

(Leader? I never asked to be the leader.)

Squall Leonhart
FINAL FANTASY VIII

Storyteller, referee, organizer — a good GM is all three, and more besides. It goes without saying that the Gamemaster's role is the most challenging and rewarding one in the entire **FFRPG**. Where players take on the role of a single heroic character and explore that character in depth, the GM is responsible for literally everything else — allies, villains, supporting cast, monsters, and world design. This chapter covers the game as seen from the other side of the table, from the first adventure to the final battle. Offered along the way are tips, tools, rules, and advice — in short, something for every Gamemaster, regardless of experience.

Of course, this section is not meant to be the alpha and omega of gamemastering advice. Literally hundreds of guides have been written on the subject over the years, and many more are likely to follow in the years to come. More importantly, there is no such thing as a fail-safe guide. Each GM and every group have their own individual needs; inevitably, some are going to slip through the cracks. Many of the suggestions and ideas in this chapter are thus more advice than gospel — in the end, your own experiences will be what guides in you in running the game.

GM BASICS

While the various aspects of running a game seem obvious to veterans, it's a different matter for newcomers. Being a GM is a daunting task, and the pitfalls on the road to a good game or session are many. For this reason, the following section covers responsibilities, habits, and considerations new GMs can benefit from knowing.

The Gamemaster's Role

The GM's responsibilities can be broken down as follows:

Present the world to the players. The GM tells — or show — the PCs what their characters experience and see in the world around them. In an e-game, this is handled by sophisticated video processors and soundtracks; the GM's challenge is to achieve the same effect with voice and props alone. On the other hand, the GM isn't limited to a mere twenty tracks of music or a single TV screen, and can paint rather more expansive vistas as a result.

Determine the feasibility of actions. Using common sense as well as the rules in this book, the GM decides what the heroes can and can't do — and if they can, how easy or challenging those actions are. A human in full armor can't jump a forty-meter-wide ravine in a single leap; a four-meter jump might be possible under the circumstances, but requires the GM to decide just how difficult the resulting roll will be.

Inevitably, there will be situations where the written rules don't clearly explain what to do, or when a PC decides to try something not covered in the rules. In this case, it is left to the GM to decide what happens, and whether a proposed action is possible at all.

Create and roleplay non-player characters. The GM roleplays the villains opposing the PCs, the sidekicks and allies assisting the heroes' efforts, their rivals and comic relief, and the 'bit part' characters — shopkeepers, bartenders, farmers, fishermen, guards, and everything in between. This can be both easy and difficult; while many of the minor NPCs need only a bare minimum of description, juggling a large number of characters — let alone making them memorable — requires a fair amount of effort.

Design encounters and adventures. The GM determines what challenges the PCs face during each session, and creates a narrative to string these challenges together into an adventure. While it is possible to develop encounters and events on the fly, most GMs plan them beforehand, making notes as to how monsters and NPCs are likely to act and thinking of ways the PCs can overcome the obstacles in their path. Pitching the difficulty at just the right level is an important part of this; a good adventure will be challenging enough to make the PCs work to survive, but not so dangerous that they'll be flayed within an inch of their lives two steps in.

Create and play monsters. Arguably the most straightforward of all GM tasks. Coming up with foes for the group is as simple as picking one of the sample monsters in **Appendix II** or creating a new one using the guidelines in that same Appendix. Running them is essentially no different than playing an NPC, and is ultimately a matter of using the opponent's intelligence and background as a yardstick for their actions. GMs should also be familiar with a monster's strength and abilities, and know how they will affect the party before throwing them into battle.

Reward the group. Much of adventuring is about the rewards the players receive along the way — money, equipment, experience, and intangibles. How much the characters receive for their trouble is up to the GM. The important trick here is to strike a balance between over-compensating and short-changing the players; guidelines for handling rewards are presented later in this chapter.

Tell a story. The players are heroes of their own story, but its ebb

and flow is the province of the GM. Developing a coherent narrative with enough twists to keep the players interested is key to a successful long-term game.

Most of these responsibilities will be looked at in greater detail as this chapter goes on.

The Seven Habits

Every group has its own way of doing things, but there are a few ways to make a session better regardless of who's playing or running. The seven most prominent of these are given below.

KNOW THE RULES

Before you begin a game, ensure you've got at least a firm grasp on the ruleset. As GM, your responsibilities will not only include adjudicating the rules, but also explaining them to your players. The better you know the raw material you're working with, the more smoothly the game will run when it's finally time to put it into action.

KNOW YOUR PLAYERS

Being able to run a rewarding and interesting roleplaying game is contingent on knowing *what* your players consider 'rewarding' and 'interesting.' Each player has his or her own motivators, and roleplays for different reasons; to create a satisfying experience, it is essential to find out what they are and plan your games accordingly.

Some players may want a straightforward hack-and-slash game; others like to flex their drama muscles and are drawn to deep, complex plots. In general, your groups will have representatives of one or more of these seven player types:

Gamists are at the table to 'play the game.' They are rarely concerned about factors like character development, and tend to care more about being able to spend time with other people at the table. This lack of engagement can be frustrating if you are trying to build a narrative, but Gamists are easier to keep pleased. Give their characters enough 'cool stuff' to do and ensure the game moves at a fair clip, and you're unlikely to have too many problems with them.

Achievers play games to advance their characters, acquire more powerful items, and see their alter egos grow in power and renown. The easiest way to motivate an Achiever is to keep XP and treasure flowing at a steady rate, though it's important to be careful when rationing out rewards; too much generosity can destroy campaign balance and adversely affect the rest of the party. A good substitute is giving the character a little bit of fame — or infamy — in the game world; sometimes, these intangible rewards carry more weight than yet another sword or high-powered item.

Killers take their satisfaction from defeating powerful foes and the visceral thrills of combat. Like Achievers, Killers are relatively easy to motivate — have enough challenging opponents on tap to ensure they have to use their full range of Abilities and make battles a regular fixture in your sessions. Regular, however, shouldn't translate to 'unrelenting' unless the rest of your group enjoys combat as well. Storytellers in particular may resent having to reach for a sword

every other hour of play.

Explorers want to see the world, explore places and meet people. If you are running with an established setting, players of this type are likely to derive particular enjoyment from seeing familiar faces; strategic encounters with major and minor e-game characters or good use of **Final Fantasy** tropes like airships and Chocobos. The secret lies in spacing out these elements so that they don't come across as over-used. Once you've run into Cloud Strife in a bar for the fourteenth time, it just stops being special.

Storytellers are in it for the roleplay aspects. They gain the most satisfaction from being able to play their characters' quirks and foibles and interact with others, and will quiz your NPCs at greater depth and length than the average player. This means having at least a stock background for all notable characters and the ability to improvise if the players go off script. At the same time, be on the lookout for 'scene diggers' — Storytellers who insist on acting out every little NPC conversation and encounter in full, drawn-out detail. Cut off grandstanding like this at the roots — buying a sword shouldn't involve a five-minute conversation about the current weather and how the shopkeeper's grandmother is doing, especially if the rest of the party is more interested in action than acting.

Party Animals get most of their kicks out of the group dynamic, and enjoy planning and strategizing with others to reach a common goal. When problems loom, the Party Animal is inevitably the first to act, assuming control of the situation and marshaling the rest of the group into developing an elaborate master plan. Throw in a whole-team activity every now and then or encourage situations where strategizing has a notable impact, but keep an eye on just how play time these grand schemes eat up. As much fun as planning is, ultimately the show must go on.

Archetypes enjoy playing one particular character type — young children, Paladins, Mithra — and play it to the hilt, even in situations where that character would normally take a back seat. With Archetypes whose specialized skills see little use in 'regular play' — Thieves designed for breaking and entering, Mediators geared toward information-gathering and persuasion — you can engineer situations where the character can take center stage without affecting the rest of the group. This may involve splitting them off and sending them on a solo excursion — effective in moderation, but best not done too often unless you enjoy being accused of favoritism.

Of course, not everybody falls into a single neat category. Most players lean towards two or more archetypes, giving you combinations like Gamist-Achievers, Achiever-Killers, Storyteller-Party Animals, or Explorer-Gamists. Keep running notes on your players and what or doesn't capture their attention over the course of a session — you'll eventually be in a better position to judge their tastes and preferences and adjust your own adventures accordingly.

WATCH THE CLOCK

In most cases, you'll only have a limited amount of time in which to run your session, so it's important to maximize what time you have. Factors to bear in mind include:

Off-Topic Chatter. Roleplaying is about socializing more than anything. As a result, you have to be prepared for a certain level of chit-chat during the course of a session as players catch up with each other on last week's TV, the latest downloads, and current events in general. While it may be tempting to ride roughshod over the chatter, letting the players get it out of their system before the session starts means they're more focused on the game itself once things kick off.

