Chapter 11: Running the Game

Getting Started

Fleshing out a world to play Pokémon Tabletop United can be trickier than it seems. It's our philosophy that we should share our opinions and experiences with various types of options rather than prescribe a specific form of setting, so instead of telling you how it's all gonna go down, we've readied a list of questions for you to think about when designing your setting. Thinking about the answers to all of these questions should give you a very firm grasp about your setting, and clarifying these questions early with your players makes sure both you and your players have the same sort of expectations about the campaign. So here we go!

Campaign Type?

What's the emphasis of the campaign? Is it a standard "To be a Master" campaign where the party travels from town to town, collecting badges? Are you going to be fighting villainous teams? Is the campaign set in a non-standard setting? Make sure to be very clear about this with your players! Don't be afraid to do something a bit whacky. Here's a small sample of some of the campaign premises for PTA and PTU we've witnessed over the past few years:

» **Wild West Mons**: a campaign following a group of travelers as they leave from Missouri and head out into the wild wild west.
» **Turf Wars**: set in a post-apocalyptic region, a group of Pokémon Trainers fights against gangs for dominance of a ruined city.
» **Trainer Academy**: Set in a high school for Trainers, this campaign detailed their adventures as they explored the school and battled a villainous team.
» **Rocket Game**: In this game the PCs WERE the villainous team! As members of Team Rocket, they had to work together to pull off increasingly dangerous and ridiculous crimes.
» **Pokétrian Odyssey**: Inspired by the Etrian Odyssey games, a Guild of Trainers explores various dungeons and natural locations while battling powerful corrupted Pokémon and attempting to find the source of an ancient evil.
» **Monster Hunters**: Inspired by the Monster Hunter games, trainers would team up to take out giant monsters that became threats throughout a region.

As you can see, taking pretty much any other premise and adding Pokémon seems to be one approach. Don't be afraid to try silly things, especially if you're getting tired of "vanilla" games!

Is there a Pokémon League?

If so, what's the role of the Pokémon League in your setting? Is it at all related to the government, or completely separate? What are the duties of Gym Leaders in your setting? How are the League and championship structured? Are there "Elite Four" or similar groups? What's their role? What about advanced content; Frontier Brains or similar? If there ISN'T a Pokémon League, is there another activity that serves to give players milestones? Trainer Academy had class exams; Pokétrian gave milestones for defeating bosses. Whatever your setting, it's good to have goals that can be met and rewarded appropriately periodically.

What's the Technology Level?

What are the implications of this? What items are and aren't readily available? If modern technology isn't available, are Poké Balls available somehow? Are only Apricorn Balls Available? Are no balls available? How are you going to handle TMs? What about Move Tutors and other NPC services?

Combat Emphasis?

Is "Trainer Combat" a big part of your campaign; or does it focus on Pokémon-only Combat? Both? How readily available are weapons? Will carrying a sword down the street quickly get law enforcement called, or does no one bat an eye at teenagers carrying guns and swords?

Supernatural Phenomena?

Are Trainers with supernatural powers common? Are Legendary Pokémon merely rare species, or are they actual divinity? Will magic and powerful artifacts feature in the campaign, or are Pokémon the extent of the fantastical elements? You may make decisions about what Trainer Classes you'll allow based on your answer to this question and the previous one.

Optional Rules?

Are you going to employ any optional rules in your campaign? Make sure to clarify this one with players from the start.

Be sure to check out the extra sourcebooks packaged with this book if you're looking for inspiration to run non-traditional Pokémon campaigns or if you want to add some exotic elements to spice up your campaign!

Constructing a Pokémon League

Most traditional Pokémon campaigns will feature a Pokémon League. So you might be asking yourself how you should put together your Pokémon League so it makes sense. Well, look no further! Here's a basic outline for a League structure that's suitable for most campaigns and gives you room to customize as well.

First of all, the Pokémon League usually governs all Pokémon Trainers in a region, including issuing Trainer IDs and tracking the registration of all caught Pokémon. The League often sponsors the Pokémon Professors who provide new Trainers with Starter Pokémon and set rules and regulations such as how many Pokémon a Trainer may carry with them at once.

Leagues are different from Region to Region in a lot of ways, but one thing most of them have in common is the League is an extension of the local law enforcement as well as an entertainment venue. Given the surplus of Teams and criminal organizations in the world of Pokémon, vigilantism is to some degree actively encouraged in certain settings. The League Officials

both take part in this, and testing the region's trainers better equips them to understand their own limits and handling these situations as well. Based on how serious this side of matters are, some Leagues encourage Trainer Combat more than traditional sports based ones do. League Officials can be broken down into three groups: Gym Leaders, The Elite Four, and Frontier Brains.

Gym Leaders are locally elected officials by each township or city to represent the spirit of the town, and help curb local crime. While not always Type based, the geographical and cultural ties of a town often lead them to be. Gym Leaders are also able to enlist Gym Trainers to serve as both aids for testing wandering Trainers, and as Deputies to their local jurisdiction. While not necessarily under the command of an Elite Four member, they typically do answer to one for relations with nearby townships as well.

The Elite Four are individuals chosen by the League as a whole, and assigned sections of the Region to oversee on a broader scale than a Gym Leader does. These

individuals are the cream of the crop and hold a little more political influence than Gym Leaders do. They are usually household names and recognized as both highly skilled Trainers, and great assets in a Region's security. They don't have an exact equivalent of a Gym Trainer, but can deputize Trainers to assist them in crisis situations.

Battle frontiers are areas in a region where Trainers who have conquered the League Challenge go for an additional challenge. They can be independently run and may be sponsored by large corporations or created by individual entrepreneurs. The Frontier Brains who run such areas often come from the more business side of things. They are chosen by powerful corporations in the Region to both assist in a manner similar to the Elite Four, and lobby on behalf of their corporations. While they are not as directly tied to the political side of things, money does talk and the corporations behind them do have their own interests.

A Trainer aspiring to gain one of these titles has some steep competition. Normally a Gym Trainer is going to be a native of their township, or a person of great influence who lives there. And while they are elected officials it's not uncommon for a Gym Leader who has had a long tenure to endorse one of their Gym Trainers, which will almost shoehorn them into the position. The best route for someone to become a Gym Leader is to gain notoriety in a local populace, or tutor with a Gym Leader and prove themselves that way.

Winning the title of Elite Four or Frontier Brain is a bit trickier. These individuals more often than not are former Champions of the League, heroes, or former Gym Leaders whose fame extended beyond their home towns. Becoming a candidate for such a position not only requires raw skill, but knowing the right people, and doing something for the betterment of the whole Region and being recognized for it.

Running League Matches

Part of creating your Pokémon League is deciding how challenges are conducted. In a traditional format, Gym Battles and other League challenges are one on one affairs with set numbers of Pokémon on each side.

Depending on the format of your campaign and how you tend to run sessions, this may or may not work. If you have plenty of time to schedule one on one meetings with players to play out League challenges, then by all means keep the traditional format.

However, if you can only get together with your players as a whole group, then conducting one on one Gym Battles might be a bad idea. Battles can become lengthy in PTU, and that means most of your players will spend a lot of time doing a whole lot of nothing unless you can manage to run multiple battles at once (we don't particularly recommend this!).

What might be a better idea in this case is to make a group format for League challenges. Even simply allowing two on two Gym Battles can cut time spent waiting on others to battle in half. You may decide that Trainers create formalized teams or guilds in your setting to challenge the Pokémon League, having Gym Battles pit all of the PCs against the Gym Leader at once. Of course, you'll want to hand-wave the usual limits on how many Pokémon turns a Gym Leader has each round for the purposes of such battles or at least give them Gym Trainers to battle at their side.

While in the video games you often must battle through many Gym Trainers to get to the Gym Leader, this typically isn't a great idea in a tabletop campaign. It can easily become dull and time-consuming. Rather, you should work to make your Gym Battles unique and fun.

Incorporating terrain elements and other environmental factors, creating puzzles to solve as part of the challenge, and using non-traditional victory conditions such as race battles, capture competitions, and fusion Contest-Battles are all ways you can spice up your gyms. If you absolutely need to have the players do something before a Gym Battle, send them on interesting quests rather than running them through a gauntlet of Gym Trainers.

On a final note, don't run a Gym Battle with too many Pokémon. Letting PCs use 3 each is more than enough.

League Legality

For formal matches at Gym Battles and Tournaments, or even between trainers, walking straight up to your opponent's Pokémon and personally giving them a swift kick is usually frowned upon quite severely.

But many Features in PTU affect Pokémon, so how are you to know if these Features should be okay to use during such League functions? Well, the League Legality (leaguality?) of some Features may be hard to grasp, so here are some rules of thumb!

»   If the Feature is a static or permanent change upon a Pokémon, such as Ace Trainer or Stat Trainer's Stat boosting features, or an Athlete's Coaching Feature, then they are definitely legal in all scenarios.

»   All Features with the [Orders] Tag are League legal, unless specifically noted otherwise.

»   If Feature is a Move, then it's likely not league-legal. Leagual. Musicians could not use Screech or Sing on an opponent's Pokémon, for example. You can't even Leer with Intimidating Presence.

»   Same goes for Abilities – using Intimidate on an opponent's Pokémon is a no-no in a League match.

»   If a Feature basically represents training or encouragement rather than direct intervention from the trainer (such as Ace Trainer, Cheerleader's Gleeful Interference, or Athete's Coaching), they should probably be okay to use.

»   If the Feature comes from a supernatural source, such as Warper's re-rolls, or Channeler's … channeling, then these are not League Legal unless your league is very open to such things. Other features like Rune Master's Words of Power, while supernaturally aided, represent training rather than direct intervention and thus can still be legal.

These are only guidelines, of course. In some campaigns, you may decide that Trainer Combat is allowed or even required for certain Gym Battles or Tournaments. If this is the case, you should probably discuss this with your players so they can build their characters with this quirk of the League in mind.

Alternatives to a Pokémon League

Maybe you want to run a Pokémon Tabletop United campaign in an unconventional setting, but your players are accustomed to the Gym Challenge format of the Pokémon franchise. A compromise is possible! It's fairly easy and probably a good idea to apply the basic structure of a Pokémon League to other concepts.

What are the basic elements of the Pokémon League structure? There is a series of challenges, usually each based around a theme, with incremental difficulty and a need to travel between challenges. Iconic personalities represent each challenge. Winning each challenge adds to a Trainer's renown and credibility, and they often need to win a set number of them in order to qualify for a greater challenge or privilege. This is generic enough to allow a great deal of flexibility.

Here are some examples to get you started:

Pokémafia: A campaign based around criminal gangs may be based in a single city, which makes adapting a Gym Challenge format more difficult, but it certainly isn't impossible. Separate rival gangs can be located in particular districts of the city and each given a theme, such as a Type, other means of choosing Pokémon, or a particular battling strategy. Obviously, each gang is headed by a Don who plays a similar role to a Gym Leader when confronted. As the PCs raid rival gang hideouts and gain control over the city, their renown will grow much like gaining Gym Badges. Eventually, they may qualify for a trial of sorts from their higher-ups in their criminal hierarchy in order to take control over the operations in the city, similar to a Pokémon League Challenge.

Alternatively, in a campaign in which the PCs play criminals in a world in which a Pokémon League exists, the iconic Gyms may still exist, but the manner in which the PCs challenge them is different. For example, assassinating Gym Leaders or subverting Gyms from within to take control of them for their criminal organization.

Trainer Academy: Rather than pursue Gym Challenges, the students at a Trainer Academy take regular exams which are designed to test their mastery of particular Types, Stats, or other battling concepts. Each exam is administered by a different Teacher, each with their own style like a Gym Leader would have. Of course, the consequences for failure are a bit more dire than simply failing to qualify for an annual tournament - fail too many exams, and you get kicked out of school! Passing exams with exemplary marks, however, earns you more privileges as a student, such as the right to explore special areas populated with rare wild Pokémon.

Poképirates: The sea can be a crowded place despite its vastness. Taking down other famous pirates, or perhaps the naval commanders and authorities of nearby countries, can help a fledgling pirate crew gain fame and treasure. The captain of a pirate ship or fleet takes the place of a Gym Leader.

Pokéfantasy: A series of large dungeons in the style of The Legend of Zelda can substitute for Gym Challenges. The opportunities for earning treasure and fame are obvious. When using this structure, you may choose to forgo using Trainers who play an analogous role to Gym Leaders. Instead, you may create special boss encounter Pokémon as the monsters at the end of each dungeon with unique powers and quirks. This is a great opportunity to introduce Type Shifted Pokémon, Giant Pokémon, and other variations.

World War Pokémon: As the war advances, the PCs are sent to lead attacks on various enemy cities or to defend allied cities. It's a good idea in this case to put the PCs in charge of attacks on major locations in a city, such as a valuable factory or a military headquarters. Enemy Generals and Commanders take the place of Gym Leaders. Rather than earn Gym Badges, the PCs gain promotions and earn additional privileges within the military hierarchy based on their rank.

Common Region Locales

Throughout the six generations of Pokémon games that have been released thus far, a number of similar locations have become recurring fixtures in the franchise. If you're a long-time fan of Pokémon, you're probably already familiar with most of these. However, if you're new to Pokémon or simply want to make sure you cover all your bases with traditional Pokémon region features, this list may help you out!

Research Labs: With so much of the world focused on Pokémon, it's no surprise that institutions for studying Pokémon are commonplace. These are also often where new Trainers begin their journey, receiving their first Pokémon and a Pokédex. Of course, each major Pokémon Professor in the franchise has their own lab.

Safari Zones: While the most common way to acquire new Pokémon is to catch them out on routes or other places in the wilderness, many Pokémon regions have special parks called Safari Zones where rare species are raised in a controlled environment for Trainers to catch. These Safari Zones are usually organized into biomes containing varied species. Also common to Safari Zones is that battling the wild Pokémon is not allowed. Special Poké Balls are provided for capturing the Pokémon within or Trainers are expected to befriend the Pokémon they want. Aside from the Safari Zones in Kanto, Johto, and Hoenn, the Great Marsh in Sinnoh and the Friend Safaris in Kalos are also prominent examples.

Pokémon Graveyards: Unfortunately, not everyone survives a Pokémon adventure. Many regions feature large memorials or graveyards where Trainers honor their fallen companions. Oftentimes, these are also locations where Ghost Type Pokémon tend to gather, and they may even be the only place where Ghost Types are found in abundance. Examples include the Pokémon Tower, Mt. Pyre, and the Celestial Tower.

Ancient Ruins: The mysterious remnants of past civilizations also tend to play a large role in the Pokémon Universe. Many Legendary Pokémon have associations with such places or legends of the past, and they often make their home there. Ancient ruins can also be sources of mystical power and places to find unique artifacts or rare Pokémon. Getting to the ruins is often a challenge in itself, as they may be located in hard to reach places such as the ocean floor. The Ruins of Alph and the Abyssal Ruins are examples of ancient ruins.

Shopping Megacenters: While shops are spread throughout a region, many regions have one particular city with a very large shopping complex that offers many goods that aren't available anywhere else. While there's nothing distinctively Pokémon about such places, they can provide something for players to look forward to after a long journey. Celadon City, Goldenrod City, and Lumiose City are all good examples.

Entertainment Cities: Not every major city is known primarily for its Pokémon Gym. Many cities are primarily known for alternate activities such as Pokémon Contests or creating Pokémon movies. Game Corners where Trainers can gamble to earn prizes such as TMs or rare Pokémon also fall into this category. It's a good idea to include cities of this nature in a region to give the players a break from the standard pattern of Gym Challenges. Virbank City and Hearthome City are well-known examples, being associated with Pokéstar Studios and the Super Contest Hall respectively.

Shrines: While religion isn't often directly addressed in the Pokémon franchise, there is often a culture of reverence for Legendary Pokémon that is represented by shrines dedicated to them. Sometimes these are also ancient ruins, but not always. Shrines provide a vessel for conveying the lore and mythology of a setting and are also handy places where a GM can create a trial for the PCs outside of Gym Challenges. The most famous example is probably the pair of Towers in Ecruteak City.

Fossil Quarries: There are often special caves and other locations in a Pokémon region where the fossils of ancient Pokémon are found. Some of these locations may also contain other rare items such as Type Plates. It's definitely a good idea to include these in a region, as they're great ways to reward exploration. Mt. Moon and the Sinnoh Underground are both examples of places where fossils can be found.

Villain Hideouts: Every criminal team needs a secret hideout! That's just how it works; don't question it. These make for fantastic 'dungeons' to send a group of PCs through, and a raid on a hideout is often the culmination of a long struggle against a criminal team. Team Rocket had hideouts under both the herb shop in Mahogany Town and the Game Corner in Celadon City. Team Magma, on the other hand, preferred to use a cave hidden in the side of Mt. Chimney.

Populating Your World With Pokémon

So you've created the basics of your campaign setting. You've drawn sweeping mountain ranges and scribbled winding rivers over your map. Labeled black dots mark your towns, and you've even penciled in a few thoughts about each of them in a notepad somewhere.

What next? Well, you have to fill the world with Pokémon for your players to catch and battle, of course!

When doing so, you'll want to keep in mind two main goals, though which one you prioritize is up to you. The first principle is Fun Game Progression – making sure it's enjoyable to journey through your world and the progression of Pokémon encountered from early in the campaign to later on is satisfying to the players. The second is Sensible Ecosystems – that is, making sure the habitats and environments make up a believable world.

Fun Game Progression

There's an obvious trend in Pokémon games regarding how the populations of the various routes, forests and caves change as you go through the game – the weaker, more vanilla Pokémon appear in earlier routes, and the more powerful and advanced Pokémon only show up after a good deal of adventuring.

In general, this is a good macro-level principle to hold to when designing your world. It is good for guiding where you place Pokémon on a large scale and in the big picture. If the cave off to the side from your first route has Larvitars, Bagons and Gibles, there's not much to look forward to when exploring more exotic locales.

One easy way to do this is to follow the examples of the video games. Many starting GMs, and those who have players with a particular hankering for nostalgia and playing through the regions they know and love, may choose to set their campaign in a canonical Pokémon region such as Kanto or Sinnoh.

With this in mind, an easy starting point for designing habitats is to take the Pokémon encounter lists for each route or area for these regions and simply modify and add to them to suit your campaign. Of course, this may not always work. Players may find it unsatisfying or dull to face predictable encounters wherever they go. Or perhaps your campaign starts in Blackthorn City, and you don't want your players nabbing Dratinis and Skarmories as their first captures. Either way, it can be a very good idea to deliberately change the possible encounters per area – and you can even tie this into a plot hook explaining why the environments have changed.

What if you have a custom region, as many GMs of the system will? Well, luckily for you, the Pokédex within each generation of Pokémon is still arranged roughly in order from common to rare, discounting the starter Pokémon.

You can be pretty assured that picking mostly Pokémon from early on in any region's Pokédex for the early game and dipping into the Pokémon near the end of the Pokédex more and more often as the game goes on will result in a satisfying distribution of Pokémon for your players.

As a thematic measure, you may also wish to group together Pokémon from the same region. One forest early on has Hoothoots, Spinaraks, Hoppips, etc. A later cave is populated with Machokes, Gravelers, Onixes, etc. This works especially well if you have multiple defined regions in your campaign world or a set of islands or other clear delineations between areas. You do not have to follow this guideline, however, and it is probably easier and more interesting to mix and match Pokémon as you choose in any given area.

What if your world is more open? There's not always a clear path your players will take from one gym to the next as they travel. Well, all this means is you should keep the easily accessible parts of your campaign relatively equal in interesting Pokémon populations. This means the well-traveled routes between towns, or the lakes and forests that are in easy reach. Perhaps each has their population of relatively common Pokémon along with a smattering of more rare species.

Save the pseudo-legendaries like Dratini and Beldum for the out of the way, difficult to reach places. In a cave system accessible only by diving underwater in a treacherous sea, for example. Or near the peaks in a mountain range filled with odd electromagnetic activity. This will ensure your players have a reason to seek out exotic locales while not being bored, no matter where they travel. Don't be afraid to fudge things a little if your priority is ensuring satisfying game progression – you want to drop Scythers in a mid-game scenario but aren't sure whether your players will go to one town or the other first? Save them for whichever path they come to later on, and populate the first path with common bugs.

Sensible Ecosystems

Following the games just isn't enough for some GMs and players though. They want their world to make sense under scrutiny, for every chosen species to have its spot in its ecosystem. Or maybe the players just really like using Google in-character to figure out where Pokémon live, or they enjoy studying the interactions within ecosystems wherever they go.

This is when you'll want to give a sense of verisimilitude, making a setting and world feel real even if everyone knows it's being tailored for a game. Where you can apply this idea best is when designing individual habitats and the Pokémon within them on a smaller scale.

Of course, making a sensible ecosystem applies on a large scale as well. You don't put water types in the middle of a desert, and you don't populate a dark cave with grass types who need sunlight to survive. But when you get to individual habitats is where it can really help to think about what makes sense in an ecosystem and how they function.

First, think about the energy pyramid in an ecosystem. No, you don't have to get into any advanced biology to do this. Just think generally about food sources and food chains here. Keep in mind that producers, that is, plant-life (or photosynthetic grass Pokémon perhaps!) are the most populous denizens of an environment, and the higher up you go on the food chain, the rarer a species becomes. The Sewaddles which feed off of leaves in the forest will be much more numerous than the Pidgeys eating them which are in turn less common than higher level predators such as Sevipers. This, luckily, works out pretty well when it comes to meshing with satisfying game progression, since most of the rare Pokémon tend to be powerful predators.

Secondly, you will also want to consider niches and competition in an ecosystem, though this is one level of detail that you may wish to ignore to save headaches and maximize fun. However, here is an example. In a dark forest, a Pokémon such as Murkrow may be a much more efficient predator due to its ability to blend

in with its surroundings, compared to Pokémon in the Spearow line. If both exist in one ecosystem, it's likely the Murkrow will out-compete the Spearows and the latter will go extinct. The opposite may be true in the case of a more open plains where the Spearows' coloration helps them blend into the tall grass when they aren't flying. Of course, another possible result of this is, of course, adaptation. Species in a particular area may adopt traits that help them compete against and survive against otherwise better prepared species.

Cast's Note: Essentially what I'm saying here is – Type-shifts, different Ability options, changed Move lists, different Skill or Capability allocations. There's a lot you can do here to represent these adaptations, though you should use this option sparingly. The Spearow population in the aforementioned example may have higher Stealth ranks, a dark coloration, or Moves that let them compete with Murkrow better.

Finally, many Pokémon have very weird diets and other living requirements. Magnemites, Voltorbs, and the like are probably mostly found in industrial areas, where there's enough electrical machinery from human civilization to sustain their populations. And if you're running a historical campaign set before the invention of electric-powered technology, don't be afraid to say some species simply don't exist if they wouldn't make sense. Looking at you, Porygon and Rotom.

You'll want to keep these needs and preferences in mind across all sorts of different species. Ghosts, while they do not strictly require run-down habitats, may be much more comfortable living in abandoned homes and similar places rather than shiny, clean, urban environments. Perhaps they feed off the emotional energy of sites of tragedy. Dragons, even if they have easy to meet biological requirements, may have been hunted to near extinction in the past due to their value. As such, you may only find them nowadays in out of the way caves and mountains.

