D&D Overview

Before the Game - Intro the concept and basic rules (ask who has played any version before)

     -> Role playing usually implies acting out a role. You might choose to play a character that is very different than your normal personality and that is really cool. You get a chance to step outside how you normally see the world.

     -> You make decisions on behalf of your character. If they require some sort of challenge the outcome of that action will be determined with a dice roll, usually the d20. You’ll add or subtract various bonuses to that roll depending on what your character is good at. A bulky strong fighter usually isn’t the most acrobatic person in the world, while they might be incredibly athletic. A spellcaster will typically lack brute strength but might excel in knowing the history of a place or information about the people you are speaking to.

     -> Combat is a key part of the game, but not every situation requires combat. Sometimes you can talk your way out of something. Maybe you offer a bribe or try and scare your attacker away. That said there are times when you will have to fight.

     -> There are (about) 10 character sheets in front of you. We’ll play each group with 5 adventurers. Typically one of the best things to do in a new campaign is to create your character. Obviously you’ll be more attached to the one you create than one that I hand you, however given the time constraints of playing a single night at a conference I’m asking everyone to go with pre-mades, but you can pick from this pack. You’ll have to try and avoid grabbing the same sheet as someone else. If anyone wants to talk about character creation later or tomorrow I’m happy to do so.

     -> I’m also going to be giving everyone a card with a bit of a background story on it. The card overrrides whatever might be on your character sheet although it will most likely just add to it. A couple of you will have something that impacts our story today. What you do with it is up to you. You can choose to share that information with your party or keep it to yourself. Your decisions will effect the outcome of the game.

     -> My job is storyteller and referee. D&D has a pretty extensive rule set and in as many situations as possible we’ll play by the rules. Sometimes there will be ambiguity and sometimes we just won’t remember exactly what the right rule is. In a real game we’d look it up but today I might opt to just make a judgement call so that we can keep the action going. I’d say decisions are final but this is a RPG… you can, in a way, play the DM just like you play everything else. If i decide against you think about what you might be able to do to turn things around for your character.

Checks

     -> Most non-combat actions are determined by a skill check. When that happens I’ll say something like “roll an athletics check”. You roll a d20 and add the bonus listed next to athletics on your character sheet. It is possible for that bonus to be negative. That is compared against the difficulty class that I determine. An easy action requires a low roll, a harder action a larger roll. I’ll tell you if you pass or fail and if you fail if there’s any negative outcome of your failure.

     -> You can try again, but some actions carry risk. Climbing a steep cliff has a chance that you’ll fall and hurt yourself. Trying to convince a rough looking orc that you’re his friend, and failing, might get you attacked.

Combat

     -> At the start of combat I’ll ask everyone to roll initiative. In combat everyone takes turns including the enemies and initiative determines the order of turns. If two combatants tie an initiative roll I’ll have you roll a d20 to break the tie. You have an initiative modifier you add to the original initiative roll but not the tie breaker.

     -> When it’s your turn you decide what to do. You can attack, cast a spell, run away or try and do something more creative. If you attack you’ll roll an attack check to see if you hit, then you’ll roll damage. We’ll figure that out during the first time.

     -> Spells are weird. Some roll attack like a melee attack, some automatically happen but have some other condition. We’ll take it case by case.

     -> Everything else we’ll figure out as we go.

So that’s the basics. Lets get started and we’ll address questions as we move on.