



FREEFORM

ROLEPLAYING

A DIRT-SIMPLE ROLEPLAYING GAME SYSTEM
FOR THE CURIOUS NOOB





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PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Many a time, I have heard people say something to the effect of, "I'm curious about D&D, but I just don't know how to get started." And honestly, I see where people are coming from when they say this. Looking upon the wall of tabletop RPG books at your local bookstore can be a mightily intimidating experience. Those things are the size of textbooks. And though many of them are really quite easy to understand, very few people relish the prospect of dropping 40 to 70 bucks on an RPG book, when there's no guarantee that tabletop RPGs are something you'll even enjoy. So they think, "Why even bother trying?"

That precise thought is why I created Freeform Roleplaying. Freeform Roleplaying, or FFRP, is a system designed for total RPG newbies. It is ridiculously simple, stripping out all but the most essential elements of tabletop roleplaying and distilling it down to its most basic essence. It is intended to give the basic experience of what tabletop roleplaying is like, without necessitating that players buy expensive books and equipment or learn a bunch of complicated rules.

As you look through this system, and as you play your first FFRP sessions, keep three basic rules in mind. The first is "Don't be a doofbucket." This just means, try not to let anything get in the way of the game being fun. Don't get into fights over game mechanics, and don't screw over your party members all the time. Such is the way of the doofbucket. Don't be a doofbucket. The second is the "Rule of Cool." This is also very simple: If something sounds cool, try it! The third is, "When in doubt, have fun." If you have the choice between a sensible, realistic option, and a less plausible but more fun option, go for the fun. FFRP is a game.

Games should be fun. Have fun.

If all of that sounds like your kind of thing, then read on.

PART TWO: PEOPLE AND STUFF

THE PEOPLE

Freeform Roleplaying, like all tabletop RPGs, is, at its heart, a social experience. You will need a group of people to play this game. Chances are, if you're reading this, you've already got at least a few people in mind. But if you don't, there are some things you might want to consider when selecting a group of people to play with. Ideally, you'll want to play with a group of people you know fairly well. Family can serve in a pinch, but friends are generally the best bet. Think about which of your friends might be interested in a collaborative, creative roleplaying experience. Think about which of your friends you could see yourself sitting around a table playing board games with.

Additionally, confer with everyone about what kind of game you want to play. By that I mean, ask each other what sort of style you are going for. Do you want a Lord of the Rings-style epic fantasy, a Game of Thrones-esque dark and gritty bloodbath, an Alice in Wonderland surreal jaunt, a Monty Python and the Holy Grail stroll through absurdity, or something else? Do you want to play as noble heroes, lovable scoundrels, or pillaging conquerors? Try to be on the same page about things like that. Games can be hard to run smoothly when on one end of the table you've got Sir Reginald Lionheart singing orphans to sleep, and on the other end you've got Urgnock the Hamfisted swinging his broadaxe into a merchant's face because said merchant took too long to make change for the ale he bought. Both of these play styles are legitimate and enjoyable in their own way, but when you mix certain things together, you're not always going to get peanut butter and jelly.

Finally, make sure everyone understands that the primary goal of FFRP is to have fun. To spend time arguing about mechanics and minutiae is to miss the point of tabletop roleplaying. Such is the way of the doofbucket. Nobody wants to be a doofbucket. Enjoy yourself, follow the Rule of Cool, and most importantly, have some fun.

THE STUFF

So now, you've got the people you need to play. But in addition to those people, you will need some basic stuff to play a session of Freeform Roleplaying. All of that stuff is listed below.

STUFF ONE: A PENCIL

Just a pencil. Nearly any kind will do. Mechanical, old-school wood, whatever you like. Just make sure the thing has a working eraser on it. No golf pencils are allowed in Freeform Roleplaying. No pens, either. Or markers. Or crayons. You will be erasing and writing things down a lot. Use a pencil.