It may simply be that you need to introduce quirky locations just to facilitate the existence of certain Pokémon species, such as the Ruins of Alph for Unown. You may add an ancient temple floating above a desert to your world to hold Yamask and Sigilyph populations, or you decide ghosts in general are rare enough that you need to introduce a Pokémon Tower or Mt. Pyre counterpart to specially house them. A Safari Zone where rare Pokémon species are bred for trainers to capture is another easy way to solve the problem of exotic species for which you can't find a proper home.

No one can tell you the one right way to handle how you populate your Pokémon world, but if you keep in mind these two goals and maintain balance with what your players want and expect, you'll come out of the worldbuilding process with a set of ecosystems that will keep everyone happy.

Pokémon Behavior and Intelligence

This has been alluded to before, but another crucial aspect of your campaign that you will need to decide is how animalistic or human-like your Pokémon act.

Do you want to replicate the feeling of the anime where Pokémon generally understand human languages, know what a Poké Ball is and even how to operate it or trick it, and act with pretty much the personality of a person aside from their quirk of repeating their names? Can Pokémon form small gangs like the Squirtle Squad with human-like characteristics or even learn to talk like Meowth? Do Pokémon generally want to be captured and desire a formidable Trainer to call their partner?

Or do you prefer to portray Pokémon as feral animals which need to be tamed and may initially react to Poké Balls and capture with extreme fear and confusion? Is Pokémon training a necessity for survival in a dangerous world rather than a popular sport and pastime?

It's important to discuss your intentions on this subject with your players so there's no confusion once the game starts. You wouldn't want to create a harsh world of feral Pokémon and be met with PCs who immediately try to pet and talk to the local wildlife, nor would you want to create a lighthearted Pokémon setting to find that a player has made a character who treats all Pokémon as inherently dangerous and potential threats to his life.

On a mechanical level, you'll need to decide whether or not Pokémon need social and knowledge skills added to their normal stats. Chapter 5: Pokémon provides some guidelines for creating Skillsets for Pokémon (page 201).

Regardless of your answer here, you should consider Pokémon hierarchies and social organization. Very few Pokémon live in complete isolation. Bug Types have hive structures, many feline and canine Pokémon have packs, Flying Types have flocks, and Water Types may live in large schools of fish. These should factor into encounters you create, as some sort of leader will usually be present in a group of Pokémon.

Further, understand that 'intelligence' is itself a vague term that encompasses plenty of different meanings. Pokemon are unlikely to be well-read or book smart the same way a human might be, though some Psychic types like Alakazam may take an interest in reading. However, a Pokemon like Bellosom might tell time by the position

of the sun and read plant growth patterns to determine soil quality, but not understand how telephones work.

When deciding how intelligent Pokémon are, both in general, and in relation to each other, it's most important to think about types of intelligence rather than trying to make intelligence into a single sliding scale. As a baseline, however, Pokémon should be smart enough to understand basic commands; otherwise Pokémon battling wouldn't get very far.

Take, for example, memory. Some Pokémon may have a hard time being taught complex tasks, such as Combee, but their memory is excellent and perhaps rivals that of humans when it comes to creating a cognitive map and memorizing the layout of a field and where good spots for flowers and other valuables are.

Tool use and social intelligence are other categories to consider. We often associate tool use and the ability to adapt to human language and communication, such as sign language, as signs of intelligence in animals, but some Pokémon species may have highly developed social intelligence and social hierarchies but simply be incompatible with human attempts at complex communication. Birds are one place where the common wisdom says they aren't particularly intelligent, but many birds are able to make use of tools and can learn over time how to more efficiently take advantage of human creations.

In general, assume that a Pokemon is at least as intelligent as it needs to be to survive in its natural habitat. Predator species can tell the difference between Rattata and Nidoran, to avoid getting poisoned by the latter. Canine Pokemon employ pack tactics when hunting, feline Pokemon know how to ambush and hide, bird Pokemon can read air currents, and so on. A Caterpie knows how to eat, how to spin silk, and how to escape predators – anything beyond that is likely to be beyond them unless you're treating Pokémon as a whole as particularly human-like.

Once a Pokemon is captured, it's almost certainly going to get smarter. In the real world, there's a difference between a smart dog and a smart service dog, and that sort of difference can carry over into Pokemon. Exposure to novel situations and a close bond with a trainer can bring out more apparent intelligence from

an individual Pokemon as that Pokemon learns. Even taking an animalistic interpretation of Pokémon into account, the majority of Pokemon can reach a childlike level of intelligence after working with a Trainer, and that's a comfortable place to stop. After being caught, that Caterpie may understand what Poké Balls are for, but not how they work or how to use them.

Some GMs may decide that special exceptions exist for Pokemon with the Telepath, Aura Reader, or Aura Pulse capabilities. These Pokemon are often comparable to humans in how much they understand when it comes to communication, as being able to read thoughts removes any language barrier in place. However, low stage Pokemon may still be limited by juvenile perspectives or a lack of education. Like humans, even these relatively smart Pokemon need experiences and instruction to show off true intelligence.

For most campaigns, an easy guideline to keep in mind is that most Pokemon can be smart, but they shouldn't be so smart that they make the Trainer character obsolete. It's perfectly acceptable to have a Pokemon realize that fire and smoke are bad and to drag an unconscious

trainer out of their house before it burns down. It's less acceptable to have the same Pokemon realize there's a fire extinguisher under the sink and to put out the flames before calling 911 themselves. Coco the Primeape may know sign language, but she doesn't know how to hold down a job. Otherwise, you may run into issues with players feeling uncomfortable with catching Pokémon that are so human-like or having trouble keeping track of so many NPCs with complex personalities. That isn't to say you can't run a campaign with more human-like Pokémon, but you should be aware of the issues and level of work before doing so. Very human-like Pokémon, such as Meowth in the anime, can be a fun and refreshing addition to a campaign.

On a related note, another source of potential awkwardness is Water-Type Pokémon in general. In Pokémon media, aquatic Pokémon are often seen functioning just fine out of water, either by flopping about or floating. It's up to you whether to follow this example or subvert it by restricting fish to the water. We don't take a stance in the system, but you should make sure your players know yours!

Pokémon Habitat List

This list is simply a compilation of the information in the Pokédex PDF on which Pokémon live in which habitats. If you're stumped on what species to populate a route or section of your world with, this makes for a handy reference. Feel free to deviate from this list, however, if you have other ideas for where Pokémon might make their homes in your setting. For example, you might have a mountain-dwelling version of Spinark and Ariados.

Arctic

Spheal
Sealeo
Walrein
Cloyster
Seel
Dewgong
Lapras
Bergmite
Avalugg

Beach

Squirtle
Wartortle
Blastoise
Totodile
Croconaw
Feraligatr
Piplup
Prinplup
Empoleon
Oshawott
Dewott
Samurott
Sandile
Krookodile
Nosepass
Slowpoke
Slowbro
Slowking
Wingull
Pelipper
Krabby
Kingler
Crawdaunt
Shellos
Gastrodon
Binacle
Barbaracle

Cave

Charmander
Charmeleon
Charizard
Cyndaquil
Quilava
Typhlosion
Chimchar
Monferno
Infernape
Pignite
Emboar
Zubat
Golbat
Crobat
Cleffa
Clefairy
Clefable
Igglybuff
Jigglypuff
Wigglytuff
Whismur
Loudred
Exploud
Weepinbell
Victreebel
Shinx
Luxio
Luxray
Tynamo
Eelektrik
Eelektross
Magby
Magmar
Magmortar
Vanillite
Vanillish
Vanilluxe
Solosis
Duosion
Reuniclus
Machop
Geodude
Graveler
Golem

Roggenrola
Boldore
Gigalith
Rhyhorn
Rhydon
Swinub
Piloswine
Aron
Lairon
Aggron
Klink
Klang
Klinklang
Gastly
Haunter
Gengar
Duskull
Dusclops
Dusknoir
Litwick
Lampent
Chandelure
Axew
Fraxure
Haxorus
Rattata
Raticate
Teddiursa
Ursaring
Paras
Parasect
Ariados
Dwebble
Crustle
Joltik
Galvantula
Larvesta
Volcarona
Rufflet
Sandshrew
Sandslash
Diglett
Dugtrio
Cubone

Marowak
Gligar
Gliscor
Baltoy
Claydol
Hippopotas
Hippowdon
Drilbur
Excadrill
Nosepass
Onix
Steelix
Bronzor
Bronzong
Foongus
Amoonguss
Ferroseed
Ferrothorn
Slugma
Magcargo
Darumaka
Darmanitan
Glalie
Cubchoo
Beartic
Natu
Xatu
Woobat
Swoobat
Chingling
Chimecho
Wynaut
Wobbuffet
Mienfoo
Mienshao
Makuhita
Hariyama
Meditite
Medicham
Riolu
Lucario
Vullaby
Houndour
Houndoom

Scrafty
Sneasel
Weavile
Pawniard
Bisharp
Misdreavus
Mismagius
Shuppet
Banette
Dunsparce
Smeargle
Shuckle
Durant
Torkoal
Heatmor
Cryogonal
Mawile
Sableye
Spiritomb
Druddigon
Solrock
Lunatone
Sawk
Throh
Unown
Flareon
Umbreon
Omanyte
Kabutops
Lileep
Cradily
Anorith
Armaldo
Cranidos
Rampardos
Shieldon
Bastiodon
Aerodactyl
Dratini
Dragonair
Dragonite
Larvitar
Pupitar
Tyranitar

Bagon
Shelgon
Salamence
Beldum
Metang
Metagross
Gible
Gabite
Garchomp
Deino
Zweilous
Hydreigon
Tyrunt
Tyrantrum
Amaura
Aurorus
Carbink
Noibat
Noivern

Desert

Sandile
Krokorok
Krookodile
Trapinch
Vibrava
Flygon
Burmy
Wormadam
Mothim
Nincada
Ninjask
Shedinja
Dwebble
Crustle
Doduo
Dodrio
Sandshrew
Sandslash
Gligar
Donphan
Hippopotas
Hippowdon

Golett
Golurk
Steelix
Cacnea
Cacturne
Numel
Camerupt
Darumaka
Darmanitan
Xatu
Vullaby
Mandibuzz
Scraggy
Scrafty
Yamask
Cofagrigus
Dunsparce
Zangoose
Seviper
Durant
Maractus
Torkoal
Heatmor
Sigilyph
Gible
Gabite
Garchomp
Helioptile
Heliolisk

Forest

Bulbasaur
Ivysaur
Venusaur
Chikorita
Bayleef
Meganium
Turtwig
Grotle
Torterra
Snivy
Servine
Serperior
Tepig
Caterpie
Metapod
Butterfree
Weedle
Kakuna
Beedrill

Sewaddle
Swadloon
Leavanny
Venipede
Whirlipede
Scolipede
Wurmple
Silcoon
Beautifly
Cascoon
Dustox
Pidgey
Pidgeotto
Pidgeot
Togepi
Togetic
Togekiss
Starly
Staravia
Staraptor
Pidove
Tranquill
Unfezant
Slakoth
Vigoroth
Slaking
Oddish
Gloom
Vileplume
Bellsprout
Weepinbell
Victreebel
Hoppip
Skiploom
Jumpluff
Ludicolo
Seedot
Nuzleaf
Shiftry
Budew
Roselia
Roserade
Pichu
Pikachu
Raichu
Elekid
Electabuzz
Electivire
Ralts
Kirlia
Gardevoir

Gallade
Abra
Kadabra
Gothita
Gothorita
Solosis
Duosion
Reuniclus
Duskull
Dusclops
Dusknoir
Rattata
Raticate
Sentret
Furret
Zigzagoon
Linoone
Bidoof
Bibarel
Patrat
Watchog
Meowth
Persian
Skitty
Delcatty
Glameow
Purugly
Minccino
Cinccino
Buneary
Lopunny
Snubbull
Granbull
Aipom
Ambipom
Deerling
Sawsbuck
Lickitung
Lickilicky
Munchlax
Snorlax
Burmy
Wormadam
Mothim
Nincada
Ninjask
Shedinja
Venonat
Venomoth
Ledyba
Ledian

Spinarak
Ariados
Yanma
Yanmega
Pineco
Forretress
Kricketot
Kricketune
Combee
Vespiquen
Karrablast
Escavalier
Shelmet
Accelgor
Joltik
Galvantula
Scyther
Hoothoot
Noctowl
Taillow
Swellow
Rufflet
Braviary
Swablu
Altaria
Stunky
Skuntank
Skorupi
Drapion
Dugtrio
Gligar
Phanpy
Bonsly
Sudowoodo
Bronzor
Sunkern
Tangela
Cherubi
Cherrim
Whimsicott
Petilil
Lilligant
Foongus
Amoonguss
Shroomish
Breloom
Exeggcute
Exeggutor
Electrike
Manectric
Natu

Xatu
Spoink
Grumpig
Munna
Musharna
Mankey
Primeape
Lucario
Murkrow
Honchkrow
Purrloin
Liepard
Poochyena
Mightyena
Zorua
Zoroark
Misdreavus
Mismagius
Drifloon
Drifblim
Pansage
Simisage
Pansear
Simisear
Panpour
Simipour
Chatot
Dunsparce
Stantler
Audino
Spinda
Kecleon
Castform
Smeargle
Zangoose
Seviper
Shuckle
Pinsir
Heracross
Tropius
Pachirisu
Emolga
Mawile
Absol
Spiritomb
Plusle
Minun
Volbeat
Illumise
Ditto
Eevee

Vaporeon
Jolteon
Espeon
Umbreon
Leafeon
Chespin
Quilladin
Chesnaught
Fennekin
Braixen
Delphox
Bunnelby
Diggersby
Fletchling
Fletchinder
Talonflame
Scatterbug
Spewpa
Vivillon
Flabébé
Floette
Florges
Skiddo
Gogoat
Pancham
Pangoro
Spritzee
Aromatisse
Hawlucha
Dedenne
Phantump
Trevenant
Pumpkaboo
Gourgeist

Fresh water

Squirtle
Wartortle
Blastoise
Totodile
Croconaw
Feraligatr
Lotad
Lombre
Ludicolo
Tynamo
Eelektrik
Eelektross

Poliwag
Poliwhirl
Poliwrath
Politoed
Azurill
Marill
Azumarill
Tympole
Palpitoad
Seismitoad
Surskit
Masquerain
Croagunk
Toxicroak
Slowpoke
Slowbro
Slowking
Goldeen
Seaking
Barboach
Whiscash
Carvanha
Sharpedo
Ducklett
Swanna
Psyduck
Golduck
Wooper
Quagsire
Buizel
Floatzel
Magikarp
Gyarados
Feebas
Milotic
Farfetch'd
Stunfisk
Vaporeon
Dratini
Dragonair
Dragonite
Froakie
Frogadier
Greninja

Grass-lands

Bulbasaur
Ivysaur

Venusaur
Chikorita
Bayleef
Meganium
Torchic
Combusken
Blaziken
Tepig
Pignite
Emboar
Starly
Staravia
Staraptor
Pidove
Tranquill
Unfezant
Nidoran F
Nidorina
Nidoqueen
Nidoran M
Nidorino
Nidoking
Igglybuff
Jigglypuff
Wigglytuff
Happiny
Chansey
Blissey
Lillipup
Herdier
Stoutland
Oddish
Gloom
Vileplume
Hoppip
Skiploom
Jumpluff
Budew
Roselia
Roserade
Pichu
Pikachu
Mareep
Flaaffy
Ampharos
Shinx
Luxio
Luxray
Elekid
Electabuzz
Electivire

Rhyhorn
Rhydon
Rattata
Raticate
Sentret
Furret
Zigzagoon
Linoone
Bidoof
Bibarel
Patrat
Watchog
Skitty
Delcatty
Glameow
Purugly
Minccino
Cinccino
Buneary
Lopunny
Deerling
Sawsbuck
Lickitung
Lickilicky
Kricketot
Kricketune
Dwebble
Crustle
Karrablast
Scyther
Scizor
Spearow
Fearow
Doduo
Dodrio
Taillow
Swellow
Ekans
Arbok
Stunky
Skuntank
Gulpin
Swalot
Trubbish
Garbodor
Sandshrew
Sandslash
Diglett
Dugtrio
Bonsly
Sunkern

Sunflora
Tangela
Cottonee
Whimsicott
Foongus
Amoonguss
Vulpix
Ninetales
Growlithe
Arcanine
Ponyta
Rapidash
Buizel
Floatzel
Electrike
Manectric
Blitzle
Zebstrika
Spoink
Grumpig
Musharna
Drowzee
Hypno
Wynaut
Wobbuffet
Mankey
Primeape
Purrloin
Liepard
Poochyena
Mightyena
Zorua
Farfetch'd
Dunsparce
Miltank
Tauros
Bouffalant
Audino
Spinda
Kangaskhan
Girafarig
Absol
Plusle
Minun
Volbeat
Illumise
Ditto
Eevee
Espeon
Leafeon
Chespin

Quilladin
Chesnaught
Fennekin
Braixen
Delphox
Bunnelby
Diggersby
Fletchling
Fletchinder
Talonflame
Scatterbug
Spewpa
Vivillon
Litleo
Pyroar
Flabébé
Floette
Florges
Skiddo
Gogoat
Pancham
Pangoro
Furfrou
Espurr
Meowstic
Honedge
Doublade
Aeigslash
Spritzee
Aromatisse
Swirlix
Slurpuff
Sylveon
Hawlucha
Dedenne
Klefki
Pumpkaboo
Gourgeist

Marsh

Turtwig
Grotle
Torterra
Totodile
Croconaw
Feraligatr
Mudkip
Marshtomp
Oddish
Gloom

Vileplume
Bellossom
Bellsprout
Weepinbell
Victreebel
Poliwag
Poliwhirl
Poliwrath
Politoed
Tympole
Palpitoad
Seismitoad
Bidoof
Bibarel
Yanma
Yanmega
Shelmet
Ekans
Koffing
Weezing
Gulpin
Swalot
Garbodor
Skorupi
Drapion
Croagunk
Toxicroak
Tangrowth
Shroomish
Breloom
Barboach
Whiscash
Ducklett
Swanna
Corphish
Crawdaunt
Wooper
Quagsire
Drowzee
Hypno
Murkrow
Honchkrow
Farfetch'd
Carnivine
Tropius
Stunfisk
Froakie
Frogadier
Greninja
Goomy
Sliggoo

Goodra

Mountain

Charmander
Charmeleon
Charizard
Cyndaquil
Quilava
Typhlosion
Chimchar
Monferno
Infernape
Tepig
Pignite
Emboar
Nidoqueen
Nidoking
Cleffa
Clefairy
Clefable
Magnemite
Magneton
Magnezone
Ampharos
Luxray
Magby
Magmar
Magmortar
Machop
Machoke
Machamp
Timburr
Gurdurr
Conkeldurr
Geodude
Graveler
Golem
Roggenrola
Boldore
Gigalith
Rhyhorn
Rhydon
Rhyperior
Aron
Lairon
Aggron
Duskull
Dusclops
Flygon
Axew

Fraxure
Haxorus
Rattata
Raticate
Teddiursa
Ursaring
Munchlax
Snorlax
Wormadam
Dwebble
Crustle
Scizor
Larvesta
Volcarona
Spearow
Fearow
Rufflet
Braviary
Koffing
Weezing
Cubone
Marowak
Gligar
Gliscor
Phanpy
Donphan
Drilbur
Excadrill
Golett
Golurk
Nosepass
Probopass
Onix
Steelix
Bronzor
Bronzong
Vulpix
Ninetales
Growlithe
Arcanine
Slugma
Magcargo
Numel
Camerupt
Darumaka
Darmanitan
Swoobat
Elgyem
Beheeyem
Wynaut
Wobbuffet

Tyrogue
Hitmonlee
Hitmonchan
Hitmontop
Mankey
Primeape
Mienfoo
Mienshao
Makuhita
Hariyama
Meditite
Medicham
Riolu
Lucario
Vullaby
Mandibuzz
Houndour
Houndoom
Scrafty
Scraggy
Pawniard
Bisharp
Smeargle
Zangoose
Seviper
Shuckle
Durant
Maractus
Torkoal
Heatmor
Delibird
Girafarig
Mawile
Skarmory
Absol
Sableye
Lunatone
Solrock
Sawk
Throh
Flareon
Cranidos
Rampardos
Shieldon
Bastiodon
Archen
Archeops
Aerodactyl
Dragonite
Larvitar
Pupitar

Tyranitar
Bagon
Shelgon
Salamence
Metagross
Garchomp
Deino
Zweilous
Hydreigon
Bunnelby
Diggersby
Helioptile
Heliolisk
Tyrunt
Tyrantrum
Amaura
Aurorus
Bergmite
Avalugg

Ocean

Squirtle
Wartortle
Blastoise
Oshawott
Dewott
Samurott
Horsea
Seadra
Kingdra
Spheal
Sealeo
Walrein
Clamperl
Huntail
Gorebyss
Finneon
Lumineon
Chinchou
Lanturn
Carvanha
Sharpedo
Tentacool
Tentacruel
Frillish
Jellicent
Shellder
Cloyster
Corphish
Crawdaunt

Staryu
Starmie
Seel
Dewgong
Shellos
Gastrodon
Remoraid
Octillery
Mantyke
Mantine
Magikarp
Gyarados
Wailmer
Wailord
Qwilfish
Basculin
Relicanth
Corsola
Luvdisc
Alomomola
Lapras
Omanyte
Omastar
Kabuto
Kabutops
Lileep
Cradily
Anorith
Tirtouga
Carracosta
Inkay
Malamar
Binacle
Barbaracle
Skrelp
Dragalge
Clauncher
Clawitzer

Rain forest

Bulbasaur
Ivysaur
Venusaur
Treecko
Grovyle
Sceptile
Turtwig
Grotle

Torterra
Snivy
Servine
Serperior
Wurmple
Silcoon
Beautifly
Cascoon
Dustox
Togepi
Togetic
Togekiss
Slakoth
Vigoroth
Slaking
Oddish
Gloom
Vileplume
Bellossom
Bellsprout
Weepinbell
Victreebel
Seedot
Nuzleaf
Shiftry
Budew
Roselia
Roserade
Aipom
Ambipom
Lickitung
Lickilicky
Burmy
Wormadam
Mothim
Paras
Parasect
Venonat
Venomoth
Ledyba
Ledian
Spinarak
Ariados
Scyther
Swablu
Altaria
Skorupi
Drapion
Tangela
Tangrowth
Cherubi

Petilil
Lilligant
Shroomish
Breloom
Exeggcute
Exeggutor
Mankey
Primeape
Purrloin
Liepard
Pansage
Simisage
Pansear
Simisear
Panpour
Simipour
Chatot
Kangaskhan
Shuckle
Pinsir
Heracross
Carnivine
Tropius
Volbeat
Illumise
Leafeon
Chespin
Quilladin
Chesnaught
Goomy
Sliggoo
Goodra

Taiga

Piplup
Prinplup

Empoleon
Slakoth
Vigoroth
Slaking
Vanillite
Vanillish
Vanilluxe
Swinub
Piloswine
Teddiursa
Ursaring
Munchlax
Snorlax
Bonsly
Sudowoodo
Snover
Abomasnow
Snorunt
Glalie
Froslass
Cubchoo
Beartic
Spoink
Grumpig
Smoochum
Jynx
Sneasel
Weavile
Stantler
Delibird
Glaceon

Tundra

Piplup
Prinplup
Empoleon

Spheal
Sealeo
Walrein
Vanillite
Vanillish
Vanilluxe
Swinub
Piloswine
Mamoswine
Snorunt
Glalie
Froslass
Cubchoo
Beartic
Smoochum
Jynx
Sneasel
Weavile
Delibird
Cryogonal
Glaceon
Bergmite
Avalugg

Urban

Pidgey
Starly
Staravia
Pidove
Tranquill
Igglybuff
Jigglypuff
Happiny
Chansey
Blissey
Lillipup

Herdier
Stoutland
Porygon
Porygon2
Porygon-Z
Pichu
Pikachu
Magnemite
Magneton
Elekid
Electabuzz
Electivire
Ralts
Kirlia
Gardevoir
Gallade
Abra
Kadabra
Alakazam
Gothita
Gothorita
Gothitelle
Machoke
Timburr
Gurdurr
Klink
Klang
Gastly
Haunter
Gengar
Litwick
Lampent
Chandelure
Rattata
Meowth
Persian
Glameow

Purugly
Minccino
Buneary
Snubbull
Granbull
Munchlax
Snorlax
Burmy
Wormadam
Mothim
Spearow
Grimer
Muk
Koffing
Weezing
Gulpin
Swalot
Trubbish
Garbodor
Cubone
Marowak
Vulpix
Voltorb
Electrode
Electrike
Elgyem
Smoochum
Jynx
Mime Jr.
Mr. Mime
Chingling
Chimecho
Tyrogue
Hitmonlee
Hitmonchan
Hitmontop
Murkrow

Purrloin
Misdreavus
Shuppet
Banette
Drifloon
Drifblim
Castform
Smeargle
Pachirisu
Emolga
Rotom
Spiritomb
Plusle
Minun
Sawk
Throh
Ditto
Unown
Eevee
Jolteon
Flareon
Espeon
Umbreon
Fennekin
Braixen
Delphox
Skiddo
Gogoat
Furfrou
Espurr
Meowstic
Honedge
Doublade
Aegislash
Sylveon
Dedenne
Klefki

Handling Player Pokémon Knowledge

Chances are, some or all of your players will practically be walking Pokémon encyclopedias, especially if they spend a lot of time with competitive battling in the video games. Should you be worried about your players bringing this knowledge into your Pokémon Tabletop United campaigns?