You can take advantage of this by budgeting a little 'social time' at the beginning and then setting a cut-off point. Depending on the circumstances, you may also want to allot a little period for cooling down at the end of the session and a break near the middle. Of course, having that kind of compromise on the table means the players must respect it, too. If two of your group members suddenly start going off on a tangent about last night's LAN party in the middle of a major fight, politely butt in with a "*Could you guys wait until the break?*"

Dead Air. Of course, ensuring the players don't get sidetracked means ensuring that there's no reason for their attention to start wandering. In tabletop groups, the main cause of this is 'dead air,' a stretch of time in which the player or group has nothing to do. Dead air arises for a number of reasons, but lack of preparation is usually a major contributor; the one thing guaranteed to kill momentum is the GM flipping pages in search of an obscure table or struggling to think up a NPC response while the players sit around tapping their pencils.

In an ideal situation, the truly crucial information needed to run the game will be at your fingertips at any given time. The time it takes to print out cheat sheets of vital formulas or record your monster stats on note cards beforehand will pay off tenfold once you're actually sitting at the table. By the same token, encourage your players to keep all relevant information pertaining to their characters — equipment, Abilities, Spells, stats, and personal details — close to hand for easy reference for when *they* need to start looking things up. Make copies of your characters' sheets if you get the chance; in many situations, having the information to hand yourself can be quicker than asking a player to relay it.

Selective Editing. Keeping a game flowing also means stepping in when the pace starts flagging and getting things moving. Don't waste too much time on scenes that don't advance the plot — roleplaying an *Inquiry* check that takes a character all over town in search of an NPC may yield some interesting moments, but can easily eat up an hour of play with no real gain.

'Selective editing' means deciding what and what not to show; mundane activities like shopping can easily be resolved in the space of a few die rolls, while conversations with important NPCs are best restricted to the information that directly affect the players' choices. On the other hand, if the PCs happen to get involved in a funny or striking conversation, let it play out; as long as the players are having fun and stay invested in action, there's no real rush.

Player Dithering. While dead air tends to be the GM's fault, the players themselves can bring the action to a screeching halt just as easily when they're debating their next course of action. While you

do want the party to strategize, an hour-long argument on equipment purchases or allocation of healing items doesn't make for a better session. Put a little time limit on player discussion and be ready to 'force their hand' if they dither for too long; forty-five minutes of arguing what to do about that Quadav scout the party's Archer spotted over the next ridge can be easily — if messily — resolved by having a full attack force charge the laggards.

Rule Debates. Nothing brings sessions to a screeching halt faster than those dreaded moments when one of your players looks up and says "*I don't think that's how that rule works.*" If you've taken the time to get to grips with the contents of the **Core Rulebook**, you've already got a leg up in this regard; find the relevant section, re-read the disputed rule, and make a judgment. If it's not immediately clear how the rule in question should be interpreted, suggest a compromise that tries to accommodate both sides. If there's a genuine deadlock, offer to settle the matter by having both sides roll a dice or flipping a coin. The ultimate goal of any rules-related debate is to get it resolved and the game going as quickly as possible; if the discussion drags on past the five-minute mark, you're already in danger of compromising the rest of the session.

Unfortunately, you may find that some players will go out of their way to keep a debate going, especially when a certain interpretation of the rules works heavily in their favor. Provided the issue isn't too critical, offer to continue the discussion in one of your scheduled breaks or after the game, then retroactively apply whatever consensus you establish to the game once play resumes.

Ending with a Bang. It's always smarter to end your sessions on a high note than let the action peter out — it keeps players interested, and leaves everybody itching for the next installment. The easiest way to do this is to cap the proceedings with a high-energy fight or a compelling cliffhanger, then end the session while the players are still enthusiastic. The main problem in pulling this off lies in timing. Due to the complexity of the **FFRPG** combat, it's all too easy for events to turn against you, transforming what was supposed to be a quick 30-minute skirmish into a 2-hour behemoth that leaves everybody drained by the end.

Cliffhangers are far easier to deploy, since almost any moment of play can turn dramatic with very little effort. Players exploring the Imperial Palace? Let them barge into the Emperor's throne room to find his cooling body on the throne. Party flying to a meeting with resistance leaders to trade a vital artifact? Warships suddenly appear on the horizon, intent on blowing them out of the skies. Group doing a meet-and-greet with a local contact? Have a flunky come rushing in, crying that soldiers are on the way and armed to the teeth. While it's best to have an ending worked in advance, you can just keep an eye on how the game is running and calculate the most dramatic possible way to cap off whichever Scene happens to be in progress at the time once the energy starts sagging. In a worst-case scenario, wait until the game's narrative flow offers a convenient stopping-place. It's often better to end a little early than a little late.

BE FIRM, BUT FAIR

As GM, you interpret the rules to serve the needs of your game and ensure the game runs under a consistent framework. From character creation to task resolution, your decisions and opinions give you a significant degree of authority at the gaming table. How much authority, though? Be too lenient, and players end up walking all over your carefully-prepared adventures, batting through powerful monsters with barely a shrug. Indulge in your fantasies of godhood and make players' lives miserable, and you could find yourself with an empty table next week.

Being an effective GM means balancing the two extremes, and keeping an open mind while doing it. While your decision is always final, you can still make a bad call or misread a rule on occasion. Don't be afraid to own up to your mistakes, and do try to compensate players if they're seriously affected by them. At the same time, be ready to put your foot down if your players edge your campaign off the rails. If the homebrew Job you approved at the outset is turning into an unending nightmare, take steps to tone it down. If one player's 'wacky' antics are throwing a disrupting play, make your disapproval known. When it comes to running the game, a little sternness can go a surprisingly long way toward making a better experience for all involved.

BE DESCRIPTIVE

A GM is a storyteller first and foremost. Even if your group treats your plots as a disposable excuse to slaughter as many monsters as possible, your descriptions should be detailed enough that your players aren't forced to ask basic questions like *"How large is the room?"* or *"What does he look like?"*

Combat in particular is one area where deploying descriptive detail can make all the difference; even with the most enthusiastic group of players, seven or eight Rounds' worth of *"You hit him with your sword. He takes 8 damage. He hits you back. You take 2 damage"* can really be a drain on the table's energy level. Take the time to embellish special attacks, critical hits, spells and the like; describe the monsters staggering, roaring, bleeding, and shouting curses like their lives depend on it.

The players, too, should be encouraged to get creative with their actions and play off each other. *"Mint attacks!"* is short and to the point, but sometimes it's more fun to see actions like *"Mint twines the whip around the Soldier, sending him spinning like a top before delivering a sharp snap as a follow-up blow."* By setting a positive example, the GM can greatly increase the amount of creative investment and description the players are willing to put forth.

BE MEMORABLE

Final Fantasy is a game of grand vistas and intriguing characters, world-threatening plots and larger-than-life villains. Keep a steady supply of interesting geographical features, exotic monsters and recognizable characters on hand and design your adventures to showcase them to maximum effect. Most importantly, always keep an eye on what you're doing and get into the habit of asking yourself,

"How could I make this more interesting?" Staging a prison break after one of your players has been kidnapped by the Empire? Make the prison a crystalline tower or place it on gigantic tank treads capable of crushing the heroes underfoot. PCs facing an Imperial general in said prison break? Surprise them with a disgraced nobleman whose right arm has been replaced by a sword, or a burly albino with a penchant for chainguns. Let your creativity shine, and don't be afraid to surprise players once in a while. At the end of the day, those efforts are what will keep the group buzzing about your sessions months after the fact.

HAVE FUN!

This is, when all is said and done, the most important thing a GM can do. Roleplaying is a hobby, not a job or competitive sport; the aim of each session is for all participants to have as much fun as possible. Keep an eye on the energy level at the table and don't be afraid to solicit feedback from players after a session wraps up; the things they tell you will ultimately help you build a better game. And if certain rules bother you or are proving to be a drag in actual play, change them. Anything presented in this book can be modified or ignored as necessary, including this chapter. At the end of the day, it's important that you derive as much enjoyment from running your games as your players derive from playing them.

House Rules

House rules are tweaks and changes made to the basic **FFRPG** ruleset for adventures and campaigns. Not every GM uses house rules, but there are times when you'll want to make adjustments or additions to suit your own needs. In most cases, these will probably be dictated by the needs of your setting. If you're creating a unique campaign world, the races given in the **Core Rulebook** probably won't cover all of your needs, or you may want to augment the equipment tables. If you want to increase player survivability, you may rule that instead of rolling for HP, characters automatically get the highest possible number of Hit Points for their Job. If you want to increase the difficulty of combat, characters can be afflicted with various Weaken-type Status Conditions upon being reduced to 10% of their maximum HP. The possibilities are endless.

Players may also come to you with homebrew material to approve, or ideas for Jobs and races they want to play. The latter are easiest to deal with — included in this chapter are a number of rules and systems to help you get started on expanding the core material. For anything beyond the scope of this book, it helps to keep two questions in mind:

Is it already covered in the rules? In many cases, it may be easier to adapt or adjust something that's already in place than writing something new. For instance, an *Impersonation* Skill might seem like a good idea at first, but with a bit of tweaking, the same ground could easily be covered by *Acting* or *Disguise*. Similarly, that Assassin Job one of your players is clamoring for might be just as well doable by throwing together existing Abilities from the *Sneak* and *Ninjutsu* sets.

