trauma? The players then live in that world with the one running the game, a world at least tainted by, or at worst governed by, the very elements that may have caused harm to the game manager in the first place.

Conclusion

Making a good story is simple, but it is hard. The framework is clear and concise, but the methodology requires authenticity, vulnerability, and brave space. We tell stories communally by calling players together and gifting them an embedded narrative that we have crafted based on research and the experience of the community as an audience. We welcome players to contribute to the ongoing narrative from their viewpoints and memories to create an emergent narrative, thereby transfiguring “my story” into “our story.” We do this so that we can all practice the real world in the made-up universe of our story, create new narratives that can heal the harm done to us, and

inform our steps to heal the harm we have done to others. As Stewards, we provide pastoral care to tend to the soul of our players, not run them through the story created from our singular perspective and laden with our blind spots and unresolved baggage. We create a safe environment that allows the community to tell our make-believe story, and in doing so, we make space to change the real world.

Further Reading

Justin Alexander, *So You Want to Be a Game Master: Everything You Need to Start Your Tabletop Adventure for Dungeons and Dragons, Pathfinder, and Other Systems*, Page Street Publishing, 2023

Xiaowen Fang, *Narrative Structure and Player Experience in Role-Playing Games*, International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction, VL 31, 156, 2014/12/02

Carolyn O'Hara, *How to Tell a Great Story*, www.hrb.org. July 30, 2014, <https://hbr.org/2014/07/how-to-tell-a-greatstory>



“Practicing” the Story.

Roger Speer

Introduction

Western culture was built upon and created wealth from slavery. I am not intending to engage in ideological warfare; I am only stating a historical fact. Our entire way of life—military, academics, politics, and religion, relies—on a system of knowing who is master over whom, and who has control and authority in any situation. Our Western way of life can be argued as evil or not because it has led to safety, prosperity, and stability for millions of human beings. But the way it established itself—through the enslavement and dehumanizing of a specific segment of the population—is evil. We see the repercussions of this in many ways, but for this unit, we will discuss how it has informed gaming culture to create an environment prone to toxicity and supremacy.

A “master” is “one having authority over another.” Our society is a very carefully balanced system of masters and subordinates. This makes the term “Dungeon Master” or “Game Master” tricky. It is impossible, in a system built upon masters and slaves, to separate the connotation from the word. But we want our games to be places of inclusion, collegiality, and mutual respect. When we play with a master mentality—a position in which one person has authority over the Players and therefore their stories—we do not allow for brave space, agency, or personal formation. The Steward ideology

is one in which a person dedicates a significant part of their time to create a world with history, depth, and factions (with agendas) that players influence through their causal agency. The Steward responds to player effectance in ways that make sense to the natural world and the factions within it. The Steward does not contrive an endgame scenario and then force players into it one way or another. Stewards want a table of equals working together to bring something that responds to their inner needs and outward expressions of personal identity to life. But how?

Framework for Brave Space

“Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is an evidence-based, tiered framework.” This system utilizes five focus areas to create environments that support behavioral, academic, social, emotional, and mental health. PBIS translates easily into a gaming environment and can lead to profoundly positive experiences for players and Stewards of the game. Here are steps to practice:

Equity. Stewards have conversations with players before game sessions to identify valuable outcomes and prioritize them for the group. The Steward is the central catalyst for this conversation and is the only one who can have it. This also means the Steward must be committed to adapting to the needs of players. If one person has a trigger that is dangerous to their physical

and/or emotional safety, then no one should experience that trigger. The Steward cannot create an environment best suited for everyone to succeed without first identifying the needs of their players and choosing practices that attempt to meet those needs. Questions Stewards can ask to build equity are:

- Can you tell me five words that describe your world right now, so I can get an idea of what you bring to my table?
- Are there any triggers I should be aware of that we must avoid? In Role-Play, we sometimes go to weird, vulnerable places, and I want to safeguard your safety.

Systems. The Ealdsmyth Gaming System is a rules-light methodology that supports both the Steward of the game and the Players in it. This system supports the story first and is built upon a Character's influence on the story, and a Player's causal agency. In Ealdsmyth, the rules reflect real life and encourage mutual support, respect, individuality, and inclusion. You cannot safeguard brave space without using a system to govern and uphold community norms as practices of mutuality and inclusion.

<https://savingthrowsretreat.com/ealdsmyth-role-playing-system/>

Data. As a Steward manages a story through play, they are encouraged to collect feedback from players

constantly. One method of doing this is what we have called a “divinity system,” wherein players suggest alternatives, corrections, or ideas about the meta-narrative to the Steward at the end of each session. The players decide which idea to present as their primary ideation, and then the Steward responds in realistic ways within the story. This is intended to be a cooperative and collaborative exercise. Touching base with individual players during breaks or after sessions by text message is invaluable and necessary. You cannot make informed decisions about the progress of your gaming community without practicing data collection.