In most cases, we think the answer is not to worry about it too much. There may be times you specifically want to tell the players that a particular Pokémon species is one they've never encountered before, such as when you decide a Pokémon hasn't been discovered yet in your region, but otherwise it's safe to allow players to use most of their Pokémon knowledge.

Trainers would typically know quite a lot when it comes to basic Pokémon knowledge, so long as they have at least Untrained Pokémon Education. What Types a Pokémon has, how the Types interact, and even basic qualitative knowledge about how a particular species tends to battle is all assumed to be common sense or part of basic education in the Pokémon world. Remember that society in the Pokémon world revolves around Pokémon to a large degree, which means it's difficult to function without knowing these basics.

If someone is playing a character with Pathetic Pokémon Education, or you have species that are undiscovered in your campaign world, it's perfectly reasonable to ask your players to roleplay appropriately. Any issues about metagaming should resolved the same way; talk to your group and figure out what a reasonable standard is for how much a Trainer might know about a given random Pokémon when encountered in the field.

Remember that the Pokémon franchise itself is based around strategic battling that requires knowledge about Pokémon to enjoy, and a lot of players seek out Pokémon Tabletop United to find fresh new avenues to explore that aspect of the franchise, even as they're enjoying the roleplaying experience. Forcing them to pretend away all of their Pokémon knowledge can seriously harm their enjoyment of the campaign.

This isn't to say that players will be able to know everything about Pokémon without making any rolls – Pokémon Education is still useful for learning about behavioral patterns of Pokémon or their biological needs. Even if everyone at the table recognizes a Weavile and can tell you it's an Ice/Dark Type with high Speed and Attack, they wouldn't necessarily know how to describe their social behavior or hunting habits. A Pokédex or high Pokémon Education Skill would also be necessary to know very specific information about what Moves a Pokémon can learn or what Abilities it gains as it grows.

Your play group may also have players who aren't as experienced with the Pokémon franchise. This is fine as well, and you should encourage your other players to help them out when it comes to knowledge that should be common sense for their characters.

Finally, you always have the option as a GM to throw curveballs at your players in the form of Shiny Pokémon, Type Shifted Pokémon, or even homebrew Pokémon of your own creation.

Campaign Structure

Even for an experienced GM, Pokémon Tabletop United presents a set of unique challenges. As in most tabletop RPGs, you tend to hit a stride after a certain point where you can either dedicate most of your time and preparation to a central plot, focus upon character-centric plot arcs, or create a "sandbox" of highly varied activities for the players to get into.

However, while in most RPGs you quickly grow out of the simple and repetitive quests used to introduce players into the world or the system, most Pokémon tabletop campaigns will retain a set of those basic activities throughout: catching Pokémon and challenging Gym Leaders. It can be a challenge to maintain an interesting variety in these activities as well as keeping the pacing of a campaign on the right track.

A good guideline is to roughly split the campaign into two different phases: One in which there's relative calm and the players are able to easily pursue Pokémon Gyms and other personal interests without interference, and one in which your larger plot intercedes and demands that action be taken on it.

Early on in a campaign, you want to lean harder on the former phase, giving players plenty of time to explore on their own terms and develop their Pokémon teams. Later on, as players have formed solid teams and are reluctant to take on new members, you can phase out the idea of throwing in plentiful random encounters.

As you introduce more of your central plot elements or character-centric plots, weave them in with the obligatory standard Trainer activities. A Gym Leader goes on hiatus until a threat to the town is dealt with. Perhaps they're on call to deal with a criminal Team and have brought their Gym Trainers along to help too. Players stumble upon clues to the overall plot as they're out catching Pokémon. Maybe they literally fall into some ancient ruins as they battle wild Pokémon over shaky ground, or maybe they might encounter an important NPC while exploring an uncharted route.

Do this sort of weaving in the other direction as well. Perhaps the players need an expert on ancient civilizations to analyze an artifact they found, and their research leads them to an expert who happens to be a Gym Leader. The Gym Leader may even require the PCs to take on their challenge if they think they're getting into too dangerous a situation and need to be tested to see if they're truly ready yet. A search for a wanted Team Rocket member could lead the PCs to find a hideout holding abused Pokémon, some of which the PCs may adopt. This adds to their teams, furthers the plot at the same time, and gives them a personal reason to pursue the villains.

Done well, this will ensure one phase of the campaign flows neatly into the next, always letting the players see when they'll have an opportunity to pursue their own interests as well as explore the plot you've laid out for them. They shouldn't ever feel like pursuing one has to come at the cost of the other.

When it comes to concluding a campaign, there are two main ways you can approach this when running a traditional League-based game. You can either conclude the overall plot and tie up character arcs before using the Pokémon League tournament as an epilogue of sorts to the campaign, or you can leave a calm before the storm in the sessions leading up to the League tournament, then set in motion the climactic events of the plot after the Pokémon League concludes or even right as post-League celebrations are beginning.

Either way, this ensures the League itself, if it is an important event for your game, is relatively isolated from other matters which might distract your players from it or keep them from fully enjoying it.

Rules are meant to be broken, of course, and you can certainly use disruption of the Pokémon League as a major plot point in and of itself. The suggestions laid out here are just provide a solid foundation to a very traditional game, and you'll likely want to deviate from this structure as you play and GM more campaigns of Pokémon Tabletop United.

This is just the start of where you can go with the system. In a campaign without a focus on a Pokémon League or Contest Circuit or equivalent event, another well tested structure is to make the PCs part of an organization such as law enforcement, students at a Pokémon Trainer academy, or an exploration team and run mission-based sessions. Not only is this easy to organize, but it makes keeping the PCs well paid easy too!

Creating Compelling Sessions

Now you have an idea of how to handle the overall structure of a campaign, but you still have to keep each individual gaming session engaging for your players. Here are some easy guidelines to help with that.

1. Sessions should promote **interactivity**.

This has multiple layers of meaning. First of all, it means your session should give your players plenty of room to make choices and influence the outcome of events. They shouldn't feel like they're simply sitting through a narrated series of events or reading a book.

Second of all, the events in your session should promote interaction between the PCs. Tie together one character's interests with another's. Make tasks require Skills held by different PCs or the use of different Pokémon on their teams, and encourage them to talk through those tasks and turn them into RP opportunities.

2. Sessions should contain **meaningful** content.

More than simply containing interactive choices, those choices should be meaningful and interesting. Combat is by its very nature interactive, but fighting bland swarms of wild Pokémon won't give players a sense that they can make changes that matter in your world.

This doesn't necessarily require you to make world-spanning plots either. The simplest way to create meaningful choices for the PCs is to have them implicate personal goals and bring in character backgrounds. Of course, not every single session needs to be filled with this sort of content; it's a good idea to have occasional fluffier sessions to give players a break.

3. Sessions should provide **self-contained satisfaction** while also **contributing to a larger whole**.

Much like an episode of a good TV show, each segment of a campaign should be satisfying in and of itself while also adding to an overall plot. It's no good to drop a bunch of clues and hints about later plot developments but leave players feeling like they didn't actually do much or accomplish anything in the session, and it's no better to create magnificently crafted sessions after sessions if all of them are completely episodic and unrelated to each other, with no overarching stories or character arcs.

This is another rule that can be bent a little, in the sense that it's okay to have occasional standalone sessions that aren't tied to anything else in particular but are a lot of fun in themselves. Usually, these are sillier off the wall sessions such as bug catching competitions, whacky Contests, and other fun minigame activities.

Pre-Campaign Preparations

Let's start with some prep work you should do at the beginning of a campaign, before you even run the first session. Doing this very soon after the first session is okay as well, but it can be time-consuming and cut into your time to prepare your next few sessions.

Create a small dossier on each PC. Don't make it too long; you have to do about 4 or 5 of these in a standard campaign, after all. What should you include in this dossier? Talk to your players about how they want their PCs to develop. Which parts of their character backgrounds are most important to them? What are their characters' main skills and interests? Do they have developed goals from the outset, or will they pick those up as the game goes on? Do your players have any out-of-character desires for the game? For example, if they'd like to have the party visit a particular type of locale sometime or if they want their character to get into trouble and shenanigans often. If you're taking down wishlists, put them in the dossier as well.

These will be your reference documents for what kind of material to include in sessions when you're stumped for ideas. Be especially careful at this stage to make sure you have ideas in mind for how to hook in PCs who have more mundane or obscure Skill choices.

Break In Case of PC Choices

It's inevitable. You will have your plans dashed by the players making decisions you didn't realize were even in the realm of possibility for them. Plan for a few sessions in a new city, and the PCs will instead latch onto the merchant NPC passing through town who makes an off-handed remark about heading into the desert, and the next thing you know they've declared themselves his bodyguards and are dead set on outfitting themselves in archeology gear and searching for ancient Unown ruins and fossils for the next couple of sessions.

Don't fret. This is a trial by fire that all GMs go through, and you'll emerge from it as a stronger and wiser GM.

Later in this chapter, you'll see guides on quickly building NPCs and fast Pokémon statting for encounters, which can help you improvise in these situations.

However, the best way to prepare for this eventuality is to create a toolkit of modular adventures that can be sprinkled through new locations as you need them. It takes a lot of initial time investment to make these, but when you're done, you can shove 'em in a box, slap a "Break In Case of PC Choices" label on the top, and sit them on your desk feeling much less stressed out about these potential situations.

This works hand-in-hand with the dossiers you've created on your PCs before the start of the campaign. Here are some examples of how to put this into practice:

Campaign Prep Examples

First, let's establish two characters for a hypothetical GM to create dossiers and run sessions for.

Marty is a Researcher focusing on botany and herbs. He mainly specializes in Survival and General Education, with a bit of dabbling in other Education Skills such as Technology. He also has a magnetic personality and the Charm Skill to match. Marty's player hasn't really thought much yet about his in-character goals, but he knows that he wants to capture Pokémon like Sneasel and Swinub and puts them on a wishlist for his GM.

Abigail is a quiet and introspective Telepath. Despite her mind reading abilities, she isn't great with people and is lacking in Skills such as Charm and Guile. However, she has great Body Skills such as Acrobatics and Athletics, along with the Focus needed for her telepathic powers. Her major in-character motivation is to uncover the secret behind a mysterious bombing at a Silph Co. office building that took her parents' lives, but out-of-character, Abigail's player wants the adventure to lead to ancient ruins somewhere.

The GM begins thinking on a number of scenarios he can put in his back pocket for sessions where he's caught off guard and needs content.

First, he thinks about his cities. He's left the specific institutions and attractions of each city deliberately

vague aside from a few major defining characteristic of each city, leaving him free to shuffle plot points around.

He comes up with a group of former Silph employee NPCs who knew Abigail's parents and might be able to help her discover who was behind the bombing. They were nearly caught in the explosion as well though, and they're reluctant to talk about what happened. The GM figures he can use this to have either Abigail make use of her Telepathy, or have Marty assist her with his charming personality.

Obviously, with an ominous terrorist attack in one of his PCs' backstories, the GM is going to need to work in some sort of criminal Team angle into his campaign, so he thinks of ways he can get Marty's player invested in this sort of plotline as well. He constructs a scenario about a few high profile murders carried out by Team Verdance, a group of ecological terrorists, using poisons harvested from various Grass Type Pokémon such as Vileplume, Parasect, and Amoonguss – perfect for Marty's botany specialty. For the victims, he creates NPCs who are close to acquaintances or friends of both Marty and Abigail, to give them a way into the scenario and a reason to investigate.

Even with these two scenarios on hand, the GM feels like he'd be more comfortable if he had a few more session ideas he could throw at his players if they make their way to a town where he has little prepared.

Knowing that Marty will find himself poking around herb and berry shops often, he maps out an underground Team Verdance hideout underneath an herb shop. He's not sure exactly how the PCs will stumble upon it, but he's confident that if he has the base prepared, he can improvise a way to rope the PCs into exploring it if he hits a slow session.

Then, realizing that he's been leaning pretty heavily on the criminal team aspect of things, he decides to prepare something lighter and comes up with a celebratory festival he can drop into a town the PCs are visiting. Among the attractions will be Pokémon Contests, a small amateurs' battling tournament, and other small minigames – with prizes such as rare herbs and berries, relics from ancient civilizations, and other items he knows the players will have an interest in.

Done with his "just in case" session ideas for the cities, the GM turns to filling the wilds with adventure seeds,

which is a bit trickier due to the variance in terrains and environments the players will encounter. He needs something that's terrain-agnostic to throw at his PCs. The GM isn't too worried about preparing encounters for capturing Pokémon – he's done some rough planning for what kinds of species go where, and he's sure he can stat them up quickly as need be. However, he does need some events on the road that the PCs can follow up on as adventure seeds.

After some writing, he comes up with a few scenarios that fit multiple different terrains – collapsed bridges that have stopped other traveling Trainers, Pokémon transport vehicles that have crashed and lead to the Pokémon inside escaping, Pokémon driven feral by questionable scientific experiments, etc. He ties some of the NPCs involved in these scenarios to the Team Verdance plotline, some of them to Marty's past and to the research lab he was a part of, and some to various other ideas the GM has had for potential plots, such as a small silly cult worshipping the Unown and a group of researchers searching for Legendary Pokémon.

However, after comparing his notes for his cities and for the wilderness, he concludes that his city-centric adventures are a lot more cohesive and focused due to their ties to the Team Verdance plotline. He decides to create something equivalent for the wilds and realizes he's yet to hit on either Abigail's player's desire to find ancient ruins and Marty's player's wishlist much.

Eventually, he comes up with the idea that an ancient civilization once created a floating city similar to the Sword of the Vale in the Pokémon Black and White movies. However, during a terrible war, the city was destroyed and its parts scattered all over the region. Some of these parts are fragments of wondrous and powerful ancient artifacts, making them valuable and sought after prizes.

To rope the PCs into this hunt, the GM decides he'll drop some hints about Silph Co. researching these artifacts shortly before the bombing that killed Abigail's parents, and for Marty, he has one of the young researcher's mentors who taught him about botany approach him with his discovery of a mysterious plant that was icy cold and exuded a freezing aura around it – found in the ruins of one particularly intact part of the ancient city.

Eventually, Abigail and Marty should find enough hints through the hunt for artifacts to lead them to a set of ruins high up in the snowy mountains – perfect for Marty to catch a Sneasel or Swinub and also a way to satisfy Abigail's player's curiosity about ancient ruins.

Satisfied with his emergency box of session ideas, the GM is confident going into the start of his campaign.

Unfortunately, however, not everything goes perfectly as planned. It turns out the way he wrote the role of the ex-Silph NPCs, it was too easy for Abigail to simply read their minds and get whatever information she needed, and Marty's player consistently felt left out of sessions involving those NPCs.

Luckily, our GM is familiar with this issue, that it is much easier to give out plot hooks to those with supernatural powers and thus necessary to think carefully about making sure everyone is equally involved, whether they are normal humans or gifted with supernatural talents.

It's an easy change for him – he has the NPCs become a bit more willing to give out information, but they are difficult to convince to come along to help investigate old shut down Silph labs and other areas of interest without Marty's smooth talking. Once in those areas, Abigail's athleticism helps everyone stay safe and access hard to reach areas while Marty continues to contribute with his knowledge of technology.

In the end, the players get to experience a wonderful campaign, and the GM has fun as well with relatively worry-free GMing due to the preparation they did before the campaign began.

Basic GMing Tasks

No matter what kind of campaign you're running, there are some tasks that are universal to GMing. Adjudicating challenges, overseeing character creation, handing out Experience Points, all that good stuff. What about creating combat encounters? you might ask. That will get its own section in this chapter, don't you worry. For now, let's start from the top.

Character Creation And You

The very first thing you need to present to your players after describing the premise and assumptions of your campaign is a set of guidelines for building their characters.

For a great many campaigns, what we outlined in the Character Creation chapter is appropriate: Level 1 Trainers with a single Level 5 or 10 Pokémon and ₽5000 to spend on items or to keep as cash.

However, you might decide that your PCs need to be more experienced from the start. Perhaps they're seasoned Trainers brought together in a special task force by the Pokémon League, or maybe they're just mildly experienced Gym Trainers out to find their own adventure.

Either way, you would simply raise the starting Level for characters in the campaign and allow them to choose more and higher leveled Pokémon to start. You may also decide to increment their starting money, increasing it anywhere from ₽500 to ₽750 per additional starting Level. Depending on what level your PCs start at, you may wish to limit what items they can purchase with their starting cash. For instance, you don't want Level 1 Trainers buying Hyper Beam TMs.

It's recommended that you don't have your players start with more than perhaps three starter Pokémon at the maximum (and that's for an experienced Trainer for a game that begins above Trainer Level 1) unless you're having someone join in an ongoing campaign midway where the rest of the players already have established teams. A lot of the fun of Pokémon is discovering Pokémon and forming your team over time, and starting with too many Pokémon can undercut this experience. If players worry about getting all the Pokémon they want, you may ask them to create a wishlist. Don't follow it religiously, but it can help you satisfy your players.

Starter Pokémon

In general, you may want players to select Pokémon with three evolutionary stages for their starters so their first Pokémon has room to grow with their Trainer over time. This isn't a hard and fast rule, and you may allow two stage evolutions or even weak single stage Pokémon. Using the classification of Underdog Pokémon is another way of making starter selection easier.

But even within this category, you'll want to keep some guidelines in mind. You may choose to limit "Pseudo-Legendary" Pokémon such as Dratini, Bagon, Gible, and Larvitar. When players begin with such rare Pokémon, it makes it difficult to give them somewhere more exciting to go.

On a more practical and mechanical level, some Pokémon that are available in the end-game of the video games tend to learn much more powerful Moves at lower levels than Pokémon available earlier on do. For instance, Larvitar learns Rock Slide at Level 19, which is a rather low Level for such a strong Move.

You should be careful when looking at the Ability choices Pokémon have as well. Abilities which give a boost to Damage Bases are very potent in the beginning stages of the game. Technician and Iron Fist are two examples of Abilities that can give Pokémon a huge early game boost. We aren't suggesting you ban these Abilities outright, but you should watch carefully as your players select starters to ensure no one is going to be marginalized.

Generally, it's a good idea to allow players to select the Ability, Gender, and Nature of their starter to avoid the RNG leaving them with a poor Pokémon for what's supposed to be one of their most important companions.

Finally, it's not a bad idea to give starter Pokémon an Inheritance List. For Pokémon without Egg Moves, you may even pick from Tutor or TM Moves for this list instead. Generally, the further you get into a campaign, the more interesting and unique Pokémon you'll hand out to your players, whether it be shiny Pokémon, well-bred specimens, or simply rare catches. It can be easy for starters to be left behind mechanically, but a set of 2-3 Inheritance Moves can help offset this.

Sample Starter Pokémon List

Following the guidelines laid out on the previous page, here are a number of Pokémon that make for good starters, sorted by the canonical Regional starters and then by Type. The Types chosen for this are largely those which are less "mundane" and more likely to have fantastical elemental or supernatural powers. Many Normal, Bug, and Flying Types are not only very common but less interesting than a Fire or Electric Type.

Keep in mind that even within this list some Pokémon may be slightly more useful than others in early levels, particularly because some Pokémon that make for great starters are reliant on Struggle Attacks for the first few levels. Rock, Steel, and Ghost Type starter Pokémon may also end up very powerful if most enemies have mainly Normal Type attacks early on, so GMs should be **very** careful about allowing these Types for starters, even if they are listed below. If early opponents are likely to have varied Typed attacks, then this is much less of an issue.

Kanto	**Johto**	**Hoenn**	**Sinnoh**	**Unova**	**Kalos**
Bulbasaur	Chikorita	Treecko	Turtwig	Snivy	Chespin
Charmander	Cyndaquil	Torchic	Chimchar	Tepig	Fennekin
Squirtle	Totodile	Mudkip	Piplup	Oshawott	Froakie

Dark Types	**Fire Types**	**Poison Types**
Scraggy	Vulpix	Nidoran
Sandile	Magby	Zubat
Vullaby	Numel	Stunky

Electric Types	**Grass Types**	**Psychic Types**
Elekid	Oddish	Abra
Mareep	Bellsprout	Solosis
Shinx	Lotad	Gothita

Fairy Types	**Ground Types**	**Water Types**
Cleffa	Geodude	Poliwag
Ralts	Swinub	Tympole
Flabébé	Sandile	Spheal

Fighting Types	**Ice Types**
Machop	Swinub
Timburr	Spheal
Makuhita	Vanillite

This isn't meant to be a comprehensive list by any means! Your players will likely have ideas for starters outside of this list, even within the Types represented, and that's perfectly okay. Just consider them on a case by case basis using the guidelines we've laid out already.

