

ZOMBIE WORLD

RULES

INTRODUCTION

ZOMBIE WORLD is a card-based tabletop roleplaying game of zombie horror. It requires 2-8 players to play their own survivor characters called **player characters**, or PCs, in an enclave amid the zombie apocalypse, and one **Gamemaster** (GM), to facilitate the game and portray all **non-player characters** (NPCs) and the world.

Together, you set up your game, including **the enclave** (the "safe" location you and the other survivors have made your own), its **population** (including the PC survivors and the NPC survivors), its **advantages**, its **scarcities**, and its **surroundings**. You set up your **survivor PCs** by pulling a few cards from the decks, and you define the **relationships** between them so they are interesting, complicated, human characters.

And you play, describing the actions of your characters, speaking for them, and drawing cards to resolve moments of uncertainty. Over the course of playing, you tell your very own story of life after the zombie apocalypse, complete with betrayals, last-minute saves, triumphs, and failures.

COMPONENTS

110 cards

- Bite Deck (15 cards)
- Survivor Deck (11 cards)
- Identity Decks (48 cards)
- Fate Deck (8 cards)
- Population Deck (16 cards)
- Advantage Deck (8 cards)
- Enclave cards (4 cards)

18 playmats

- 8 character mats
- 8 basic move mats
- 1 enclave mat
- 1 GM mat

1 dry erase pen

SUMMARY OF DECKS

BITE DECK

Players draw from this deck when zombies can get a hand on them or when a move instructs them to draw. The deck is not reshuffled until someone draws the single Bite result card. 15 cards: 4 More Zombies, 4 Something Breaks, 1 Escalation, 1 Bite, 5 Safe.

SURVIVOR DECK

Players draw from this deck to resolve most moves throughout the game, including basic and Zombie Moves. They draw a number of cards based on the move and take the best result. A Triumph is best; an Edge is second best; and a miss is worst. An Opportunity is treated as a miss unless the PC marks one stress; then it is treated as a Triumph. This deck is reshuffled with all cards after a move is fully resolved. 11 cards: 6 Misses, 3 Edges, 1 Triumph, 1 Opportunity.

IDENTITY DECKS (Past, Present, Trauma)

Players draw from these decks during character creation. See character creation on page 6 for more information. 16 cards for each deck.

FATE DECK

This deck is used either for relationships between characters or for random events that happen to the enclave whenever time passes. 8 cards.

POPULATION DECK

Cards describing other, non-player survivors. Can be used for allies or general population of enclave. Each one describes their skills and equipment. 16 cards.

ADVANTAGE DECK

These cards represent the enclave's advantages with special moves. 8 cards.

ENCLAVE CARDS

A pair of cards for each enclave, describing the possible options during enclave creation, and the enclave's own special moves. 2 cards per enclave (4 cards).

SUMMARY OF MATS

CHARACTER MATS

Each non-GM player uses one of these mats to hold their character's information. The mat comes with slots for the character's Past, Present, and Trauma cards, along with space for their stats, and a few moves for reference. 8 mats.

BASIC MOVE MATS

These mats contain all the core, basic rules of the game that the players will be using regularly. They are double-sided, with one side containing the less-used Zombie Moves. 8 mats.

ENCLAVE MAT

This mat is used for recording any information about the enclave, including important population members, advantages, and scarcities. Single-sided. 1 mat.

GAMEMASTER MAT

This mat contains useful additional reference for the GM. 1 mat.

TO START A GAME OF ZOMBIE WORLD

1. Create your enclave
2. Create your survivors
3. Draw a Fate card to start play
4. Play!

CREATING YOUR ENCLAVE

1. Choose as a group what enclave you'll be using. The core **ZOMBIE WORLD** box contains two—the Prison and the Hospital. You might have others from expansions. Gather the two cards from the enclave you're going to use and the enclave playmat.
2. The GM passes the enclave checklist card (enclave card 2) around the table, clockwise. Once it's gone all the way around the table and reached the GM again, the GM passes it back around, counterclockwise.
 - When a player (not the GM) gets the checklist, they must choose any single option from any of the 4 categories listed on the checklist: a scarcity, a surrounding, a population, or an advantage. Some options are already checked off and true for the enclave at the start of play. For each category, you add only a total of two new options.
 - If they choose a scarcity: they can provide some detail about what that scarcity means, and the GM fills in additional detail.
 - If they choose a surrounding: they can provide some detail about what that surrounding is, and the GM fills in additional detail.
 - If they choose a population: they can provide some detail about who that person is, and the GM fills in additional detail.
 - If they choose an advantage: find the advantage card for that advantage and put it out on the table, next to the enclave playmat.
3. Pass the checklist card until the players have chosen a total of 2 new scarcities, 2 new surroundings, 2 new population, and 2 new advantages.
 - Record any new population or details on the enclave playmat. Try to provide some details about any population already added to the enclave, although specifics can wait until after the survivors have been made.
4. Then, finally, give the enclave a name.

CREATING YOUR SURVIVORS

Each player gets their own survivor playmat and copy of the basic moves. Then, the GM deals the following identity cards to each player:

- **1 Past:** Who you were before Z-Day
- **2 Presents:** Who you have become since Z-Day
- **1 Trauma:** How you cope with all you have suffered since Z-Day

Keep the Past and Trauma cards facedown. The player who receives them may look at them, but should otherwise keep them secret. Nobody knows who you were, and nobody knows how you cope...except you. At least to start.

Each player chooses one of their two Presents to put into play faceup and discards the other. They immediately gain the effects, if any, of their chosen Present. While your Past and Trauma aren't yours to choose, your Present is the role you have taken in the enclave, a role you have, to some extent, chosen.

STATS

Then, each player assigns their stats. They place a 3, 2, 2, and 1 as they choose between their Savagery, Soul, Steel, and Survival. Higher numbers mean a survivor draws more cards when using that stat.

SAVAGERY

Your capacity for inflicting violence.

STEEL

Your capacity to keep calm and in control.

SOUL

Your capacity for human connection.