- What is an aspect of the story we are not focusing on that we should?
- What needs to happen to make this story more profound to you?

Practices. The units in this training process all have practices included for you to incorporate (or not) into your games. Theology, Safeguarding, Psychology, Pastoring, Communal Storytelling, Game Mechanics, and Improvisation are all practices that may or may not address the needs of your Players. How does including or altering these practices benefit your Player’s behavioral, academic, social, emotional, and mental health?

Outcomes. Establishing equity among Players requires identifying goals and needs. Meeting needs requires

the direct questioning of a Player's satisfaction with the game. As a Steward, it is helpful to connect with Players to evaluate your work through the game and interpersonal behavior so that you can grow and improve as a Steward of the community's story. To measure outcomes, a Steward must first know what is important to the community. These questions are a good starting point to build outcomes-based goals for managing your game community.

Feedback

- How can I as a Player make different choices for the positive effect of my team?
- What feedback would benefit how my team is playing?
- What feedback does my Steward need to hear?

Feedforward

- What improves our story in the next session?
- What rabbit hole/sidequest/secret mission did we miss that we should return to?

Brave Space is the result of working through the PBIS framework. Both players and Stewards practice vulnerability in expressing their needs to create equity at their table. The Ealdsmyth System changes the perspective of the game and pushes us out of our comfort zones into spaces of communal storytelling. Data collection regularly in-game helps us face unspoken fears and concerns about the story and what

it triggers within us. Practices provide strategies for confronting those fears in healthy ways that encourage positive growth. Feedforward and communal feedback allows each Player to examine their intentions for positive effect and voice negative emotions that may undermine the overall health and well-being of the group.

Positive Behavioral Affect in the Sandbox

We can repeat the steps of the Positive Behavioral framework when we build our Sandbox in which Players will play and explore. As discussed in the previous lesson, communal storytelling is about empowerment and relaxed control of the meta-narrative. “Sandbox” is a term used metaphorically to describe the style of play in video, board, and role-playing games. It generally means a game that leans heavily into undirected free play. There are mini-games, such as exploration, puzzles, or conflict scenarios, but the players are free to engage in mini-games at their discretion and schedule. Using the Positive Behavioral framework, we will plan a sample Sandbox episode for three players.

Equity. Equity requires data collection before sitting down at the table, or at the outset of the game session if the Steward is confident enough to build a Sandbox spontaneously. The goal of creating equity is the same as it is before the team comes together to play: identify

valuable outcomes and prioritize them for the group. This can be as simple as asking players, “What do we want to play today?” The type of mission coincides with a playstyle for each player. Some examples:

- Old MacGregory has asked some stupid fools/intrepid adventurers to hunt the monster eating his chickens. (Tracking and solving the puzzle of the Monster Hunt)
- The Prior of the Monastery has requested support in exploring an ancient cave system for relics of a long-lost colony of monks from before the breaking. (Exploring ancient dungeons fraught with traps and danger of the Tomb Raid)
- The Sheriff needs to deputize some citizens to address the Goonberry Gang, who have been harassing and robbing the King’s supply lines in Shadow Woods. (Using skill and stealth to solve a problem with a Tactical Combat Mission)
- The wizard Magicus has a list of components necessary to construct a cognition spell for the prince, who hasn’t been “right in his head” since he was thrown from his horse last Tuesday. (Crafting and resource development tree in a Quest for the McGuffin)
- The Mayor has asked us to search the depths of the Shadow Woods for the last location of a Starfighter that crashed in the planetary bombardment last winter. (Hex Crawl through the wilderness)

Once the Steward knows their players, generating

gameplay equity is easier through missions instead of crafting a meta-narrative. The valuable outcome of the group is based on their play styles and engagement with the narrative and becomes more easily attainable over time. This is a primary reason for the weekend game retreat, which allows us to craft equity more completely for our players.

Systems. In a Sandbox, your systems are your mini-games. Tabletop, Board, and Video Games all have mini-games. When building the Sandbox, partner play-style and valuable outcomes to a mission, then pair it with an appropriate mini-game. Some examples of mini-games are:

- Tactical Combat. Minis on a map with special abilities and lots of dice rolls.
- Role-Play. Players take on Character personas to talk through social-ethical, problem-solving, or scenario-based challenges.
- Puzzles. I am a fan of the escape room puzzle chain, in which one puzzle unlocks the possible solution to the next. Another favorite is the open-ended puzzle, which presents a non-linear situation and encourages players to develop the most creative solution possible.
- Obstacle Course. A preset path of obstacles that Players use Character skills and abilities to navigate, which can include any other mini-game asset.
- Exploration. Reveal the map or the wilderness through careful description and representation.