Is it balanced? Unless everything else is being boosted up to match, any new addition should be on par with the Spells, Abilities, Advantages and Jobs in this rulebook. They provide a useful yardstick for what is and isn't 'balanced'. When compared to other Warrior Jobs, for instance, an Ability that delivers **(52 x SPD) + 15d12** damage to a single target for no Initiative Penalty is clearly overpowered, even at Level 64.

Other additions may be harder to make a snap judgment on. You may find yourself approving something that only reveals the true extent of its power after many weeks of play. If there is no way to compensate for this by normal means — tougher monsters, heavier penalties, out-of-character restrictions on usage — the best way to resolve it is to simply sit down and have a talk with the player about adjusting it retroactively.

Gaming vs. Metagaming

Players always know more than their characters should, especially when you are running in a setting the players are already familiar with. Somebody who has beaten **Final Fantasy VII** four times knows all the ins and outs of the setting, including background, characters, history, politics, and secrets — fine and well until you start a **Final Fantasy VII** campaign and they declare that the party is chartering an airship to the island where the legendary Knights of the Round materia is stashed.

As tempted as the players may be to exploit outside knowledge to help their characters, it is essential to keep a tight leash on 'metagaming.' Unless the character actually has an excuse for knowing a particular piece of information — Traits, *Lores*, background — the response to examples like the above should always be, "*Your character has no way of knowing that. Sorry.*"

Gaming Supplies

GMs also have to shoulder the burden of providing the materials needed to run a session — the bare essentials are at least one copy of the **Core Rulebook**, enough dice for all players, pencils and erasers, and character sheets. While many players bring their own supplies, it is convenient to have spares along in case somebody happens to forget something. Other things worth having at the gaming table might include:

GM aids. For those with printer ink to spare, the **FFRPG** has a number of quick reference sheets and tables that condense the most vital information in the rulebook. Depending on the circumstances, you may also want to supplement these with notes of your own.

A binder. Binders can be convenient for organizing loose leaf papers in an orderly fashion, and are an excellent way to store printouts, sheets, and campaign notes.

Scrap paper. Get in the habit of having at least one or two sheets of paper for every person present. For players, it allows them to make notes about HP loss and gain, Status Conditions and the like without having to constantly erase and re-write their character

sheets. For a GM, it's a good way to keep track of the dozens of small details needed to run the game. In battles in particular, writing out Combat Statistics beforehand means less time spent sorting through sheets and more time focused on the action.

Refreshments. As a gaming session can run for several hours, the GM — or whoever else happens to be hosting — may want to provide drinks and finger food for the participants. Chips, pretzels and anything else easily poured into a convenient bowl in the middle of the gaming table is ideal for this purpose.

Music. Music is one of those like-it-or-leave-it aspects of roleplaying; some GMs swear by it, others find it too much of a hassle to deal with. Picking the right soundtrack presents something of a challenge; ideally, you'll want music that's unobtrusive enough for players to talk over it, but atmospheric enough to add something to play.

Raw material for a soundtrack can come from a few places. The most obvious is to go straight to the source. **Final Fantasy** soundtracks are routinely released on CD in Japan; depending on its popularity, a game may also spawn orchestral or remix albums, giving the original music a significantly more lavish treatment. Several of the more prominent OSTs have seen limited release in the United States; a greater selection is available through import channels, though importing Japanese CDs can often be an expensive proposition for the casual gamer.

For the most cost-conscious GM, movie soundtracks are far easier to obtain, though it is important not to pick anything too recognizable to your players — a blast of *Indiana Jones* or *Star Wars* is more likely to inspire cheap jokes than improve immersion at the table.

Finally, ever since *Final Fantasy VIII* roped in *chanteuse* Faye Wong to perform 'Eyes on Me', it's also become fashionable for Japanese RPGs to include at least one saccharine, cloudbusting orchestral ballad. If your tastes in music happen to run into J-pop or soundtrack-friendly female artists, you may want to round off your campaign soundtrack by selecting one or two vocal tracks to act as your 'official theme song'.

Once you've settled on a final track selection and sorted them into appropriate categories — battle tracks, suspense music, town themes — the next thing to consider is how to bring them to your players. Depending on your available resources, you have three options: take CDs and switch manually between them as needed, set them up in a CD changer, or simply burn your own CD-ROMs with a tracklist you can run more or less continuously as the game goes on. Of course, CDs aren't the only viable medium — converting the music to MP3 format increases the ease with which you can access your soundtrack, but usually requires you to bring additional equipment to the gaming table.

Portable Sound Format (PSF) and Sound Processing Chip (SPC) files offer another interesting alternative for increasing your sessions' multimedia quotient. In essence, they use the raw instrumental data used by gaming consoles — in this case, the Playstation and the Super Nintendo, respectively — to replicate in-game music. Unlike MP3s and CDs, these will only run through

programs capable of emulating the sound core of the console in question; to compensate, they offer three key advantages over more traditional music media.

Firstly, the length of a file can be set by the user, allowing you to loop a piece of music for ten or fifteen minutes. This is both more convenient and immersive than constantly skipping from track to track. Secondly, PSF and SPCs are small in size, and can be found for a wide variety of games; thanks to a vibrant ripping scene, it is now possible to obtain soundtracks for titles that never spawned an OST album. Thirdly, many PSF and SPC compilations also include ambient sounds — cricket noises, the gushing of a waterfall, or the sound of a crowd can provide a surprisingly effective backdrop for characters' conversations in-game. Links to major PSF and SPC archives can be found on the RGi website.

Illustrations: As the old cliché goes, a picture can be worth a thousand words. E-game veterans may be intimately familiar with the environments, creatures, and characters of a given setting, but for a newcomer, having a little visual reference material at hand never hurts. While a number of **Final Fantasy** artbooks have seen release in Japan, Western gamers will have better luck turning to the Internet for their needs.

Props: For those who like to add a more hands-on element to their games, there are plenty of possibilities. Those with deep pockets and good connections in the Land of the Rising Sun can find just about *anything*, from jewelry and replica weapons to the official Galbadia Bears jersey. The most useful play aids are probably the various **Final Fantasy** figures and figurines released over the years, though there is a significant difference in scale between the various ranges. When coupled with the difficulty and expense involved in getting hold of merchandise for older games, this rather limits their usefulness.

BUILDING AN ADVENTURE

The adventure is the basic building block of the **FFRPG** — a starting point for GMs and players in getting to grips with the system, and a gateway to running a successful long-term campaign. For this reason, knowing how to structure adventures is an essential skill for any GM. The following section covers how best to tackle adventure design and develop the challenges the players face during the course of their quests.

The Objective

All adventures have one or more objectives for the party to fulfill, though these may not be known at the outset. The first step in adventure design is deciding what these objectives are and how the party can fulfill them, considerations that will shape how the rest of the adventure plays out. The most common types are:

Fetch Quest. Overcome the obstacles to find a specific item or piece of information and bring it back for a reward. The Fetch Quest is the most commonly-encountered adventure in **Final Fantasy** games, and generally is used to 'gate' progress — items or

rewards gained in one adventure are required to get to the next, meaning the story will not progress until the quest has been completed.

Mark Hunt. Find and defeat a monster or opponent in battle to claim a reward. Missions like these tend to work best as 'filler' between more involved sessions.

Sabotage. Put something out of commission — a weapon, a building, an artifact, a vehicle, a plan. Missions of this type usually involve a significant amount of subterfuge and stealth — as good a time as any to break out those *Disguise* rolls and make sure your players put a few points into *Demolitions*.

“If there’s a door, we go in. If there’s anything we can break, we break it! And in the end, we blow this place to smithereens!”

Selphie Tilmitt
FINAL FANTASY VIII

Escort. Get somebody from Point A to Point B in one piece, fending off would-be assassins or kidnappers along the way. Danger can come from many angles during missions like these — the players will have to think on their feet and learn to trust no-one.

Rescue. Somebody important to the party has been captured, and now it's time to bust them out. Like sabotage attempts, rescue bids inevitably involve bombs or disguises, sometimes even at the exact same time.

Kidnapping. The exact reverse of the rescue mission sees the party tasked with abducting someone, avoiding any and all security along the way.

Escape. Break through enemy lines, find a way out of a monster-infested forest, or chart a route back to the land of the living — escapes may sound simple on paper, but tend to be anything but in practice.

Breaking and Entering. The reverse of the escape mission requires the party to find a way into an otherwise impregnable location. This frequently will be combined with another objective.