STUFF TWO: A PIECE OF PAPER

Any kind of paper. Looseleaf paper, construction paper, computer paper, whatever kind of paper you want. You can even use that pad of hotel stationery you stole from the Holiday Inn that one time, you dirty thief. Hundreds of hotel gnomes DIED to make that pad of paper, and the best you can think of to do with it is stuff it in your junk drawer and forget about it? You monster.

STUFF THREE: A HARD, FLAT SURFACE

Most commonly, this will be a table. But any surface will do, as long as you can roll dice on it and place paper on it to write on. You could roll dice on the floor and write on clipboards if you want. Just make sure you're comfortable. RPG sessions can last a while.

STUFF FOUR: A SIX-SIDED DIE

I guarantee that you've got one somewhere in your place of residence. Raid an old board game. Check the couch cushions. Look in the junk drawer while you're digging out that Holiday Inn notepad. You only need one die. Look hard enough, and you'll find it.

STUFF FIVE: SNACKS

You might think snacks are not essential. You'd be wrong, you MORON. Imagine your life without snacks. What kind of life is that? No life at all, I say. Snacks are distilled happiness. Bring snacks.

PART THREE: ABILITY SCORES

Character ability scores, also referred to as statistics, or “stats,” are the bread and butter of everything you do in FFRP. Every die roll you make refers back to your stats. There are six stats. This section covers what they are and how to determine yours.

ABILITY SCORE OVERVIEW

STRENGTH (STR)

Strength is pretty self-explanatory. This represents your character’s raw physical power. You use Strength to do things like climb trees and walls, swim through treacherous waters, break down doors, restrain struggling prisoners, and lift heavy objects. A character with high Strength will be muscular and fit. A character with low Strength will be weak and reedy.

DEXTERITY (DEX)

Dexterity represents how agile your character is. It is used to do things like maintain your balance on a narrow bridge, sneak around without being detected, and perform acrobatic stunts. You also use your Dexterity to perform tasks involving fine motor control, such as picking locks and sleight of hand. A character with high Dexterity will be lithe, flexible, and nimble. A character with low Dexterity will be clumsy, oafish, and uncoordinated.

CONSTITUTION (CON)

Constitution represents your character’s general physical health. A character with high Constitution will be healthy and hardy, capable of shrugging off disease and poisons, as well as resist the adverse effects of intoxicants. A character with low Constitution will be weak and sickly, prone to illness and fatigue. Constitution also determines how many Hit Points your character has. Hit Points are explained in greater detail later in this section.

INTELLIGENCE (INT)

Intelligence represents your character's level of formal education, and is concerned with the sorts of things you learn in books. Characters with high Intelligence range from scholarly professors to trivia buffs. Characters with low Intelligence run the gamut from simple, uneducated folk to the village idiot hollering about how two plus two equals chicken.

WISDOM (WIS)

Wisdom represents your character's everyday, practical knowledge, and can sometimes be thought of as "street smarts" or "common sense." Wisdom is used for things like navigating your way around an unfamiliar environment, spotting an approaching enemy creeping in the shadows, noticing details in your surroundings, or discerning the intentions of a person you are conversing with. Characters with high Wisdom will have an intuitive grasp of human nature and perceive things others might not. Characters with low Wisdom are inattentive and foolish, and may stumble into danger more easily than others.

CHARISMA (CHA)

Charisma represents your character's force of personality. Charisma is of great importance to anyone who makes their living by performing. It can also be used to get what you want out of people, whether by winning them over with your sparkling personality, or skillfully lying through your teeth to fool them into doing what you want. Characters with high Charisma have winning smiles, alluring personalities, and can command attention wherever they go. Characters with low Charisma are awkward, bumbling, and often shy.

DETERMINING YOUR ABILITY SCORES

Determining your ability scores is a very simple process. Remember that six-sided die? It can give you a number anywhere between one and six. Those numbers will be your stats. You have six stats to assign, and six numbers to use. Once you have used a number, you cannot use it again. To do this, simply write "STR," "DEX," "CON," "INT," "WIS," and "CHA" on separate vertical lines on your sheet of paper, then write the corresponding number next to the appropriate stat.