- **Crafting.** Searching for recipes, acquiring components, and building new assets that open up new storylines or abilities.

You can engage your Player's Equity through myriad mini-game systems.

Data. The narrative crafted by the Steward becomes the background data players use to form a meta-narrative. This is the "Story of the World," and it is the primary difference between railroaded narratives and communal storytelling. When your meta-narrative happens independently of causative agency, it makes room for the Players to engage, or not, as they decide. This means you as the Steward are responding to their effectance, not trying to get them to a specific goal. Here's how you do it, using some simple world-building as an example. Our game has three players, each with a different playstyle. Player One loves combat and rolling dice. Player Two loves the story and role-playing emotional situations that feel important and have a depth of meaning. Player Three is all about being with their friends and joking around while building rapport outside the game.

1. Identify the factions in your World.

- A marauding tribe of Orks has terrorized the people for generations. No one knows the source of their animosity. There has been war for decades. (Player One: combat)

- The townsfolk are connected to the Land with nature Magic, but even that can't heal the children, all of whom have recently fallen ill with a mysterious illness that no medicine has cured. (Player Two: emotion)
- A magical creature came to one of your Players in a dream. This creature represents the Ghulm, a race of beings hidden deep in the swamps that need understanding adventurers to confront an ancient evil they are no longer strong enough to contain. (Given to Player Three independently, so they can convince the group, or not, to engage)

2. Develop the narrative of your factions over chapters. In our case, we will be playing for the weekend, having five sessions that are two hours long. For the sake of clarity, I'm developing only one faction's narrative here, the Ork tribe. Remember, each session's narrative will happen whether players do anything about it or not. This narrative is independent of Player's Causative Agency and Effectance. Each faction (Orks, Townsfolk, Ghulm) has a narrative independent from each other and any form of meta-narrative. As players play and make choices, their effectance can alter these checkpoints, which the Steward adjusts in between sessions.

ORK Narrative.

- Session One. The Orks raid the MacGregory farmstead and take the family hostage. They do

this to gain information about the town and recent events that their shaman has dreamed of.

- Session Two. The Orks learn from MacGregory that the townsfolk dug a new well and found a cave under the town filled with crystals. The Orks have a prophecy about the crystals being the key to their peace and prosperity, so they send stealth agents into town to investigate. Unfortunately, the agents are found and have to fight their way free, causing havoc in the process.
- Session Three. The Orks, desperate to be free of the oppression of the Dragon that tormented them for generations, agree to invade the town to steal the crystals and use their magic to confront the dragon. If they have to kill the townsfolk, so be it. The townsfolk have not negotiated before. Why would they start now?
- Session Four. Having secured the crystals by any means, the Orks spend this session searching for materials to turn the crystals into magical weapons. They raid local areas of interest and take what cannot be bought or given. They are desperate to be free of the dragon.
- Session Five. Armed with magical weapons, the Orks confront the adult blue dragon in the mountains near their village. Win or lose, they will be free of its tyranny.

3. Present your players with mission hooks based on

their playstyle that may have an effect on the World's factions:

- The MacGregory farmstead has been raided by Orks and they were taken hostage, free them at any cost. Kill the orks if you can.
- Healer Madge needs help. Interview and explore the village for any way to identify this secret illness affecting our children.
- You have a dream in which Funkwilly the Ghulm led you to a secret door that holds an ancient treasure. This drawing is your best recollection of that door, maybe it holds a clue to how to find Funkwilly?

4. As Players make choices, edit the faction narratives between sessions in response to the Effectance of Player choice. This helps Players know their choices have meaning and affect the larger world.

Practices. This is how we “practice” the story. The definition of Practice is to “perform (an activity) or exercise (a skill) repeatedly or regularly to improve or maintain one’s proficiency.” We improve the story through our choices, based on our inherent psychology and behavior, and how we develop our Characters. There is no pre-written story that Players strive to uncover because we write it together. This leads to less decision fatigue by the Steward. This eliminates any conflict between the “master” of the story and their subordinates because equity and data are the