There is also some repetition in this list. For the most part, we try to populate it with three-stage Pokémon, but it isn't always possible to find multiple three-stage families in a given Type that are appropriate as Starters.

Rewards and Experience

Another important part of GMing is handing out Experience so your PCs can grow and advance as they explore the world.

Calculating Pokémon Experience

Calculating Experience after an encounter is easy.

»   First off, **total the Level of the enemy combatants which were defeated**. For encounters where Trainers were directly involved in the combat, treat their Level as doubled for the sake of this calculation. For example, if your players fought a Level 10 Trainer with a level 20 Pokémon, Base Experience Value for this encounter is 40.

»   Second, **consider the significance of the encounter.** This will decide a value to multiply the Base Experience Value. See below for details on picking a significance multiplier.

»   Third, **divide the Experience by the number of players gaining Experience**. Divide by the number of Players – not the number of Pokémon. If a Trainer used multiple Pokémon, he will have to split his experience among the Pokémon he used. The resulting number is how much experience is gained by each Trainer!

Significance Multiplier

The Significance Multiplier should range from x1 to about x5, and there's many things to consider when picking this value.

First, consider narrative significance. This will inform your "base" significance multiplier.

An encounter against wild Pidgeys probably doesn't have any significance; an encounter against a rival trainer has more; and an encounter for the championship title has lots!

»   Insignificant encounters should trend towards the bottom of the spectrum at x1 to x1.5.

»   "Average" everyday encounters should be about x2 or x3.

»   More significant encounters may range anywhere from x4 to x5 depending on their significance; a match against an average gym leader might merit as high as x4. A decisive battle against a Rival or in the top tiers of a tournament might be worth x5 or even higher!

Next, consider the challenge and threat being posed. Even if a wild Pokémon doesn't have much narrative significance, a very strong wild Pokémon may be able to inflict serious damage to trainers and their Pokémon. Conversely, a fight against an unskilled Gym Leader might hardly be a challenge at all. Lower or raise the significance a little, by x0.5 to x1.5, based on the difficulty of the challenge. Of course, don't use this to punish particular party members if they have an advantage due to type or similar – this should be used to consider more sweeping advantages based on numbers or Level differences.

Regulating Experience

As written, Experience can only be distributed to Pokémon who participated directly in an encounter, and it can be split however the player sees fit, even if that means putting all of the Experience for a large encounter into a single Pokémon. Note that unlike in the video games, Fainted Pokémon can still gain Experience.

In some cases, however, such as boss encounters that mark the end of a major plot arc or chapter in your campaign, you could choose to allow a portion of the Experience being handed out to be distributed even to Pokémon that didn't participate in battle.

This is especially useful if you'll be using timeskips in your campaign. It's also a handy tool to allow players to catch up weaker Pokémon without wasting session time looking for Pidgeys to "grind" on.

On the other hand, you may want to regulate how much Experience can be put into any single Pokémon after an encounter, even if it was a Pokémon that was used in that battle. (Letting one Pokémon on a PC's team greatly outstrip the average Pokémon Level in a party is a bad idea!) You could institute a rule that Pokémon above a certain Level can only receive up to a certain cap of Experience from the encounter, for instance or simply put a flat cap on how much Experience any one Pokémon can receive. This can result in a player having too much Experience to allocate properly if they only used one or two Pokémon in a battle, so you should combine this with the above guideline for allowing non-participant Pokémon to gain Experience as well when used in very large encounters.

Trainer Levels and Milestones

In Pokémon Tabletop United, there are two ways for Trainers to gain levels; **Milestones** and **Experience**.

Milestones are the most straight forward way of leveling up. A Milestone represents meeting a significant goal. For example, gaining a Badge or a Ribbon in a contest should be causes for a Milestone Level-Up. Other events such as defeating a major opponent or very challenging "boss", or fulfilling a long-term goal that impacts the narrative, should also grant Milestone Level-Ups, subject to GM discretion.

Here's a sample list of other Milestones you can use for campaigns without a Pokémon League or characters who have no interest in the League.

High Seas Pirate Campaign: +1 Level for each island fully explored or enemy flagship raided and looted.
Space Opera Campaign: +1 Level for each planet explored and catalogued for the fleet.
Pokémon World War Campaign: +1 Level for each enemy city conquered or major encampment destroyed.
Noir Detective Campaign: +1 Level for each mob boss taken down or arrested.

The other way to Level Up is from gaining **Experience**. Whenever a Trainer reaches 10 Experience or higher, they immediately subtract 10 Experience from their **Experience Bank** and gain 1 Level. Leveling Up through a Milestone does not affect your Experience Bank.

There is only one automatic source of experience: Pokémon. Whenever a Trainer catches, hatches, or evolves a Pokémon species they did not previously own, they gain +1 Experience.

Note: Not all characters will want to catch a lot of Pokémon, so it may be a good idea to create alternate Experience goal posts for other characters. You would likely keep Experience from capturing Pokémon for the Capture Specialist since they will do this activity frequently and need to be rewarded for it. However, for another character, they gain no Experience from captures, but you might say they gain 3 Experience every time they compete in a tournament, on top of the Experience the group would normally gain from those sessions. Scale these rewards to how often you think they will occur in comparison to capturing Pokémon.

You may even decide to do this replacement with Milestones as well to create custom advancement goal posts for everyone. The League battler certainly might benefit from Gym Badges as Milestones, but you may decide a detective instead arrests criminal Team admins and officers as their Milestones.

All other Experience must be granted by the GM, and it is up to the GM to decide when to grant experience, and how much, and thus decide the pace of leveling for the campaign.

Calculating Trainer Experience

Like with Pokémon Experience, GMs will have to decide how much Trainer Experience to grant after each encounter; and again, we encourage GMs to consider narrative significance and challenge as the main determining factors.

A scuffle with weak or average wild Pokémon shouldn't be worth any Trainer experience most of the time. An average encounter with other Trainers or with stronger wild Pokémon usually merits 1 or 2 Experience at most.

Significant battles that do not quite merit a Milestone award by themselves should award 3, 4, or even 5 Experience. Alternatively, "lost" battles that would have otherwise awarded a Milestone Level-Up may be worth 1 or 2 Experience as well, or even more if it is a significant and non-repeatable event.

Experience for Trainers can and should also come from non-combat goals and achievements as well, both as a party as an individuals.

As a party, non-combat goals could include narrative progress, such as reaching a new Town or Route, or unraveling a bit of political intrigue. If nothing else, if you have session that has little in the way of action or intrigue, it wouldn't be a bad idea to grant your party +1 Experience for the session anyway.

As individuals, you probably should not give out too much experience too often unless you're using the alternate Experience goal posts method, but don't be shy about giving it for particular achievements. For example, the Ace Trainer that finally got its unruly Camerupt to follow orders deserves a little Experience.

MONEY MATTERS

Giving your Trainers money can sometimes be a bit tricky. In the ideal situation, you want to keep most of your PCs poor enough that they need to constantly be on the lookout for sources of income; but you also want them to have enough money to purchase basic needs, and indulge occasional splurges. Here are some helpful ideas or guidelines that may be of use.

Wagers: Other trainers that travel the region may occasionally challenge your PCs to battles. Usually, they'll make a wager, agreed on by both parties. Whoever wins gets both sides of the wager. Simple. Young, inexperienced trainers often don't have much cash to wager; maybe 2000 at a high bid, but usually much lower. Older, richer, and more experienced trainers may wager up to 5000 however.

Contests & Gym Battles: If your Campaign involves Pokémon Gyms, let Gyms grant money without the risk of a wager. A reward of 4,000 to 8,000 or even more is probably in order – and of course, a TM as well! Contests may give similar rewards, perhaps giving a Held Item instead of a TM.

Parents: Parents or other family members may wish to help a little bit financially! They may send money, coupons, or vouchers electronically.

Promotions & Raffles: Like real-life stores, PokéMarts and PokéCenters may sometimes run promotional offers. Punch Cards for every 100 spent that grant 500 in credit for 10 punches might be a nice way to help trainers keep up on Potions and other basic necessities.

Occasional Raffles for free items may also be nice; on every purchase over 2000 for example, let them make a 1d20 roll; upon success, they win a nice Poké Ball or Restorative item of your choice.

Side Jobs: In the grand tradition of RPGs, side quests are always a good source of income! The amount awarded should be consistent with the difficulty or danger of the task. Some players may also wish to sell goods or services, such as items they can craft or the use of Features from Mentor and similar Classes.

The Ground: The floor can be a great ally to your PCs! If you feel your trainers are having trouble keeping their inventories stocked, once per route, let them make a 1d20 Luck Roll, and grant them items based on the result. Here's a chart that may help – feel free to change the chart as little or as much as you wish.

1-4	Nope.avi	You find nothing
5 - 6	Battle Enhancers	A Random X-Item
7 – 8	Money	You find 1d4 x100 bucks!
9-10	Berries	Any Random Berry
11-12	Poké Ball	Any Random Poké Ball
13-16	Status/Healing	Any Restorative
17	Evolutionary Stones	Any Random Evolutionary Stone
18	Performance Enhancers	Any Random Vitamin
19	Hold Item	Any Random Hold Item
20	TM	Any Random TM

Conversion Rate: Wanna run your campaign on dollars instead of ₱? Easy! $1 = ₱50. This puts basic Poké Balls at $5 and candy bars at $1.50 Even if you want to run your game in ₱, this is a useful way to price random items.

Creating Shops

Stumped on what kinds of shops to fill your world with? Here are 7 ideas for types of shops that will fit most Pokémon worlds and towns.

Commonly available products will show up in a store in most any town, save perhaps for very out of the way areas. Products that are "**Possibly**" available are less common and may be in stock only due to the surrounding environment, such as a Travel Shop near a cave stocking Dark Vision Goggles. "**Rarely**" available items are usually the providence of more specialized or especially large shops, such as the department stores found in cities like Goldenrod and Celadon.

Feel free to mix and match products across rarity levels to best suit your setting and the shops in your world.

PokéMarts
Commonly: Basic Balls, one or two Specialty Poké Balls
Possibly: Great Balls, two or more Specialty Poké Balls, Held Items worth ₽2500 or less, one to three Evolutionary Stones or Keepsakes, one to three TMs
Rarely: Ultra Balls, several Specialty Poké Balls, Held Items worth ₽2500 or more, large selection of Evolutionary Stones and Keepsakes, large selection of TMs

Pharmacy
Commonly: Candy Bars, Potions, Antidotes, Awakenings, Burn Heals, Ice Heals, First Aid Kit, Chemistry Set, Repels
Possibly: Full Heal, Revive, X-Items
Rarely: Full Restore, Vitamins
Very Rarely: Pester Balls

Travel Shop
Commonly: All items listed in the "Travel Gear" section, Repels, Cooking Set, Dowsing Rod, Poké Ball Tool Box, Portable Grower, Snow Boots, Running Shoes, Flippers, Jungle Boots, Old Rods, Hand Nets
Possibly: Light Armor, Stealth Clothes, Dark Vision Goggles, Gas Masks, Helmets, Re-Breathers, Good Rods, Glue Cannons, Weighted Nets, Light Shield
Rarely: Heavy Armor, Heavy Shield, Super Rods, Wonder Launcher, Caltrops, Smoke Balls

Market:
Commonly: Candy Bars, Enriched Water, Tier 1 Berries, Baby Food, Poffin Mixer
Possibly: Super Soda Pop, Leftovers, Tier 2 Berries, Apricorns
Rarely: Sparkling Lemonade, MooMoo Milk

Herb Shop
Commonly: Energy Powder, Heal Powder, Poultices, Tier 1 Berries, Honey
Possibly: Energy Root, Revival Herb, Tier 2 or 3 Berries

Fashion Shop
Commonly: Fancy Clothes, Sunglasses, Running Shoes, Contest Accessories, Contest Fashion, Groomer's Kit, Egg Warmers, Poffin Mixer

Occult Shops
Commonly: Useless hogwash with no effect
Possibly: Cleanse Tags, Dream Mist
Very Rarely: Magic Flutes

Tutors and Other Services

Occasionally, your players may want access to a service provided by Class Features – a Move Tutor, for example,or perhaps a breeder. The availability for these services depends on you, and you should consider your setting before making any service available.

That said, below are some of the more common NPC services accompanied by recommended frequencies of availability and prices.

Commonly available services probably can be given out pretty freely without hurting anything. "**Possibly**" and "**Rarely**" available services should be considered a bit more before inserting them into your setting. Also note, you should of course mix and match across rarity levels as it suits you; A breeder with Master Rank Pokémon Education could only have Rattatas and Pidgeys for adoption, for example.

Specialist Tutors: These Tutors have taken the "Tutoring" Feature, and can teach only a single specific Move to Pokémon that could learn that Move via Level-Up, TM, Egg-Move list, or Move Tutor. Having one of these per town can be an interesting way to keep players looking forward to new locations. Prices should vary from ₽1000 to ₽3000, depending on the strength of the Move in question.

Generalist Tutors: These Tutors have taken Mentor Features, and are rarer than Specialist Tutors and often more expensive, but can provide varied services.
Commonly: Latent Potential (₽800)
Possibly: Move Tutor (Varies Per Move), Corrective Learning (₽1200)
Rarely: Changing Viewpoints (₽2500), Versatile Teachings (₽2500)

Chefs: Rare gourmet foods are relatively common in big cities in restaurants, food stalls, and cafes. However, they are often sold at a significant mark-ups. Items such as Vitamins and Refreshments are usually sold at their normal market price.
Commonly: Super Bait (₽400), Vile Bait (₽400), Honey Candy (₽150), Stat Suppressants (₽500)
Possibly: Salty Surprise and Similar (₽600), Preserves (Matches Price of original item)
Rarely: Dumplings (Combined Item Price + ₽500)

Fashionistas: Oh baby! Salons are common in big cities, and their services widely available - if pricy. Their makeovers will last until your next extended rest.
Commonly: Stylish Makeover (₽1000)
Rarely: Elaborate Masquerade (₽1000)

Breeders: These are very rare. The difference between various Breeders are their Skill Rank in Pokémon Education which affects which traits they can control when Breeding, and the Eggs or young Pokémon they offer for adoption. You may want to consider the presence and availability of Breeders in your game very carefully.
Commonly: Adept Pokémon Education, Common and cute Pokémon such as Rattata, Sentret, Pidgey, Lillipup, etc. (₽1000)
Possibly: Expert Rank Education, Slightly Rarer Pokémon such as Pichu, Sandshrew, or Poliwag (₽5000)
Rarely: Master Rank Education, "Starter" Pokémon or other rare breeds (₽10,000 or more).
Very Rarely: Stronger or Rare Pokémon (₽15,000 or more)

As a final note, some of these services such as Move Tutoring or Hatching Pokémon Eggs may also be good options to offer as prizes for defeating a Gym Leader.

Setting Skill Check Difficulties

Some basic ideas for setting difficulties for Skill Checks were touched upon earlier in the book, but here's a more thorough and mathematically rigorous treatment of the subject, if that's your thing.

First of all, here's a mathematical breakdown of percentage chance of success for a given DC a +0 modifer applied to the raw Skill Check. Trainers will often have Equipment, Edges that give them bonus modifiers to their Skills, and other effects which will give them higher probabilities for success than these baseline values might indicate. Be sure to account for that when setting DCs.

If you need to see the chances of success/failure for a specific Trainer, then simply adjust the DC to account for the difference in their modifier. For every point above +0, subtract 1 from the DC. For example, a Trainer making a DC 14 Athletics check with a +4 modifier to theirAthletics from equipment and other effects would have the chances associated with DC 10 on the chart. So 84.1% at Adept, 50% at Novice, and 16.67% at Untrained.

DC 4 - 90%+ success rate at Untrained or higher, 50% success rate at Pathetic
DC 6 - 90%+ success rate at Novice or higher, 72.22% at Untrained, 16.67% success rate at Pathetic
DC 8 - 83.8% success rate at Novice, 41.67% at Untrained, impossible at Pathetic
DC 10 - 84.1% success rate at Adept, 50% at Novice, 16.67% at Untrained
DC 12 - 90%+ success rate at Expert or higher, 76.08% at Adept, 37.5% at Novice, 2.78% at Untrained
DC 14 - 84.8% success rate at Expert, 55.63% at Adept, 16.2% at Novice, impossible at Untrained
DC 16 - 90%+ success rate at Master, 69.48% at Expert, 33.56% at Adept, 4.63% at Novice
DC 18 - 79.42% at Master, 50% at Expert, 15.9% at Adept, less than 1% at Novice
DC 20 - 63.69% at Master, 30.52% at Expert, 5.4% at Adept, impossible at Novice
DC 22 - 45.43% at Master, 15.2% at Expert, 1.16% at Adept
DC 24 - 27.94% at Master, 5.88% at Expert, less than 1% at Adept
DC 26 - 14.46% at Master, 3.24% at Expert, impossible at Adept
DC 28 - 6.08% at Master, less than 1% at Expert
DC 30 - 1.97% at Master

That said, here's an easy breakdown – the following DCs represent the average roll for a Skill Check at these DCs. Use them when you want the PCs to succeed most of the time but still want a chance for failure. You should also frequently increase them by a couple points for more difficult situations, especially because most characters will have bonus modifers to their specialty Skills.

Untrained check – DC 7
Novice check – DC 10
Adept check – DC 13
Expert check – DC 17
Master check – DC 21

Armed with these percentages, or simply the easy breakdown if you wish, you can decide how difficult to make the Skill Checks in your campaign! First of all, what kind of tone are you going for in your campaign?

If you're emulating the Pokémon anime, then DCs may tend toward the easy side. Leaps of faith from building tops to passing airships and hot-air balloons may be difficult but doable even for relatively inexperienced (Novice) acrobats, say, a DC of 12 or 14. Essentially, "anime physics" are in play, and Trainers can expect for acts of heroism to have moderately high chances of success.

Now, if you were running a gritty noir campaign, or a downtrodden post-apocalyptic campaign, you may decide the overall tone is grimmer, making Skill Checks more difficult. That same jump could easily be a DC 20 Acrobatics Check, representing the difficulty of accurately leaping from a building to a quickly moving airship. With more realistic physics in play, Trainers will have to be careful what risks they take.

Second, think about what each level of Skill Rank represents in your campaign. For example, generally, Adept Rank is enough for someone to make a living by their Skill.

So when considering whether or not one of your PCs with an Adept Education: Technology Skill can successfully repair a car engine in a shop, think about whether or not the problem is one they'd be able to routinely handle at any given car mechanic you'd visit.

Simply replacing a part? At DC 10, even someone without bonuses from equipment and other modifiers would succeed an overwhelming amount of the time with an Adept Skill. If it's a more esoteric problem

involving a rarer model of car? At DC 17, even someone with a +3 total modifier from Categoric Inclination and Skill Enhancement and an Adept Skill in Technology is only going to be able to solve the problem a little over half the time – and that might be accurate.

It could be the kind of problem that gets the chief mechanic called in at the shop or requires further research and special equipment that might give a bonus to the Skill Check on a later reattempt.

We don't really believe in handing out tables of set DCs for particular tasks, but hopefully, having these numbers on hand and this guide will allow you to properly set DCs for Skill Checks in a variety of campaign types!

Circumstantial Difficulties

When deciding the difficulty for a Skill Check, the target number depends on the difficulty of the task itself, but Skill Checks aren't done in a vacuum. The environment and other external circumstances will affect the difficulty of a task. However, trying to map different activities to a scale of DCs that range from the single digits up to 30+ is a daunting task, and it can be hard to conceptualize that wide a range. It can seem like once players rank up their skills to a certain point, they can't fail at anything anymore.

The recommended solution here is to apply penalty dice to checks in severe circumstances. For each mitigating circumstance that makes a task more difficult, roll 1d6 and subtract that amount from the character's Skill Check. For example, you might set the difficulty for a Perception Check to spy a hidden scroll in the nook of a tree at 12. A character with Adept Perception and a +2 bonus from Skill Enhancement would easily make this check most of the time as they'd average a roll of 16.

However, if they're making this check while in the dark and during a violent rainstorm with high speed winds blowing, you may decide to roll two penalty dice against their check in addition to the DC you set for the task. This makes it easier to create difficult tasks for highly skilled characters without needing to conceptualize an enormous range of DCs.

The reason penalty dice are rolled instead of merely subtracting d6s from the player's roll is that we wanted to avoid situations where a player literally could not roll a check because all of their dice have been subtracted due to circumstantial modifiers. While it is exceedingly unlikely that a player might succeed in a roll where the penalty dice equal or exceed the dice they would roll for a check, it's still possible, and they should have a chance to attempt that roll.

Shiny Pokémon

"Shiny Pokémon" is a catch-all term for Pokémon with unusual characteristics.

The most common kind of Shiny Pokémon are the kind that simply have a Shiny Color. Most commonly, this is a result of a minor genetic abnormality that simply changes the color of a Pokémon's fur, scales, or similar outer coatings without additional effect. Nonetheless, these Pokémon are valued highly by collectors and will often draw notice in Contests; they may roll +2d6 during the Introduction Stage. Shiny Pokémon should also give their trainer more cachet when attempting to trade the Pokémon.

Rarer "Shiny Pokémon" are usually the result of an environmental adaptation or more extreme genetic mutation. These Pokémon may have Abilities, Capabilities, or a Moveset different from other Pokémon of their Species – some may even be of a different Type. They may exhibit one or more of these capabilities.

For example, a Shiny Ninetales found in the ruins of a burned haunted house might be Fire/Ghost Type, have Pressure as an ability choice, have the Phasing capability, or have Moves such as Shadow Ball in its level-up Move List.

Even rarer still are Shiny Pokémon which have custom traits such as changes to their Base Stats, completely custom Features, or homebrew Moves. The writers of the system recommend using these two brands of rare Shiny Pokémon sparingly in most settings so as to avoid overshadowing the normal Pokémon the players have.

Examples of Shiny Pokémon

Below we've outlined a few example shiny Pokémon to get your creative juices flowing. Listed in order from a "Minor" Shiny to more significant "Shininess".

Punchy Sentret – This Sentret somehow learned the Move Dizzy Punch! How about that?

Cave Breloom – This stark white Breloom was found deep in a cavern, lightless save from the eerie pale glow of the mushroom Pokémon there. It has the Glow Capability.

Heart-Spot Spinda – This Spinda's spots are all shaped like hearts! These seem to give her a strange power; they glow whenever she uses the Move Attract, and she can successfully use that Move on any Pokémon, even genderless Pokémon.

Muscle Audino – This Fighting-Type Audino is super hulky! Its base Defense and Special Defense are each lowered by -3, but its Attack is increased by +6! Its Power Capability is increased by +3 as well! It's capable of learning all Fighting Type TMs, but its natural Move list remains physically … unimpressive.