Example Ability Score Assignment:

You decide you want to play a dwarven warrior. You think that your character's toughness is what defines him most, so you give him a Constitution score of 6. You also want him to be physically powerful, so you assign a Strength score of 5. Your character is an older dwarf with a lot of life experience, so you decide that his Wisdom score is 4. You don't think of your character as stupid, but he's not terribly well-educated either, so you give him an Intelligence score of 3. Because your dwarf is older and combat-hardened, he's also fairly curmudgeonly, so you give him a Charisma of 2. Finally, because your dwarf is stocky and built like a brick wall, you assign him a Dexterity of 1.

HIT POINTS

After you have figured out your stats, make sure to also write down your Hit Points, or HP. Your Hit Points are equal to double your Constitution score. The number of Hit Points you have represents the number of times you can be struck in combat before dying. When your character reaches zero hit points, they are knocked unconscious. If your character is at zero hit points and is struck again, they die.

USING YOUR STATS

There are many things that you will do in your game sessions that don't require any rules or dice rolls. Talking amongst your party members and interacting with NPCs will, for the most part, be based solely on talking and roleplaying. However, anytime you want to do something that involves potential failure, that's where your stats come in. Any time that you are trying to accomplish a task, the Game Master will prompt you to roll an ability check. When rolling a check, you roll your die and add whichever ability score is appropriate to the situation, as decided by the GM.

Example Ability Check:

Your party is attempting to break into a place of business after hours because you have reason to suspect the owner of trafficking in alchemical drugs. You decide to try and break down the door. The GM prompts you to roll a Strength check. You all decide that your warrior, a barbarian from the south, is the best one for the job. She rolls her die, landing on the number 4. Then, she adds her Strength bonus of 6, giving her a total result of 10. She succeeds in smashing the door off its hinges, granting you access to the shop.

Some tasks are more difficult than others. The GM decides how difficult any particular check might be, based on what you are trying to accomplish and the circumstances of the world around that check.

Example Ability Check:

Amara, who is playing the party's rogue, is trying to help the party secure some extra funds to buy some healing potions for their next journey. Amara's character is a skilled thief, and decides to walk around the town square and pickpocket some of the noblemen in the area. The GM prompts Amara to roll a Dexterity check to do so. The square is very busy and bustling with trade, so the GM decides that Amara only needs a result of 8 to pull this off. Amara rolls a 3 and adds her Dexterity of 6, succeeding at the task easily. Later, Amara is playing cards at the tavern, and decides to try and cheat by palming a few cards for use in a later turn. The GM prompts her to roll a Dexterity check, like before, but because the tavern is quiet and all the card players are highly attentive, the GM decides that Amara needs a result of 11 this time. Fortunately, Amara rolls a 6, giving her a result of 12 after adding her Dexterity. Amara cleans house.

This is where roleplaying can really come in handy. Being a good roleplayer and actively engaging with the game world and the characters within it, can make a huge difference in how difficult the GM thinks a particular task might be. Always remember that good roleplaying is the whole point of FFRP. It makes the game more unique, fun and interesting, and is often rewarded by the GM.

Example Ability Check:

The party has just arrived in town, and has decided to visit the market to restock on some basic supplies. Kevin, who is playing your group's mage, tells the GM, "I walk up to the nearest food vendor and start haggling for a good price on some trail rations." The GM tells Kevin to roll a Charisma check. Kevin gets a total result of 5. The GM says that this is not good enough to secure a deal, and Kevin pays full market price. David, who is playing the party's warrior, tells the GM, "I need some more arrows for my longbow. I walk up to a vendor, ask his name, and ask him to take a look at his wares." The GM says, "The merchant's name is Alan. He directs your attention to his supply of arrows, and asks, 'So, how are the roads these days. Run into any bandits on your way to town?'" David and the GM begin sharing old war stories. After a minute, David asks, "Can I see if I can get a good price on these arrows if I buy them in bulk?" The GM prompts David to roll a Charisma check. Like Kevin, David also gets a total result of five. However, the GM decides that, because David's character built a personal rapport with the merchant, the merchant is more willing to give him a deal, so David secures a better price on the arrows.