SURVIVAL

Your capacity to survive at any cost.

CHARACTER DETAILS

Next, each player spends a few minutes choosing a name and appearance for their survivor. Then, go around the table and introduce survivors, focusing on physical descriptions, demeanors, and what the other survivors would know. Remember: survivor PCs do not, by default, know each other's Pasts or Traumas.

RELATIONSHIPS

For groups of 6 or fewer players:

Once all the survivors have been introduced, the GM deals one Fate card between adjacent players (and the GM skips themselves, so the players on the ends are treated as adjacent). Use the Relationship side of the Fate card to learn what the relationship between their two survivors is. Work out the details of that relationship, with the GM asking questions to fully flesh it out.

If a relationship suggests that two characters knew each other before Z-Day, they can show each other their Past cards, but otherwise keep them facedown—those Pasts still aren't public knowledge.

If a relationship requires a third character to be involved, use one of the existing enclave population, or draw a random Population card to fill that role.

For groups of 4 players:

You may also deal a relationship between any two players seated across from each other, to ensure all the PC survivors have a connection to each other.

For groups of 7 or more players:

So as to conserve time, don't deal Fate cards between players—assume all PC survivors know each other, but don't know each other well.

ALLIES

For groups of 5 or fewer players:

After finishing relationships, the GM deals out one Population card to each player. This person is a member of the enclave's population who has become an ally of that PC. Each player details their relationship and why this ally has come to follow their PC's lead. If a PC's Present card gives them allies, draw additional Population cards, or allow them to pick from those NPCs already created.

For groups of 6 or more players:

After finishing relationships, the GM deals out four Population cards to the center of the table, to add some survivors to the enclave's population.

CHARACTER EQUIPMENT

Equipment for player character survivors isn't tracked—they have access to anything that would be reasonable for their characters or their enclave, depending upon scarcities, advantages, and the enclave itself. Only rare or noteworthy equipment is worth tracking, and player character survivors are unlikely to start with that—they must find it by foraging.

START PLAY

Draw a Fate card to start play

The GM draws a single Fate card and uses the Time Passes side to determine what initial problem faces the enclave. The GM should look to the choices and survivors introduced in enclave creation to create the first scene and incident of the game—something that demands the enclave take action.

EXAMPLE

The players made their characters—Ellen, Deke, and Lopez—and made their enclave, Woodburn Prison. All relationships have been set up. Time to start play.

The GM pulls the top card of the Fate deck and sees “A scarcity becomes acute.” The GM then looks over the enclave playmat, where the group’s scarcities are listed: food, privacy, and suburban comforts. One of those scarcities becomes acute and creates a problem the enclave must deal with.

The GM considers a scarcity of privacy becoming acute—one member of the enclave sees another doing drugs when they thought they had privacy—or a scarcity of suburban comforts becoming acute—one member of the enclave tears into another for using up the last of the toilet paper—but ultimately settles on the food scarcity becoming acute.

“Deke, you’re the cook, right? So you wake up a bit early to head down to the cafeteria and start putting together breakfast, only to find that all your food stores are gone—not even a single can left. But you know there was food in here last night. What do you do?”

PLAYING ZOMBIE WORLD

MOVES

During **ZOMBIE WORLD**, players describe what their characters do or say. Sometimes, the actions they take or the things they say will match the trigger on an available "move." Moves are always phrased as something like, "When [you do X or X happens], [Y happens]." Move triggers are the first part of the move. The GM is the arbiter of whether or not someone has triggered a move.

The second part of the move describes what happens when someone triggers it. Mostly, moves say something like "Draw Savagery" or "Draw Soul."

Whenever a player triggers one of these moves, they draw a number of cards from the Survivor deck equal to the appropriate stat and take the best result. If you have a +1 or a -1, that modifies the number of cards you draw—so a +1 lets you draw another card. If, thanks to a -1, you would ever draw 0 cards, instead you draw 2 and take the worst. A "+1 forward" affects only the very next draw, while a "+1 ongoing" can affect multiple draws. Here are the possible results:

- A **Triumph** is the best possible result, often full success without cost.
- An **Edge** is second best, and has a cost, complication, or reduced effect.
- A **Miss** is the worst result; the GM says what happens, and it will be bad.
- An **Opportunity** is a **Miss**, unless the PC **pushes themself** and marks stress; then it's a **Triumph**. For more on stress, see page 19.

After the full resolution of any move that draws from the survivor deck, reshuffle all drawn cards back into the deck. Do not reshuffle until after help or interference is resolved. See "Help or Interfere" on page 11 and "Notes on Help or Interfere" on page 12 for more on help and interference.

BASIC MOVES

The “basic moves” are all listed on the front of the basic move mats. These are the moves most likely to trigger during the course of play. These include:

GET IN SOMEONE'S FACE

When you **get in someone's face**, draw Savagery. On a hit, they have to choose: mark stress and escalate the situation or concede. On a Triumph, you take +1 forward against them if they escalate or you suffer harm.

TURN TO VIOLENCE

When you **turn to violence** against the uninfected, draw Savagery. On a hit, trade harm and choose options. On a Triumph, choose 3. On an Edge, choose 2:

- inflict terrible harm
- suffer little harm
- resist marking stress
- avoid collateral damage

ASK AN NPC FOR HELP

When you **ask a friendly or neutral NPC for help**, draw Soul. On a Triumph, they'll do what you want if you give them a bribe or a motive. On an Edge, the GM will tell you what they want—do it and they'll return the favor.

OPEN UP TO SOMEONE

When you **open up to someone** about your feelings or past, draw Soul. On a hit, you both clear a stress and you choose one:

- look at any one of their facedown identity cards
- ask them any question; they must answer honestly
- NPCs: raise their disposition or calm them down

On an Edge, they also choose one:

- they look at one of your facedown identity cards
- they ask you any question; you must answer honestly
- NPCs: they ask for help; mark stress to weasel out

CALM AN NPC DOWN

When you try to **calm an NPC down** with logic or reason, draw Steel. On a hit, they won't do anything drastic, at least for now. On a Triumph, pick 2. On an Edge, pick 1:

- they keep calm for some time
- they reveal their true concerns
- they don't hold you responsible

ASSESS A BAD SITUATION

When you **assess a bad situation**, draw Steel. On a Triumph, ask 2. On an Edge, ask 1. When you act on the answer, draw +1:

- what here is the biggest threat to me / the enclave?
- what here is most useful to me / my allies / the enclave?
- what's my best escape route / way in / way past?
- who here is most vulnerable to me / my allies / the dead?