Pacifist Chimecho – This Chimecho refuses to hurt others and isn't even capable of learning Moves that hurt enemies – not even Confusion! Even teaching it offensive Status Moves like Toxic seems to fail! It knows Wish, Light Screen, and Reflect from the start, however.

Crystal Onix – This Onix is made of glass! Its typing is Glass/Ground. The Glass Type's Elemental weaknesses and resistances are listed below, as are the final resistances of a Glass/Ground Onix. Glass-Type Pokémon gain STAB on Rock-Type Moves.

Glass Type	Glass/Ground
Immune: Water	**Immune**: Water, Electric
Resist: Normal, Ice, Poison	**Resist**: Normal, Flying
	Double Resist: Poison
Weak: Fire, Fighting, Ground, Rock, Steel	**Weak**: Fire, Grass, Fighting, Ground, Steel

Raikou-Bred Manectric – It seems like one of this Manectric's parents was a Raikou! It has the flowing cape-like purple fur of a Raikou coming from the back of its head, and its tail is identical to a Raikou's. Its natural Move List is a combination of Raikou and Manectric's, drawing from both directly, and its choice of Abilities similarly may draw from Raikou's list in addition to Manectric's.

Giant Caterpie – This Caterpie is the size of a Rhyhorn! Increase its Base Stats by +6 across the board! Its Power is increased by +3, its Overland Speed is increased by +4, and its Jump Capabilities by +2. It knows the Moves Tackle, String Shot, Bug Bite, Thrash, Body Slam, and Megahorn! However, for some reason, it can't seem to evolve no matter what you do…

Type Changes

As a result of a Type Ace's Features or perhaps simply because you're making a Type-shifted Shiny Pokémon to throw at your players, you may have to deal with Moves and Pokémon that have changed Type.

Changing Move Type

Permanently changing a Move's Type with Move Sync may change the effects of the move, sometimes severely. For example, an Ice Beam that is made to be Fire Type should probably no longer have a chance to cause Freezing - Burn would be an appropriate substitute. A Dark-Type Sunny Day would perhaps cause a Dark Day instead - raising the power of Dark Type Moves, and lowering the power of Psychic Type Moves.

These are mere suggestions, and the effects of each Move after Move Sync are up to the individual GM. Be creative, and don't change the viability or power level of the move too significantly. Do not change effects if the effect doesn't seem very inappropriate for the type; Thunderbolt could still paralyze, for example, if it were shifted to Normal, Ghost, Dark, Grass, Psychic and many other types.

And most importantly, change the name of the Move after it's been Type Sync'd! That Ghost-Type Thunderbolt may turn into Spiritbolt, for example.

Pokémon Type Change

Type Sync (found in the fantasy and sci-fi supplement books) permanently changes a Pokémon's Type to match a Trainer's Elemental Connection. Changing a Pokémon's Type has several effects;

First and most obvious, the actual Type is changed. You can either add the Chosen Type to an existing Type, or replace a Type with your Chosen Type. You cannot cause a Pokémon to have more than two types in this way, but you can:

1. Turn a Mono-Typed Pokémon into a Dual Typed Pokémon with both its original Typing and your chosen Type.
2. Turn a Mono-Typed Pokémon into a Mono-Typed Pokémon of your chosen Type.
3. Cause a Dual-Typed Pokémon to become a Dual-Typed Pokémon with your chosen type replacing

one of its original types. If you use Type Sync on a Dual-Typed Pokémon that is already of your chosen type, it loses its additional Typing and becomes a Mono-Typed Pokémon of your chosen Type.

Secondly, the Pokémon can generally learn TMs, HMs, and Move Tutor Moves of that Type. It should be able to learn MOST moves that match its new Types, but there may be exceptions; just like Steelix can't learn Steel Wing, some Pokémon may not be able to learn some Moves that match its new Type. This is up to your GM.

Third, the Pokémon's Capabilities change to match its new Type. It gains Capabilities associated with its new type; Firestarter and Heater for Fire Types, Gilled and Fountain for Water Types, etc. The exact Capabilities gained are up to the GM. If the Pokémon lost a Type, it similarly loses the Capabilities associated with its former Type.

Fourth, the Pokémon's Ability may change. It may not. A Flying/Poison Gengar probably shouldn't retain Levitate; a Dark/Poison Gengar could. Abilities that are very generally indicative of a Type, such as Volt Absorb or Flame Body, should probably not be kept – however, there are always exceptions. It may be worthwhile to be more lenient on weaker Pokémon over Pokémon that are already very strong.

And Fifth, a Pokémon's Level-Up Move List will change. This is a delicate process that is up to the GM. Generally, the thought process for altering a Level-Up List should be as such: Was a Type replaced? Moves of that Type on the Move-List should be changed to that of the new Type. If those moves are very sparse, consider changing a few other moves of another Type to the New Type as well. If no Type was replaced, convert some moves of a Type the Pokémon doesn't have to the new Type; often, many Normal-Type moves will be available for this. Generally, you should turn a Move into a different move of the Chosen Type with the same Frequency and power level.

Fluffing Type Changes

The Fluff of changing a Pokémon's type can be tricky. Some Types seem made for it – the Ghost Ace who performs an ancient and eldritch ritual on their Pokémon to take them beyond death. Some Types … not so much. How do you explain a Pokémon suddenly becoming a Normal Type?

This is up to the GM! Here are a couple of ideas to get your started:

1. Pokémon are inherently mutable and unstable creatures. The easiest way to explain a sudden Type Change is to exploit this aspect of Pokémon. As a GM, you might require a Type-Change to be performed as a Pokémon is evolving; during this mysterious process, due to their Trainer's inherent connection to a Type, the Pokémon changes their own form to match.
2. Single-Staged or Fully Evolved Pokémon may go through this same process, SEEMING to evolve – they glow, change shape slightly, and then wow, they have a new type!
3. Look at the Trainer's other classes. A Type Ace / Researcher could perhaps concoct a strange and powerful potion. A Hex Maniac or Channeler would be a natural candidate for performing strange and unknowable rituals.

4. A Wizard did it. No, seriously; maybe the PCs have to visit a particular NPC and use their powers/ super-advanced machine to effect a change in their Pokémon. Perhaps they have to visit an obscure and remote shrine. If the PCs in your game travel often, perhaps there are various of these wizard/machine/ shrines throughout the region.

Whichever method you choose to employ, keep these things in mind:

The way in which the GM chooses to implement Type-Sync could affect the requirements and action-type of Type Sync, but we strongly recommend making these FLUFF requirements rather than overtly mechanical ones.

Saying your trainer has to spend some time creating a Potion or setting up a ritual is alright – making it so they have to spend a big chunk of their available funds to do so is probably too mean. If you choose to have an NPC or location be involved in the process, these shouldn't be places that are very hard to reach; you probably do not want to limit the opportunities to use their Features too harshly.

All of these options will of course vary by the campaign.

Example Type Change

A Fighting Ace / Researcher performs mad science to give his Rapidash big muscley arms, shifting it from Fire Type to Fighting Type. It loses Egg Warmer, Firestarter, Glow, and Heater while gaining +2 Power. Flash Fire is replaced with Discipline and Flame Body with Iron Fist. Its Level-Up Moves also change:

4 Tail Whip - Normal	4 Tail Whip - Normal
9 Ember - Fire	**9 Vacuum Wave - Fighting**
13 Flame Wheel - Fire	**13 Rolling Kick - Fighting**
17 Stomp - Normal	17 Stomp - Normal
21 Flame Charge - Fire	**21 Power-Up Punch - Fighting**
25 Fire Spin - Fire	**25 Low Sweep - Fighting**
29 Take Down - Normal	29 Take Down - Normal
33 Inferno - Fire	**33 Dynamic Punch - Fighting**
37 Agility - Psychic	**37 Bulk Up - Fighting**
40 Fury Attack - Normal	40 Fury Attack - Normal
41 Fire Blast - Fire	**41 Focus Blast - Fighting**
45 Bounce - Flying	45 Bounce - Flying
49 Flare Blitz - Fire	**49 Superpower - Fighting**

Mega Evolution and End-Game Pokémon

Late in a campaign or as the PCs are finalizing their main teams, the players will often want to seek out truly impressive Pokémon to finish off their teams. Much of the time, this will simply mean seeking out a rare "pseudo-legendary" Pokémon such as Dragonite or Metagross, but players will also often express interest in Mega Evolutions and even Legendary Pokémon. How should a GM handle these quests and make them properly challenging and meaningful?

Trainers will often have to prove themselves worthy of such a Pokémon rather than attempting to catch it outright. This is particularly the case for Mega Evolutions where a Trainer probably already owns the Pokémon of the species they'd like to Mega Evolve but must obtain both a Mega Ring and the appropriate Mega Stone.

The Mega Ring itself can be portrayed as advanced technology or a mystical artifact. Either way, it is likely kept under guard by an elite group charged with determining when Trainers are ready to handle a Mega Ring. The test can be anything from a Gym Challenge or series of battle challenges to trials that more broadly test a Trainer's competence or their ethics and character. You may even mix these up and combine them.

For example, a Trainer might be tasked with retrieving an artifact from an ancient ruin to prove their competence. However, upon arriving at the ruins and battling through the Pokémon within, they discover the artifact and reach out for it – and when they touch it, they are sent into a dream-like trance where they're thrust into hypothetical situations that test their strength of character and ethical integrity.

Such trials are useful not only for giving Trainers Mega Rings but for granting entry to caves where rare or Legendary Pokémon make their home.

Of course, to achieve Mega Evolution, a Trainer needs not only a Mega Ring but the appropriate Mega Stone for their Pokémon.

You will have to first decide what exactly a Mega Stone is. They may be similar to Elemental Stones that are used to Evolve Pokémon, just with an affinity to a single species rather than several. You may decide they are the byproducts of world-changing supernatural events, such as the leftover crystallized bits of life energy from

an act by Xerneas or Yveltal. You may decide they are man-made, and a specific ritual or machine can create them when powered by the bond of friendship between Trainer and Pokémon.

What a Mega Stone is will determine what a Trainer has to do to acquire one. If they're ancient relics or simply naturally occurring stones, you may have the PCs go ruin-diving or spelunking to find their Mega Stones. It could be a good idea in these cases to put them in areas where the particular species for the Mega Stone is commonly found, or where they were found in antiquity, for the case of ruins. If they're man-made, then it's likely that whoever provided them with the Mega Ring also has the ability to manufacture Mega Stones.

The proper timing for introducing a quest to acquire the equipment for Mega Evolution, a Legendary Pokémon, or other rare and powerful Pokémon is up to you. A good guideline for when to make Mega Evolution available is when most of the PCs' teams are at least 5-10 Levels past their final Evolutionary Stages. Obviously, if everyone has largely Pokémon that evolve very late or very early, this isn't as useful of a metric.

Requiring in-game research or basing qualification on a number of Gym Badges is another way to pace out the beginning of this type of quest. For finding an area to catch lower-leveled pseudo-legendary Pokémon, all it might take is some research and a dangerous trip out to their natural habitats. For gaining access to Mega Evolution or the homes of Legendary Pokémon, a Trainer might need anywhere from 4-8 Gym Badges depending on the pace of your campaign.

Quickly Building NPCs

Building a full character in Pokémon Tabletop United can be pretty time consuming. If you try to build every NPC just as you could build a PC, then you'll quickly find yourself swamped by a lot of work for very little gain. Instead, you should give most NPCs just the bare minimum of what they need to function, especially if you don't foresee using them in combat.

By all means, spend the time to write out full builds for major NPCs that will be showing up often, but most NPCs don't need that treatment.

Use the following process to quickly generate NPCs:

Decide on Level. The easiest way to do this is simply by reference to the PCs' Levels. Is your NPC generally more experienced than the PCs or less? By how much? While you may not use this directly when doing quick stats for an NPC, it's good to have an idea of the Level difference between the NPC and the PCs.

Choose major Classes and Features. You should have a general idea of what kind of archetype this NPC represents or what role you expect to play in the story. Based on this, pick a small handful of Features you know they need, including Class Features. Unless they're at a very low Level, you don't really have to worry about whether they can gain all of these. For Combat Trainers, focus on the Moves and Abilities they'll use in battle.

Choose major Skills and Edges. Look at the Features you chose in the previous step. Mark down any Skill prerequisites for your NPC and any Edges they may need as well. Then, if you feel there's more to the NPC not represented here between the Features, Edges, and Skills, add the missing Skills and Edges within reason. Don't give an NPC everything, but if you build a quick Martial Artist / Ace Trainer but remember he's supposed to be a gadget whiz too, it wouldn't hurt to bump up his Technology Education to Adept or so.

(Optional) Distribute Combat Stats. Starting Trainers have 10 HP and 5 in the rest of their Combat Stats. They then add 10 points on top of that. A fully non-combat Trainer will then have an additional stat point for each Level past 1. A fully combat focused Trainer has twice that due to Stat Tags. Add Stat Points somewhere between those extremes as appropriate.

Example: A GM is preparing a Poké Ball crafter and wilderness guide who lives in a shack outside the woods the PCs are preparing to explore. Here's the quick process for making this NPC.

Decide on Level: The PCs are all about Level 10, having gotten a few Gym Badges under their belt along with the other exploring they've done. The GM decides his crafter is somewhat more experienced than them, having spent his life traveling the region. He sets his Level at 15.

Choose major Classes and Features: Poké Ball Crafter is crucial to this concept of course. This means he has Poké Ball Repair too. On the wilderness guide side of the concept, the GM decides this guy has the Survivalist Class and Hunter Classes from dealing with the wilds nearby. Because he's good at dealing with the rough weather around this area too, he gives him Researcher and the Climatology Field of Study.

Choose major Skills and Edges: The GM first looks over the prerequisites for the Features he's chosen and bumps up his NPC's Technology Education to Expert, General Education to Novice, Stealth to Novice, and Survival to Adept. Since he's good with Pokémon and a researcher, he goes ahead and writes down Novice Charm and Pokémon Education for the NPC too.

(Optional) Distribute Combat Stats: While the GM was just planning to make his NPC a guide through the forest and a source of information, his session takes an interesting turn, and he thinks he'll need to have the guy participate in a battle with wild Pokémon the PCs provoked.

He writes down 10 HP and 5 in the rest of his NPC's Combat Stats. Noting he's a guy who can take a hit, he puts 5 more points into HP and 5 into Defense. He then thinks about how many more Stat Points he'll have. Hunter will give some HP and Speed Stat Tags, but he's also a Researcher. A fully combat ready Trainer has 28 additional Stat Points at Level 15. A fully non-combat Trainer has 14. Since this NPC is somewhere in between, the GM gives him 20 Stat Points, 10 of which he puts in Speed, and 5 each in HP and Special Defense.

Encounter Creation Guide

What's probably the most time consuming part of being a GM is putting together all the combat encounters your players will face off against. This doesn't have to be a painful process though, and you should have fun coming up with unique and interesting encounters for your players. Here's a guide for doing just that.

Setting Up the Encounter

The first step to crafting a combat encounter is figuring out why the players will be fighting. A lot of the advice in this particular section won't necessarily be exclusive to combat encounters, however, and can be helpful in crafting non-combat events and activities for the players to engage with.

It's easy enough to come up with most League-affiliated or plot-centric encounters. Having to challenge a Gym Leader for a badge or enter a qualifying tournament for the Pokémon League is pretty universal to campaigns with that kind of structure. Pitting your players against Team Rocket or your own custom criminal team is also straightforward.

When your players are traveling between towns, however, it can be boring to always have a pack of wild Pokémon ambush them for no reason simply so you can give the players something to fight and catch. Carnivorous Pokémon may see Trainers as food, but you don't always have the luxury of building an encounter around those species. Here are some common scenarios where your players might get into a scuffle with the local wildlife.

There's an ongoing fight between Pokémon on the road. This can range from Sevipers and Zangoose duking it out to a pack of Mighyenas hunting prey like Buneary. In many cases, Trainers will simply leave such fights alone, but you'd be surprised how many PCs will want to intercede on nature running its course, especially if cute and fluffy Pokémon are in danger.

Alternatively, a conflict could be so large that it's impossible to cross a part of the route without cutting a path through and getting caught in the crossfire. As a twist, you may have a pack of wild Pokémon hunting another wounded Trainer or group of Trainers as prey, even if the local wildlife wouldn't normally go after healthy Trainers.

Pokémon are protecting something valuable. Most wild Pokémon will leave Trainers alone, but if they're guarding eggs, children, or wounded members of their pack, they may act more aggressively. Pokémon can also often be intensely territorial, but this rarely results in a fight unless the PCs don't know they're intruding or if they have a compelling reason to willfully go into dangerous territory. So pair this with the territory or valuables being guarded being in the direct path of the PCs, and you have a good formula for getting the players involved in a fight or at least making a difficult choice how to proceed.

If a storm is approaching while the players are hiking up a treacherous mountain, and the only shelter available is a cave system guarded by a Druddigon taking care of her eggs, what do the players do?

Pokémon are agitated by an external source. A Team Rocket radio broadcast might be riling up the wildlife, or perhaps a group of poachers has set the local Pokémon population on edge. This is a good way to draw the PCs into a larger plot too, if you wish.

Basic Encounter Creation Guidelines

With the ease and simplicity of PTU's rules for giving out Experience (page 460), one great method for creating encounters is to work backwards from the Experience drop you want to give your players.

One good guideline here for an everyday encounter is to multiply the average Pokémon Level of your PCs by 2 (average Trainer Level x 4 works in a pinch too given most games maintain Pokémon Levels at twice average Trainer Levels) and use that as a projected **baseline Experience drop per player** for the encounter. This should result in about enough Experience for each player to get a Pokémon half a Level from the encounter. For very low Level parties with few Pokémon, you'll want to decrease baseline Experience when using this method. This assumes an encounter with a Significance Multiplier of 1x, or insignificant. A Significance Multiplier of 2x, or the lower end for an everyday encounter, will double your baseline and nets you about enough Experience for a Pokémon to Level Up once. As you create a more important encounter, not only should you increase the Significance Multiplier, but you should also increase the baseline Experience you're working with, as that will determine the Levels of the enemies you create.

From there, simply multiply the Experience drop by your number of Trainers. This is the number of Levels you have to work with to build your encounter.

Example: A GM is designing an encounter for three Level 10 Trainers, each with Pokémon around Level 20. Multiply the average Pokémon Level by 2 for a baseline Experience drop of 40. Multiply this by 3 for the number of Trainers for a total of 120 levels to build an encounter. The GM splits this six ways and stats up an encounter with six Level 20 Pokémon. If the battle has an everyday Significance modifier of 2x, then each player gets 80 Experience and can approximately Level Up their Pokémon once from the battle.

For a bigger, more important, fight, the GM decides on a baseline Experience drop per player of 60 and a Significance Multiplier of 5x for a total of 300 Experience, enough to give several Pokémon a Level or give one or two Pokémon a couple of Levels. Multiplying 60 by 3 for the number of Trainers, the GM has 180 Levels to build an encounter. He splits it into two Level 40 Pokémon and four Level 25 Pokémon. He could also give up two weaker Pokémon to make a Level 25 Trainer.

For normal encounters, don't sink all of the Levels you have to work with into one or two Pokémon with extremely high Levels! But also, Levels aren't the only factor that should be affected by the Significance Multiplier. How well the enemies synergize, whether they have Egg, TM, or Tutor Moves, and how powerful the species are should vary as well.

Example: Our GM from the previous example may create an encounter of three Cacnea and three Trapinch for a desert encounter in the case of six Level 20 foes. They might not have much special, but maybe the Cacneas have Magical Leaf or Low Kick in their Inheritance Move list, and the Trapinch have Quick Attack to make up for their abysmal speed.

However, for the more important encounter, he uses Level 40 Cacturne and gives them Thunder Punch and Poison Jab to help cover their Flying and Fairy weaknesses, respectively. He also ensures they have the Twisted Power and Sand Veil Abilities. Three Trapinch support them in the encounter and have Rock Slide and Sandstorm. A Researcher / Cheerleader with the Extreme Weather Feature gives all Pokémon damaged by Sandstorm a penalty to accuracy rolls and uses Orders to boost their attacks.

Of course, you can certainly build an encounter without working backwards this way. Either way, be mindful of what your aim for the encounter is as well. The six Level 20s may not seriously threaten the group of Trainers and might just act as a tax on their resources as they travel, but the more significant encounter poses a real threat of taking them all out.

As a final bit of advice, be wary of action economy! A large swarm of low Level foes can quickly overwhelm even the strongest of parties. It's usually better to use a moderate number of foes than go in either extreme, though there are exceptions which will be noted in the more advanced parts of this guide.

Quick-Statting Pokémon

Just as with NPCs, you don't always have the luxury (or desire) of spending hours fine-tuning a combat encounter. Sometimes, you just need something quick to throw at your players as they go exploring the wilderness or looking for Pokémon to catch.

Here are some tips for on-the-fly wild Pokémon battles or last minute prep work.

1. Stick to 2 or 3 different species.

You want to clone a few Pokémon to populate your encounter, but you don't want an encounter made entirely of one species either. Luckily, it makes logical sense for most Pokémon to travel in packs, and you can pick species which supplement the "main" species you select for the encounter.

2. Pick species that are easy to stat.

An ideal Pokémon for quickly statting an encounter has one attacking Stat and HP as their highest Base Stats or is in a position where a choice of Nature can easily make that the case. Pokémon with very low base HP make for difficult statting on the fly.

3. Pick 3-4 Stats to focus on per Pokémon.

If you've picked a fairly easy to stat species, then you can simply evenly divide Stat Points for the Pokémon among their highest 3 or 4 stats, depending on their specific Base Stat configuration. This will usually raise HP, one attack stat, and then some combination of speed and the defenses, making for a reasonably well-rounded combatant that can still hold its own.

As an emergency option, you can grab just about any species, distribute Stat Points evenly across all six Stats, and then throw them into an encounter. Keep in mind though that enemies written with this method will be much weaker than an equivalently Leveled PC Pokémon almost all of the time.

Example: The players have suddenly taken a detour away from the beach path to the grassy plains, and the GM's prepared Krabby and Crawdaunt encounter is now completely out of place. They're still looking to catch wild Pokémon though, and so the GM needs a new set of stats, and quick!

Glancing through the list of grassland Pokémon, the GM finds Growlithe and glances over its Base Stats. Attack and Special Attack are highest, followed by HP and Speed. Pretty good for this exercise. She tosses in an Arcanine as the pack leader and decides that the group also adopted a Herdier, to give the encounter some variety.

Growlithe's Stats are simple. The GM distributes all Stat Points evenly between Attack, Special Attack, HP, and Speed, creating a mixed attacker easily even with an unadjusted neutral Nature.

She takes a quick moment to be fancier with Arcanine, giving it a Curious Nature to raise HP and lower Special Attack, making it focused on Physical attacks. She then distributes Stat Points evenly between HP, Attack, and Speed only.

For the Herdier, a neutral Nature works as well. Stat Points are split between Attack, HP, and both defensive Stats, making it the tankier part of this encounter.