In addition to the normal difficulty of any given situation, sometimes, specific circumstances might give you a special advantage on a particular check. Such circumstances relate to your character's life experiences and background.

Example Ability Check:

The GM prompts you to roll a Wisdom check to track a fleeing opponent through a large crowd. According to your character's backstory, you were orphaned at a young age and grew up on the streets of a large port town. Because of this, you ask the GM whether your background would provide you with a circumstantial bonus in this instance. The GM agrees that your upbringing is relevant to this roll, and provides you with a +1 bonus. You roll your die and add your Wisdom score, then add 1 to the result.

However, sometimes circumstances may work against you, rather than in your favor.

Example Ability Check:

You are sitting at the bar in your tavern, chatting with the young woman behind the bar. As you do so, the GM prompts you roll a Wisdom check to notice a pickpocket attempt to slip your coin purse out of your belt. The bartender happens to bear a striking resemblance to your sister whom you have not seen in months. Because of this, the GM decides that you are more distracted than usual, and imposes a -1 penalty. You roll your die and add your Wisdom score, then subtract 1 from the result.

Circumstantial penalties may provide a greater benefit or impose a larger detriment than a +1 or -1, depending on the GM's discretion. If you think that circumstances may be in your favor based on your character's history, don't hesitate to bring it up. However, avoid getting into arguments over such things. Arguments slow the game down and make the whole experience less fun. Arguments are for doofbuckets. Don't be a doofbucket.

PART FOUR: CHARACTER CLASSES

Character classes represent the basic fantasy archetype into which your character falls. Most RPG systems have a wide variety of classes with specific strengths and weaknesses. In keeping with the basic nature of FFRP, I have boiled down the character classes to a list of four. Each of these classes has a special ability unique to that class.

A NOTE ON CLASSES:

Though FFRP's class system is aimed in the direction of fantasy-style role-playing games, there is no reason you should have to restrict yourself to one particular genre! The system works just as well for other genres. Just be creative!

EXAMPLE ONE:

Derek wants to run a game inspired by modern action movies. He decides to omit the Mage and Cleric classes from his game, but also decides that without Clerics, he needs some means of providing healing. So when his players are low on health, he asks them to roll to attempt to administer First Aid, which he decides is an Intelligence check because it requires formal training.

EXAMPLE TWO:

Rachel is a huge Star Wars fan, and wants to run a game using it as inspiration. She decides that the Mage and Cleric classes should be combined into one class, which she calls "Force User." She decides that the Force User class will roll Wisdom checks to utilize Force powers, since the ability to use the Force is dependent on one's willpower and inner focus.

WARRIOR



Warriors are masters of martial combat. Whether they are a massive bruiser swinging a hefty greatsword, a scrappy street fighter flourishing a pair of daggers, a military-trained guardsman standing at the ready with a long halberd, or a skilled archer firing a longbow with pinpoint accuracy, warriors are defined by their ability to excel at physical combat.

SPECIAL ABILITY:

Warriors have the ability to take the Attack Action more than once per turn (See Part Five: Combat for more details on Actions).

RESTRICTIONS:

Warriors have no special restrictions.

ROGUE

Rogues are sneaky tricksters. Some are the type to lurk in shadows, waiting for the perfect opportunity to strike an unaware target. Others work in the open, deceiving others through cunning and guile. Whatever their specialization, rogues always know how to get what they want.

SPECIAL ABILITY:

Rogues have the ability to pick locks and disarm traps. They can also perform a unique Action called Knock Out (see Part Five: Combat).

RESTRICTIONS:

Rogues have no special restrictions.