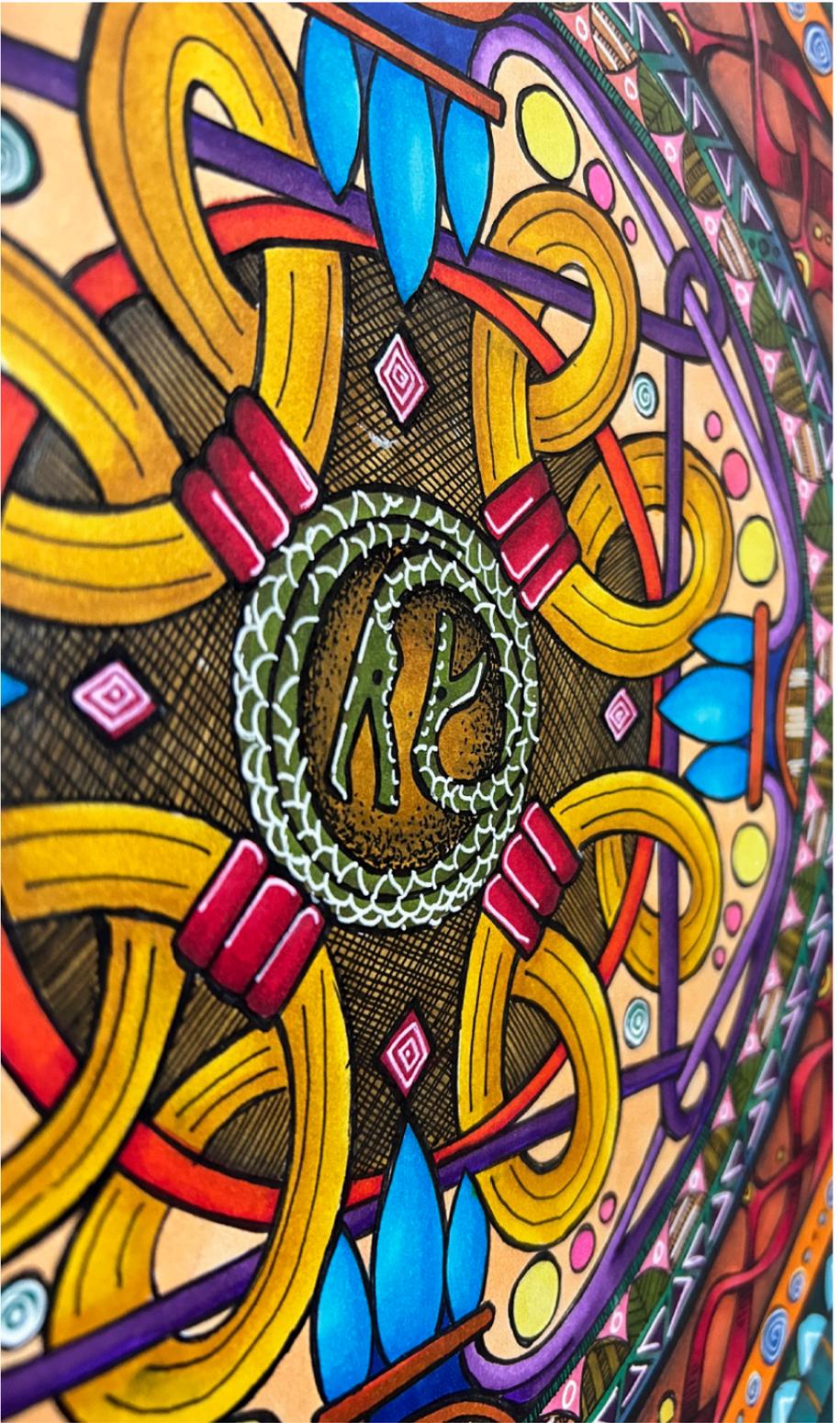
foundations of the narrative rather than supremacy.

Outcomes. At the end of every session, ask your Players, “What do you want to do next session?” Listen to their conversation about direction and decision-making, then prepare your next session based directly on the Valuable Outcomes and needs expressed by the Players this session. As an outcomes-focused catalyst, the Steward’s role becomes that of designer and artist, or mechanic, or engineer, depending on your skill set. The Steward is the Catalyst of the Story, empowering Players to write the history of their Characters, creating an environment of communal storytelling instead of egoistic railroading in which “fun” is determined by how well the “master” creates exciting play for their people.

Further Reading

What is PBIS? <https://www.pbis.org/pbis/what-is-pbis>

Travis Miller, *Building Blocks of A Sandbox Campaign*, November 24, 2022, <https://grumpywizard.home.blog/2022/11/24/building-blocks-of-a-sandbox-campaign/>



Role play is powerful. This is why.

Roger Speer

Orcs are people, too.

I was a professional Dungeon Master at a weekend DnD event. My table, one of 16, became known as the Table of Tears. Everyone who played with me left encased in appropriate displays of affection and most often tears of various emotions based on each player's unique contribution to the story. That year, I decided to lean into my experience as a youth minister and dad to bring real situations to my scenarios rather than tropes. It all started with placing a painting of a family in an Orc's pocket. My greatest criticism of DnD is that it continues to dehumanize and beat people up, allowing us to hate minority and fringe groups. "Monsters" are always bad, the treasure is always yours if you kill the current owner, and when talking doesn't work, violence is the answer. None of those lessons were ones I desired to impart to my students or my son, so I worked to find another way. Once I realized that playing a Tabletop Role-Playing Game didn't require role-play all the time, I was able to see it as a tool for friendship-making, trust-building, and even healing. Once that Orc painting allowed my players to see the Orc as another Character in their story, the ability to approach the scary nightmare-inducing scenarios of real life in a safe space opened up emotions that made the stories we told at the Table of Tears the talk of the

festival. Set a goal, take a Stewarding stance, and use specific improvisational tools to deliver a powerful and memorable Role-Play mini-game in your sandbox.