The Complications

Once the objective has been set, the next thing to think about is what the players have to do to accomplish it. Obstacles can take the form of combat, physical challenges, interactions with NPCs, traps, hazards, and puzzles, each of which is discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Treat every major complication placed in the party's path as its own Scene, regardless of type — the easiest way to populate an adventure is to develop several of these Scenes, then string them together to form a narrative. On average, the crux of a good adventure will revolve around three memorable set-pieces, but due to the unpredictable nature of tabletop play, players may bypass events you originally intended to pave the way to the objective. For

this reason, it tends to be better to map out your Scenes as a loose web rather than a linear path. That way, if the players miss one connection, you can move them to the next logical event instead.

In the examples given over the course of the rulebook, Rodger led the party through a number of Scenes designed to test their skills – a collapsing cave, a prison break, and a high-stakes air battle. However, these were only a few of the potential turns the adventure could have taken. Rodger had also sketched out a raid on the resistance's headquarters, an eavesdropping attempt on covert meeting between the Dark Lord's agents, and a chase scene involving stolen Chocobos racing through the streets of a major metropolis.

The advantage of developing complications in chunks is that anything your players don't get to can be quietly shuffled into the next adventure. Don't be afraid of recycling unused content – if the idea was worth using once, it's definitely worth using again.

Battles

As prevalent as combat is in the **Final Fantasy** series, it's a seriously time-consuming proposition on the tabletop. Running battles with the same frequency players of the e-games are used to leaves room for little else, meaning you'll inevitably have to choose quality over quantity when planning your encounters.

How many battles should your adventure have? The determining factor is how your group feels about giving their sword-arms a workout – some relish the challenges and feel happier sticking a sword in a monster than engaging in long-winded conversations, whilst others prefer to leave their swords sheathed and talk things out. Combat-heavy games can get away with about two encounters per session, while more sedate adventures with one encounter every other session.

BUILDING INTEREST

Even then, you have to plan to sustain your players' interest. The first factor in this is duration – the longer combat drags on, the higher the risk that people will start getting bored with the proceedings. This is doubly true in situations where the heroes are reduced to simply trotting out the same Attacks and Abilities Round after Round. With this in mind, the 'average' battle should last between three and four Rounds, a number you can enforce by keeping an eye on how much damage the heroes are capable of inflicting and tailoring monster strength and composition to fit. Too, not every opponent fights to the death. If the odds are against them and the battle drags on, the monsters could just as easily attempt to flee as carry on.

The second factor is tactics. Avoid staging all-out slugfests – players should be forced to think before they act, rather than just blindly slashing away with their most powerful attacks Round after Round. A few ways to shake things up include:

Mix and Match. Grouping together monsters with drastically different attack forms, weaknesses, and strategies is an easy way to keep the party on its toes – couple physically powerful monsters

with spellcasting ones, direct damage dealers with Status-causers, Ice Worms with Fire Flans.

What's My Weakness? Intelligent use of Elemental Weaknesses and Immunities can turn otherwise straightforward combat into a potentially dangerous guessing game for the party – especially if the party relies on Elemental attacks for most of its damage output. Avoid making a monster's Elemental properties too obvious, however – Water Giants, Fire Lizards, and other creatures may have their counterparts in the games, but don't require a lot of gray matter to vanquish. Keep your players guessing and teach them the importance of *Scan* and *Sensor* in the process.

Counter Tactics. Reactions are a powerful tool for GMs, especially when triggered by a party's more common attacks. Smart use of Reactions not only punishes players who take the obvious approach, but forces the party to figure out *what* triggers a counterattack – and what they can use to avoid or circumvent it.

The Guardians. The players aren't the only ones capable of protecting weaker allies. When battling a mixture of monsters – or a Boss monster with Slave Parts – make your players cut through a number of 'protectors' to get to the opponents they want to target.

The Right Tools for the Right Job. As the game progresses, your players will amass a significant number of ways to hurt specific opponents. Every once in a while, plan an encounter that will let them do exactly that – a few Zombies to sharpen those *Undead Killer* Weapons on, or an Ice Dragon for that new *Firaga*. Giving players the chance to make effective use of specialized equipment can help wallpaper over less inspired battles.

Buff vs. Debuff. Used at the right moment, Barrier and Enhance-type Status Conditions can have a significant impact on the flow of battle. For this reason, their management can make for a few interesting situations in combat. Beginning a fight by having the opponent cast positive Status Conditions forces the party to spend Actions and resources to counter their effects; conversely, a situation where the party's *Protects*, *Hastes*, and *Regens* are constantly being nullified by monster intervention encourages strategic thinking rather than blind reliance.

Unusual Situations. In **Chapter 7**, you'll find a number of ways to spice up any encounters, including terrain effects, weather conditions, and timed battles. Don't be afraid to drop a few of these additional complications into your combats every now and then, especially if there is nothing else distinctive about them.

WORKSHEETS

Even the best-planned battles can fall down in actual play, however. Combat may be the most straightforward task awaiting a GM, but that does not make it simple by a long shot. Running a battle means making many decisions, and keeping track of a significant amount of information on both sides of the table. For this reason, **Appendix V** has several worksheets designed to make the combat process run that much more smoothly. The most notable:

Vitals Sheet. This worksheet collects the most important information needed during combat in one place. ACC, M, ACC, EVA,

and M. EVA can be quickly referenced to determine the success and failure of specific attacks, while having HP, MP, ARM, and M. ARM at the ready allows for faster damage calculations. By the same token, the spaces given for recording SPD decrease the amount of time taken to resolve Initiative and Initiative conflicts. Finally, space is provided for listing character Abilities as well as effects provided by Support Abilities or equipment.

How this sheet is used is a manner of personal preference. One GM might decide to list Ability names and costs only, letting the players tell him what effects the Abilities have. Another GM might choose to write down all of the salient details. A third GM, meanwhile, might just use the Abilities space to list Support Abilities that would affect monsters' attacks, and rely entirely on the players to report the costs of their actions.

Round Tracker. This worksheet allows the GM to keep track of Initiative order in the Round, as well as any Statuses inflicted upon characters and monsters, Item use and other useful details. Changes in Initiative as a result of CT and other factors can also be noted on this sheet.

These two sheets can be supplemented or replaced by personal notes as needed. As far as combat is concerned, the more information a GM has at their fingertips, the better.

Physical Challenges

Anything that requires the players to use Skills and Attributes through Task Checks against inanimate objects can be defined as a 'physical challenge.' Examples include successfully scaling a fortress wall, running across a crumbling bridge before it collapses, or holding onto Ultima Weapon for dear life as it roars through the skies.

As Task Checks are relatively fast and easy to resolve, physical challenges can be introduced without too many problems — a description and a Conditional Modifier, and things are good to go. Because of this, moderation is important — too many rolls for too many trivial tasks, and the players will start feeling put upon. Consolidate Task Checks where possible, and save the rolls for when the results are dramatically interesting or important. It is also essential to make challenges appropriate to the party's composition and strengths. It should be obvious from the get-go that challenging an all-Mage group to clear a landslide of adamantium ore by hand is only going to result in miserable failure.

Due to the speed with which they are resolved and the large number of potential 'safety nets' players have at their disposal in the event of failure, physical challenges should not yield XP or Gil. Rather, they are best treated as obstacles to be overcome on the way to a greater reward.

Social Challenges

A smart group of adventurers doesn't get in a fight with every living thing they meet. Unfortunately, there are times when others block the way forward — uncooperative guards, recalcitrant informants,

enemy spies, and prowling monsters will test the characters' bartering, sneaking, and roleplaying skills to the limit. Unlike physical challenges, social challenges should hinge on what a character says as much as low they can roll. If a PC attempts to use a persuasive Skill like *Seduction* or *Negotiation*, make the player act out the attempt rather than simply have them roll for it — the end results are far more dramatically interesting, and force the player to think about their character's approach. Good performances should net the player a bonus or waive the roll entirely, assuming this is in character; no amount of smooth talking on the player's part can compensate for a 20 in *Negotiation*.

Because many social challenges take the form of Opposed Task Checks, the PCs' opponents must have Skill Ratings of their own. If there is no time to draw up detailed Ratings, decide how proficient the opponent is in the Skill being rolled for, then use the table below to determine what Skill Rating they will be rolling at.

Proficiency Level	Skill Rating
Untrained	10
Novice	20
Intermediate	40
Advanced	60
Expert	80
Master	100

Against monsters, the monster's Intelligence is the most important factor. Creatures with an Intelligence rating of 'None' cannot be bargained or argued with unless the party happens to be dealing with the creature's controller. Otherwise, any rolls for *Negotiation*, *Etiquette*, *Seduction*, or the like will fail automatically. Creatures of Animal Intelligence cannot be bargained with through normal Skills, but can be manipulated with *Animal Training*. In this case, the opposing Skill Rating is equal to the monster's Level. For all other Intelligence grades, use the table below to find the most appropriate Skill Rating.

Proficiency Level	Skill Rating
None	n/a
Animal	Monster's Level
Primitive -	As Animal
Primitive	20
Primitive +	30
Average -	40
Average	50
Average +	60
High -	70
High	80
High +	90
Elder	100

As with physical challenges, overcoming a social challenge rarely yields Gil or XP. The rewards for success here tend to be more intangible, usually taking the form of information or assistance from NPCs. The effects of failure depend on the stakes; attempting — and failing — to intimidate a powerful political figure, for instance, could

well land the entire party in jail indefinitely.

