

BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO ROLE-PLAY GAMES

A Role-Play Game (shorted RPG) needs only your imagination: you and your friends sit down around a table, just with a sheet and a pencil for each player, and begin to play.

The first thing to understand is the difference from the Player to the Character. For example, if John (the player) choose the name Elias for his Character, John could be very different from Elias: John is a student, is 20 years old, is tall, clever and wants to become an Engineer, while Elias (the Character) is 40 years old, is small, he finds really difficult reasoning, and he's working as a sailor-man on a huge ship. And he's not able to read or write.

During the game, the director (usually called Story-teller or Master) may say to the players – “You are in the docklands, near a pub with the sign: sailors are not allowed to get in”.

Of course John understands the situation, but Elias doesn't, so the Character will get in the pub without even thinking about it! This doesn't mean that John is stupid, but that John is a good role-play player...

This is why people enjoy RPG: they allow you to see life from different points of view, you can forget about your life, thinking and talking like a different person, for a couple of hours.

RPG are very similar to acting, they can be an interesting challenge: are you able to speak like a grandfather? Are you able to think like a person of different sex? And so on...

Playing RPG you can better understand different culture, different ages, all this just enjoying a evening with your friends!

HOW TO PLAY

In RPG you have just to talk, you must avoid touching other players or to move like your character. If your character wants to run, you just say to the Story-teller “I run through the road to get the bus”.

To avoid confusion we use a simple rule: when you put your hand up, this means that the player is talking, not the character.

For example your party (you and your friends) is in a theatre, watching a drama. Elias, your character, is sat near Aurelio, the Samantha's character. If Samantha whispers you something funny and you two start laughing, your characters are laughing in the theatre, so the storyteller could decide that the security excuse Elias and Samantha out of the theatre. To avoid this, you can just put your hand up: this means that John is laughing, not Elias.

Of course, since your are playing a RPG, it's suggested to minimise these cases: if you spend 30% of the time talking as the player, why are you playing?

THE STORY-TELLER

The Story-teller is always right. In RPG nobody wins, nobody loses, we just play to enjoy ourself, there isn't any winner at the end of the evening!

The Story-teller manages the “virtual world” where characters live: he decides like the weather is, if your character is tired, if you are hungry, if the cab notices you, and so on...

He decides all this using a very complex set of rules, and sometimes he uses dice to get random possibilities: if you don't agree with a Story-teller decision, ask him (at the end of the game) the list of books you can study to understand the game's rule system. After you have finished reading them, you will be welcome to have a long discussion about the rules, and the Storyteller will be pleased to listen your suggestion.

Actually this is the first step to become a Story-teller, but remember that the Story-teller is not playing: he's working for the players!

CHRONICLE

When you play RPG, you need your own character. Before starting playing each player must write the character's Background, usually one paper sheet full of information about the character's life. In the Background you decide when your character is born, his name, his country, his childhood, his habits, his skills, his fears, and so on...

Writing a Background is like summarizing the life of one person in a single sheet, of course it's a pity to do such work for just a couple of hours. Furthermore, the first evening you'll familiarize with the game's system, the second evening you'll start feeling “yours” the character, the third evening you'll begin to understand the story, and so on...

That's why usually RPG's players play a Chronicle, not single games. A Chronicle is a big adventure, created by the Story-teller, that goes on for some months (in players time), usually playing once for week.

For example, you may have to find a magic stone, or to save the world, or just find the way out from a evil maze: collecting different clues evening after evening, the whole party may be able to reach his aim, or may not. This doesn't matter, the only important thing is enjoying playing, if after some months of play you fail ... don't worry: it's only a game!

TYPES OF ROLE-PLAY GAMES

Of course it's not so amazing to role the play of a student, a sailor-man, or a secretary: fantasy hasn't limits, that's why people usually prefer acting very special characters, like wizards, great warriors, werewolfs etc... Choosing the character's nature, you choose the fantasy world in which your characters are going to live in. In 1970 the most famous RPG was Dungeons & Dragons (D&D), where the characters were warriors, wizards, dwarfs and so on, living in a middle-age like world. Ten years after came Advanced D&D, bringing only better rules, without changing anything about the imaginary world. In 90's a revolution happened, and the White Wolf's RPG age began: this RPG s are about THIS century, the character live in our "real" world, seen from a Gothic-Punk point of view. This World of Darkness is just a little different from ours, since in it you can find Vampires, Mages, Werewolfs, Mummies, etc...

If you have read about Lovecraft's novels, you won't find difficult imagining it...

We're going to play with White Wolf's game-system, from many simple reasons: it's the simplest system I know, it's the better system I know, it's the most popular system in the world...

WHITE WOLF'S SYSTEM

Everything is described using the "hotel system":

- (1 "star") : minimum
- (3 "star") : average
- (5 "star") : perfect

A Character is defined by three sets of Attributes: Physical, Social, Mental. Physical are divided into Strength, Dexterity, Stamina, so you can have a value from 1 to 5 in each of these fields.

In the same way, Social are divided into Appearance, Charisma, Manipulation, and Mental attributes are divided into Perception, Intelligence, Wits.

For example, let's assume the following values for Elias, your character:

Strength: 2	Appearance: 2	Intelligence: 4
Dexterity: 3	Charisma: 3	Wits: 2
Stamina: 3	Manipulation: 4	Perception: 1

Elias isn't very strong (Strength), he can run and jump over normal obstacles (Dexterity) without problems, and working hard for a whole day when it's necessary (Stamina). Just watching an Elias's picture (Appearance), you don't have any special impression about him, but when you see him (Charisma), he looks better, and when he starts talking (Manipulation) you always agree with him. Elias he's able to understand (Intelligence) almost every reasoning, but he wouldn't see a clue even under his nose (Perception). Finally, he is seldom able to say the right thing at the right moment (Wits): after a speech or after a row, he always thinks "I could have said This, I could have said That..."

After the attributes, a character is defined by his Skills: is he able to drive a car? Does he speak other languages? Is he a good athlete? Does he know how a computer works?

Like above, for each of his skills the character has a value from 1 to 5.

Finally, each character is defined by:

- *Merits*: very particular aptitudes (he never gets flue, he can avoid sleeping for days, ...)
- *Flaws*: allergies, deformities, fears, personal foes etc...
- *Influence*: important friends in some fields (Politics, Mass Media, Finance, Bureaucracy, ...)
- *Health*: the present health situation of the character (sane, injured, bruised, ...)
- *Willpower*: using willpower points a character can solve difficult situations.

There are a lot of other rules, but it's not required a such knowledge to play a RPG: the Story-teller knows all the rules and will help you to use them...