

Theo
Nachricht an Bischof de Colonne.
Ich war im Hause des Weizis und hatte die
Gelegenheit mit einem seiner Untergassen über
Schwester Esther aus meinem Orden zu unterhalten
(Schwester E. habe ich zuvor schon erwähnt) Durch
Hilfe der mir gegebenen Kräfte konnte
Verbleib als Gefangene in
Erzählung bringen 1: Mal ist es eine Brüder für beide?
2: selbst auf eigene Wünsche?
diesem Falle würde ich
des Unvermögen
hier eine
Übersichtsp

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The term "gamemaster" as used in this book does not imply any preference of gender and refers to male and female gamemasters alike even when only one pronoun is used.

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- 14.04 Titel 4
- 15. The Passport
- 16. Aphrodisiac
- 17. Examining, Exam
- 18. A Cry from the He
- 19. Mani and the Gyps

Dunkelheit / Natur
Körperliche Arbeit
Die Trip vorbei, weg von hier
Gesunde

Blade Runner
Brotherhood of the
Lore/Themes And
Lore
Gangs of New York
Ghost In The Shell
Matrix Reloaded

Gamemastering

Dominic Wäsch

Preparing and Running Storytelling
and Roleplaying Games

A Guidebook for Gamemasters

PROINDIE

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A few words in Advance

Gamemastering is not very popular in the community – preparing for sessions is lots of work, the gamemaster must know the rules, and he or she must improvise and moderate the game. Many people don't have the nerve. Others don't feel like doing so. In many groups there are players who don't feel up to gamemastering. Role-playing conventions attempt to sweeten the pot by reducing the admission fee if one is willing to master a game, and still there usually are too few gamemasters at conventions.

Why is that so? The answer can be found in the rulebooks for the big role-playing systems, or rather, it *cannot*. The gamemastering parts of the rulebooks often describe secrets for the gamemaster, monster stats, or other rulings and background stuff. There are only few texts which describe what to do during the gaming session and how to prepare a role playing game. Remarkable books are *Robin's Law of Good Gamemastering* and *Play Unsafe*. Together with the *Big Model* (a theoretical model for role playing games) and other internet sources (blogs, forums, etc.) they build the base of this book. Especially the ideas of the “father of improvisation” *Keith Johnstone* have found their way into this book via the Blog of *Graham Walmsley*, the author of *Play Unsafe*.

A structured approach, which covers the whole thing, is still missing. What are a gamemaster's tasks in the first place? How can gamemasters prepare efficiently? How do gamemasters manage to incorporate the character portayers' motivations in their stories and make the game interesting for the players? And how does one improvise as a gamemaster?

This book provides answers to all these questions. It offers hands-on help and advice on what efficient, tailored-to-the-players'-needs preparation might look like. This means less work for the gamemaster and more fun during the session.

This book provides answers to all these questions. It offers hands-on help and advice on what efficient, tailored-to-the-players'-needs preparation might look like. This means less work for the gamemaster and more fun during the session.

This book does not explain how role-playing games are played in the first place; still, it is aimed at beginners and advanced gamemasters alike as well as those who haven't mastered a session yet but would like to do so. However, one precondition is that the reader has an idea of what role-playing games are and knows a few people with whom to play. An introduction to the subject of role-playing may be found at in

the Wikipedia article on pen & paper role-playing games (this article also has lots of interesting links).

Put very simply, pen & paper role-playing games may be seen as a combination of board games and story-telling. The gamemaster guides the game, sets the basic framework of the story. The other players portray their fictitious characters within this framework and make decisions for these characters within the scope of existing sets of rules. Chance is simulated by means of dice, or, more rarely, playing cards.

For those readers who are familiar with many role-playing systems, please note the things that this book cannot provide. Primetime Adventures producers and other specialized gamemasters are not covered; neither are game-master-less role-playing games such as Universalis. This book does not deal with the creation of suitable challenges, the statistics of “good” monsters or the coolest cyberware – all these things are too much a part of individual role-playing systems to be covered here.

Instead, this book focuses on traditional systems with a strong GM who makes sure that there is a plot and that the players are in control of their own characters. Most of the popular role-playing games fall into this category: Dungeons & Dragons, World of Darkness, Warhammer Fantasy RPG, Shadowrun, Call of Cthulhu, Earthdawn, and GURPS.

There is a detailed section on how to be responsive to one’s players as a gamemaster, how to think up interesting situations and prepare characters for these situations. All this plays a crucial role during gaming sessions. Even the so-called adventure role-playing games are not all about fighting and disarming traps – even there, the challenges are wrapped up in a plausible, attractive backstory.