BRIBERY

In some cases, characters may decide to part with a few Gil or an item to sway an NPC's opinion in their favor. If so, make a judgment as to whether the bribe is adequate, generous, or insulting. An adequate bribe offers a +10 bonus to the next relevant Skill roll made against its target; a generous one a +20 bonus. Insulting bribes impose a -10 penalty on top of any Conditional Modifiers already in place. Particularly moral or upstanding characters will be offended at the very idea of bribery, regardless of the amount offered.

PLAYING NPCs

If you are expecting your players to act out their bargaining, questioning, and threatening, you will naturally be expected to provide responses in kind. The main objective in doing so is to coax better performances out of the players — this means creating characters both interesting and memorable for the party to interact with.

But how do you make an NPC memorable? Unless you're shooting for a character you know will be appearing on a regular basis, don't try for subtlety; the most successful approach is to go over the top and play the character as broadly as possible. Focus on a few memorable vocal tics and speaking habits — one character might have a tendency to clear her throat at dramatically important moments, another the unfortunate habit of forgetting the topic of conversation after about three sentences. Outrageous laughter — particularly when using outlandish syllables like “*kyu kyu kyu*” and “*mu mu mu*” — is another useful shorthand for identifying characters, especially evil ones. By assigning every major villain a distinctive ‘sinister laugh’, you can make antagonists almost instantly recognizable.

The same principle applies when giving descriptions of NPCs. Rather than try and shoot for a lot of detail your players won't remember an hour later, boil the NPC's ‘image’ down to a few key attributes — a strange hair color, a certain dress sense, a prominent piece of jewelry or tattoo, scars, or physical deformities. As with vocal mannerisms, going a little over the top is almost recommended, if not essential. The more outrageous the character's appearance, the more likely it is that he or she will stick in the players' minds.

Traps and Hazards

Traps, terrain hazards, and other dangers of the wilderness can give a party plenty of headaches without ever straining their sword arms. For this reason, the next few pages are devoted to a simple but flexible ‘construction system’ capable of generating all three with a minimum of fuss. If overcome, traps and hazards reward the party with Experience Points; for this reason it is essential to keep track of the XP modifiers given for various options during the creation process.

There are a few things to keep in mind when adding traps and hazards to an adventure. First off, challenges like these should be used sparingly during the course of an adventure. With most of a Job's Ability Set geared towards combat, favoring traps over combat encounters removes most of the opportunity to use many Job-defining features. Traps should also be balanced as carefully as any other encounter in terms of damage output — while the party should suffer if they fail to deal with a trap, the entire group shouldn't die from one flubbed d% roll. Finally, characters should generally have some chance to react to or deal with a trap before its effects take place — having fiery death rain on the party from out of nowhere isn't challenging, just outright sadistic.

TRAP CONCEPT AND LEVEL

While monsters roam freely, traps are restricted to a specific location. For this reason, concept is particularly important in the creation process. Begin by considering the type and location of trap — is it a lock designed to shoot poisoned darts? A spiked roller that sweeps along a narrow corridor to crush everything in its path? A hidden spout in a rock face capable of spewing deadly fire? Determining the overall size and general danger level not only helps narrow down where the trap can be placed, but also provides a useful framework for its in-game capabilities.

Next, decide on a the trap's Level. As with PCs and monsters, Level is an overall measure of power and lethality ranging from 1 to 99; the higher the Level, the most of a challenge the trap will be to overcome. Ideally, the trap's Level should be reasonably close to the party's average, though higher- and lower-Level traps can be used as serious challenges and minor nuisances.

EFFECT

All traps have one thing in common — they are designed to harm or inconvenience those who trigger it. Once concept and Level have been settled, the next step is to determine what the trap actually *does*. Every trap must have at least one of the effects listed below; some types may combine multiple effects, though these are rarer.

ALARM

Effect: A trap of this type sounds an alarm that alerts enemies or releases creatures for the PCs to fight, essentially resulting in an encounter which the PCs might have rather avoided. Sometimes the PCs will be able to hear the alarm themselves, realize what they've done, and have time to prepare for the inevitable. In other situations, the PCs remain unaware until they're ambushed — sometimes, of course, the fight will start immediately after the trap is sprung, rendering the issue moot.

Note that an Alarm effect is not the same thing as a trap guarded by monsters. If disarming the trap before it is triggered avoids a fight, the trap has an Alarm effect. Otherwise, the situation is treated as two separate threats rolled up into a single encounter.

EFFECT	XP MODIFIER
Single monster summoned	+7
Two monsters summoned	+9
Item relatively rare or exotic	-20
Monster numbers equal party's	+12
Monster numbers twice party's	+16
Monster Level lower than trap	+10
Monster Level equal to trap's	+18
Monster Level higher than trap	+27
Monsters arrive immediately	+10
Monsters arrive in 1 Round	+7
Monsters arrive in 2 - 4 Rounds	+3
Monsters arrive in 5+ Rounds	+0
Silent Alarm	+6

DAMAGE

Effect: The trap deals Physical, Magical, or Elemental damage to the party when triggered. As traps lack STR or MAG scores, damage done in this fashion is determined entirely by the trap's Level.

DAMAGE	XP MODIFIER
(Trap Level x 4) + [x]d6	+15
(Trap Level x 5) + [x]d6	+18
(Trap Level x 6) + [x]d8	+24
(Trap Level x 8) + [x]d8	+28
(Trap Level x 9) + [x]d10	+35
(Trap Level x 10) + [x]d10	+39
(Trap Level x 11) + [x]d10	+45
(Trap Level x 12) + [x]d12	+50
(Trap Level x 15) + [x]d12	+60

The number of damage dice rolled for a trap effect is determined by the base damage inflicted by the trap.

BASE DAMAGE	DICE ROLLED
1 – 40	1
41 – 90	2
91 – 180	3
181 – 320	4
321+	5

Of course, damage-dealing attacks do not always land automatically. Luck and reflexes can still save characters from harm even if the trap is triggered. Select a CoS from the options below and note down the relevant XP modifier before proceeding.

DAMAGE	XP MODIFIER
(30 + Trap Level x 2), EVA	-10
(50 + Trap Level x 2), EVA	0
(70 + Trap Level x 2), EVA	+12
(90 + Trap Level x 2), EVA	+20
Flat 30%	-5
Flat 60%	+15
Automatic Hit	+28

By default, Trap damage is Physical, and modified by Armor. A trap whose damage ignores Armor should combine a damage effect with a *Meltdown* status effect. Traps can also do Magical damage at no additional XP cost; the only change is that the resulting damage will be reduced by M. ARM and modified by M. EVA. Elemental damage can also be added at no additional cost.

STATUS

Effect: The trap inflicts a Status Condition if triggered. For purposes of calculating XP modifiers, Status Conditions are organized into one of five 'classes':

Class I: *Blind* (4), *Immobilize* (4), *Silence* (4), *Sleep* (4), *Slow* (4)

Class II: *Berserk* (4), *Confuse* (4), *Curse* (4), *Disable* (4), *[x] Down* (6)

Class III: *Mini* (4), *Poison* (∞), *Toad* (4), *[x] Break* (6), *Zombie* (∞)

Class IV: *Condemned* (4), *Frozen* (4), *Heat* (4), *Meltdown* (2), *Petrify* (4), *Stop* (4)

Class V: *Eject*, *Death*, *Stone* (∞)

More powerful Status Conditions may only be placed on higher-Level traps; the minimum trap Level needed to support a given class of Status Condition is shown below.

STATUS TYPE	MINIMUM LEVEL	XP MODIFIER
Class I	1	+5
Class II	10	+8
Class III	25	+14
Class IV	45	+18
Class V	50	+35

! Deathtraps

A trap that inflicts *Condemned* or *Petrify* will kill or *Stone* the affected characters within the listed number of Rounds unless the PCs can either escape the trap's area of effect or find a way to counteract it – a great way to simulate those crushing stone walls, flooding chambers, and other nasty dungeon deathtraps.

As with damage-dealing traps, Status-causing traps may be avoided even if triggered. Select a CoS from the options below and note down the relevant XP modifier before proceeding.

CoS	XP MODIFIER
(30 + Trap Level x 2), EVA	0
(50 + Trap Level x 2), EVA	+7
(70 + Trap Level x 2), EVA	+18
(90 + Trap Level x 2), EVA	+25
Flat 30%	+3
Flat 60%	+21
Automatic Hit	+36

DURATION

Duration determines how long a trap's effects last. The simplest traps fire a single shot, and then are harmless until rearmed or

reset. More complex ones act multiple times, or even continuously until the PCs are out of reach.

SINGLE SHOT

Effect: The trap's effect only triggers once – after this, the trap is harmless. The XP value of the resulting effect depends on how many targets are affected by it.

