

A Note on Game Theory

Character sheets are there to provide two vital bits of information: who are you, and why are you here? The character history provides insights into the character's past and present, the character's mindset, the way he or she looks at life, other people, and the word around him. The history traces a path that explains how the character got to the start of the game. The goals and motivations take the character to the next step, explaining what the character wishes to accomplish and why.

Both are important. The history provides background for roleplaying, for seeing the game through the eyes of your character, and reacting as this alien mindset would. The goals and motivations give you a reason to interact, and a reason to stay when things get strange or difficult.

[Your Game Here] is an experiment in live action roleplaying. I have created a structure and a number of plots and characters, but you, the players, will create the details. It will be as silly or serious a game as you make it. This is only the first step on the path of player created games; however, it is as far as we can go in the hour allotted. Certainly, other games have traveled further along this path, allowing players to create characters and plots for their events. Still, [Your Game Here] is an interesting novelty, and will hopefully be a fun hour's divertissement.

[Your Game Here] written by Mike Young

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A Note on GM Theory

In a LARP, GMs are called upon to make rules decisions, to clarify information, and to act as "the rest of the world." Essentially, they are called upon as independent moderators when the players cannot resolve the issue themselves.

[Your Game Here] endows that ability to the players. You are the judge of whether your character may or may not do something. You are allowed to expand the game world as needed, as long as it is reasonable. The trick here is knowing what is reasonable. If you aren't sure, find someone who is uninvolved in your situation. We call that person the O3P, the Objective Third Party. The O3P acts as a GM for your situation.

Let's Get Specific: Game Mechanics

Each ability (thing you could do) has five levels: Horrible, Below Average, Average, Above Average, and Excellent. If you are trying to do something, say pick a lock, you compare your level to the target level (which will either be explicitly stated or decided by an O3P). If you are better, then you do it. If you are worse, you fail. If you tie, you need to find a O3P and have them make a decision. We'll get into how to make a good decision as a O3P in a bit.

There may come a time when you want to try something you don't have a skill for. At that point, you must decide if it is reasonable that you could do it (see Making Decisions) based on your character history and other skills. If you cannot decide, see a O3P.

If you are attempting to do something to someone else, like say, defeat them in combat, you first have an announcement phase, something to the effect of, "I'm a gonna whump you because I'm above average in combat." "Oh yeah? I may only be average in combat, but I'll get my licks in." Try to keep it in character, but get the idea across.

Once all parties know how they will do, then you act out the resolution safely and dramatically. Afterwards, resolve the combat. You may end up Healthy, Slightly Wounded, Severely Wounded, and Dead (see Damage below). The winner gets to decide how the loser is. If the loser is the same or one rank lower, they can "get their licks in" and leave the winner Slightly Wounded.

If both parties have the same ability level and they cannot come up with a mutually satisfying resolution, then they must find a O3P to decide. The decision of the O3P is final and could result in any resolution, up to and including all participants being killed.

Teaming Up

Two or more people may team up to defeat someone who has one higher skill level. For example, two people who are Below Average in combat, may work together to beat up someone who is Average in combat. The person who is higher may get his licks in to up to two others in the combat of his or her choice.

For combats more complex than that, find a O3P agreeable to all involved and have that person decide the results.

The O3P decides the results but does *not* describe the action of the combat. After hearing or deciding on the results, you must act out the combat or actions, roleplay them in slow motion.

Damage

There are four levels of damage. If you are Healthy, you have no damage and there is no game effect.

If you are Slightly Wounded, all of the levels of what you can do are one less. You need to announce this in the declarative phase, “I wish to win the dance competition, and am normally an excellent dancer, but due to this leg wound, I am only above average today.” You may be Slightly Wounded for as long as you want, but not less than 15 minutes. After that, you go back to Healthy.

If you are Severely Wounded, you need immediate medical attention. Until you receive medical attention, you may not use any of your abilities, nor may you move faster than a slow limp.

Dead is dead.

Two additional notes. First, note that damage does not stack. If you are Slightly Wounded and become Slightly Wounded again, you do not gain more wounds. It just resets the 15 minute wound clock.

Also, it is possible that you may want to knock someone out but leave them unharmed. If you win a combat, you may choose to declare that your opponent is unconscious. They stay unconscious for as long as is dramatically

appropriate. The combat winner gets to decide how long is dramatically appropriate, although an appeal may be made to an O3P if it seems excessive.

Making Decisions

When deciding if you should be able to do something, or if you are a O3P, you should decide based on the following factors:

- ☺ **Is it reasonable?** Could the character do it based on his or her abilities and character history? For example, if someone is playing a super spy but doesn’t have an ability to pick locks, can they try to pick the lock. You might say that they have an Average ability to pick locks. They then want to perform brain surgery. You would probably say that there is nothing in their background to support such an activity, so you would rule they cannot do it.
- ☺ **Is it fair?** When making a decision, you need to decide not only if it is fair to the player, but to the game as a whole. Would allowing the player to do this keep someone else from joining in on the fun? Would not allowing the player to do this damage his or her fun? Which would be better for the game as a whole.
- ☺ **Is it dramatically appropriate?** This is a touch, gut-feeling, sort of thing. John is playing an expert detective. Five minutes into the game, he thinks he knows whodunit. Allowing him to unmask the culprit so soon is not only unfair to the other player, it is not very dramatically appropriate. Ask John to get some more

proof, or interview more people. Likewise, having the villain leave the game as soon as he hears that you declined John’s request isn’t fair or appropriate either. Instead encourage the villain to have a dramatic denouement when it is appropriate for the game. Think of the handcuffs scene in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. He could only escape the cuffs when it was funny. In the best of all possible worlds, things should happen in the LARP when dramatically appropriate.

Recusing Yourself

There may come a time when you are called to be a O3P and you cannot decide. Maybe you are too close to the situation and cannot be an arbitrator. Maybe you simply cannot decide what is fair, reasonable, or dramatically appropriate. In any case, you may simply recuse yourself.

Explain to the people involved that you cannot make a decision. You don’t have to say why. Simply bow out, but if you can make some suggestions for a different O3P.

Item Cards

The event runner should have provided a number of blank index cards to use as item cards. Please make item cards for any items your character starts with or obtains during the game.