Goal Setting

Role-play has been used as a method in education as early as 1946. Before engaging in roleplay, we must clearly express our purpose. For instance, educational role-play positions its players as learners. Education, not fun, is the goal. In Gaming, fun is the goal (typically measured by laughter, but I would argue that “emotional expression” is the true currency of gaming). In therapeutic practice, personal development is the goal. What do your players need? Laughter and fun? To learn to function as a team within societal expectations? To express emotion? We have discussed how to plan sandbox sessions that allow you to Steward mini-game frameworks to engage each Player’s unique style. When placing the role-playing mini-game into your session, consider these goals:

- Allow players to deal with real-life problems that directly engage their senses, emotions, and attitudes as forerunners of behavior.
- Acknowledge that feelings are the source of behavior. Behavior is what leads to problem situations. Allow participants to place themselves inside the problem situation to become emotionally involved.
- Allow players to practice interpersonal skills and test

ideas and hypotheses about their and other human behaviors. Players then train their emotional control and execute a solution with continuous feedback.

Because role-play allows humans to put make-believe characters in unsafe situations while remaining completely safe in real life, it benefits educational, therapeutic, and recreational growth. Role-play increases confidence to interact with others by increasing persuasive communication. It helps people express difficult emotions. It makes people feel connected. And it increases empathy, creativity, and strategic thinking. But only if they are vulnerable. And you are the one responsible for building an environment that is brave enough to be vulnerable. Understanding the objectives and tactics inherent in daily communication with others, as well as problem-solving and positive teamwork, are goals of role-playing games. Stewards that allow players to cater to their lesser, darker impulses create environments that are lesser and darker. These environments are not fun for all players, nor do they empower or encourage players to be the best versions of themselves. Unless you are with a tight-knit, differentiated, emotionally healthy group of people...still stay away from playing evil. It never leads to good.

Steward the Mini Game

It is important to know that role-play contributed

very little to personal growth in the studies reviewed for this article. It was the discussions held after role-playing that provided the most impact. Give yourself permission as the Steward not to be in a role at every moment of your session. Think of role-play as a specific situation that will appeal to some of your players, but not others. When you enter role-play, have a specific goal: this NPC needs the player's help, or this atypical "monster" only wants to live in peace. Write down the goal of the role-play, but not a specific solution to it. When you come to role-play with a set of possible outcomes or a specific needed outcome, you encourage decision-making, not solution finding. The number of integrated solutions increases when we place role-play exercises in the context of solution-finding rather than decision-making. Integrated solutions are action plans that engage the entire Player team, and their skill sets, play styles, and emotions. Stewards who propose problems and become vulnerable enough to take on a role offer more information than Stewards who are reciting data from a book. In short, your player's ability to "get into a role" is directly proportional to the depth at which you are willing to take the non-player character. You have to understand the Orc's emotional state that drives their behavior to create the problem that the players then need to provide a solution to. Using these tactics, the Steward allows players to draw on their cognitive repertoire to think up good arguments. This contrasts with a master mentality

that presents a prescribed set of outcomes for players to decide among. It also offers a higher probability of long-lasting attitudinal change and personal growth.

Tools

The following tools should be memorized and incorporated into your cognitive repertoire to make the most of the role-play mini-game.

1. “Yes, and,” is the contrast to “yes, but.” I learned this concept in a Disney leadership academy course as a foundational method to build rapport, consensus, trust, and a unified vision. “Yes, and” embodies our commitment to build upon what another Player offers us. We don’t shut down ideas or play the devil’s advocate. In role-play, the purpose is not to reach the correct conclusion but to keep the conversation going until an integrated solution is realized.

An example of “no denials” or the “yes, and” concept:

Good Improv

Player A makes an assertion: Oh look, a meteor!

Player B agrees and adds to the concept: You’re right and it’s coming this way!

Poor Improv

Player A: Oh look, a meteor!

Player B: There isn’t anything there. That’s a cat.

2. Active Listening. You must be fully present in the conversation to engage with it. You cannot be preparing your next line, or thinking of the funniest way to take this while your players are talking. You cannot be worried about where the role-play will go

narratively because you are not solely responsible for the outcome of the mini-game. The whole team is. Listen with your eyes and heart: the tone of voice, body language, and overall message will help you to respond appropriately. Keep in mind the emotional state of the NPC and their goal for this mini-game and listen to everything else.