TARGETS AFFECTED	XP MODIFIER
1	0
2	+10
3	+20
Entire Party	+32

MULTIPLE SHOT

Effect: Once triggered, the trap's effects are applied once per Round – or roughly once every 30 seconds – until it expires. The XP value of this depends on both the number of targets affected and the number of 'shots' the trap can unleash before expiring.

TARGETS AFFECTED	XP MODIFIER
1	+5 per 'shot'
2	+9 per 'shot'
3	+17 per 'shot'
Party	+27 per 'shot'

CONTINUOUS FIRE

Effect: Once triggered, the trap's effects are applied once per Round – or once every 30 seconds – until the players leave the trap's area of effect. Short of deactivating the trap, this is the only way to stop it from working.

TARGETS AFFECTED	XP MODIFIER
1	+16
2	+25
3	+49
Party	+75

SLOW ACTING

Effect: Some traps don't take effect until the PCs spend a prolonged length of time in the area. This can sometimes be used for elaborate deathtraps (*"My laser will KILL you in precisely one hour unless you escape your bonds!"*) but is more at home with environmental hazards that affect the PCs after a long period of travel. If combined with Multiple Shots or Continuous Fire, the time it normally takes for the trap's effects to take hold becomes the delay between shots.

EFFECTS TAKE HOLD IN	XP MODIFIER
10 minutes	-15
1 hour	-25
3 hours	-40
12 hours	-60

DETECTION

Next, determine how easy it is for PCs to detect the trap. Some traps are obvious, others take a bit more effort, and a rare few can't be seen at all. Select an option from the following list and note down the relevant XP modifiers before moving on to the next step.

AUTOMATIC

Effect: The trap is clearly visible, and cannot be missed.

TYPE	XP MODIFIER
Automatic	-12

CURSORY

Effect: Some attempts have been made to conceal the trap, though a sufficiently observant person will notice it if they scan the area. Make a Task Check using *Awareness* when the PCs enter the vicinity of the trap to see if they notice it. The Conditional Modifier for this Task Check will be determined by how well the trap has been concealed.

CONDITIONAL MODIFIER	XP MODIFIER
+80	-16
+60	-12
+40	-8
+20	-4
0	0
-20	+4
-40	+8
-60	+12
-80	+16

DEDICATED

Effect: The trap is well-hidden enough to be all but invisible unless actively searched for. In order to find the trap, PCs must declare they are searching for traps and make a successful Task Check using *Awareness* – as above, the Conditional Modifier will be determined by how well the trap has been concealed.

CONDITIONAL MODIFIER	XP MODIFIER
+80	-38
+60	-26
+40	-16
+20	-8
0	0
-20	+6
-40	+12
-60	+20
-80	+30

UNDETECTABLE

Effect: The trap cannot be detected by normal means. The only way the PCs will know about the trap is through magic, prior knowledge, or triggering it.

TYPE	XP MODIFIER
Undetectable	+35

AVOIDANCE

Once the PCs know a trap is in place, they may have a chance to avoid it or disarm it. Exactly how difficult this is to accomplish is determined in this step. Select one of the options below and note down the relevant XP modifiers given for that option before proceeding to the next step.

AUTOMATIC

Effect: If the party detects the trap, it can easily be sidestepped, requiring no additional effort to disarm.

TYPE	XP MODIFIER
Automatic	0

DESTRUCTIBLE

Effect: The trap can be destroyed if the PCs do a certain amount of damage to it based on the trap's Level. Note that depending on the nature of the trap and its triggers, attacking it may be enough to set it off if the PCs don't do enough damage to destroy it in one blow.

DAMAGE NEEDED TO DESTROY	XP MODIFIER
Trap Level x 20	0
Trap Level x 30	+3
Trap Level x 50	+7
Trap Level x 75	+10
Trap Level x 100	+14
Trap Level x 150	+20
Trap Level x 250	+32
Trap only damaged by <i>Ranged</i> attacks	+8

DISARMABLE

Effect: The trap can be disarmed with a successful roll against the *Traps* Skill or an equivalent substitute. As stated in the Skill's description, a Botch on the Task Check will always cause the trap to trigger.

CONDITIONAL MODIFIER	XP MODIFIER
+80	-12
+60	-8
+40	-4
+20	0
0	+4
-20	+8
-40	+12
-60	+16
-80	+20
Failed Task Check triggers trap	+14

JOB ABILITY

Effect: A specific Job Ability or set of Abilities can deactivate or

bypass the trap. Decide which Abilities apply when picking this option.

TYPE	XP MODIFIER
Job Ability	+15

STATUS

Effect: A specific Status Condition or set of Status Conditions can deactivate or bypass the trap. Decide which Conditions apply when picking this option.

TYPE	XP MODIFIER
Status	+12

MULTIPLE METHODS

Effect: The trap can be disarmed by several different means. Select two or three options from the following list — Destructible, Disarmable, Job Ability — and average their XP modifiers, then note the result down and proceed to the next step.

TYPE	XP MODIFIER
Multiple	As per option

UNAVOIDABLE

Effect: The trap cannot be disarmed. The only way to avoid its effects is not to trigger it.

TYPE	XP MODIFIER
Unavoidable	+44

COMPLETING THE TRAP

All that remains now is to calculate the final XP value of the trap. Add together all XP modifiers accumulated through the various options selected over the course of creation, then multiply the resulting number by the trap's Level. The resulting number is the number of XP awarded for overcoming the trap, and is divided evenly among all party members. Unlike monsters, traps do not award treasure when destroyed or circumvented, though they may be guarding it. If this is the case, the Gil value of whatever treasure is beyond the trap should be no higher than **25%** of the trap's XP value.

CREATING HAZARDS

The system used to construct traps can also be used to create natural hazards — sandstorms, rockslides, flooding — for the players to tackle. Though the concepts involved may restrict use of certain options, the process is identical, XP costs included. Note that detecting and disarming a trap usually involves the *Awareness* and *Traps** Skills, but natural hazards may involve Skills like *Survival*, *Climb*, and *Swim* in their place.

SAMPLE TRAPS AND HAZARDS

To better illustrate how trap creation works, a number of sample traps and hazards are given below.

PIT TRAP

LEVEL 2

A thin layer of false floor over a relatively steep four-meter drop. Stepping on the floor causes it to collapse, sending anyone and -thing standing on it tumbling down the hole. The pit is large enough to catch up to two characters.

Effects: 16 + d8, ARM Physical Damage / CoS 54, EVA

Duration: Single Shot (2 targets)

Detection: Cursory (-10)

Avoidance: Automatic

Experience Value: 102 XP

FIRE WALL

LEVEL 10

A solid barrier of unending flame spewed from a magical mechanism buried deep in a rock face. The heat is intense enough to cause serious damage to anything attempting to pass the barrier, though only one person can attempt to pass at any one time. Water and Ice Elemental Spells and effects can be used to temporarily stem the flow of fire.

Effects: 60 + 2d8, M. ARM Fire Elemental Damage / Automatic

Duration: Continuous (1 target)

Detection: Automatic

Avoidance: Job Ability (Water, Ice Elemental)

Experience Value: 830 XP

STEN NEEDLE

LEVEL 15

A wickedly sharp man-sized spike hidden in the ground. A magical ward directly above the spot where the sten needle is buried is responsible for triggering it, sending the needle shooting out to brutally impale whoever steps on the ward.

Effects: 135 + 3d10, ARM Physical Damage / Automatic

Duration: Single Shot (1 target)

Detection: Undetectable

Avoidance: Status (*Float, Flight*), Job Ability (*Light Step*)

Experience Value: 1650 XP

POISON SWAMP

LEVEL 25

This diseased, brackish mire leaves those who venture into its murky waters in danger of being subjected to deadly poison.

Effects: *Poison* (∞) / CoS 120, EVA

Duration: Continuous (Party)

Detection: Automatic

Avoidance: Status (*Float, Flight*), Job Ability (*Light Step*)

Experience Value: 2990 XP

LAVA FLOOR

LEVEL 40

An area of hot molten lava capable of scorching anything that sets foot on it.

Effects: 200 + 4d6, M. ARM Fire Elemental Damage / Automatic

Duration: Continuous (Party)

Detection: Automatic

Avoidance: Status (*Float, Flight*), Job Ability (*Light Step*)

Experience Value: 5460 XP

Riddles and Puzzles

Whether it's an unsolved enigma from the dawn of time or a game of wits down at the local pub, riddles and puzzles can offer a welcome change from brutal melee with monsters or hair-raising deathtraps. These challenges can take many forms: trick questions, numerical puzzles, anagrams or cyphers, or object-based conundrums. Just as diverse are the possible payoffs for a successful solution — treasure, information, access to hidden locations, and Experience Points are all viable rewards for quick-witted players.