Finally, all the GM needs to do is write down their Abilities and Level Up Moves and then decide on whether to give them an Inheritance Move or two if she's getting really fancy with her hastily statted encounter.

Running Faster Combat

Sometimes, not only do you need to stat the encounter quickly, but you want to run the players through it as quickly as possible as well. Here are a few tips for doing just that.

1. **Don't use maps.** Abstract distances instead so you and the players have to spend less time thinking about exactly which square to move to and what's in range from there.
2. **Pre-roll Accuracy Rolls for your foes.** Simply keep a sheet of randomly generated numbers from 1 to 20 (either rolling manually before the session or using an online generator or spreadsheet) and use them in order for Accuracy Rolls for your enemies, crossing them off as you go.
3. **Use the set damage chart**, not the rolled damage chart. This will save you loads of time finding the right dice and counting them up for damage.

The Types and Roles of Combat Encounters

This section of the encounter creation guide gets a bit theoretical, so if you find it boring, feel free to skip ahead to the next page. It's mainly for those GMs who really want to think about what their aims are when they create a combat encounter for their players and how to design and execute encounters to meet those aims.

For many veteran GMs, the advice here will seem familiar and broadly applicable to many tabletop roleplaying games, but there's also going to be discussion of how the particular dynamics of PTU affect encounter creation. Specifically, unlike most other roleplaying systems, the player controls a team of varied Pokémon in PTU that play many roles and have individual strengths and weaknesses rather than a single character which is rather static in both role and its strengths and weaknesses.

Broadly speaking, combat encounters can do two things to the PCs. They can **Tax** them or **Threaten** them.

An encounter that Taxes the PCs most likely won't have a high chance of resulting in their defeat and may even seem to be an almost assured victory for them. However, what it does do is cost them resources. This doesn't just mean Hit Points or the healing items used to recover them, but those certainly are the most obvious resources that are taxed. Pokémon and Trainer alike can become Injured, which takes a long time to heal. Knocked out Pokémon may present a conundrum to a party ill-equipped to revive them. Features and Moves with Daily Frequencies are expended. An encounter that Taxes the party makes future encounters more difficult until resources are recovered, and it can set up for an encounter meant to Threaten the PCs.

An encounter that Threatens the PCs does just what it sounds like. It threatens to defeat the PCs and result in their demise, capture, or other form of incapacitation. Usually, this takes the form of a boss encounter and only occurs after the PCs have already been Taxed by other encounters or adventures. Simply put, with a full team of six Pokémon per PC, it's very unlikely that a single encounter will take them all out from full health unless either 1) the enemies target down PC Trainers quickly while deprioritizing their Pokémon or 2) the encounter stretches out for a very long time. Neither of these situations are particularly fun when used liberally.

So what do you do with these two types of combat encounters in mind? Well, that's simple, when you sit down to create an encounter, think about which role you want it to play and tailor it accordingly.

When you want to Tax the PCs, widespread damage over time such as Hail and Sandstorm are good ways of bringing down Hit Points over the whole party in a way that doesn't threaten death but will either weaken them for future encounters or cost them healing resources. Persistent Status Afflictions also play this role well. Injuries are perhaps the most lasting way to Tax a party, and while they can be accrued naturally through the course of battle, throwing in enemies with Cruelty or similar effects can accelerate this.

When you Threaten the PCs, you will usually be in for a longer encounter no matter what, unless you simply create enemies capable of one-shotting them, which is usually no fun. High damage is more important, however, and you may wish to use Moves such as Heal Block to further ramp up the danger.

Encounters meant to Threaten the PCs should typically be designed in concert with those that will Tax them. Part of this is to create interesting choices in your campaign – the PCs know they will almost certainly defeat a caravan of Team Plasma grunts they encounter on the road on the way to the hideout, but they also know it will cost them precious resources to do so that will hinder them in attacking the hideout. If the caravan is possibly holding an experimental weapon or perhaps kidnapped prisoners, this may become a tough decision.

Another reason to design these encounters parallel to each other is that you may wish to Tax the PC party in particular ways before an upcoming encounter. For example, grunts under the command of a Fire Ace villain may be instructed to weaken or target down any Water and Rock Type Pokémon that intruders use. In this way, even encounters that the PCs know they will win for sure become dangerous – not because there is some chance they might lose, but because not winning soundly enough could cost them a future victory against more imposing or vital foes.

Spicing Up Encounters

Now that you've got the basics down, it's time to get interesting. Battles don't happen in a vacuum, or they shouldn't anyway. If all of your encounters take place against a stock number of opponents and on a flat and empty plane, then your players are liable to get bored from the lack of tactical variety. Here are some ideas for mixing it up!

Use the Environment

Consider the environment the encounter takes place in. A couple of simple rules for a hazardous environment such as traps, poor visibility, or restricted movement can turn what is ordinarily a mundane and easy encounter into a real trial for the players. You can also set up scenarios where the players' actions and choices leading up to the encounter affect the final environment they fight in. This can be especially handy to make the characters who aren't built for combat feel more useful if they can put their skills to work making the battle easier before it even starts. Here are some examples.

Dark Caves: These caves are pitch black without light sources available, making fighting nigh impossible without Darkvision or Blindsense. Light sources help, but they can only perfectly illuminate your surroundings for a short distance around you.

A standard lantern or a small or medium sized Pokémon with the Glow Capability creates a Burst 2 of light around it where you can see unimpeded. Every meter between a character and their target imposes a -2 penalty to Accuracy Rolls and Perception Checks regarding that target, but squares illuminated by light do not count toward this total. So for example, if a Trainer is holding a standard lantern, they have no problem making Perception Checks and Accuracy Rolls against anything up to 2 meters away from them because those all fall in illuminated squares, but an Accuracy Roll against something 4 meters away would suffer a -4 penalty, -2 for each unilluminated meter.

The size and quality of the light source affects the usable radius around it. Large Pokémon with Glow and powerful artificial light sources generate a Burst 3, Huge Pokémon generate a Burst 4, and the Illuminate Ability adds 1 to the Burst radius of a light source.

To make penalties easy to calculate, simply draw a line from a character to their target, count the number of meter squares the line passes through, subtract any illuminated squares the line goes through, and multiply that by -2 to calculate the appropriate Perception and Accuracy penalty.

An Arctic Battle: A battle over a frozen lake could pose a unique challenge to even experienced Trainers. The thin ice makes it dangerous to use any Pokémon of significant size – anything with a Weight Class of 5 or higher breaks the ice and falls into the lake. Groundsource attacks and other Moves at the GM's discretion also make holes in the ice in their area of effect.

You could make the ice slow terrain as well to represent how one must move slowly over it, and you could even call for Acrobatics checks to prevent being Tripped when hit by attacks that cause an Injury.

And finally, to impose an actual danger to falling in the water, you could make everyone in the freezing water suffer Hail damage each turn and also impose a Speed Combat Stage debuff on anyone who falls in.

The Hazard Factory: This abandoned factory still has power thanks to the multitude of Electric Type Pokémon that make it their home. Many of the other species in the factory have even learned to operate the machinery in basic ways and often use it to their advantage in battle.

Here, the gadget whiz of the party who otherwise has had trouble contributing to battles can thrive. Suppose the PCs are looking to recover an important hard drive or piece of equipment from deep within the factory, but it is surrounded by hostile wild Pokémon.

Before the battle even begins, the gadget whiz can find where the Electric Types live in the factory and sabotage the wiring system to prevent them from powering the machines the Pokémon use to defend the factory. In the midst of battle, she may even operate the machines herself, using cranes to pick up and move enemies, activating electro-magnets to pin Steel Type opponents in place, or shocking enemies with overloaded circuits.

Collateral Damage: Set your encounter indoors or in an area with many fragile items or innocent bystanders. Players might be more careful to use their powerful area of effect attacks if they have to keep collateral damage to a minimum. Even single target attacks such as Flamethrower can be extremely dangerous to use in a wooden shack. Your players will have to plan their tactics carefully or make hard decisions about what they're willing to do to win the battle.

Set Unconventional Victory Conditions

Not all battles have to continue until only one side is left standing. Unconventional victory conditions can allow you to turn easy encounters into tougher affairs or pit the PCs against foes they normally couldn't handle. Remember, running away is always an option too. Even strong foes may back down if a few of them are beaten.

Perhaps the PCs are faced with a group of very high Level Pokémon they cannot hope to defeat, but all they have to manage is to get to a boat waiting for them at the beach so they can make their escape. Moves that deal a lot of damage may not be as valuable here compared to Moves that can Slow foes, inflict debilitating Status Afflictions like Sleep, or otherwise impede their foes, such as Barrier.

On the flip side, defeating a pack of weaker foes becomes a much more tense situation when they're the ones trying to escape and throwing every trick they can against the PCs to slow them down and buy time. Brute force might not be enough when time isn't on their side.

Other unconventional victory conditions you can use are trying to disable a machine that's being guarded – the players will have to choose between focusing their attacks on the machine itself and the guards who may be too powerful to completely defeat in a straight up fight, quietly defeating a set of guards without triggering noise sensors or allowing them to trip the alarm system, and retrieving an artifact from underwater ruins and putting it on their boat while assaulted by unending waves of aquatic Pokémon.

Defy Player Expectations

Using the occasional Type Shift or other variants of a Pokémon can take players by surprise and turn their battle tactics upside down. Even when a Type Shift is obvious, it can throw off expectations enough to make it a formidable foe, and some Type Shifts are not obvious at all. A Normal/Psychic Claydol may clearly look like it's not a Ground Type, but PCs may not realize its Typing until one of them fails to damage it with a Ghost Type attack.

Type Shifts are only the start of the variations you can use to give more variety to your encounters. As a bonus, not only do these help you make more difficult and exciting encounters, but if they're wild Pokémon, then players will likely be more interested in capturing them for their uniqueness.

Alternate Move Effects: Change up how standard combat mechanics work. Poison doesn't always have to have the same effect, for example. You may create a breed of Poison Type Swampert with a Toxic venom that's designed to immobilize and weaken a foe rather than knock them out. Instead of Poison's normal effect, Poisoned targets are Slowed and suffer -1 to a random Combat Stage each turn, becoming weaker over time. Add in Venom Drench for an even stronger debuffer.

Giant Pokémon: Larger variations of a typically small Pokémon are also great for adding unpredictability to a fight. Take for example the Shiny Giant Caterpie described earlier in this chapter. Few players might expect it to know a powerful Move like Megahorn. Other great candidates for making giant Pokémon are Trapinch, Magikarp, and Ditto. Imagine a giant Ditto transforming into a super-sized version of the party's biggest and scariest Pokémon. Aquatic Pokémon and Bug Types in general make natural fits for this treatment.

Give giant Pokémon boosted stats and changes to their Move and Ability lists to account for their size. Body Slam, Thrash, Earthquake, and Bounce are all appropriate Moves, and Abilities such as Thrust and Thick Fat could prove a nasty surprise as well.

Swarm Pokémon: Typically, it isn't recommended to use large numbers of Pokémon in an encounter, for two main reasons. First of all, it slows down combat tremendously to have many more actions per turn, and players can become bored waiting for their turn to act. Second of all, the action economy of many weaker combatants is incredibly dangerous, and you can very easily overestimate what your players can deal with.

If you encounter a swarm of Joltiks, the zoofbat encourages you to run for your life, as they are the most deadly predators you will ever encounter in the vast world of Pokémon. No, really, they'll bind you in webs and eat your face.

Sometimes, however, you have to break a few rules to make an interesting encounter. Sometimes it just plain makes sense that the PCs will be assaulted by a huge swarm of bugs or other small Pokémon.

For these cases, you can create a Swarm Template that lets you abstract large numbers of Pokémon into a single entity that roughly emulates how fighting a swarm would work. Note that this still results in a rather nasty encounter! Save it for special occasions.

First, decide on how big the swarm is in your encounter. This may vary from merely being a way to group a dozen or so enemies into one to save time and trouble to representing a fight against a flood of Zubat swooping out of a cave to attack the PCs. You can generalize the sizes of swarms into a **Swarm Multiplier** according to the following chart.

Swarm Multiplier	Size of Swarm
1	Less than a dozen Pokémon
2	15-25 Pokémon
3	25-40 Pokémon
4	40-60 Pokémon
5	60+ Pokémon

These numbers may seem high, but, of course, it's assumed that each individual Pokémon is trivially weak in this case and is only strong due to their numbers.

Here are the mechanics for the Swarm Template.

The Swarm is treated as one entity and should be given one stat block for a Pokémon of an appropriate Level. It has a number of "Hit Point bars" to its Swarm Multiplier. It can't suffer Injuries, but as it takes damage in battle and loses all the Hit Points in a bar, its Swarm Multiplier decreases by one each time.

The Swarm acts multiple times each turn in battle – it has a number of **Swarm Points** each turn equal to its Swarm Multiplier that it spends on actions. The first Standard Action or attack each turn is free for the Swarm. It then subtracts 5 from its Initiative and can act again on that new value. Even if a Swarm hits Initiative 0, it can still act, even acting multiple times in a row on that Initiative tick. However, these actions have a cost according to their Frequency. At-Will actions cost 1 Swarm Point, EOT costs 2, Scene costs 3, and Daily costs 4. Yes, this means an especially large Swarm may use Daily Moves multiple times in a battle, making it especially dangerous. These costs apply only to Standard Actions. For Swift and Free Actions that are limited to Scene or Daily frequency, a Swarm can use each a number of times a Scene equal to its Swarm Multiplier. Otherwise, a Swarm can take At-Will and EOT Swift and Free Actions each time it acts, frequency allowing.

When a Swarm fails to be able to act due to a Status Affliction such as Sleep, it instead loses 1 Swarm Point for that turn. A Swarm always has at least one action each turn, no matter the result of its Save Rolls.

Accuracy Rolls to hit the Swarm gain a bonus equal to its Swarm Multiplier, but all single target damage is resisted one step further. Area of effect attacks and attacks that hit multiple targets are treated as one step more super-effective, however.

Building Recurring Rivals and Villains

Team Rocket would've been much less memorable in the Pokémon anime if Ash had fought off nameless grunts around every corner rather than consistently facing off against Jessie and James. Rivals are also a staple of Pokémon media, and it's a good idea to establish both recurring villains and rivals for your campaign.

Honestly, this is a much less daunting task than it might seem at first because many of the guidelines and principles you'd follow for making an interesting PC apply equally to writing recurring NPCs!

Give these important NPCs a theme. This applies both on a fluff level and on a level of mechanics and how they handle battle strategy and approach the PCs. One villain may like to lay ambushes and use sneaky Pokémon while another is all about flashiness and honorable duels.

Just as you may wish to focus your characterization of the PCs' Pokémon on one or two per character, do the same with the rival or villain's team, creating a recognizable mascot of sorts for them.

It's important to stat up rivals and villains in a way where they have room to grow alongside the PCs. Absolutely don't stat out an early rival appearance with more than one or two Classes, because you'll want to save those Class slots for giving them surprising new tricks in future meetings or for growing their characters in unexpected directions in reaction to the events of the game or how the PCs interact with them.

On that note, you definitely do want to have them learn and change from their interactions with the PCs. A villain whose bumbling and reckless full frontal assaults keep failing will eventually learn more subtle and nuanced ways of attacking the PCs. A rival who sees their PC nemesis begin to focus on Fire Types and walk down the path of a Type Ace might go out of their way to pick up a strong Rock or Water Type Pokémon.

Keep some things the same, of course, or else you risk destroying any sense of identity for these NPCs. Also important is allowing PCs to develop counters to these NPCs the same way the NPCSs do for them.

Encounter Creation for Unbalanced Parties

In a perfect world, all PC parties would be perfectly balanced, well-oiled machines where each component plays a crucial but balanced role. That's rarely the case, whether due to honest mistakes, munchkins that aren't properly reined in, or other reasons.

Your first step to deal with this is to develop a plan for restoring game balance. This tends to begin with talking to any players of PCs that are vastly outshining the others and making your concerns known, possibly arranging for tweaks that will tone down the characters in question. You may also begin planning ways to give weaker characters nifty bonuses for their Pokémon or opportunities to capture strong additions to their team to restore balance over time.

In the meantime though, you'll have to cope with writing encounters for an unbalanced party. Don't worry. It's easier than you think.

The most common mistake a GM makes in this situation is to overcompensate and insert many hard counters to the powerful PCs or to focus fire down their Pokémon immediately in encounters. Don't do this.

A more fun and reasonable way to deal with this issue is to create compartmentalized encounters, where one foe or subset of foes may be acting in a slightly separate area from the others and is clearly meant for the stronger PC and their Pokémon to take on. For example, if the PCs are investigating a criminal laboratory, you might have a large threat like a Metagross bursting in from the outside of the area for the strong PC to hold off while the others delve deeper inside, fighting off more minor scientists and their Magnemites and Voltorbs as they try to get to the heart of the facility and steal its secrets.

This can be combined with the earlier advice on creating non-traditional goals for combat that can enable scenarios like having the combat monster PC hold off enemies while the others set up a crucial piece of equipment. This is especially useful because oftentimes, a character built to be very good at combat is less adept at many non-combat tasks.

While you don't want to hard counter strong PCs at every corner, using Status Afflictions and some selected counters to their strategies, especially if villains have learned them over time, can help even the playing field.

Teamwork in Battles

The Pokémon video games usually focus on single battles, but that will typically not be the case for a tabletop campaign! A number of Moves and Abilities in the video games make it easy to create teams that have a lot of synergy for double and triple battles, and Pokémon Tabletop United takes this idea and expands upon it.

Your encounters will be more interesting if you play with these parts and show off cool interactions and teamwork between your enemies instead of having them all function as individual units. GMs, **show your players this section too**! They'll probably have a lot of fun coming up with teamwork tactics amongst themselves, and it will make battles more exciting for everyone.

First of all, consider which Trainer Classes contribute well to working as a team. In League Battles, the Cheerleader and Mastermind are obvious choices, both able to use Orders that affect a large number of allies at once, or even just their partners in double and triple battles. In the tradition of Bards in tabletop RPGs, the Musician is also capable of providing support to multiple allies with Bardic Flair, War Song, and Lively Beat.

In full contact fights, the Channeler, Dancer, and Hunter are all good at supporting other allies as well. Every Channeled Pokémon can benefit from a variety of buffs depending on other Channeled Pokémon such as gaining Combat Stages when they do or resisting attacks that other Channeled Pokémon resist. The Dancer provides Combat Stage buffs to its allies. And finally, the Hunter takes advantage of positioning and ganging up on single foes.

These are only the most obvious examples, and most Classes have some way of helping out their allies if you look for them.

Next, consider Abilities. The most obvious choice for Abilities that help allies are Helper, Teamwork, Pack Hunt, Friend Guard, Bodyguard, Sequence, and the Veil and Boost Abilities (Flower Veil, Ignition Boost, etc). A number of Abilities also let Pokémon use their Standard Actions to support the team – Interference, Confidence, and Rally are just a few. And of course, Plus and Minus work together well. When picking Pokémon for a team or encounter based on teamwork, look for these.

Many Moves are also designed to support teammates. Helping Hand and Blessings are the most obvious choices among these. A number of Moves can heal allies of Status Afflictions or restore their Hit Points – Soft-Boiled, Wish, Heal Pulse, Heal Bell, Aromatherapy. The Pledge Moves, Echoed Voice, and Round also are at their most powerful when used together by a number of allies.

Rototiller, Magnetic Flux, and similar Moves provide buffs to allies in a more situational manner. Weather effects can also be useful to allies by boosting Move damage or ensuring normally inconsistent Moves such as Hurricane always hit; weather can easily be the basis of a themed team.

Psych Up is often used for copying an opponent's Combat Stages, but it can also be used for a team to copy one self-buffing ally's Combat Stages.

You can also look for places in the system where you can find synergy that isn't quite as obvious.

For example, when looking at Plusle and Minun, what stands out the most from a teamwork perspective are their Plus and Minus Abilities, as well as Sequence. To make that combination even more potent, however, a Plusle or Minun with an Electric Type Hidden Power can power up the other through the Lightning Rod Ability. A similar tactic can be used with any area of effect Moves of a particular Type and similar Abilities, such as Storm Drain, Flash Fire, or Water Absorb.

Anger Point can be triggered by an ally's Frost Breath or Storm Throw, and if the ally is built so that attack would do minimal damage, this can be an incredibly potent way to boost an ally to maximum Attack Combat Stages.

Finally, there are some basic system mechanics which encourage cooperation and working as a team. Flanking enemies makes them easier to hit, and clever positioning can also make use of the fact that combatants count as Rough Terrain to help protect allies. Pokémon who have achieved a Loyalty Rank of 6 can attempt to Intercept attacks aimed at any of their allies.

CREATING GYM CHALLENGES

Gym Challenges should have a special place in any PTU GM's heart. They're where you can go all out in giving an NPC nasty and whacky strategies and throw tough challenges at your PCs without worrying that you might kill them all off with too difficult an encounter. In Gym Challenges and other League matches, death tends not to be an issue, and Trainers can always challenge a Gym again at a later date if they fail the first time. This doesn't mean you should intentionally create impossible Gyms or pay absolutely no heed to balance, but it does mean you can relax a little and be more experimental.

In a standard League-based campaign, Gym Challenges are the one main constant when it comes to significant encounters. You'll want to do your best to make sure they stay interesting throughout the campaign and don't become stagnant. Here are some tips and things to consider when crafting your region's Gyms.

Theme: A region's Gym Leaders aren't just a collection of powerful Trainers. Usually, each Gym Leader has a specific theme to his or her Gym Challenge. Most commonly, this is a specialty in a certain elemental Type, but you can certainly deviate from the standard and build Gym Leaders around a particular Combat Stat, a particular kind of battling style, or other factors. Feel free to combine themes as well, such as pairing a Type with a Combat Stat for a Gym.

Unique Mechanics: Gym Leaders should pose a special challenge to the PCs, and a straight up bog standard League match is anything but in most cases. Even adding just a small twist to the standard battling procedure can help, such as using an electrified floor in an Electric Type Gym. You can go further with this and create Gyms built around completely different victory conditions, such as Capture the Flag or obstacle courses.

While many Leagues will require that Gyms adhere to standard League battling regulations – Pokémon battles only with no direct Trainer involvement, it is also interesting and exciting to break from that and create Gyms that challenge the Trainers directly as well.

Here are some examples of Gyms with a strong theme that also works well into the unique mechanics they present for the Gym Challenge.

A Dark Type Gym that also themes itself on the Stealth Skill. The Gym Challenge isn't about facing off in open field combat, but instead the challengers must work as a team to retrieve a number of artifacts from a dark labyrinth within a time limit while facing assassination style attacks from the Gym Leader's Pokémon.

A Gym that themes itself off the Cool Contest Stat. It has no particular Type affiliation, but it leans somewhat toward Flying and Electric Types due to the number of Cool Moves of those Types. The battle arena is designed as a series of floating platforms that encourage combatants to make cool and risky acrobatic maneuvers to move around efficiently. An audience judges the combatants' every Move with Appeal Points much like a Contest, and special bonuses are given for high Appeal such as healing items and buffs.