3. Tell a story (beginning, middle, and end). The best scenes are built when we offer something new and interesting. Instead of repeating what others have said, think of how you can move this story to the middle, or to the end. Moving the conversation forward is more important than making the funniest or most powerful retort.

4. It doesn't need to be funny. Improv is so much more fun when you can play and be light-hearted. Your natural sense of humor is good enough. Your innate curiosity will lead you to interesting topics. Your idea of fun is just as important as your player's. The more "fun" a role-play is is directly proportional to your vulnerability without forcing the conversation to "be" anything specific.

5. The partner is the most important member of the group. "In improv, there are no solo acts." When you value the contributions of your players to realize common ground, you collaborate. When you collaborate, you create a synergy that leads to meaning and emotional experiences. When we role-play, the

authors are fond of beginning a line with “What if...” this thing was a pirate treasure buried here centuries ago? We build off of each other constantly.

Trust: This is the elephant in the living room. Good improv and good role-play cannot happen without trust between the Steward and the players. Beginning a session with a statement that the table is choosing to trust each other is vital to creating a powerful, emotional experience. Trust is a building block of brave space. Trust is only lost when one human wounds another. Your ability to build and rebuild trust is determined by your willingness to “first do no harm.”

6. The Opening Line. Edit this statement to be your words, and read it at the beginning of every session you Steward:

This game is Ealdsmyth. I will be playing the role of your Steward. I am not the master of this story nor is this my story. This is our story. Your characters can be anyone you need them to be right now. I want to invite you all to take liberties and risks with your character that make for a good story. This is an invitation for you to act on your needs, dreams, and beliefs and support the dreams of others here at our table. Most importantly, I request your trust, for me as your Steward, and for your fellow players. Trust is the foundation of all life-changing stories and that is what we intend to create today. Take a moment to assess yourself and what you bring to the table. How are you feeling? What do you need from this

session? Please feel free to share. We'll begin when you are ready.

Conclusion

Think of role-play as a mini game within the larger environment of your game session. You do not need to be “in character” for two hours, which is exhausting. When you use role-play, do so with intention of reaching a goal that makes sense in the narrative of your story.

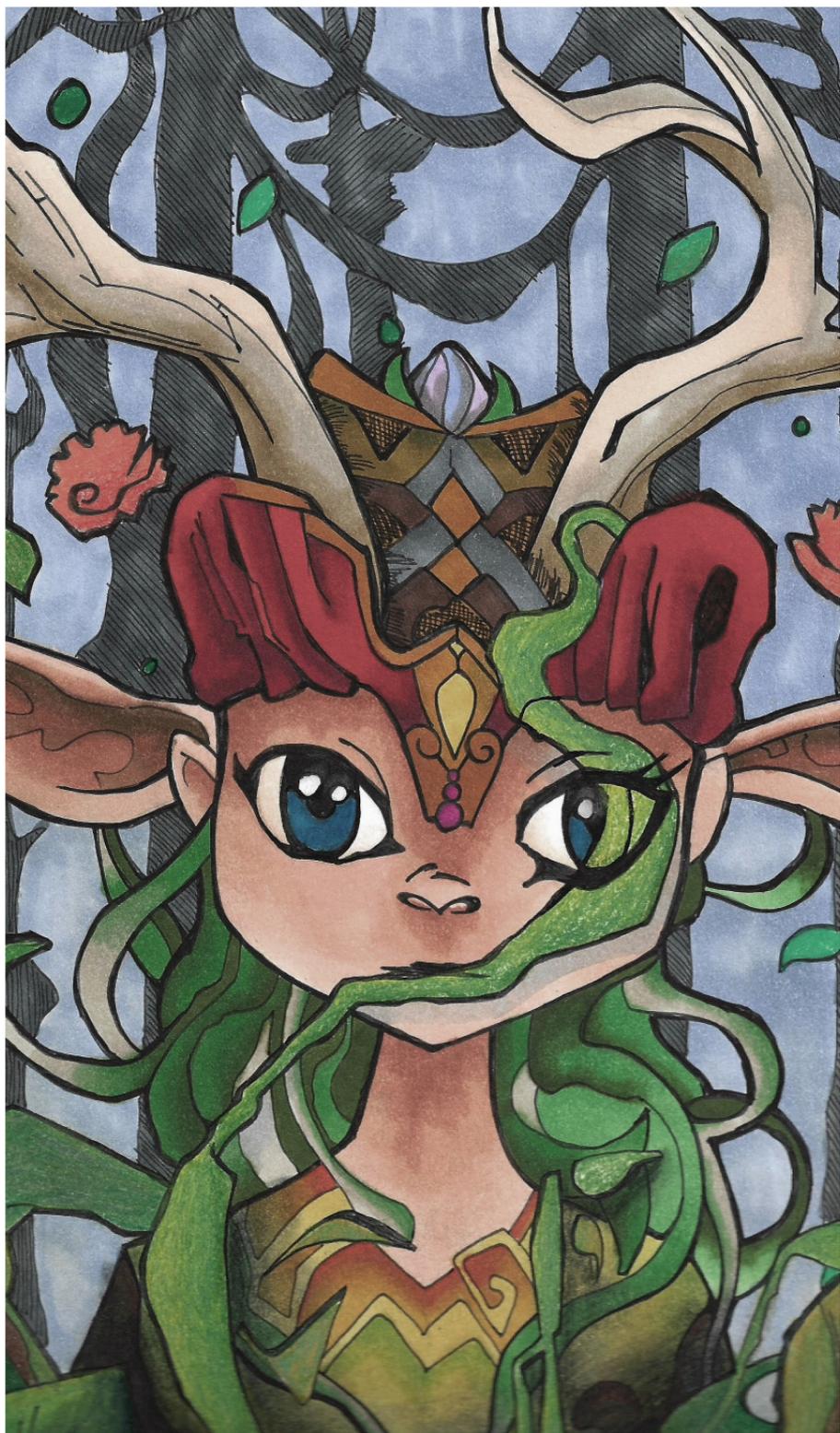
While playing, be a Steward. You are the caretaker of the game world and your players' physical and emotional safety. There is no need for pages of notes, because that leads to your players making decisions, not designing solutions. Always keep in mind improvisational tools when role-playing as they will you present an authentic Character with depth and meaning. To make role-play a successful addition to your game, set a goal, take a Stewarding stance, and use specific improvisational tools to deliver a powerful and memorable Role-Play mini-game in your sandbox.