AVERT DISASTER

When you try to **avert disaster**, say what you're trying to prevent and draw Survival. On a Triumph, you manage it. On an Edge, you pull through, but it will cost you. The GM will offer you a hard bargain, ugly choice, or Pyrrhic victory.

HELP OR INTERFERE

When you **help or interfere** with another PC survivor, mark a stress to draw cards equal to their faceup identity cards. Replace any one card from their draw with a card you have drawn before the results are evaluated, but you're now mixed up in the situation.

PUSH YOURSELF

When you **draw an Opportunity**, mark stress to push yourself and treat the Opportunity as a Triumph.

NOTES ON HELP OR INTERFERE

This move inserts itself into other moves, so it deserves some special attention!

PCs may help or interfere with each other's moves AFTER the initial draw, but before the acting PC chooses their card.

When one PC (the helper) tries to help another (the actor) on their move, then the helper marks a stress and draws a number of cards equal to the actor's faceup identity cards. So if the actor has their Present and Past faceup, the helper draws two cards. (For more on stress, see page 19.)

The helper can then replace any one of the actor's initial cards with one of the new ones the helper drew. So if the helper drew a Triumph, they could replace one of the actor's miss cards with the Triumph, allowing the actor to have a Triumph on the move.

When one PC (the interferer) tries to interfere with another (the actor) on their move, then you follow the same procedure. The interferer marks a stress and draws a number of cards equal to the actor's faceup identity cards.

The interferer can then replace any one of the actor's initial cards with one of the new ones the interferer drew. So if the interferer drew a miss, they could replace the actor's Triumph with the miss, taking away the actor's Triumph.

In both cases, the helper or the interferer is now tied up in the situation, subject to its effects and costs, according to the GM's discretion.

EXAMPLE

Deke (a player-character survivor) is yelling and waving his hands around as he comes straight for Lopez (another PC survivor); he's trying to get in the face of Lopez, to get her to drop her gun. But Lopez isn't having it.

Deke's player makes his draw of 3 Savagery for the move, and gets miss—miss—Triumph. But Lopez stands her ground, and her player decides to interfere. She marks stress and draws 1 card for Deke's single faceup Present card, and gets an Edge. She swaps Deke's Triumph with the Edge—not bringing it down to a miss, but at least reducing Deke's result.

NOTES ON HARM AND STRESS

In the **turn to violence** move, there are a few options that deserve some additional attention. For more specific information, check "Suffer Serious Harm" on page 23 for the rules on suffering serious harm, and page 19 for the rules on stress.

When you resist marking stress, it means you are closing yourself off to the severity of what you are doing. **By default, when you engage in violence, when you hurt or kill another human being, you mark stress.** Violence is stressful, costly, and terrible for all parties. But if you choose to resist marking stress, then you steel yourself and commit the violence without also being driven towards a psychological breakdown and further Trauma cards.

When you inflict terrible harm, it means you're not holding back at all, and you may even be going too far. If you're using a gun, you're aiming for a kill shot, pulling the trigger over and over again. If you're using a baseball bat, you just keep swinging and going for vital areas. You're trying to inflict as much pain and injury as you can. If you choose this option against an NPC, then most likely they'll die or be severely injured, GM's choice. If you choose this option against another player's survivor, then the GM should take your choice and the severity of the harm into account when deciding which options of the **suffer serious harm** move take effect.

When you suffer little harm, it means you're protecting yourself, keeping yourself out of reach, taking cover, and so on. **By default, your opponent inflicts harm on you, so not choosing to suffer little harm means they will inflict whatever harm is appropriate based on the fiction and the GM's choice.** For example, if they have an assault rifle, you may very well suffer serious harm automatically. But if you choose to suffer little harm, then you can avoid that—you'll get bruised, clipped, or winged, but they won't land shots on your body. Suffering little harm is always relative—if your enemy is using a rocket launcher, then choosing to suffer little harm might be the difference between straight up dying and triggering the **suffer serious harm** move.

ZOMBIE MOVES

Zombie Moves are used only in particular situations, but they follow the general rules for moves, with some adjustments:

- When a group of PCs would make a Zombie Move together, one PC should **go on point** and lead the group. They make the move (and draw) on behalf of everyone, and pay the move's costs alone.
- PCs cannot help or interfere with each other on Zombie Moves. Instead, to help, use the **go on point** rules (draw from the bite deck to give the on-point character +1 on their draw) and to interfere, just withhold help.

FIGHT THE DEAD

When you try to **fight a swarm of zombies**, draw Savagery. On a hit, you greatly reduce their numbers and choose one. On an Edge, the GM chooses one as well:

- you attract the attention of a third party
- you end up in a bad spot; draw from the bite deck
- you mark stress or suffer harm, your choice

FOOL THE DEAD

When you try to **fool a swarm of zombies**, draw Steel. On a hit, your efforts to mislead them work; choose one. On an Edge, the GM chooses one as well:

- your deception is brief or incomplete
- you attract more zombies to the scene
- you mark stress or draw from the bite deck, your choice

FLEE THE DEAD

When you try to **flee a swarm of zombies**, draw Survival. On a hit, you escape and choose one. On an Edge, the GM chooses one as well:

- you run into another danger or crisis
- you leave something (or someone) valuable behind
- you draw from the bite deck or suffer serious harm, your choice

GO ON POINT

When you **take point against the dead**, draw for the group and suffer alone. Draw +1 for each member of the group that draws from the bite deck before your draw [max+4].