A Gym that replicates the terror and arduousness of extreme mountain climbing. Set on the peak of a large mountain itself, it takes advantage of the permanent Hail conditions of its locale to wear down opponents. Most of the Gym Leader's Pokémon are Ground or Ice Type, and she throws in the bite of a Sandstorm into the challenge for added difficulty. Pokémon with push effects are common, replicating the ever-present danger of falling in mountain climbing.

A Grass and Bug Typed Gym that is designed as an obstacle course challenge. Winning is simply a matter of getting to the end. However, the path to the finish line is littered with traps and Bug and Grass Pokémon that will try their best to wear the challengers down with Status Afflictions rather than attacking directly.

That's not all you should think about when making your region's Gyms, however! Ideally, your region's Gyms should fit together in a cohesive whole.

Part of this is simply working to make sure that while each Gym has its special theme, the pattern of themes used throughout the region is predictable or at the least consistent. For example, the previous four example Gyms might seem like they're all over the place in terms of theme, but if you make a pattern where Gyms always borrow existing facilities or structures for their challenges, it could make sense.

The Dark Gym borrows an old archaeological dig site that's been fully excavated already, or old mine tunnels perhaps. The Cool Gym uses a sports arena, perhaps one designed for Pokéathlons. The mountain climbing Gym borrows the peak of a ski resort during times of intense winter storms. The obstacle course Gym borrows a forested path through a wildlife preserve.

Part of this is considering what the role of a Gym Leader is in your region, which was covered earlier in the section on Constructing a Pokémon League (page 438).

You will also want to consider how the Pokémon League expects challengers to approach the Gym circuit. Do challengers simply need to win once and keep a Badge for life? Or is qualification to an annual League tournament contingent on winning a number of Badges again each year?

Here are some further assorted thoughts and advice on creating Gyms.

Don't enforce a strict Gym order! This isn't the video games, and you have the flexibility of writing the stats for a Gym as you need them rather than setting them all in stone at the beginning of the campaign. Naturally, Gym Leaders keep Pokémon of a wide range of strength, using what's appropriate for a given challenger based on the number of other Badges they already have.

If you want to give a little more structure to your League, one way to do so without forcing a single right order for Gym Challenges is to create two or three tiers of Gyms, where you need to clear one tier to access to the next but Gyms within the same tier can be challenged in any order otherwise. You could also let Trainers choose from a pool of Gyms. Perhaps there are 12 Gyms, but you only need 8 Badges to qualify for the League.

Give Gym Leaders personality! Gym Leaders should exist for a reason other than for Gym Challenges. They should have a place in the community and are often well-known figures. Introducing PCs to a Gym Leader before the Gym Challenge, such as helping them defend the town from a criminal Team's attack, can help get players more invested in the upcoming challenge.

Don't be afraid to go all out! Gym Leaders are likely to have great resources at their disposal, not to mention having many connections who can help them out. Except perhaps at the lower tiers of Gym Challenges, there's no reason for your Gym Leaders not to make full use of TMs, Breeding bonuses, Tutor Moves, Vitamins, Held Items, and other edges and bonuses in battle. Some may even use Shiny Pokémon with special characteristics or make liberal use of Type Shifted Pokémon.

Rewards for Gym Challenges

It's standard in the video games to hand out a TM and some money as a reward for besting a Gym Challenge, but you may wish to go further with interesting ideas and offer players a choice between different rewards upon their victory. Here are a few to get you started.

Custom Moves: Gym Leaders will often have their own signature Moves they can give out as TMs. This can be as simple as, say, giving the Dark Gym Leader mentioned previously a Dark Type Phantom Force, and it can be as complicated as the Cool Gym Leader developing a physical Electric Typed Move that lets the user bounce like a pinball between nearby targets, hitting them all if they can find a continuous path bouncing off them.

Badges as Held Items: Badges can be for more than show! The Dark Gym Leader's Badge may grant a Pokémon the Dead Silent Capability or Ambush Ability, for example, or the mountain climbing Gym Leader's may grant the Snow Cloak Ability.

Pokémon Eggs: Eggs can make great rewards as well, especially when Gym Leaders use Pokémon with special traits. The Cool Gym Leader may offer eggs for Flying/Electric Typed winged Blitzle.

Trainer Equipment: If Trainers are directly involved in the Gym Challenge, it can make sense to give them equipment as part of a reward. The Grass and Bug Gym may hand out Wallclimber Trainer Feet slot equipment, for example.

Sample Gym Challenge

This can be rather a lot to consider at once, so we're providing you with a sample Pokémon Gym Challenge, based on one of the Gym ideas that was described earlier in this section. The entry has details on the Gym Leader and their Pokémon as well as some fluff on their role in the community.

The sample Gym Challenge is the mountain climbing gym, which is actually a fairly traditional Gym Challenge despite its theme. The aim is still to knock out all the opponent's Pokémon, and Trainers can only give orders on the sidelines. However, this type of Gym Challenge can be easily modified to accommodate full contact battling, and it can be exciting for the players to have their Trainers take part directly in the challenge to try to climb the mountain alongside their Pokémon.

The other Gym concepts aren't given stats here, but you can easily use them as a basis to create your own unique and exciting Gym Challenges. There are enough tools and tips in the rest of the Encounter Creation Guide for you to create exciting unconventional Gym Challenges if you so desire.

Nicolette, The Mountain's Maiden

Name: Nicolette Myra
Age: 27
Gender: Female
Specialty: Ground and Ice Types, Climatology, Battlefield Control
Battle Theme: Cold Wind Flash! – Tales of Graces OST

Cast's Note: Yes, all Gym Challenges must have their own themes. This is absolutely mandatory, and you are banned from ever GMing PTU again on pain of Mawile bite if you don't do this. You have been warned!

**Trainer Classes**: Researcher, Commander, Survivalist, Enduring Soul
Important Features: **Researcher**: [Climate Control, Extreme Weather], **Commander**: [Leadership, Battlefield Conductor, Complex Orders, Scheme Twist], **Survivalist**: [Wilderness Guide, Adapive Geography], **Enduring Soul**: [Resilience, Awareness, Not Yet!], **General**: [Focused Training, Inspired Training, Trickster Orders, Precision Orders, Commander's Voice, Command Versatility]

Background: Nicolette hails from the snowy city of Kale, where a ski resort and other tourist attractions drive the local economy. While the snow falls year round, her Gym accepts challenges only during the winter months when the ski resort closes its highest peaks due to the strong storms in the area. For the rest of the year, Nicolette helps run an orphanage in the city, passing the responsibility entirely to her brother in winter while she runs the Gym. She is bubbly, incredibly excitable, and very generous, often bringing the children to learn to ski or taking them around the mountain on her snowmobile. She is also known for coordinating the city's biggest donation drive during the holiday season right before her Gym duties begin. The donations go to the orphanage's children, of course, along with the other poor and homeless of the cold city.

If Nicolette needs to be given stats for use outside of her Gym duties, she excels in the Mind Category Skills and tends to solve problems through cleverness and ingenuity. Athletics, Survival, Command, and Perception are her best Skills, though she also has training in Acrobatics, Charm, Focus, and General Education.
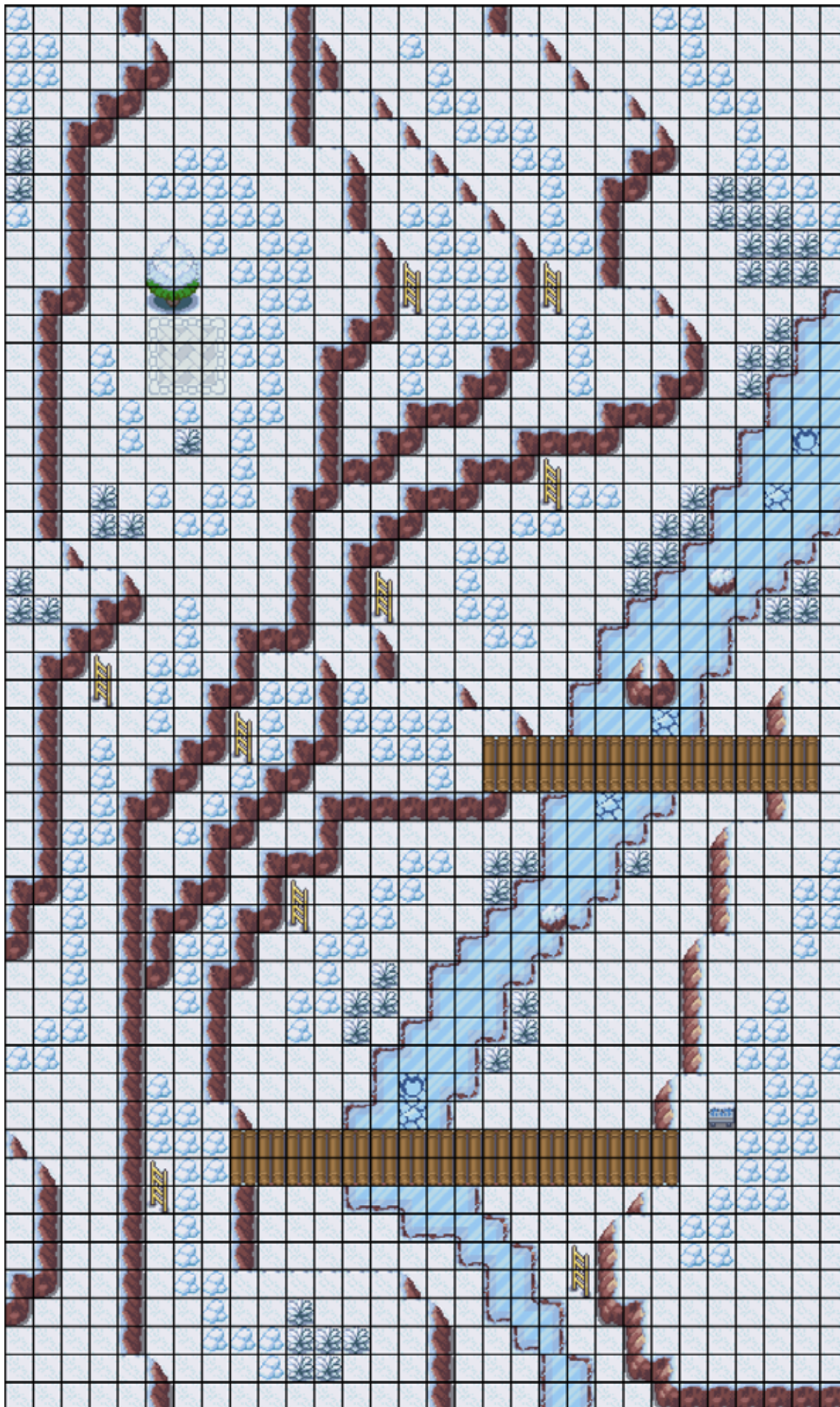
Map Notes:

Each level of the mountain is 3 meters apart in height, With the small 3rd level, there's essentially 6 meters between the larger 2nd and 4th levels. Using the ladders counts as Overland, but Pokémon can attempt to climb up 3m of cliff directly as a Standard Action with an Acrobatics or Athletics Check with DC 12.

The mounds of snow are deep snow and count as Slow Terrain. The bushes are similar but also count as Rough Terrain. The icy river cracks when anyone of Weight Class 3 or higher falls onto it or when anyone of Weight Class 5 or 6 steps onto it. Each turn spent in frigid water lowers a non-Ice Type's Speed by 1 CS at the end of their turn.

The players send out their Pokémon near the sign post on the right side, while Nicolette's Pokémon are spread on the left side near the bridges. The square area next to the tree is where Nicolette stands, but she isn't part of the battle.

Nicolette's Pokémon

Donder the Mamoswine (M), Level 40 @ King's Rock

Hit Points: 131			
Stat	Base	Added	Total
HP	11	16	27
ATK	15	15	30
DEF	8	3	11
SPATK	5	0	5
SPDEF	6	4	10
SPEED	8	12	20

Abilities: Snow Cloak, Thick Fat, Ice Body
Moves: Ice Shard, Rock Slide (PP Upped), Stealth Rock, Superpower, Double-Hit, Ice Fang
Poké Edges: Accuracy Training (Rock Slide)

Comet the Hippowdon (F), Level 40 @ Summit Badge

Hit Points: 125			
Stat	Base	Added	Total
HP	10	15	25
ATK	11	16	27
DEF	14	16	30
SPATK	5	0	5
SPDEF	7	3	10
SPEED	5	0	5

Abilities: Sand Stream, Arena Trap, Sand Force
Moves: Stealth Rock, Fire Fang, Sand Tomb (PP Upped), Earthquake, Strength, Whirlwind
Poké Edges: Advanced Mobility (Overland)

Blitzen the Sigilyph (M), Level 41 @ Focus Band

Hit Points: 108			
Stat	Base	Added	Total
HP	8	11	19
ATK	4	0	4
DEF	8	7	15
SPATK	10	11	21
SPDEF	8	7	15
SPEED	10	15	25

Abilities: Wonder Skin, Magic Guard, Instinct
Moves: Whirlwind, Hypnosis, Toxic, Light Screen, Smack Down, Air Slash (PP Upped)
Poké Edges: Advanced Mobility (Sky)

Vixen the Glaceon (F), Level 40 @ Safety Goggles

Hit Points: 122			
Stat	Base	Added	Total
HP	7	17	24
ATK	4	0	4
DEF	11	10	21
SPATK	15	10	25
SPDEF	10	10	20
SPEED	7	3	10

Abilities: Snow Cloak, Ice Body, Frostbite
Moves: Barrier, Heal Bell, Hyper Voice (PP Upped), Signal Beam, Icy Wind, Wish
Poké Edges: Capability Training (High and Long Jump)

Cupid the Aurorus (F), Level 40 @ Leftovers

Hit Points: 140			
Stat	Base	Added	Total
HP	12	18	30
ATK	6	0	6
DEF	7	8	15
SPATK	12	13	25
SPDEF	9	11	20
SPEED	6	0	6

Abilities: Ice Shield, Solid Rock, Ice Body
Moves: Freeze-Dry, Haze, Sandstorm, Discharge, Ancient Power, Blizzard (PP-Upped)
Poké Edges: Advanced Mobility (Overland)

Rudolph the Castform (M), Level 40 @ Lum Berry

Hit Points: 101			
Stat	Base	Added	Total
HP	7	10	17
ATK	5	0	5
DEF	7	8	15
SPATK	9	16	25
SPDEF	7	8	15
SPEED	7	8	15

Abilities: Forecast, Levitate, Snow Warning
Moves: Weather Ball (PP Upped), Blizzard, Hex, Shock Wave, Energy Ball, Scald
Poké Edges: Advanced Mobility (Sky)
Special: Rudolph is Ice/Ground Type in Hail/Sandstorm combination; Weather Ball may deal Ground Damage

Strategy: Nicolette's Gym Challenge is appropriate for Trainers with Pokémon in their late 20s and early 30s. She challenges Trainers in groups rather than individually, and she is capable of commanding her entire team each turn regardless of the normal number of Pokémon turns per round. Each PC Trainer commands only one Pokémon at a time, but set up the challenge so that the total number of Pokémon the PCs can use throughout the battle is about one and a half times the number Nicolette uses. Nicolette herself is at least Trainer Level 40, though this should only come into play for determining AP pool. You may also give her bonus AP to make up for the players' numbers advantage.

Nicolette's strategy revolves around taking advantage of **weather effects** and using **battlefield control** to slowly wear down her opponents. The mountain on which she sets her Gym Challenge is enveloped in a permanent **Hailstorm**, at least for the winter months, and this results in a special mechanic for the challenge: Effects such as Defog and Cloud Nine only temporarily hold the weather's effects at bay, lasting for only two rounds. On top of this, Nicolette uses the **Climate Control** Feature to add a **Sandstorm** on top of the Hail, adding additional damage over time to her Gym Challenge. The **Extreme Weather** Feature ensures that her opponents also do less damage with their attacks and hit less often.

All of Nicolette's Pokémon have had her special training applied, allowing them to treat deep snow and ice as Normal Terrain. Additionally, they are well-trained in mountain climbing and can run up the cliffs around the map as if they had the Wallclimber Capability. Remember also to apply **Training Features**!

The other part of her strategy revolves around controlling the battlefield. The map on the previous page is designed to facilitate this, containing choke points and giving opportunity for **Push Moves** to send opponents down cliffs for falling damage or into the icy river to be further slowed. The map is actually fairly flat for a mountain, and this was deliberately chosen for the sake of making battles run smoother. By all means, feel free to make a map that is more steep if you feel that is an appropriate challenge.

A typical battle against Nicolette will see her set up **Stealth Rock** and **Barrier** Hazards near the bridge choke points. Depending on the composition of the PCs' teams, she may or may not open with a **Light Screen** for defense.

From there, her tactics center around a battle of attrition for the most part. Several of Nicolette's Pokémon have the **Ice Body** Ability, so don't forget to apply that each turn as the Hail rages on. She will use Moves like Icy Wind and Sand Tomb to lower Speed Combat Stages or slow her enemies directly to keep them struggling to reach her other Pokémon while taking damage each round. Push Moves such as Whirlwind and Strength let her push opponents down cliffs for falling damage and to slow down their approach further. Vixen plays a small cleric role on her team, curing Status Afflictions and restoring Hit Points. Nicolette will often have her Pokémon retreat up the mountain, forcing opponents to take more damage as they try to follow. **Haze** prevents them from setting up Combat Stages during this time.

On her turns, Nicolette will use **Orders** and **Stratagems** such as **Focused Training** or **Capricious Whirl**, boosting the number of targets she can affect with her Commander Features. **Command Versatility** lets her reuse useful Moves, such as using Blitzen's Smack Down more often or gaining more uses of Vixen's Heal Bell. **Resilience** helps her win the battle of attrition.

Flying opponents and other opponents with high mobility are Nicolette's greatest weakness, of course. She tends to deal with most fliers by hitting them with high damage Ice attacks such as **Blizzard**, which always hits during Hail. Failing that, Rudolph and Cupid both have Electric Type attacks for dealing with them, and Blitzen may use **Smack Down** to bring them back to earth, especially if that lets Comet trap them with Sand Tomb. Pokémon with Magic Guard also give her trouble.

It's recommended that you leave this weakness as part of Nicolette's challenge because it will give the players an angle to prepare from. Her vision behind the Gym is to test the challengers' preparedness for extreme environmental conditions after all, so her team is built to reward exploiting that weakness. That said, if you feel the battle may become too easy that way, you can easily give her Mold Breaker Pokémon like Excadrill, more Pokémon with Smack Down, and swifter hard-hitting fliers of her own. You may even create a custom Move that is an Ice-Typed Fire Spin to deal with high mobility.

Rewards: Summit Badge (Pokémon Held Item, grants the Snow Cloak Ability), ₱6000, and a choice of one of the following: Amaura Egg (Inheritance Moves: Discharge and Haze), Blizzard TM, Overcloak (Held Item/Accessory Item: Grants Overcoat Ability).

Boss Encounters

Even in a League-based campaign of Pokémon Tabletop United, there are times you need to throw a traditional "boss" encounter at the PCs outside of a Gym Challenge or tournament match. It can be a fight against a criminal Team admin and his experimental superweapon or even a face off against a Legendary Pokémon.

One important bit of advice you should keep in mind in these situations is that merely throwing a single high level enemy at a group of PCs is not going to provide a challenge. A group of 3 or 4 Trainers with average Level 20 Pokémon will often make short work of even a Level 80 opponent. If you want to make a single foe an imposing challenge for a group, you will have to apply some special rules to them in the encounter.

Standard Boss Template

When Do I Use It?
The Boss Template need not be reserved for gargantuan plot-arc-concluding encounters. The nature of action economy and combat in PTU makes it a good idea to use the Boss Template much more frequently, whenever you want a particular enemy to shine in battle. While you shouldn't be making enemies which have the full number of Hit Point bars and Initiative Counts in battle all the time, you can make lieutenants and enemy commanders in regular encounters more significant by giving them one extra hit point bar and one extra action each turn.

Basic Stats
Begin by statting the enemy for the Boss Template as normal. This is done just like a normal enemy, but you want to keep in mind several considerations:
» HP is even more important. The Boss Enemy's final number of Hit Points will be multiplied across several Hit Point bars, so skimping here will have a multiplied effect in making the encounter easier than it should be when you apply all the changes from the template.
» More than other foes, Bosses need access to reliable high-frequency Moves. With all of their actions per round, stuffing them with Scene and Daily Moves will ensure that they run out of steam quickly.
» Players typically expect Bosses to be big damage dealers and threats on their own. Of course, you don't have to abide by these expectations, but keep in mind that a Boss Enemy will often be the very last foe that the players take down in a fight. If you've built a Boss that's purely dedicated to support and relies on its minions for damage output, then you're going to see a very anticlimactic end to your fight compared to if you build a powerful bruiser.
» Especially powerful Boss Pokémon can have some of their Combat Stages set above zero as their Default.

Actions and Initiative
Count up the number of Pokémon turns your players typically have each round. Typically, this will be equal to the number of players, but frequent use of Focused Command may increase this number. Then add the number of Trainers who are mostly specialized towards Trainer Combat. Usually, you would only count someone who has built their character to be dedicated to spending their Standard Actions using Moves and other attacks.

This final number is the baseline for how many actions per round a fully fledged Boss Enemy should have when facing your party. When making minor Bosses, or for lieutenants and commanders in more regular fights, you can use a fraction of this final value instead. You should space out these actions throughout the Initiative order to ensure each round is well paced. Start with the Boss Enemy's base Initiative value. Then subtract 5 and add an additional turn at that new Initiative Count. Subtract 5 again and add another additional turn. Repeat this process until you've distributed all of the Boss Enemy's turns throughout the Initiative order or you reach the point where you can't subtract 5 anymore without going below 1. If you still have leftover turns to distribute, then start adding 5 from the enemy's original Initiative. On each round, your Boss Enemy acts on each of these Initiative Counts.

Let's take for example a Boss Enemy with 20 base Initiative and 5 turns per round. Start with giving it its normal turn at Initiative Count 20. Then distribute turns to Initiative Counts 15, 10, and 5. You still have 2 turns left to distribute, so those go to 25 and 30.

EOT Frequency Moves also work differently for Boss Template enemies. Rather than needing to wait an entire round between using those Moves, they can use EOT Moves multiple times a round as long as they put a turn in between each use. This also applies to the restriction on using Scene x2 Moves multiple times in a row.

Hit Points and Injuries

Just as Boss Template enemies have their actions per round multiplied, so do they have their number of Hit Point bars, making them effectively as powerful as several enemies. For each action a Boss Enemy has each round, give them one Hit Point bar.

When taking percentile damage, such as Poison or Sandstorm, recovering percentile Hit Points, such as Ingrain or Heal Pulse, or using effects that set Hit Points to a certain number, such as Pain Split, use only the current Hit Point bar; these effects do not touch the other ones. You might notice this looks very similar to the Swarm Rules so far. However, do not lower a Boss Template enemy's number of actions per turn as it loses Hit Point bars. Doing so would make them degrade in power too much to be threatening.