CLERIC



Clerics are intuitive and wise. They devote themselves to serving higher powers. Those that follow noble gods are often healers and protectors, focusing their efforts on carrying light into the darkness. Those that follow wicked gods generally focus more on sapping the life and energy from their enemies, bringing pain and ruin to nonbelievers.

SPECIAL ABILITY:

Clerics can cast divine magic, which can directly assist allies or debilitate foes. Examples might include healing spells or buffs to provide a temporary increase to another character's stats or skills, or doing the reverse to enemies.

The stat that determines a cleric's magical skill is Wisdom.

RESTRICTIONS:

Clerics must worship a god in order to be blessed with their divine powers. Additionally, clerics must present a holy symbol of their chosen deity in order to cast their divine magic. Such symbols are commonly worn around the neck, or emblazoned on a shield or tabard.



MAGE

Mages are masters of the mystical forces that bind the very universe together. Some spend years mastering their skills in scholarly wizard's colleges, and others discover their innate magical talents through random experiments and trial and error.

SPECIAL ABILITY:

Mages can cast arcane magic, which can be applied in a more combative way than divine magic. Examples might include throwing balls of fire or conjuring invisible walls of force. The stat that determines a mage's magical skill is Intelligence.

RESTRICTIONS:

Mages cannot wear armor of any kind, because armor interferes with the precise movements needed to cast arcane magic. Additionally, mages must have an arcane focus item in hand in order to cast their magic. Examples of such items include staves, magic wands, enchanted weapons, and amulets.

PART FOUR: COMBAT

In most instances, keeping precise track of in-game time while playing is not necessary. When characters are having drinks at a tavern, or wandering around a marketplace, there is no need to break the game down second by second. However, sometimes it will be necessary to keep track of time more precisely. At that time, everyone would enter timed combat. Combat in FFRP is turn-based, with each player, plus the GM, going down a list and taking Actions. When all the characters and NPCs have taken a turn, that is called a "round." The rules of combat are detailed below.

COMBAT ROUNDS

STEP ONE: ROLLING FOR INITIATIVE

The first step of combat is to determine initiative. This means figuring out what order everyone's turn will be in. When the first round of combat begins, everyone rolls a Dexterity check. The turns then happen in descending order depending on the results of those checks. If two characters roll the same total result, the character with the higher Dexterity score goes first. If both characters have the same Dexterity score, those characters roll against each other, without adding Dexterity, to determine who goes first.

Example Initiative Result:

The party of characters consists of Lauren, a mage, Craig, a cleric, Sarah, a warrior, and James, a rogue. Lauren and Craig are walking around the town's marketplace when the GM decides that a pickpocket is going to attempt to steal Craig's coin purse. The GM rolls a Dexterity result of 6, and prompts Craig and Lauren to roll Wisdom checks to notice the attempt. Lauren and Craig get results of 6 and 11, meaning that both of them spot the thief slipping the pouch off of Craig's belt. They demand that the thief drop the stolen money, at which point combat begins. The GM rolls a Dexterity result of 10 for the thief. Lauren rolls a 10, and Craig rolls a 4. The thief's Dexterity score is 5, and Lauren's is 4, so the thief goes first, followed by Lauren, then by Craig.

To keep things simple, whenever the players are facing multiple enemies at the same time, it is recommended that the GM have all enemy combatants take their Actions on the same turn.

STEP TWO: THE FIRST COMBATANT

When initiative has been determined, combat rounds start and the first combatant may take Actions. A character may take two Actions per round, plus an additional number of Free Actions, depending on the GM's discretion. The types of Actions are detailed in the second half of this chapter. If the player wishes, they may also delay their turn until after another ally or enemy has acted. This effectively changes their Initiative result to just after whichever combatant they designate.

STEP THREE: OTHER COMBATANTS

After the first combatant has taken their Actions, the second combatant may take their Actions, then the third, and so on.

STEP FOUR: NEW ROUNDS

Once all combatants have taken their Actions, the initiative order cycles back around to the beginning, starting a new round of combat. Combat rounds continue until the combat reaches resolution, whether through fatality or surrender.