DISPOSE OF THE DEAD

When you **dispose of the newly deceased**, draw Savagery. On a hit, you do what needs to be done, quickly. On an Edge, it isn't smooth going; mark a stress or draw from the bite deck, your choice.

RESCUE AN NPC

When you try to **rescue an NPC from the zombies**, draw Steel. On a hit, you pull them to safety. On an Edge, draw from the bite deck or suffer serious harm, your choice.

BARRICADE A PLACE

When you **barricade a place against the zombies**, draw Survival. On a hit, the location is mostly secure. On an Edge, mark stress or suffer serious harm, your choice.

NOTES ON ZOMBIE MOVES

Fighting, fooling, and fleeing the dead are moves for dealing with swarms of zombies, and only swarms. A swarm of zombies isn't a few zombies, or a horde of zombies. It's not an exact number, but it is enough to present a real threat, and few enough not to overwhelm a survivor instantly. You cannot fool a horde of zombies—there are too many for it to work. Nor can you fool a few zombies—that's more like an **avert disaster**. The GM is the final authority on whether the zombies are a few, a swarm, or a horde.

Fighting zombies is about straight up engaging them, trying to kill them before they can kill you. Fooling them is playing some trick or ploy to mislead them—disguising yourself with zombie scent, or making a big firework display somewhere to draw their attention. Fleeing zombies is about just trying to get away, as fast as possible.

MAKE A PLAN

Making a plan is a special Zombie Move that allows a group to arrive in the middle of their plan. PC survivors do not go on point for making plans; the move has its own procedure for who leads the plan and makes the draw.

When you **make a plan**, use the stat of the person who proposed the plan.

- If it's a plan about taking violent, dangerous, destructive action, use Savagery.
- If it's a plan about being careful, safe, stealthy, and smart, use Survival.
- If it's a plan about talking, persuading, manipulating, or lying, use Soul.
- If it's a plan about pushing through, being tough, strong, and implacable, use Steel.

Take +1 if the plan is supported by plenty of resources and people.

Take +1 if you're basing the plan on accurate, current information.

Take -1 if there's significant opposition that would interfere with the plan.

Take -1 if there's significant dissent about what plan to follow.

On a hit, you arrive in the middle of your plan in decent shape. On an Edge, some part of your plan encounters unexpected difficulties or your party splinters, your choice. On a miss, you find yourselves in over your head or under fire as your plan falls apart.

The GM decides which stat is used to make the move, according to the appropriate criteria. The PC who makes the move is the one who proposed the plan.

The GM is the final arbiter over which of the +1 or -1 modifiers apply.

Other PCs cannot help or interfere with the **make a plan** move. If they would help or interfere, they're just affecting which of the +1 or -1 modifiers apply.

The **make a plan** move will result in the PCs arriving in the middle of a new scene—so you do not have to go through the plan, step by step. The GM should take the results of the **make a plan** move and set a new scene accordingly. Think of it as cutting to the action—skipping past steps like “going to a place” and “entering a building” and arriving at the first interesting moment requiring new action—most likely a moment of success or new difficulty.

ADVANTAGES

Advantages are special moves you have access to as a result of your enclave's special resources. They are used just like basic moves.

If an advantage is **exhausted**, that means it is temporarily unusable, until the survivors take action to replenish its supplies or resources. The GM decides when an exhausted resource would be replenished—usually after complicated repairs, a successful scavenging or foraging mission, or when the survivors have stolen the necessary resources from rival humans.

Many advantages can be exhausted as part of their own moves, but all can be exhausted—or even lost—as a result of events in the game. For example, your quarantine might be broken as a result of a miss during a firefight in the hospital, and the GM could choose to exhaust the corresponding Quarantine advantage—it's not permanently destroyed, but certainly needs to be repaired before it's useful again.

Only a single PC should make the actual move to use an advantage—if others want to meaningfully help or interfere with them, they may do so as normal using the **help or interfere** move (see “Help or Interfere” on page 11).

EXAMPLE

The residents of Woodburn Prison know they're about to come under attack by another enclave from Ice Lake. Ellen proposes raiding the prison's armory—effectively using the Armory advantage card. Deke agrees and offers to help dispense the weapons.

Ellen makes the move on the card, drawing her Survival (2 cards). She has a terrible draw: miss—miss. Deke helps, marking a stress and drawing 2 cards for Ellen's faceup Past and Present, and gets a miss—Edge. He replaces one of Ellen's misses with the Edge; together, they've scored a hit and armed the enclave.

They fight off the survivors of Ice Lake, but the Armory advantage says they've exhausted it by using it in a fight. The GM tells them they need more ammunition before they can use the advantage again; Lopez suggests an expedition to forage for ammo.

BITE DECK

The bite deck is used to represent how deadly and dangerous zombies are. Whenever you get too close to the undead, or a move tells you to draw from the bite deck, take the top card and reveal it; the GM interprets the results. The GM decides when you draw from the bite deck due to proximity of the zombies.

The bite deck has five kinds of cards in it:

SAFE

You are safe! Nothing bad happens, or you wriggle out of immediate danger.

THREAT: SOMETHING BREAKS

Something in the environment breaks, whether from the crush of undead bodies or from natural wear and tear. The GM decides what breaks.

THREAT: MORE ZOMBIES

Zombies are drawn to the area by noise, blood, or whatever makes sense. One zombie becomes a few; a few becomes a swarm; a swarm becomes a horde.

THREAT: ESCALATION

The situation gets worse, and the GM decides how. They can choose what gets worse and how bad it gets, based on established threats and dangers.

BITE

You are bitten, and death is inevitable. But the GM will tell you when you die—meaning you may have time for a final suicide mission or heroic sacrifice.

RESHUFFLING THE BITE DECK

Do not reshuffle the bite deck until someone is bitten by drawing the **Bite** card. Each card drawn from the deck makes someone's death more and more likely, until that card finally comes out. As soon as the **Bite** card is drawn, reshuffle all cards in the bite deck back together.