Further Reading

Manchester Metropolitan University, “D&D at 50: how the role-playing game may soon be used as a form of therapy,” ENP Newshare, April 23, 2024, NA

Aryeh G Kidron, “The Effectiveness of Experiential Methods in Training and Education: The Case of Role Playing,” *Academy of Management Review*, July 1977

Gary Rollins Brata Winary, Eva Setiana, “Role, Play, and Games: Comparison between role-playing games and roleplay in Education,” *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 8 (2023) 100527



Steward Tools

VIOLENCE

Aggro

Opponents target Characters that are actively trying to hurt them. If Aggro is not obvious, then an Opponent attacks anything that appears magical first.

Hearts or Hits?

For Stewards who like numbers, keep track of heart totals for Opponents and subtract as Players attack. For Stewards with more narrative flair, count the combat in rounds without keeping track of the Opponent's Heart total. (the Opponent requires three rounds of Violence to succumb to the Player's Violence)

Minions (Conflict focusing on the Body)

1 Heart or 1 hit

Minions have 1d4 attack. They attack who they are ordered to attack, typically en masse.

Hard Opponents

(Conflict focusing on Mind and Body)

Phase one: Role Play.

Establish Role Play as a mini game with Motivation Checks, Skill Checks, etc. Establish Goals:

1. Determine the balance of Role Play and Combat for future phases.
2. Tell some of the Opponent's backstory: How did it

come to this? Why is the Conflict unavoidable?

Phase Two: Combat.

10 Hearts, or 2 Rounds.

The Opponent takes actions on the Steward's turn.

When it is the Hard Creature's turn:

1. Attack all players that aggro'd it the previous round.
2. Use one supernatural ability that affects all Characters.

Boss Opponents

(Conflict focusing on Mind, Body, and Spirit)

Phase One, Mind: Role-Play

Phase Two, Body: Combat. 20 Hearts, or 4 Rounds

Phase Three, Spirit: Psycho-Spiritual Climax

In this phase, the conflict evolves beyond a confrontation with the Opponent, and into a confrontation with the Psychic or Spiritual Motivation that drives the Opponent.

Examples: We have overcome the Dragon. It is now time to confront the Dragon's Greed.

The Gang Leader has been defeated, but now we must conquer the personified pain, betrayal, and trauma that made them the Big, Bad, Evil Guy.

This phase is intended to be the final showdown, the ultimate confrontation, and the narrative climax of all previous games. It assumes the following:

1. This will be either the last game session in this Story Arc, or among the very last.
2. The Characters have defined a clear goal and wish

to accomplish a specific task in this final narrative scene.

3. The Steward intends to guide the Characters in a clear step-by-step Story using all Skills, Powers, Items, etc. This is not a competition, but providing care in the final moments of a Story.
4. Only the Dice Checks can make this series of Goals and intentions “fail.” Failures fail forward.

This Phase is the playground of the Steward. Imagine a graphic novel page with a series of panels. In each panel is the results of an action and Dice Check from a player. Imagine the final scene of your favorite movie. The scene that makes you cry and cheer and yell for more. Begin on your left as always.