ACTIONS

During combat, a character is limited in what they can accomplish before their turn is done. This limit is expressed in the form of Actions. A character can only take two Actions per turn, plus an additional number of Free Actions, detailed on the next few pages.

ATTACK ACTION

A character can attempt to deal damage to a target's Hit Points by rolling an Attack action. Attack Actions can only be taken once per turn. The character rolls either a Strength check or a Dexterity check, depending on which one the player prefers. To the result of that check, you add your character level. Depending on the result of this check, the player either damages the target or fails to do so. Each successful Attack lowers the target's Hit Points by one.

Whether the roll is good enough to damage the target or not is up to the GM to decide, depending on the circumstances and the target itself. For example, firing a longbow at the broad side of a rhinoceros in bright, windless daylight is a much easier prospect than hitting a mid-flight bird in the eye from a hundred yards away during a hurricane.

It should also be noted that hitting a target is not necessarily the same as damaging its Hit Points. However, a small goblin who is wearing only scraps of leather, but is ducking and weaving in and out of cover, is probably about as difficult to injure as a 6 foot tall orc moving slowly, but clad in finely-crafted plate armor and wielding a shield. The goblin is harder to hit, but easier to hurt once you do hit them. The orc, conversely, would get hit a lot more often, but very few of those hits would be able to reach their flesh beneath the armor. A successful Attack means that you have not just hit a creature, but hurt it.

The GM may also decide that some things are simply beyond being damaged by certain kinds of attacks. For example, you could swing a shortsword at the bars of a steel cage all day long without ever making a dent in them. The GM could also rule that certain types of attacks are more effective than others. For instance, a magically animated scarecrow might take additional damage from a source of fire, such as a spell, or being hit with a flaming arrow or torch.

MOVE ACTION

Typically, a Move Action means moving from one place on the battlefield to another. Depending on the GM's discretion, they may decide that a particular movement costs more than one Move Action. Hurrying from one end of a small tavern can probably be done with a single Move Action, but moving from one end of the tavern to another, hopping over the bar, and hurling yourself through an open door would probably cost two Move actions.

Beyond moving your body in physical space, other Move Actions are up to the GM to adjudicate. To give an example, drawing a sword is usually considered a Free Action. However, sheathing one sword, drawing an axe, and then readying a shield would probably add up to a Move Action.

SPELLCASTING ACTION

Spellcasting involves a lot of creativity. The way that spellcasting works in FFRP is very simple: You describe what sort of magical effect you want to produce, and the GM decides whether or not such a spell is feasible, and how difficult it should be. You then make a Spellcasting attempt by rolling an Intelligence check (if a mage) or a Wisdom check (if a cleric), and add your mage (or cleric) level to the check. Depending on the total result of the Spellcasting attempt, the GM decides whether the spell was cast successfully, or whether it failed to coalesce.

The more powerful a spell is, the more difficult it should be to cast. Conjuring a small handful of flames and throwing it at a single opponent, for example, should be easier to do than creating a fiery explosion that damages several opponents. Some uses of magic are so minor that the GM may decide that a roll is unnecessary, such as lighting a single candle without a match, or making a stain on a robe disappear. Conversely, some uses of magic are so powerful that the GM may decide that certain spells are simply beyond the ability of the player character to cast at their current level. Also keep in mind that you cannot cast a spell more than once per turn, nor can you cast a spell and take an Attack action in the same turn.

KNOCK OUT ACTION

Knock Out is a special Action that can be performed only by rogues. To attempt a Knock Out action, the rogue must target a creature who is entirely unaware of the rogue. This is usually done by sneaking up on the target and catching them by surprise. The rogue then attempts to knock out the target. To do this, the rogue rolls a Dexterity check and adds their rogue level to the result. The resulting number is the Knock Out result. A Knock Out attempt deals no hit point damage to the target. However, the target must make a Constitution check equal to the result of the rogue's Knock Out result. If the target fails to meet or exceed the number set by the Knock Out check, they are knocked out for a number of minutes equal to the rogue's Knock Out result.