IDENTITY CARDS

Your Past, Present, and Trauma are your identity cards. Your Past is who you were before Z-Day; your Present is the role you have taken on since Z-Day; and your Trauma is how you have come to cope with all you've suffered since Z-Day.

Both Past and Trauma start facedown. One survivor could know your face down cards, but until they are faceup, the enclave as a whole doesn't know. You do not get any card effects until they are flipped up and revealed. Keep in mind that revealing your identity cards has fictional meaning—people in the enclave know who you are now and will act accordingly.

Your Past can only be turned faceup via the condition on the card. You must take that action to flip the card. Once it is flipped, its effects come into play.

Your Trauma can be revealed any time you take action that evidences that Trauma, roleplaying it or bringing it into play in a clear fashion. When your Trauma is flipped, you get the "When this card is revealed" effect immediately and get the "While your card is revealed" ongoing effect.

STRESS

Every survivor in **ZOMBIE WORLD** has a stress track (including NPCs). For a player's survivor, the track is 5 boxes long; for an NPC, the track is 2 or 3 boxes.

When every box of a PC's stress track is filled, that PC takes a new Trauma and clears the track. The new Trauma is added to their character mat, face down, and works just like their first Trauma. All Traumas on the mat apply. If a PC would ever take a fourth Trauma, they instead become an NPC—the world they live in has changed them so much they are now a threat to the enclave in some way, and the GM will play them from now on.

When an NPC marks stress, it is catastrophic—the NPC is distraught, furious, or shocked. They act irrationally, driven by current feelings, fears, and desires. If an NPC would fill their stress track, they immediately either pursue a foolhardy goal without sense or forethought, or give in to the desires of those around them, depending upon their nature (GM's discretion).

ENCLAVE POPULATION

The enclave often has several characters who haven't been described—that way, you can always introduce a new character as needed. If the population gets too high, however (GM's discretion), only use those already introduced.

DISPOSITION

Each member of the population has a disposition towards each player's survivor, ranging from **Hostile** to **Dislike** to **Neutral** to **Friendly** to **Allied**.

HOSTILE

The NPC is an active enemy of the PC survivor. The NPC works against the PC and tries to harm them if given the opportunity.

DISLIKE

The NPC is antagonistic towards the PC survivor. The NPC does not provide help and may try to stymie the PC's efforts.

NEUTRAL

The NPC is ambivalent or indifferent towards the PC survivor. The NPC might help, but might not, and neither thinks the PC is dangerous nor helpful.

FRIENDLY

The NPC thinks of the PC survivor as a friend. The NPC generally helps out the PC (not to a suicidal extent) and thinks well of them.

ALLIED

The NPC is an ally of the PC survivor. The NPC follows the PC's direction, except in extreme cases (asking a mother to kill her child, for example).

The GM does not have to track every disposition for every NPC! Instead, GMs should follow the fiction and their sense of the characters and only track disposition when it changes in a significant way.

ALLIES

A PC survivor's allies are non-player members of the enclave who by and large consider the PC survivor to be a close friend and will follow the PC's lead.

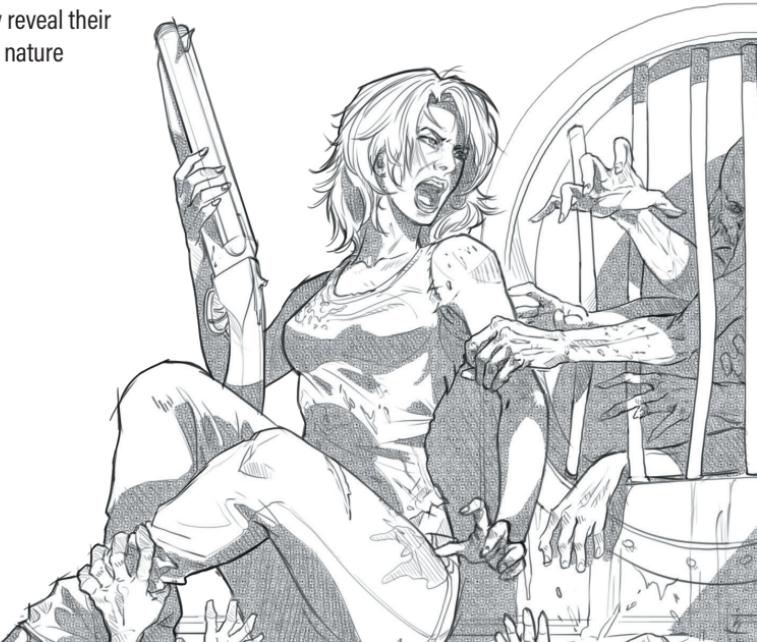
Allies are still characters, with their own sense, their own desires, and their own concerns. They won't always follow their allied survivor without thought, especially if asked to do something suicidally dangerous, but for the most part they will do as asked.

When a PC asks for an ally to do something, do not use the **ask for help** move; instead, use the NPC allies section on the character mat, also below.

NPC ALLIES

When you **direct your allies to take action**, draw two cards from the survivor deck. If the action is in line with the ally's skills, draw +1. If the ally has equipment or useful materials, draw +1. On a Triumph, everything goes according to plan. On an Edge, the plan works but the GM chooses one:

- they suffer a terrible loss
- they endure serious harm
- they reveal their true nature



FORAGING

Often, it will become important what supplies or equipment the survivors can find while scrounging. The foraging moves are here for just such situations.

In general, the survivors should have whatever equipment or supplies their enclave, surroundings, advantages, and identity cards would suggest is reasonable, with the GM making any final decisions about what is reasonable. For scarce or rare equipment or supplies, the survivors can forage to find it.

FORAGING FOR SUPPLIES

When you **forage for supplies**, draw three cards from the survivor deck. For each hit, take +1 gear. Spend it to say what you find while foraging. A Triumph counts as +2 gear instead of +1.

When you **push your luck while foraging**, draw from the bite deck to forage again and draw another three cards from the survivor deck.

SPENDING GEAR

Spend gear to get something.

