Pointy Hat

Creating a Rival Team for your PLayers

An Introduction

Welcome! This guide is designed to help you create rivals for your player characters. This method is system agnostic, which means it can be used for any game that asks the players to create characters in order to play, including 5e. This guide won't go into detail about the rival's classes, subclasses, abilities, or how to make a stat block for these rivals, it will cover how to come up with a concept for a rival and flesh out the rival character themselves and how they are a foil to your player character.

This guide assumes that your players have already created characters with a backstory and their own personal conflicts and goals. Since this method uses the player characters to create the rivals, these cannot be made before the player characters are set in stone.

Nothing is stopping you as a player from creating rivals for your backstory. This guide is focused on creating rival teams, but you can use the same principles outlined here to create a backstory-relevant character and set them up for your GM to use them as your rival. Communicate with your GM so both you and them share the same expectations for this rival character.

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Explaining Foils

A foil is a role a character can take in a story. The role of a foil is to highlight another character's personality and character traits. They are contrasts: the foil's character traits bring out the other character's attributes by inhabiting the same story. A simple example of a character foil to another character is a kind, humble character that has a mean, vain sibling. The mean sibling acts as a foil to the humble sibling and enhances their character traits by contrasting them with their own. This guide will help you create foils for your player characters.

Step I: Examine the Hero

The first step is to take a look at the player character you want to make a foil to. For ease of use later down the line when creating the rival, we will boil down the character to only three key categories: character traits, backstory information, and want. We'll be using the character of Alois outlined in the Pointy Hat video attached to this guide as an example:

Alois - Example:

Character Traits: Dutiful, Scrappy, Hard Working, Anxious, Low Self-Esteem, Warm,
Backstory Information: Comes from a family of knights, Mother decided since he was born he would become a knight, Has impossible expectations to live up to as a result.
Want: To live up to his mother's expectations.

Your Character:

Character Traits:
Backstory Information:
Want:

Step II: Choose a Type of Foil

The second step is to choose one of two methods of creating character foils. These two methods are outlined in the Pointy Hat video accompanying this document. The two methods we will be using are opposites and mirrors.

- An opposite foil is, as the name implies, the complete opposite of a character. The example of the kind and humble sibling versus the mean and vain sibling is an example of this type of foil.
- A mirror foil is a character that mirrors many aspects of the character they are a foil to, but one or more key aspects are different. These aspects must be chosen to maximize this character's capacity to act as a foil to the player character.

The opposite foil method is generally simpler to create, but leads to very impactful results. For this guide we will be using the mirror foil, since it's comparatively more complicated to do.

Alois' Foil - Example:

- **Mirror Foil**

Your Type of Foil is:

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Step III: Create the Rival

The third step is to finally create the rival character. Based on the information on the three categories that we outlined on step I and the type of foil we chose on step II, we can create a character that serves as an impactful foil to our player character.

We will be using the same categories we outlined on step I to do so, but this time we will apply them to the rival instead of the player character. Since we are using the mirror foil method, we won't be looking for opposites for every item on the categories, but rather we will only make opposites of the ones that will theoretically create the most impact in play. We will be using Fernanda as our example rival character for Alois. The opposites are underlined below so that you are able to see which ones remain the same between the two characters and which ones change.

Fernanda - Example:

Character Traits: Dutiful, <u>Put Together</u>, Hard Working, <u>Determined</u>, Low Self-Esteem, <u>Cold</u>.
Backstory Information: Comes from a family of knights, <u>Mother focused on older siblings taking on the mantle as knights instead for her</u>, <u>Nobody expects anything of her</u>.
Want: <u>For her mother to see her worth as a knight</u>.

Your Rival:

Character Traits:
Backstory Information:
Want:

Step IV: Rival Teams

The fourth and final step is to conceive of the rivals as a team. If you are using this guide as a GM planning to incorporate a rival team to your campaign, there's a few things to keep in mind when you do so.

- Rival teams work best when they are of comparable strength to the player characters.
- Rival teams don't have to be villains but they are better suited for an antagonistic role at the beginning of the story. Depending on your players' interactions with them they can develop into allies or full blown villains down the line.
- Rival teams should have a similar motivation to the player characters. This does not mean they want to accomplish the same thing, but rather that they have comparable goals. If the player team is entering a competition the rival team should also enter that competition, if the player team is trying to hunt a monster to get a reward the rival team should also be trying to do the same, if the player team is trying to stop a villain the rival

team can try to stop that villain but is going about it in a completely different way that contradicts the way the players are going about their mission.