

This document provides guidelines for writing a solitaire adventure (PA). When composing and writing your adventure, please keep game mechanics simple and playable.

Dark City Games loses money. Nevertheless, we want to incentivize creative authors to submit their materials for publication. We will purchase submission for full and exclusive perpetual rights, provided the playtesters believe the submission is fun and appropriate.

SECTIONS

Each PA should include the following sections. Please see the addendum for an example of what each section should look like. If you'd like, you can simply copy and paste from the Introduction from the sample and adjust it accordingly to meet the needs of your adventure.

Blurb: A quick teaser of the adventure, written in the second person.

Introduction: An explanation of a programmed adventure, and how to play it. This will be provided by DCG, so there is no need to write this in your submission.

Entries: The actual paragraphs that compose the adventure.

WRITING A PA

Writing a PA is different from writing a story. A story follows a linear path. In a PA however, the players determine where they will travel and what actions they take. As a result, a PA must accommodate random movement, time and decision making.

As a result, the building blocks of PAs are frequently locations (often referred to as encounters). For example, if the story's plot involves uncovering a murder, a PA will detail a number of locations that the party can visit, each with a different clue as to the resolution of the murder.

One way of translating a plot into a programmed adventure is to identify significant events in the storyline and translate those events into locations. For example, a plot where professor Purple bludgeoned the victim with a hammer and then dragged the body away and buried it in the garden. The author would write one encounter for the kitchen, where the murder occurred. There might be flecks of blood on the floor that suggest murder. Then there would be an encounter for the garden, where loose dirt gives away the location where the body is buried. Finally, there would be an encounter for the library, where behind the bookshelf, there is a bloody hammer that belongs to professor Purple.

THE PLOT

A well-designed plot is important to a successful adventure.

- The overall plot should always have a "pulling" force. This can be a physical object such as recovering the "Crown of Kings," or it can be intangible, such as escaping from the "Island of Terror" before the last boat departs.

- There should also be "pushing" forces. These can be an adversary in pursuit, environmental conditions (blizzards of winter), a time limit (running out of oxygen) and so on.
- Tension is critical. This can be something trying to kill the characters, steal their belongings, sabotage their objective etc.
- Time pressure adds to tension.
- The plot must have logical consistency. There should be a good reason for everything that happens in the plot.
- Player characters should be given a very good chance to survive the adventure. Adventures that quickly kill off characters will lose the players' interest. Conversely, threats should not be excessively weak; that too gets boring.
- A good guideline would be that at each fighting encounter, at least one of the player characters gets injured a little bit. This way, over the course of the adventure, a player character may die, but the entire party doesn't get wiped out right away.
- Characters should work for their rewards. Meaningful treasure, magical items, skills and other rewards should be rare, and should require difficult feats for acquisition.
- Rewards should not be ridiculous. Excessive value in a reward is meaningless, unless you can spend the reward and purchase something meaningful.
- Though this is only a game, we want to avoid potential problems that can damage our efforts to make this a mainstream game. Keep in mind, we have customers that enjoy gaming with their often sub-teen children. As a result, please be careful about sexually explicit materials, satanic themes presented in a positive light, etc.

THE ENCOUNTERS

An encounter is what happens to the party at a specific location. An encounter may span several entries, but is usually limited to a single location.

- Write in active voice. Use colorful verbs and adjectives ("The water trickles over glimmering stones" rather than "the water goes over rocks"). A sentence should build on, and be consistent with, the previous one. Avoid redundancy.
- A successful encounter forces the player to interact with the game or each other. EVERY encounters should cause players to react to a threat, make a decision, or check skills or attributes.
- Every encounter should include three elements: "Description," "Threat" and "Find."
- Description: There should be a couple lines of text, describing at least two different aspects of the current location. What do you see? What do you hear or smell? Is your skin crawling? Are beads of sweat running down your nose? Limit descriptions to about two lines, as excessive description can bog down play.

- **Threat:** Every encounter should present an immediate threat. This can be an adversary, weather, dangerous terrain, foreboding clues, or anything that implies the loss of life, belongings or well-being. Tension keeps the adventure lively.
- **Find:** Once characters resolve the threat, the encounter should reveal a "find." A find can be tangible or intangible: money, arms, magic, trinkets, potions, artifacts, clues, warnings, etc. Finds should occasionally relate to remote encounters, tying different areas together and creating logical consistency through the adventure.

OTHER ISSUES

- Writers must follow the combat, magic, skills, and advancement guidelines set forth in Dark City Games' *Legends* core rules.
- To minimize page-flipping, paragraphs related to each other should remain in very close proximity, though not necessarily adjacent.
- Try to keep as much information as possible in each encounter. Information spread across too many different entries increases page-flipping and reduces playability.
- Minimize linking encounters. Necessary linking encounters should have enough descriptive language to make them worth visiting on the description alone. Once again, even linking encounters should have the three: description, threat & find.
- Encounters with NPCs should almost include options to "Attack" and "Talk." A "Search" option should be available after the characters have cleared any immediate threat. Characters successfully search "*on passing 3/IQ.*" This makes IQ a strategically important attribute, as IQ can frequently be neglected.
- Write in as many instances of skills from the listing in the rules. This makes the skills useful. For example, characters might have to be literate in COMMON TONGUE in order to read a note scribbled on a wall, or might require CHARISMA in order to elicit important clues from a grumpy old villager.
- Award players experience points for figuring out puzzles, heroic actions, self-sacrifice, or charity. This allows characters to advance through role-playing, and not only through fighting.
- Use a generic background when writing an adventure. This way, the adventure can be adapted for use in many different game worlds.

CHARACTER SHORTHAND

- Write character attributes listing ST first, followed by DX, and then by IQ.
- For example: *Alexander: ST11³ DX11⁹ IQ11*
- Separate attributes from skills with a slash. Separate skills from belongings with a slash.

- For skills and weapons, capitalize each entry.
- For example: *Climbing+1, Swimming+1 / Short sword 2d6-1 / Leather 2-2, Small Shield 1-0.*
- Simplify adjustments as follows: Put the character's combined armor rating as a superscript to the ST, e.g. *ST11³*.
- You can put the character's adjusted DX (after armor restriction) as a superscript to the DX, e.g. *DX11⁹*.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Save documents in Open Office file format (*.ODT). Also please use outlining for each instruction number, as this facilitates formatting later on. If you have questions on outlining, email me.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions, please email me at: Info@DarkCityGames.com