Additionally, Boss Template enemies do not follow normal Injury rules and instead gain an Injury only when:
» They take Massive Damage. This does not give them an Injury for Hit Point Markers, just for Massive Damage itself.
» They lose half of their total Hit Point Bars.
» An effect such as Cruelty specifically mandates giving them an Injury.

Keep in mind that Injuries a Boss suffers early in an encounter will affect its later Hit Point bars. Plan accordingly.

Whenever a Boss Enemy loses a Hit Point bar, additional damage or loss of Hit Points carries over to the next. The Boss is considered Staggered when it loses a Hit Point bar. Mechanically, this doesn't mean anything in the context of the system, but for the sake of pacing your encounter and giving the players a sense of progress when fighting an enemy that has much more health than normal, it can be a good idea to have one or more of the following effects occur whenever a Boss Enemy is Staggered. Both positive and negative effects are included, as there are some Boss encounters you may wish to make easier as they go on and some more difficult.
» They become Vulnerable until the next time they are hit by a damaging attack.
» Become Flinched and lose their next turn (not a whole round).
» Increase a Combat Stage by 1.
» They regain a use of a Scene Frequency Move.
» They become cured of a single Volatile Affliction.

Additionally, you may wish for special effects to trigger when a Boss Template enemy is down to its last Hit Point bar. What exactly this is should depend on the Boss itself. A feral Wild Pokémon may become Enraged and set its default Attack Combat Stages to +6. A skilled and disciplined Fighting-Type Pokémon may unlock access to a powerful signature attack. A Boss may simply clear itself of negative Combat Stages and Status Afflictions.

Status Afflictions

Status Afflictions must be modified for Boss Template enemies. If you were have a Boss lose a Tick of Hit Points on every single turn from Poison, for example, it would quickly go down without much of a fight. Here are some suggestions for how to modify Status Afflictions.
» Burn, Poison, Curse, Sandstorm, Hail, and other effects that cause a target to lose Hit Points over time occur only once at the beginning of each round, rather than on each turn.
» Similarly, effects that cause action denial, such as Confuse and Paralyze only affect one turn each round. When a Move or effect is used which causes one of these Status Afflictions, it affects the immediate next turn the Boss has and is assigned to that Initiative Count until it is cured.
» Sleep and Frozen instead become Drowsy and Chilled respectively. These are identical effects that affect all of a Boss Enemy's turns each round but do not cause them to lose their actions. Instead, they cause a Boss to lose half of their Evasion, and upon failing a Save Check, they suffer a -10 penalty to their next Damage Roll. Otherwise, they may recover from these Status Afflictions as normal, though taking damage does not automatically cure Drowsy as it would cure Sleep.
» Disable can affect only one of a Boss Enemy's Moves at a time, to prevent a party from completely locking down their actions.
» Boss Enemies cannot lose multiple turns each round from Flinch.

Environment and Minions

Even with a boss template applied, a single boss enemy should not be the entirety of the encounter. Giving minions to supply support or adding extra effects from the environment (such as giving a turn for a volcanic environment to "act" by spreading Fire Hazards and splashing molten lava out of pools at combatants) is still a good move to prevent type advantage from completely trivializing a boss as well as to allow the players to split up instead of all mobbing around one Boss Enemy.

Experience and Rewards

When awarding Experience for a Boss encounter, do not divide the Experience from the Boss Enemy itself by the number of players. Looking back to the Basic Encounter Creation section, the GM there had 180 Levels to build an important encounter. A similar boss encounter with a single Pokémon may only be Level 60, which would be far less Experience despite a similar level of difficulty!

While rare, there may be times when you have a Boss Enemy or other high level encounter be caught by the players. First of all, you should make the Boss Enemy immune to Poké Balls until it is on its last Hit Point bar, but you should make it very clear and obvious when that immunity is broken.

In the case of a successful capture, there's no shame in ratcheting down their Level to be a more reasonable catch for the players, rather than trying to deal with them having a new Pokémon far above their average party level. You can use a variety of in-universe explanations to justify this, such as a Pokémon suffering grievous Injuries that make it require a long period of training and rehabilitation to reach its former strength. Many Boss Enemies are also often artificially boosted in power, such as a Pokémon corrupted by dark magic or twisted science experiments. Defeating them and cleansing them of these factors can weaken them and make them more on par with a normal Pokémon.

Obviously, you would never allow a player to use a caught Pokémon as if it had the Boss Template, even if it had it before as an encounter.

Sample Boss: Mewtwo

Mewtwo
Level 70
Modest Nature (-Attack / +Special Attack)

Hit Points: 167 (x4 bars)			
Stat	**Base**	**Added**	**Total**
HP	11	18	29
ATK	9	0	9
DEF	9	6	15
SPATK	17	33	50
SPDEF	9	6	15
SPEED	13	17	30

Acts on Initiative 30, 25, 20, and 15.

Abilities: Pressure, Frighten, Memory Wipe
Moves: Psychic (PP Upped to At-Will), Swift, Shadow Ball, Energy Ball, Hidden Power (Fairy), Guard Swap

Zoofbat: For Legendary Pokémon in particular, you might find it useful to take a look at *The Blessed and the Damned* splat! In fact, many of these ideas are similar to how Legendary Pokémon battles are handled there.

Multi-Part Enemies

Another method for making boss encounters involves splitting up the boss into multiple parts, each with their own Initiative, bar of Hit Points, and often their own set of Moves and Abilities as well.

Think about classic video game bosses such as the Dragon Tank in Chrono Trigger with Head, Body, and Wheel parts. The tactical choice of which area of the enemy to target adds depth to an encounter and can make it more exciting.

In particular, this method is useful for creating giant Pokémon as bosses. You may create a giant Hydreigon boss encounter where the dragon perches each of its three heads over the top edge of a cliff to face the PCs, each of those heads armed with different attacks.

Simply give each part of the Pokémon stats as if they were an individual of the whole species. You can make modifications to Base Stats here and use different Abilities, but that can add complexity to your statting process. Do it if you have the time, but it isn't necessary.

When it comes to Movement and turns, this can be a little trickier. Typically, however, if you're using this method for a giant Pokémon, each individual part will be big enough to occupy a sizable part of the battlefield and have some freedom of movement itself, for example a giant Charizard's claws or the tail of a giant Steelix.

Sample Boss: Hydreigon

Each of the three heads takes up a 4x1 area, and they can stretch to move 7 meters from their starting position. Occasionally, the Hydreigon may reposition itself entirely to allow itself better access to the battlefield.

Hydreigon's Left Head
Level 50
Adamant Nature (-Special Attack / +Attack)
Poké Edges: Attack Conflict (Special Attack)

Hit Points: 117			
Stat	**Base**	**Added**	**Total**
HP	9	10	19
ATK	13	28	41
DEF	9	6	15
SPATK	11	0	11
SPDEF	9	6	15
SPEED	10	10	20

Abilities: Levitate, Polycephaly, Cruelty
Moves: Crunch, Body Slam, Ice Fang, Thunder Fang, Outrage, Fire Fang

Hydreigon's Right Head
Level 50
Modest Nature (-Attack / +Special Attack)

Hit Points: 117			
Stat	**Base**	**Added**	**Total**
HP	9	10	19
ATK	9	0	9
DEF	9	6	15
SPATK	15	28	43
SPDEF	9	6	15
SPEED	10	10	20

Abilities: Levitate, Cruelty, Pride
Moves: Tri-Attack, Dragon Pulse (PP Upped to At-Will), Signal Beam, Earth Power, Flamethrower, Roar

Hydreigon's Center Head
Level 70
Brave Nature (-Speed / +Attack)
Poké Edges: Mixed Sweeper 1, 2, 3

Hit Points: 158			
Stat	Base	Added	Total
HP	9	17	26
ATK	13	30	43
DEF	9	6	15
SPATK	13	30	43
SPDEF	9	6	15
SPEED	8	0	8

Abilities: Levitate, Cruelty, Twisted Power
Moves: Hyper Voice, Superpower, Draco Meteor, Stone Edge, Crunch, Dragon Pulse (PP Upped to At-Will)

Truly Colossal Foes

Sometimes, simply making a multi-part enemy isn't enough for the scale of your encounter. Sometimes, an enemy is so large it doesn't really make sense how you would attack them from the ground or with another traditional approach.

In this case, you may turn the entire enemy into a "dungeon" or "level", turning the encounter into a matter of climbing all over them and striking at weak spots. Think Shadow of the Colossus. Of course, in such a challenge, the boss itself isn't likely to directly attack the PCs. More likely, you will want to turn back a few pages and take a look at the advice for using the environment to spice up an encounter. In addition, such colossal Pokémon are likely to be ecosystems unto themselves, and you would create the encounter much like any other, using the Pokémon who would live there.

The big addition comes in adding the vulnerable parts of the colossal Pokémon. A colossal Torterra may have certain ancient trees on its back that supply it with much of its energy and life force. An Avalugg large enough to carry a frozen lake on its back may have support structures in that lake which can be broken. An ancient Regigigas may have been animated from inorganic material, and ancient seals adorn its surface which must be broken to shut it down. Give each weak spot its own set of stats, or just Hit Points. It's unlikely these can attack directly, but you may have the trees on the Torterra's back use Powder moves, for example.

Special Boss Powers

If you really want to take a boss battle to the next level, it can be a good idea to give them special powers in battle that further distinguish them from normal foes. A powerful boss may have some or all of their default Combat Stages set to a higher value, for example.

Boss creatures may also be enhanced in some way – maybe a gigantic Claydol is also encrusted with Unown that give it additional mysterious powers, a Nidoking could be strapped into a mechanical power frame, or a Delphox could be empowered by eldritch magic. This could serve as a convenient in-universe explanation for additional Hit Point bars and actions – all of these enhancements could account for a boss Pokémon's increased durability and offensive capability in combat.

These special boss powers can be as complicated or as simple as you want. Here are write-ups based on the above examples in ascending complexity.

Mechanical Power Frame: This Pokémon or Trainer's Attack Combat Stages default to +3, and they add the following Moves to their Move List: Metal Claw, Iron Head, Meteor Mash.

Eldritch Magic: This Pokémon or Trainer is empowered by powerful magic. Their damaging attacks inflict Dementia on 16+. Dementia is identical to Confusion except with these additional effects:
» The target suffers a -2 penalty to all Save Checks.
» On a roll of 1-8, the target also loses a Combat Stage in a Stat chosen at random.
» If a target affected by Dementia would be afflicted with Dementia again, they are instead Cursed.

Unown Imbuement: This Pokémon or Trainer has one to five Clusters of Unown grafted onto their body. Each active Cluster of Unown gives them a passive +1 bonus to both Accuracy and Evasion. Clusters of Unown can also be burned away and deactivated for the rest of the Scene to produce the following effects, depending on how many Clusters are burned at once:
» **One Cluster** – Use the Move Hidden Power as a Swift Action as either a Physical or Special Attack. The user picks Hidden Power's Type for each use.
» **Two Clusters** – Add a +5 bonus to the Accuracy Roll of one attack as a Swift Action.
» **Three Clusters** – Use the Move Detect as a Free Action.

Other Assorted Boss Tips

Even with strong bosses with multiple Hit Point bars and actions per turn, it's usually a good idea to create some smaller minions to fight alongside the boss, since defeating them gives a concrete measurement of progress for the players.

Injuries are usually applied meaningfully only to the PCs. Except in cases where enemies use an inordinate amount of healing, the PCs will typically knock out their foes before they accrue enough Injuries to make a difference. Bosses are one place where you can buck this trend and make strategies based on inflicting or taking advantage of Injuries more useful.

One way to do this is to have a boss or other important enemy try to escape during an encounter. It's not realistic to have all enemies fight until the last man standing, after all. If the PCs manage to track down the villain again within a day or so, it's probable he will still have Injuries from their previous encounter, making it easier to defeat them.

Another way to use Injuries is to throw an already Injured villain at the PCs. This can weaken a foe that might otherwise be too difficult for the PCs to handle, and it can make a lot of sense in situations such as when a villain emerges from the ancient temple full of traps having found the artifact he was searching for.

Bosses are also a great place to use unconventional strategies and combinations that might take your players by surprise. Having a series of weaker foes launch Guard and Power Split attacks against a party's strongest Pokémon can really put a spanner in the works for the players and give them a memorable encounter. Trick Room is another rarely seen strategy that can be put to good use in a boss encounter if a boss has many slow minions in the battle.

It's a good idea to consider the various different roles Pokémon can play in battle and make them work together in a boss encounter. A strong multi-action boss will usually be a bulky or speedy damage dealer, but you can throw a pair of disablers like Spiritomb or Whimsicott alongside them or a pair of clerics like Blissey or Meganium to support them and act as force multipliers. Think about supporting Trainers for boss encounters too. They may even act as direct participants in battle using combat-oriented Classes.

Common GM Pitfalls

Because we've all made mistakes, and we want to help you avoid the ones we've made! A lot of these will be common mistakes that GMs make when just starting a campaign, when PCs and their Pokémon tend to be weak and limited, but many of these will continue to apply throughout a campaign.

Players Should Invest in HP

This is more of a player-side issue, but a GM should still have their finger on the pulse of their game enough to identify it when they see it.

Especially early on when Levels are low, investment in HP is very important for Pokémon and Trainers alike. If a player is putting very few or no Stat Points into HP, you should probably intercede and tell them that they're going to have a rough time early on.

Later on, when higher Levels automatically provide a decent buffer of Hit Points to a Pokémon, it can be safer to slack off on HP investment, but it's almost never a good idea to ignore it entirely.

On the GM side, aside from watching what the players do with their stats, another good idea is to watch the Base Stat Relations of the Pokémon you hand out for capture. Species with HP as their lowest, or close to lowest, Base Stat are very difficult to raise early on. Choosing Natures carefully can help alleviate this problem, as can providing suppressant berries or other means of tweaking Base Stats. Alternatively, simply save these species for later in the campaign.

Beware Flying Pokémon

In the video games, Pidgey and its equivalents are chump-change encounters. Depending on your players' starter Pokémon, that could remain the case, or they could be terrifying demonspawn due to their simple ability to fly and launch attacks from range while remaining out of reach of melee attacks.

Of course, it wouldn't make sense to simply remove all Flying Pokémon from your routes or render them pacifistic until your players have Pokémon capable of dealing with them in a traditional manner, but you can make encounters with them less one-sided and boring for your players.

First of all, remind your players that they can do more than simply use the Moves they have. Improvised attacks such as throwing rocks can allow a melee combatant to take aim at flyers, for example. Ambushes with Bait can catch birds off guard before they take off, and Combat Maneuvers like Grappling can keep them on the ground.

Pokémon in the anime and manga often leap and perform great feats of acrobatics to fight their flying foes, and that's no different in PTU. Create an environment where Pokémon can leap off outcroppings, trees, and other geographical features to reach flying foes with melee attacks. In a pinch, they may even use their Trainers for a boost. A relatively tall Trainer with their hands stretched above their heads will be able to boost a small Pokémon up 2 meters, often enough to help close the distance between them and a low-flying bird.

Be Careful With Homebrew

By all means, we encourage you to make tweaks and modifications to our system to best fit your campaign, and, in fact, we provide optional rules and ideas for doing so throughout this book. However, it's probably best as a new GM to keep your adjustments and modifications within manageable limits as you learn the system.

Particularly, newcomers to the system often have a hard time balancing custom Trainer Classes or assessing the balance effect of homebrew Classes that others have written, not to mention the possibility that some homebrew Classes haven't been updated to match the latest official rules. If you're new to GMing the system, it's recommended that you have players stick to the Classes available in the official releases, whether in this book or in one of the supplementary books.

Even if you're an experienced GM, if you have new players, it may be easier to stick to the official Classes until everyone is more familiar with the system and less likely to get tripped up by homebrew Classes.

Another place where new GMs often throw a spanner into their own works is by creating more complex subsystems for the game or increasing the complexity of existing systems, such as reintroducing differing base capture rates by Pokémon species.

This kind of added complexity can often slow down the game considerably, especially if it requires looking up data often! We fully acknowledge that PTU is already a rather complex system with many moving parts, and this means the more you can keep things simple, the better off you'll usually be.

Use Shinies Judiciously

Many GMs and players find themselves drawn to Pokémon tabletop gaming so they can give their Pokémon the quirks and personality they couldn't in the handheld games. Those with a creative streak have often imagined variations on their favorite Pokémon or "fakemon" species they've always wanted to see. With the existence of Type Shifts and Shiny Pokémon, it can be tempting to flood your campaign world with special specimens and make even the mundane species such as Rattata routinely extraordinary or to give such Pokémon extravagant effects that outstrip normal specimens.

Hold yourself back. We've seen cases where campaigns can devolve into Shiny Pokémon "arms races" where players feel the need to reserve spots on their team for Shiny Pokémon only and where any normal specimen of a species is going to be grossly devalued once a Shiny version is inevitably discovered. This is no fun for anyone, and it can be especially frustrating to have early game captures or even starter Pokémon that have become important to a character from an RP perspective rendered dull, uninteresting, and weak compared to the plethora of Shiny Pokémon that are made available.

While Shiny Pokémon and Type Shifts are useful for spicing up a campaign, especially for veterans of the handheld games and of PTU, they are, like most good things in life, best in moderation.

Pace Out Item Availability

No, really, be judicious with how available you make powerful items, especially early on. There's little else that's less fun in PTU than having every battle become a game of rocket tag, which can easily happen if starting Trainers get their hands on an Earthquake or Blizzard TM. It may make sense in a modern society that just about anything can be ordered online from the equivalent of Amazon.com, but you probably want to sacrifice a little realism there for the sake of fun.

More broadly speaking, don't make every item available in every store, regardless of the item's power.

First of all, it removes a lot of the incentive to visit new places and the excitement players feel when browsing stores in new towns. Giving different towns different selections of Poké Balls, TMs, Held Items, Evolution Stones, and other items is an easy way to give them flavor, especially if you designate specialties to particular towns like putting a lot of Poké Ball vendors in a town with a Poké Ball factory.

Second of all, players who took crafting Features such as Ninja's Arsenal will feel their Features are cheapened if their specialty items can be bought just about anywhere.

If you need a stronger in-universe reason for limitations on TMs and other powerful items, it could simply be that the Pokémon League regulates their sale and use, making the powerful selections off limits to everyone without the requisite Gym Badges.

Beware Single 'Mon Trainers

The Pokémon video games teach players to diversify their teams and not rely on a single Pokémon for everything. The same principle applies to Pokémon Tabletop United.

Pouring a lot of Experience into a single Pokémon will result in a Pokémon that is very powerful in certain situations yet absolutely useless in others. It can be very difficult for a GM to manage encounter difficulty in such a situation. A Pokémon far above the average Level of the others in the party would contribute far more than the others if left alone, but if it's taken out, the player who had that Pokémon is usually left crippled if they haven't been raising the rest of their team. Neither situation produces a fun dynamic.

It's for this reason that we recommend putting maximum caps on the amount of Experience that can be allocated to a single Pokémon after an encounter. Even if a player uses only one Pokémon throughout a large boss encounter, it's okay to let them allocate some of their Experience to their weaker team members in order to catch them up and to spread Experience among their team.

Don't be afraid to talk to your players either if they're trying to pump up one Pokémon to the exclusion of the rest of their team. If most players have Pokémon in the Level 15 range, but one has mostly Level 5 Pokémon aside from one that they're attempting to shoot up to Level 30 for a third stage evolution, then that's probably an issue that should be addressed.

Don't Run For a Crowd

Pokémon Tabletop United really plays best when you have four or fewer players at the table, plus a GM. Once you get into the realm of having five, six, or more players, then combat starts getting bogged down, and overall it can become quite a slow experience.

Keep Combat Going Briskly

There are a number of pitfalls that can cause combat to go slowly. First of all, make sure you and all of the players are well acquainted with the rules in the system. Taking time in the middle of a turn to look up rules is an easy way for combat to slow to a crawl.

Second of all, ask the players to pay attention to combat and decide on their actions while others' turns are happening. That way, they don't need to spend time once it's their turn to figure out what they want to do and can instead announce their actions immediately.

Third, keep aids such as the Type Effectiveness Chart and Damage Charts at hand for quick reference. This is especially important if any of your players are new to Pokémon or aren't familiar with new Types and the updates to Type Effectiveness from the newest video games.

Finally, when you're roleplaying online via real time text, such as a chatroom or IRC channel, it's a good idea to conduct the dice rolls and other mechanical parts of a turn in combat first before doing all the fluff and description. That way, everyone can apply damage and other effects while the person attacking types up their description for their attack.

Optional Rules

Baby Template

You may wish to roleplay baby Pokémon has having a small handicap, due to their newborn status.

If so, simply subtract 2, 3, or even 4 from each of the Pokémon's Base Stats, lower each of their Skills one Rank, and lower their Capabilities by 2. Weight and height are lowered accordingly, by up to 50%.

Pokémon tend to grow quickly; every 5 levels, they gain +1 to each of their Base Stats, and they grow in size a little. When they have finally regained all of their Base Stats, remove the penalties to skills and capabilities.

This template isn't necessary for Pokémon that are already quite weak; a baby Sentret probably doesn't need this applied, for example, and don't even consider it on a Weedle. If your Trainers somehow gain a baby Pinsir or Tauros early on, you may wish to dampen those Stats however.

You can also use this Template to make Legendary Pokémon usable by PCs! You could even make it permanent or partly permanent, especially on Pokémon with a Base Stat Total of over 60 or so.

Ground Attacks + Flying Types

Did it ever seem odd to anyone that Mud Bomb or Bonemerang can't hit flying Types? But somehow Venomoth and Beedrill are fully susceptible to earthquakes?

Here's a simple Optional Rule that addresses that:

Instead, Flying-Type Pokémon resist Ground-Type moves.

However, Moves with the Groundsource keyword (Earthquake, Magnitude, Dig, Fissure, Earth Power) do not affect Pokémon that are currently Levitating or Flying, regardless of Type.

Narrative Frequency

When the game says "Per day", it generally refers to one in-game day.

But if you play a game where there are often in-character time-skips in between days represented by sessions, or even if you would just like to keep all of those things a bit easier to track, you may want to consider putting your game on Narrative Frequency.

"Per Day" can instead be interpreted as "Per Session". Depending on how much do in a single session, this may really push your PCs to the limit – which can be both a good and bad thing.

If you end the session in the middle of an encounter, you may also want to establish that the session "refreshes" after you finish any encounters that are still unfinished.

Oh, and be mindful of some features or effects – Egg hatching for example would take FOREVER under narrative structure. Consider speeding up Egg Hatching when running a Narrative-Frequency game.

Limited Combat Stage Moves

With the wide range of options in Pokémon mobility such as flight and burrowing, you might run into the problem of having combatants retreat far above or below the battlefield to repeatedly use Combat Stage boosting Moves until they're maxed out and ready to fight.

One way to overcome this is to not allow effects that only raise Combat Stages, such as Moves like Swords Dance or Abilities like Speed Boost, to take effect unless a combatant is within 6 meters of a foe. Unless they're engaged in the midst of battle, they can't pump themselves up for the fight as effectively.