- 1 gear: useful, but disposable (flare, a few rounds of ammo)
- 2 gear: useful, but small or limited (flashlight, keys, handgun, clothes)
- 3 gear: useful, but difficult or bulky (ammo bags, shotgun, med supplies)
- 4 gear: valuable or useful (a car, construction materials)
- 5 gear: rare, valuable, and useful (sniper rifle, high tech comm gear)

These two moves, foraging and spending gear, flow together—all gear earned from foraging must be spent immediately to choose what the survivors find.

The survivors can spend gear to find items of their choice, within reason. The place where the survivors forage limits what they can find—the survivors can't find a high-powered sniper rifle at a school, for example. The GM is the final arbiter over what is reasonable for the survivors to find in any given location.

HARM

When a zombie gets its slimy hands on you, you go to the bite deck. But when you get shot, or eviscerated by a machete, or a car hits you, or you're crushed beneath stampeding feet...you suffer serious harm. This move is also printed on the character playmats.

Note that this move is only for suffering serious harm—so if you just get bruised a bit, no big deal. You'll recover. It's down to the GM to decide if the harm is serious or not.

SUFFER SERIOUS HARM

When you **suffer serious harm**, draw a card from the survivor deck. Draw an additional card for each true statement:

- the harm is unintentional or accidental
- the harm isn't explicitly lethal—no guns, knives, grenades, etc.
- you have cover, body armor, or a bodyguard

On a hit, you'll live. On a Triumph, it's a minor but heroic wound. On an Edge, you choose one:

- it's messy; you'll die without immediate aid
- it's painful; take -1 ongoing until you get some rest
- it's lasting; one of your stats goes down by 1 permanently

On a miss, you're dead. The GM will tell you when.

DEATH

Death is always on the table in **ZOMBIE WORLD**. Whether you draw the one Bite card in the bite deck, or you **suffer serious harm** and draw a miss from the survivor deck, or miss your **avert disaster** move while you're dangling off a building—your character might perish mid-session.

ADJUDICATING DEATH

Most of the time, deaths come with dramatically appropriate "stays of execution." For example, when you draw the Bite card, you are not instantly killed—your death is certain, but the GM tells you when it comes. You might manage to play out the rest of the session hiding your bite wound from the other survivors. When you are shot fatally, the same rule applies—you might have enough time to pull that grenade off your belt and chuck the pin. It all depends upon the situation and GM judgment.

MAKING A NEW CHARACTER

When your character finally does perish, then it's time to make a new character! Follow the steps in character creation as normal, up until your relationships. Then decide how your character comes into the action. There are two ways:

- Your character is another member of the enclave who just hasn't been on-screen yet. This is most effective in enclaves with populations that include groups—for example, "a group of survivors from the city."
- Your character arrives at the enclave from elsewhere, as a newcomer.

If your new character is already a member of the enclave: draw a relationship card and point it at another player's survivor, your choice. Then, the GM introduces you whenever it's appropriate, and you're in the action!

If your character arrives as a newcomer: draw a population card as an ally, a fellow survivor you've arrived with. Then, the GM introduces you arriving at the enclave whenever appropriate, and you should play through those initial tense interactions—**ZOMBIE WORLD** thrives on that kind of conflict and tension!

Finally, if your character dies at the end of session or if you enact a time jump, then your character can just jump in after the next Fate card is drawn, even if they are a newcomer who arrived during those intervening months. In that case, create them fully, including an ally card and two relationships with other players' survivors. Those relationships can be pointed at any player, not just the players on your left and right.



RUNNING ZOMBIE WORLD

So you're the Gamemaster, or GM, for your game of **ZOMBIE WORLD!** Awesome! Thanks! Games like **ZOMBIE WORLD** only work thanks to players like you.

By picking up the GM role, you're filling a necessary job with its own complicated elements. The other players just have to portray their characters, saying what they say, describing what they do. You have to handle nearly everything else, filling in the world around them, describing all the other characters in the story. It's great fun!

Try to think of your role as playing a part in a conversation. You and the players will go back and forth at the table, talking about what's happening, filling in lines of dialogue, and so on. If they're the actors playing particular characters, you're the sets, the supporting cast, and the director. So when they say they do something, it's your job to respond with what happens next (although the rules and the moves will help you out)!

Here are some more guidelines and tips to help you in your role. If you are running the game of **ZOMBIE WORLD**, you are in charge of:

- Depicting every character besides the PC survivors
- Setting new scenes and describing the world clearly and interestingly
- Adjudicating rules
- Making your own moves

DEPICTING CHARACTERS

Every non-player character (NPC) is yours to portray. You have a few tools to help you, and here are some guidelines for depicting and using the NPCs.

GIVE EACH NPC A DRIVE

A drive is a simple sentence that describes the goal or desire of the NPC. "To survive at all costs." "To protect my children." "To gain control of the enclave." If you know what an NPC's drive is, then you know what they want, what they'll work for, what they'll ask for.

USE THEIR DISPOSITION AS A GUIDE

Use disposition to inspire and help you decide on what actions the NPC takes. If a PC survivor gets in the face of an NPC, and you've never tracked their disposition before, then it means the NPC is neutral and might be more likely to give in. If you've tracked their disposition and the NPC is hostile, though, then the NPC almost certainly fights back somehow. If their disposition is friendly, then the NPC may give in, but be upset at being threatened, so their disposition drops.

PORTRAY STRESS

Stress for NPCs is catastrophic. A PC survivor can mark stress and generally be okay for a while, but an NPC who marks stress takes drastic, irrational action immediately. They continue to act on their basest, most extreme impulses until they calm down. Whenever an NPC takes stress, depict them as driven to the edge, dangerous and explosive.

SETTING SCENES

As the GM, you're in charge of describing the actual surroundings of the characters and pushing everyone forward into a new scene. Here are some guidelines for describing the world and setting scenes.