This book covers practically every genre, any mood, and every type of role-playing game. It is intended as an instruction manual that points out which techniques may lead to successful gamemastering regardless of specific systems. Therefore, the examples used were taken from different genres, showing how the techniques described may be used in all kinds of settings.

Naturally, the method detailed herein is not the only one leading to fun during sessions. Even the best instruction manual cannot replace the intuition displayed by a person who reacts flexibly to her players, who makes her players shift restlessly in their seats whenever the story gets exciting, and who can feel the fun that her players are having. The hints and advice gathered in this book are not meant to induce gamemasters to throw all their experience overboard – instead, the text offers impetus that any gamemaster may use to enrich her game.

Terms and abbreviations

Player and Gamemaster (GM): Every participant in the game, with the exception of the gamemaster, is called a player. The gamemaster also participates in the game, but due to his special role, he is seen more as a facilitator than a player. Many role-playing systems have special names for the GM, such as Master, Dungeon Master, Storyteller, Producer, etc.

Player Characters (PCs): PCs usually are the protagonists of a jointly told story; however, PCs may also be evil or play against each other. Whichever the case may be, they take the most prominent role during the game. In the game, every player usually portrays one PC.

Gamemaster Characters (GMCs): Gamemaster characters are all leading and supporting roles which are not a PC; even monsters are counted as GMCs. GMCs are often called Non-Player Characters (NPCs) by other authors. GMCs are prepared by the gamemaster and usually portrayed by him. Some gamemasters hand over GMCs to their players as *extras*. That way, the players can participate in scenes where their characters are not present.

The structure of this book

This book is structured as follows:

1. The first chapter, “A Gamemaster’s Tasks”, focuses on what a role-playing gamemaster has to do and what her position in the role-playing group is. The chapter also deals with some of the problems that may crop up if different opinions of what the gamemaster’s tasks actually are occur in the group.
2. The next chapter, called “The Role-Playing Group”, deals with the entire group. The chapter starts off by discussing individual preferences and the resulting problems; this is contrasted with the fun and enjoyment for the entire group. The objective always must be to increase fun for the entire group, which may be achieved by both players and the gamemaster joining creative forces, and if they reward each other for good gaming. This, in turn, may best be achieved by taking into account the above-mentioned individual preferences, which can be captured by means of flags or kickers.

3. “Mastering a Gaming Session” is the title of the third chapter. The lion’s share of this chapter is devoted to the improvisation of stories; however, some general principles are also discussed. Why should a gamemaster be responsive to his players? How can he achieve this objective?
4. The fourth chapter, “Preparation”, explains how a gamemaster can specifically prepare sessions without it turning into boring drudgery. This section points out how preparation lets a gamemaster allow her players great liberties, without being hanging herself during the game. Besides traditional dramatic situations, this chapter focuses on techniques such as mind and relationship maps, conflict nets, as well as the specific preparation of GMCs and places.
5. The last chapter, “Further Gaming Techniques”, is used to present a small collection of other techniques which do not really fit into the structure of the previous chapters. Still, they are interesting enough that every gamemaster should have heard of them, such as pace control by the GM, situational decisions, or other problems which crop up time and again in role-playing sessions.

Examples

In order to illustrate the advice given in the text and the gaming situations detailed therein, the book is littered with examples. Some of them are linked and refer back to each other, but mostly they are independent of each other. To make it easier for the reader to understand the text, the examples should not be skipped.



In A Nutshell

At the end of every major section, there is a box which summarizes the text in a few keywords. These boxes are intended to serve as a mnemonic aid and to once again draw the reader’s attention to the main terms of the section. Here, readers may check whether they have grasped the pertinent information from the section.



Exercises

Strewn throughout the text are some exercises meant for readers to try out the ideas they have just read about themselves. Ideas for solutions, descriptions, and background information on the exercises may be found in the appendix. Such exercises can support the success of the learning process tremendously, but only if the reader





enjoys doing them. This, in turn, means that readers who do not feel like doing the exercises may simply skip them. They are of no significance for the rest of the text, and nowhere will references be made to an exercise.

Naturally, not all sections are equally well suited for exercises; therefore they are unevenly spread throughout the book.

Digging Deeper

Some of the ideas and techniques detailed herein seem to contradict each other at first glance, or at least they don't fit in with the game as most players or gamemasters know it. These issues are dealt with in greater detail and discussed in a critical manner in the sections called "Digging Deeper". Sometimes, these paragraphs will digress from the actual subject, and sometimes they are fairly hard to understand. The "Digging Deeper" sections deal with tricky questions, but they are not necessary for understanding the book itself; they simply provide some additional information.