FREE ACTION

Some things can be done very quickly or easily during a combat turn. These are referred to as Free Actions, and you can take as many of them as you want during your turn, depending on the GM's discretion. The most common use of a Free Action is to shout something in-character to your allies during battle, though the fact that each round of combat lasts only six seconds of in-game time means that you are restricted to one or two very short sentences. Other examples could include slamming a door shut as you run through it, or drawing an arrow to fire it as part of an Attack action.

PART SIX: LEVELING

Leveling in FFRP is a fairly streamlined process. Characters begin at level 1 and progress to level 10. Whenever the GM decides it is appropriate, they will award the player characters a level. This is generally done at key story moments, or after a certain amount of time has passed, but it is ultimately up to the GM to decide. Since you add your character level to attack rolls and spellcasting checks, this means that your character will become more adept at combat and more magically potent as your level increases.

Beyond this, there are no special rules for what happens when you level up. However, feel free to work with the GM to come up with your own ideas for gaining benefits from leveling if you want to. Ideally, these should be benefits that are as specific to your character as possible. For example, perhaps your character has been gambling a lot during the game, and you and the GM decide that, because gambling is central to your character, and because your character gets so much practice at it, you might add your character level to any checks made to gamble. Be as creative as you like.

As a final note on spellcasting, keep in mind that, much like an archer runs out of arrows or a cutthroat's knives get dull with heavy use, magically gifted characters generally have a limited daily reservoir of magical energy. This reservoir tends to become larger as you level up, and the spells you can cast also become more powerful. GMs should keep this limitation in mind, and decide for themselves when they think a mage or a cleric might be running low on magical power. A character who acts conservatively, conjuring only minor blasts of force against single targets or healing only minor injuries, and uses spells of greater power very infrequently, will generally be able to go the distance fairly well. Conversely, a character who calls down lightning from the heavens on massive groups of enemies every round will find that their power swiftly runs dry, leaving them without their best advantage.

PART SEVEN: THE GAME MASTER

In every session of FFRP, it is one player's job to act as the Game Master. The other players at the table represent the main characters of the story being told through roleplaying. The Game Master represents everything else. The GM creates the world, and acts as all the non-player characters, or NPCs, with whom the player characters interact. Essentially, the GM comes up with the premise for the adventure and creates the initial situation the players find themselves in. Perhaps the players wake up in a prison cell after a night of heavy drinking, or are walking down a road when they suddenly spot an overturned cart and signs of a struggle, or are minding their own business in town when an invading force suddenly attacks. Once the GM has described the initial situation, the player characters will decide how they want to respond to the situation. The GM asks for any appropriate rolls, and tells them the results of their actions, either by narrating events or by responding as an NPC. Then the player characters respond to that, and soon you've got an adventure going.

Anytime that a player wants to do something that is not explicitly stated in the rules, it is the job of the GM to decide whether they can do that thing, how difficult it would be to do so, and what sort of check they would have to make. Try to reward innovative thinking, and be flexible. It is the job of the GM to facilitate the imaginations of the players. At the same time, players need to respect a GM's decision, even if they disagree with said decision. Starting arguments is unproductive and slows the game down.

Being the GM involves wielding a lot of power, and as such, demands a lot of responsibility. Your goal should be to put forth a series of challenges to the players that test their ability to work as a unit and play smart. It is hard to enjoy a game that is too easy, because there is little satisfaction to be had in steamrolling a vastly inferior opponent. By the same token, if characters repeatedly act foolishly and suffer no ill consequences, they will tend not to take the game seriously. On the other hand, a game that is too hard can feel stressful and unfair. If the characters are never in a position to feel like they are doing well, they may lose interest in playing. Do your best to read the mood of the room and respond accordingly. Remember that fun is the ultimate goal of FFRP.

CREDITS

CREATOR
JESSE CODER

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