CUT TO A NEW SCENE AGGRESSIVELY

"Cutting to a new scene" is the equivalent of you saying, "Okay, so, an hour later, you're all outside at the truck," or "Meanwhile, what are you doing, Bart?" You, as the GM, are in command of the game's "camera," the action that would be on-screen if your game were a TV show. Cut to a new scene whenever the old one is dragging, and always cut to the next point of interest. Cut to the very moment that a PC's worst enemy slips into their room to slit their throat. This is a zombie story—bad stuff happens and happens, and there's always tension.

GIVE THE IMPORTANT DETAILS

Whenever you're setting a scene, describe a few important details in the area. "You're in the cafeteria. It's dark outside, and getting colder in here. The only light comes from the few candles you've scattered around." That way, the PC survivors immediately know the general setting and have a few details to call on. If they want to know more details, then either answer their questions for simple details—"No, there is no food on the tables right now"—or ask the player if they are **assessing a bad situation** and making that move.

LEAVE YOURSELF HOOKS

Try to think of at least one or two details in every scene that could matter later. A locked door in the back of the empty convenience store. A steak knife left on the cafeteria table. You may not even have to communicate these details to the players immediately—they may only come up after the results of the **assess a bad situation** move. But if you can come up with a few details like that while setting the scene, then you're prepared for whatever happens next.

ADJUDICATING RULES

You're the final arbiter of most rules questions throughout the game. Here are a few guidelines for how to adjudicate the rules.

BE TRUE TO THE WORLD

When you're trying to decide whether the questions for the **make a plan** move apply, your answers come first and foremost from what has actually been established so far in the story. Is the plan being supported by plenty of resources and people? Well, the PC survivors have all banded together for this plan, and they're armed with those guns they took from the soldiers, so... yeah. Makes sense. Because the PCs spent time and effort before gaining those resources (the guns), then they matter now, and the answer to the question is yes. But at the same time, the remaining soldiers are angry with the PCs—so they would provide significant opposition. The past consequences, actions, and facts of the game should inform what you say now.

BE A FAN

Your job in the game is not to be the enemy of the PC survivors—you're not trying to make their lives harder so you "win." You're watching a TV show that you also happen to be able to influence and affect, and you want to always be excited about that show. When you're thinking about how to adjudicate the rules, keep this in mind—that your core role is to make the show something you'd be more interested in. And to that effect, sometimes it would make the show better if the main characters were in trouble—but not always.

BE TRUE TO THE RULES THEMSELVES

Sometimes, the rules will say that a PC survivor dies. In that moment, you might groan. You might hate it. You might want that PC survivor to live, to succeed, to triumph. But stick to the rules—they're going to die (although you do have some say in exactly when and where). Don't fudge the results, no matter how much you might want to—commit to what happens in the game. If someone draws a Bite result from the bite deck, it doesn't matter how much we love their character—that's it.

MAKING YOUR OWN MOVES

Whenever someone gets a miss...or whenever someone hands you a golden opportunity on a platter...or whenever things kind of stall or get quiet...or whenever any other move tells you to... You say that something happens. You have NPCs voice their concerns and problems and take rash action. You have zombies break into places where they shouldn't be. You have other enclaves send armed expeditions to steal resources. This is called "making a GM move" and really just means, "saying something interesting happens, right now." Here are some guidelines for making your own moves.

VARY HOW HARD YOUR MOVES ARE

Sometimes, you say, "The guy shoots you. You can't get away in time. Draw to suffer serious harm." And sometimes, you say, "The guy picks up his gun. He's going to shoot at you. What do you do?"

The first version is irrevocable—"hard." It just happens, and the PC survivor has to deal with the consequences, with no chance of stopping it. The second version gives them a chance to react, to take action, to stop the badness before it comes to pass; it's a "soft" move.

Vary up your moves on this spectrum—sometimes make hard, irrevocable moves, and sometimes make soft, fixable moves. As a rule of thumb, if a PC survivor got a miss result, go for a hard, irrevocable move—but the rest of the time, use your judgment, especially as a fan of the story.

MAKE MOVES WHEN NEEDED

For sure, whenever someone gets a miss, you make a move. When someone draws a card from the bite deck and something breaks—that's a cue for you to make a move, describing what breaks.

But remember that you make moves at other times, not just when prompted directly by rules. If the PCs are all getting along and discussing how to use their newfound medical supplies without any disagreement...well, that means it's a good time for you to make a move, describing an NPC showing up to disagree and argue with them. Keep the story interesting and surprising by making moves whenever there's a lull.

FORESHADOW BIGGER MOVES

Going with the guidelines above—being true to the fiction and to the world, specifically—you wouldn’t break into a moment of silence and say, “Suddenly, your generator explodes and your enclave is on fire.” That’s too much, too fast.

But you could say, “There’s a grinding noise from the generator room, and when you check it, you find out the generator is breaking.” And then, if the survivors don’t deal with it...well, they’re asking for that explosion and fire.

For bigger, more intense, crazier moves, it’s often a good idea to build up to them with smaller moves, warning the PC survivors and giving them a chance to respond...and then following up down the line. This isn’t always true—sometimes, the most effective move is a sudden and horrible death as a zombie bursts through the floorboards—but generally, it’s better to build.

MAKE TIME PASS

Especially in a series game, you’re responsible for saying when “time passes.” This is just shorthand for making a time jump, fast forwarding days, weeks, or even months to the next point of interesting action and tension. When you do say “time passes,” many other moves may trigger, and you should draw a Fate card and read the Time Passes side to determine what new problems face the enclave. Use this technique to skip ahead when things have settled down, and arrive at more interesting situations.

REMEMBER TO BE A FAN

This is a repeat of one of the earlier guidelines, but the idea is that important. You’re a fan of this TV show. That means you want to enjoy watching, and you should modulate your moves accordingly.