1. Describe the situation with all pertinent details.
2. I like to ask the player “How do you want to do this?” to echo my favorite Dungeon Master.
3. Assign the appropriate Dice Check, including a motivation. (a Fate-based Violence Check, for example)
4. If a critical, then: “Tell me the story of...”
5. If not, adjust the narrative to the degree of success or failure, describing consequences to actions. (At this point, it is wise to rethink of the D20 spectrum as degrees of success, not opportunity of failure. 2-5 is least successful, 16-19 is most successful.)
6. Move to next Player, “How do you want to do this?”

In playtests, the dice rarely make for longer than one round of play to vanquish the ultimate evil. The more cheers you produce in your response to dice rolls, the better.

Sandbox Worksheet

(see page 68)

EQUITY

1. What are our next steps today?
2. Design Adventure Hooks based on the play style of each player.

SYSTEMS

1. What mini-game is attached to each adventure hook?

DATA

1. Attach a faction to each mini game.
2. What is the faction(s) narrative over 2-3 sessions in relation to the adventure hooks?

PRACTICES

1. What checkpoints, methods, or character development can I catalyze as the Steward? (1-2/player)

FEEDBACK

End of Session Questions

- What are your Character's next steps?
- What Story Notes should we give?
- What Skills did we learn?
- How can I as a Player do better?
- What feedback does the Steward need to hear?
- What rabbit hole/side quest/secret mission did we miss that we should return to?

Random Events while Resting

1. A supernatural entity: a spirit, cryptid, fairy tale, or divine source manifests, interrupts your rest, and wishes to engage in Role Play.
2. A monster interrupts the rest. It is time to defend yourselves!
3. You have dreams of your Character's life and possible destiny. What were they?
4. You have dreams of possible twists and turns to our story. What were they?
5. Nothing Happens.
6. The Deus ex Machina happens. Reset, redirect, or alter the Story to help your Players succeed their quest.

Creature Destiny Table

1. Turns into a Ghost
2. Knocked unconscious
3. Incapacitating wound
4. Death

Loot Table

1. A Trinket that is important to the story
2. Armor
3. Weapon
4. Gold Pieces or Gems
5. Non-Magical, but useful, Equipment
6. Magical Object

Opening Statement

This game is Ealdsmyth. I will be playing the role of your Steward. I am not the master of this story nor is this my story. This is our story. Your characters can be anyone you need them to be right now. I want to invite you to take liberties and risks with your character that make for a good story. This is an invitation for you to act on your needs, dreams, and beliefs and support your friends at our table. I ask for trust as your Steward, and for trust in your fellow players. Take a moment to assess yourself and what you bring to the table. How are you feeling? What do you need from this session? Feel free to share. We'll begin when you are ready.



About the Authors

Roger Speer has lived his life in service to others. A Minister in the Episcopal Church, he has used DnD to forge safe spaces for teens and young adults, built family game nights for communities, and produced day camps using LARP, Art & Music, and Gaming. Roger's mission is to stand by people as they discover the best version of themselves.



Roger is a Winner Circle recipient of the One Page Dungeon Contest, the winner of the Golden Mace for tabletop terrain building at MACE (now MythicCon) 2020, and is a well-known artist, writer, and illustrator. He has GMed (Fifth Edition) at Con Carolinas, MACE, The Festival in the Forest, Sandbox Adventures, The FORMA Conference, and countless church groups, schools, and summer camps. He is the founder and producer of the Saving Throws Gaming Retreat.

Learn more about Roger at:

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www.SavingThrowsRetreat.com



Mark Ezra Stokes is a little obsessed with storytelling. By day, he's a high-school theatre teacher and freelance journalist. He holds master's degrees in screenwriting & film studies, and he's spent about a decade and a half in the film industry. One time he was the stand-in/puppet for SpongeBob's best friend. Another time, he got paid \$100 an hour to trip over a random stuffed alligator.

Mark has GMed professionally for MACE (now MythicCon), The Festival in the Forest, Sandbox Adventures, and Saving Throws. His published resources for GMs include *Off the Shelf*, *On the Table*, *Under the Skin* and the upcoming *Out of the Box*.

Learn more about Mark at:
www.markezrastokes.com



Gregory Peterson has lived a life of a self-indulgent artist whose leisurely pursuit of the arts has been met with very little turmoil or resistance. Of his graphic design and multidisciplinary goals, he's developed a handful of card games including Bout, Circadia and Minions. If Greg has a mission at the gaming table, it's to give players the space for their creativity to shine. Gregory is a newly-minted Shamanic Reiki Master and purveyor of uniquely-crafted game experiences. Greg is a two-time award winner of the Tabletop Crafters Guild craft-off and a handful of miniature-painting competitions.

He has professionally GM'd for The Festival in the Forest, Sandbox Adventures, Saving Throws, and The Side Quest in Lakewood, Ohio. For more information about Greg and his various pursuits, check out:

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