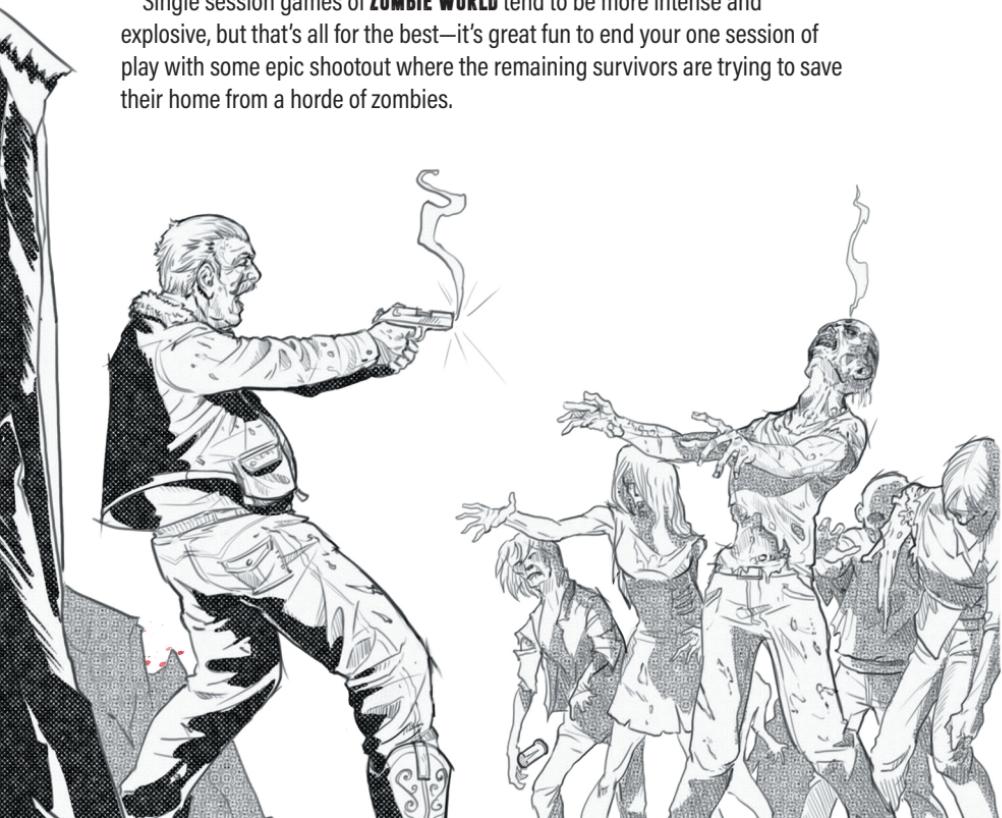
If everything is miserable all the time, non-stop, then...you’ll probably be disinterested in watching further. But if everything is too easy, that’ll be boring, too. If the PC survivors lose their advantages and resources suddenly, without a chance to respond, they’ll be unhappy—and everyone will tune out a bit from the game. But if they never feel that their advantages and resources are in danger...then there’s no tension, and they’ll tune out. Balance your moves to match what you would want out of the TV show next.

PLAYING A SINGLE SESSION

ZOMBIE WORLD works great as a single session game. Get together with your friends, break out the cards, make your characters and enclave, and go!

In a single session game, it's your job as the GM to keep an eye on pacing and how much time is left. The best way to think of it is that you're making a zombie movie, not a TV show. Build intensity over the course of the session, and don't worry too much about providing breathing room. Things need to happen now because there is no later! Punch hard with your moves! Make things happen! Bring threats to bear! If people die, great! If they survive, great! Nothing is sacred!

Single session games of **ZOMBIE WORLD** tend to be more intense and explosive, but that's all for the best—it's great fun to end your one session of play with some epic shootout where the remaining survivors are trying to save their home from a horde of zombies.



PLAYING FOR A SERIES

But you can also play **ZOMBIE WORLD** for multiple sessions, using the same enclave and telling a continuing story!

Playing **ZOMBIE WORLD** in a series shifts the story to feel less like a movie and more like a TV show, with ongoing plotlines, build-ups and depletions of tension, and entire arcs. The most important thing to keep in mind when you're planning a series is that the PCs are not the main characters of the series—it's the enclave itself. The PC survivors are still the most important individual human characters, for sure—the camera doesn't leave them, and most of the story is about them. But any of them can die, and the story will continue. In point of fact, if each of the starting characters dies over the course of the first few episodes, but the enclave survives—the story will continue. But if the enclave itself is destroyed entirely, then the story is over, and it's time to start a new series.

In turn, the characters will change over the course of play—especially in what they think is important, and what they're willing to do—and they will almost certainly gain new Traumas. But they don't "advance" or "improve" as such—they survive. Instead, the enclave can improve.

If the PC survivors successfully take action that deals with one of their scarcities—say, finding a cache of food hidden away in an abandoned building when their enclave still has a "food" scarcity—then you can clear that scarcity from the enclave. If they destroy an element of their surroundings—like another dangerous enclave located nearby—then you can remove that piece of their surroundings from the enclave. If they find a valuable resource expressed by one of your other advantage cards—like the members of a prison enclave finding a bunch of medicine and using it to set up an Infirmary—then they can earn that advantage card for the enclave. And so on.

All of this is dependent on what actually happens in the game. Every piece of the enclave exists in the game's world—so if the game's world changes, the enclave should change. As the GM, you are the final arbiter of whether or not anything changes. Follow your guidelines, and go with what makes sense.

CARD CHECKLIST

Here's a checklist of every Past, Present, and Trauma in the core game—check the box when you see it revealed in play!

Past

- Guard
- Priest
- Psychiatrist
- Doctor
- Ex-Convict
- Cop
- Teenager
- Survivalist
- Biker
- Prize Fighter
- Actor
- EMT
- Coach
- Veteran
- Gangbanger
- Musician

Present

- Lookout
- Scout
- Cook
- Survivor
- Enforcer
- Butcher
- Follower
- Guardian
- Mediator
- Visionary
- Contrarian
- Archivist
- Prophet
- Scientist
- Diplomat
- Tyrant

Trauma

- Cruel
- Reckless
- Cold
- Explosive
- Addicted
- Arrogant
- Cowardly
- Deadened
- Overbearing
- Stubborn
- Controlling
- Obsessive
- Compulsive
- Fixated
- Predatory
- Xenophobic

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