PUZZLE DESIGN

There are many possible ways to test your characters' intelligence, but the medium you use to run your games will impose hard limits on what you can and can't throw out. Numerical codes, cyphers, or anagrams can be fun and immersive when players are clustered around a tabletop exchanging notes, but fall flat in online chat; visual puzzles work better when you're looking at a screen than when you've got papers, books, dice, and other players competing for your attention. Then there are the players themselves to consider. Not everybody has the skill or patience for puzzles purely built on guesswork and reasoning — even a well-designed brain teaser can create a situation where a few members of the group throw themselves into the problem and the rest twiddle their thumbs on the sidelines.

The easiest — and most series-appropriate — compromise is the 'password puzzle.' Here, the players have to piece together a code or password to gain access to an area from clues scattered around the environment. However, not every clue they find relates to the final password; by using trial and error, elimination, and a bit of old-fashioned logic, they must weed out the bogus leads to solve the puzzle in earnest. An extreme example of this kind of challenge was seen in *Final Fantasy VI*, where the player attempted to gain access to a clock tower in the town of Zozo by setting the tower's clock face to the correct time. Interrogating the townspeople yielded dozens of answers as to what the exact time actually *was* — until it became apparent that everyone in the town was lying, cutting down the number of options by a substantial amount.

The advantage of the password puzzle is that it keeps the characters active traveling from place to place in search of hints and fragments. As the players progress and gather more information, other challenges and problems can be dropped into the proceedings to spice things up — a good opportunity for the players to flex muscle and gray matter at once.

Another possible option is the 'switch puzzle,' used to significant effect in several e-games. Pressure-sensitive switches are dotted around a dungeon, each capable of opening a door or disarming a trap — but need to have weight equivalent to a person's on them in order to be operated. As a result, the party is forced to split up, keeping one person behind to trigger the switch while the rest of the party heads forward, looking for another way for their comrade to get in. As with the password puzzle, the switch puzzle keeps the party active, and allows for some hairy situations if a lone party

member ends up stranded in a dangerous place while the rest of the group hunt around for the next switch.

A third option is to leave players with a locked door or barred passage and a roomful of objects. One or more of the objects will unlock the passage, but the players must first experiment with the room's contents to find the way out. While this leaves the door open for more creative approaches, it is important not to make the solution too obtuse, or require the players to prod every inch of the room in search of the one true answer. Job Abilities and other effects may also be used in this process – for instance, casting Ice magic on a discarded key can create something capable of unlocking that frost-bound door to the north.

If you're fortunate enough to have a group that collectively enjoys solving puzzles, your choices are somewhat broader. Take the time to figure out where your players' individual strengths lie – numbercrunching, wordplay, simple logic – and create the puzzles to allow everybody a chance to contribute.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

There are four important things to remember when putting together a puzzle. The first is that it should be solvable by the *players*, not answered by a GM-run ally or oracle. In order for this to happen, every piece of knowledge needed for a solution should be at their fingertips – if they happened to miss a vital clue earlier, figure out a way to get that information to them another way. In the same vein, a GM should be prepared to offer more clues if the party appears to be genuinely struggling.

The second is that every puzzle should have a clear penalty for failure, even if you believe that the party can solve it. By working with a penalty in mind, you will be less likely to create a puzzle that can derail the adventure if the party happens to be stumped. 'Acceptable' penalties can range from simply missing out on a piece of treasure to actively being placed in the path of danger or triggering an encounter – more dangerous outcomes should be on par with all other hazards, traps, and monsters in the adventure.

The third is that you should consider the amount of time it takes to solve a puzzle, especially in the context of a session as a whole. Unless you are genuinely stalling for time because you are running underprepared, you probably don't want to have the group spending two hours analyzing numbers and throwing theories around the table. Fifteen minutes to half an hour is generally the maximum playtime a brain teaser should consume unless the party has to actively engage in other activities – exploring an area, collecting items for a key – to solve it.

Finally, remember to be flexible and accept creative solutions, even if they aren't exactly what you had in mind. The purpose of a puzzle is to encourage your players to think – if they come up with an answer that's as good or better than the 'right' solution you came up with before the session kicked off, let them get away with it.

Travel

Many adventures require at least some degree of travel, while campaigns make it almost a necessity. At the same time, sessions

can only run for so long and an entire day spent trudging up a dirt road isn't going to make for compelling play unless your party are really, *really* into PC-to-PC conversations. How much do you show, then?

A simple rule of thumb: If the most challenging dilemma you can offer your players en route is the question of whether to go left or right at that fork in the road, keep the entire journey 'off camera' and start your next Scene with the heroes arriving at their destination after a "*long and tiring trip*." If there are genuine challenges to be overcome – collapsed bridges, small farms in dire need of heroic assistance, mysterious cairns and caverns begging for further exploration – start a Scene with your heroes encountering the situation in question and keep on rolling until everything has been resolved, then follow up with a new Scene at the next point of interest or – if everything noteworthy about the journey has already been exhausted – the end of the road.

How long it takes to get to a destination should not be a primary concern; in general, time revolves around the heroes, not vice versa. Should you need to estimate travel time, the table below gives an idea of how many kilometers a party can cover in a day via a given means of travel. Note that these are only rough estimates, and can vary depending on a number of factors – reliability of transportation, problems encountered on the road, weather, terrain. For instance, pouring rain could easily halve the amount of ground the party normally covers in a day's time.

Table 10-1: Travel Time

TRAVELLING BY	KILOMETERS PER DAY
Walking – Normal	25
Walking – Hard March	40
Mount – Normal	280
Mount – Racing or War	320
Wheeled Vehicle – Primitive	300
Wheeled Vehicle – Modern	800
Ship – Sail	170
Ship – Steam	960
Airship – Primitive	1200
Airship – Modern	9000

Towns

Because towns encompass such a broad range of possible activities, a few bear exploring in more detail.

! Shopping in All the Wrong Places

Players are expected to buy new equipment and items on a fairly frequent basis – often enough to make it essential that they have access to a town at least once per adventure. If there is no reasonable way for them to reach a town during the course of an adventure, consider bringing in a travelling merchant. In **Final Fantasy** games, unscrupulous traders could be found anywhere from baking deserts to monster-infested dungeons – as odd as it may sound, having a merchant pop up just before the party kicks down the doors to the boss's lair is perfectly in keeping with the genre.

WANDERING TOWN

If a player chooses to exercise this option, give them a rundown of the rumors, stories, and otherwise inconsequential information (*"Aurora Castle has many guards!"*) they've picked up along the way. At your discretion, you can also have wandering players roll against their *Awareness* with an appropriate Conditional Modifier — if successful, the player's character has found a few Gil or a Recovery Item hidden somewhere in the town. Apart from being genre-appropriate, this also allows GMs to boost players' stocks if the adventure ahead is particularly tough or demanding.

SHOPPING

If players want to shop for equipment at a town or merchant's, the GM must determine exactly what the player can buy there. The easiest way of handling this is to make use of the Availability Ratings given in **Chapter 6** by assigning the store a **Quality Rating** ranging from 100 to 20. This Quality Rating is equal to the Availability Rating of the rarest item sold by the store. A store with a Quality Rating of 40 would therefore offer every piece of equipment with an Availability Rating between 100 and 40, assuming the equipment fits into the store's range of offering — Weapon Stores generally don't carry Hi-Potions.

Quality Ratings range from town to town — your average village or lonely roadside souvenir stand will have a much lower Quality Rating than a major metropolis. Similarly, a location's Quality Rating can change over time as supply shifts and new items become available. However, a store's Quality Rating should be no lower than **92 - (Party's Average Level x 1.25)**. This ensures equipment purchases stay in line with the intended rate of progression for players.

Note also that the prices given in **Chapter 6** are only 'recommended' values. Less scrupulous merchants may increase the price of an item to up to double its value, depending on rarity, demand or old-fashioned greed.

BAZAARS

Bazaars are a good place for characters with high *Trade* ratings to get some use out of their Skills, and may make for some potentially amusing encounters — just don't make the mistake of spending an hour walking the party through every last item on offer. A bazaar can also be used to make specific pieces of equipment available to the players without 'unlocking' a whole Tier or Availability Rating's worth of equipment to purchase.

To keep players on their toes, a bazaar's stock should be a mixture of money-wasting red herrings and genuinely good buys — in general, *legitimate* items sold at a bazaar are **10% to 25%** cheaper than their list price in **Chapter 6**.

AUCTION HOUSES

An item bought from an auction house can easily be the start of a great adventure or change the course of the current one — just make sure the players aren't tossing Gil after stuff that doesn't benefit them in the long run. If they're on the verge of burning

25,000 Gil on a master-crafted dollhouse, have other bidders swoop in and push the price up to levels they simply can't afford.

INNS

Like stores, inns take time to locate, though players should always have access to them. Even tiny villages will have somewhere the players can take a load off at the end of the day and regain those lost HP. If the players are going off on individual jaunts around town, inns are an excellent place to reconvene the party after everybody has had their fill. They also offer a nice venue for player interaction if the adventure could use a little more character development, so don't hesitate to give the group some room to chat and strategize in their rooms.

SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION

Having the party search for information has two major uses. Firstly, it's a way to gently nudge players back on track if they've lost sight of the main storyline or started drifting off-track over the course of their current quest. If your party has been racking up more Gil than you'd originally intended, having players pay for information is also a good and subtle way to reduce their bankroll.

PUBS AND CAFES

As an alternative to aimless wandering, players can head for the local pub or cafe to soak up stories and gossip. While they won't stumble across any Potions, they *can* find barkeepers and notice boards with jobs and side quests that will earn them a few Gil on the side.

Rewards

Rewards are arguably the most essential part of the adventuring experience — without them, parties have no chance of advancing, let alone facing down the fearsome opponents awaiting them at the higher Levels. However, figuring out how to compensate the PCs for their troubles can be a tricky, if not outright counterintuitive. For this reason, the following section covers the many forms of player reward and how to best manage them.

EXPERIENCE REWARDS

Experience Points are the most common reward characters will receive. Nearly every encounter and adventure will net the heroes at least some XP, advancing them in levels and granting them increased power and new abilities. A typical **FFRPG** adventure will provide each participant with enough experience to gain at least one level — a bit less if things go poorly, and slightly more if play goes well.

In battles, the number of XP awarded is determined by the strength of the monsters the PCs face. Add up the XP values of all monsters defeated at the end of combat, divide this total by the number of PCs active in the combat — excluding anybody who finished the battle with *Unconscious* or *Stone* or was *Ejected* before the fight wrapped up — and award the heroes that amount. For example, if a party of four characters defeats three Leaf Bunnies

worth 90 XP apiece and two Wolves worth 330 XP apiece, the total party XP award would be 930 XP, and each character would earn 232 XP. As with all other calculations in the system, XP rewards are always rounded down.

Experience Points can also be used to judge what constitutes a 'fair fight' for the party. Generally, a single combat encounter should grant each PC 100 to 125 XP per character Level. If four Level 1 PCs face off against a group of Leaf Bunnies worth 90 XP apiece, for instance, a group of five Leaf Bunnies would make for a fair fight. Since the five Leaf Bunnies together are worth 450 XP, each of the PCs would earn 112 XP in the event of a victory. A battle against four Leaf Bunnies would only grant 90 XP — a bit low — while six Leaf Bunnies would net the PCs 135 XP each, which is a bit much and indicates an encounter that's possibly too challenging. If the PCs advance to Level 3 and are attacked by Wolves each worth 330 XP, four Wolves would be a fair fight. Since the PCs are Level 3, an encounter should net each character between 300 and 375 XP.

Hazards, traps, noncombat encounters, and puzzles can also offer XP rewards. For hazards and traps, the XP value will be drawn up during the creation process, and is divided by the number of PCs in the same manner as XP gained from monsters. For noncombat encounters and puzzles, an experience award may not be appropriate — only award XP if the characters' actions keep them out of danger. Encounters where the PCs successfully evade a fight with a monster through stealth should net them an XP reward equal to **50%** of what they would have earned through combat, though this shouldn't exceed 100 XP per character Level. This means that a group of Level 10 PCs who successfully sneak past a pack of Behemoths shouldn't receive an XP award based on the Behemoths' combat XP total — 1000 XP apiece is more than enough. In cases where the PCs are dealing with an ally or puzzle, a flat XP award of 50 to 100 XP per character Level is a good guideline.

GIL REWARDS

Gil is used to buy Items, Weapons, Armor, and expendables, and pay for other expenses encountered along the way — bribes, fines, ticket costs, fees. Excluding equipment sales, a party's main source of Gil is from one of three sources: money earned as a result of successfully defeating monsters, treasure obtained during the course of an adventure, and money given to the party by NPCs and other allies in exchange for services and other tasks. The income from these three combined should have the characters making around **(Current Level x 150)** G apiece per adventure, excluding any additional income from sources like the *Gillionaire* Advantage.

Generally, a typical combat encounter will award about one-third as many Gil as XP. The MCS was designed with this level of reward in mind. Noncombat encounters should award Gil at the same overall rate as combat encounters. If more Gil are made available, bear in mind that this means that characters will have access to better equipment and more healing, decreasing the challenge level of future encounters. In games where Gil is scarcer, on the other hand, the dearth of money means the party will be less prepared to face battles. As a result, the difficulty level of the game rises accordingly.

ALTERNATING ADVANCEMENT

The suggested XP and Gil awards given in this book are designed so that each character gains a Level after four or five encounters, or about one Level per session. This is a good rate of growth for a typical campaign — assuming one game session a week, the characters will go from Level 1 novices to Level 65+ champions in a little more than one year.

Depending on game setup and pacing, though, GMs may want character advancement to move faster or slower. The easiest way to do this is to vary the XP awards for encounters. A fast-paced game may award **150%** to **200%** of normal XP, while a more drawn-out campaign may hand out only **75%** to **50%** of the usual awards. Slowing the rate of advancement is also useful for games starting at higher Levels, preventing the players from getting too powerful too soon.

The one thing to note when adjusting awards is that Gil awards can't be changed by the same ratio as XP. **FFRPG** prices are designed around the assumption that characters will spend between one-third to one-fourth of their Gil on Items, Ammunition, and other 'expendables.' Double XP and Gil awards, and suddenly PCs have twice as much money at their disposal while facing the same number of encounters. To make sure Gil and XP are in relative sync, use the table below to balance the two.

Table 10-2: Gil and XP Adjustments

XP REWARD	GIL REWARD	BATTLES PER LEVEL
250%	210%	1 - 2
200%	175%	2 - 3
150%	135%	3 - 4
100%	100%	4 - 5
75%	80%	5 - 7
50%	65%	6 - 9

EQUIPMENT REWARDS

Items and Equipment can be awarded to PCs in addition to or instead of Gil. This is a good option for presenting help from sympathetic NPCs or placing treasure chests in a dungeon — receiving a new Rune Blade or finding a set of Potions is far more memorable than ending up with a plain lump of cash. Specific items such as Weapons and Accessories may also be obtained as a result of slaying tough opponents and Boss monsters.

! Theft and Rewards

Some Advantages and Abilities, most notably the Thief's *Steal*, allow characters to gain Items and Gil beyond those normally awarded to the party. This is compensated for by reducing the Job's combat potential, or — in the case of Advantages like *Gillionaire* — equivalent Disadvantages. If you feel these extra sources of income are in danger of unbalancing the game, however, you can adjust monsters' treasure tables to contain fewer valuable items.

Any items or equipment given out during the course of an

adventure should reduce its Gil award accordingly – **75%** of the price given for the item in question in **Chapter 6** is usually a good figure. For example, a typical adventure for a Level 3 group with four members would normally pay out 1800 G, or 450 G apiece. If the adventure also awards six Potions, however, the total payout decreases by 225 G – **75%** of the value of those six Potions.

One note on placing items and equipment: due to the fact that a character's equipment is a significant factor in their overall power, it is essential not to give the party too much too soon. The following table shows when new equipment should generally become available:

Table 10-3: Equipment Availability

EQUIPMENT TIER	AVAILABLE AT
Tier 1	Level 1
Tier 2	Level 4 – 6
Tier 3	Level 12 – 15
Tier 4	Level 18 – 20
Tier 5	Level 25 – 27
Tier 6	Level 33 – 36
Tier 7	Level 42 – 44
Tier 8	Level 50+
Tier 9	1 at Level 48 - 50 1 every 5 Levels afterwards
Tier 10	1 at Level 60 1 every 5 - 10 Levels afterwards

! Artifact Items

The equipment availability suggested in the table above are best used for Weapons, Armor, and the like. When awarding "artifact items" – one-shot Tier 9 and 10 items – GMs can use one of two methods. The first is to award one piece of equipment and 4 or 5 artifact items every time a character is eligible to receive new Tier 9 or 10 equipment. The other is to award an artifact item as normal when the character is eligible to receive Tier 9 or 10 equipment, but award another item if the original item is used up during the course of a session. This continues until the character becomes eligible for new equipment or four or five artifact items have been used up.

MAGIC REWARDS

Unlike other Mage professions, Blue Mages, Callers, and Summoners earn their magic by questing, making Blue Spells and Summons a reward in their own right. Blue Mages gain their Spells from monsters, meaning the introduction of new Blue Spells is entirely left to the GM's discretion. For best results, Blue Mages should have the opportunity to learn one new Blue Spell every two Levels. A suggested Spell progression has been laid out below.

Table 10-4: Blue Magic Availability

SPELL GAINED AT LEVELS	MAXIMUM MP COST
3, 5, 7	10
9, 11, 13, 15	18
17, 19, 21, 23	27
25, 27, 29, 31	40
33, 35, 37, 39	50
41, 43, 45, 47	119
49, 51, 53, 55	139
57, 59, 61, 63	No Limit

Summoners and Callers expand their powers by earning the trust of Summons, either by performing tasks for them or defeating them in combat. Summoners are expected to eventually acquire an 'arsenal' of 6 Summons, though which Summons they gain and when they get them is up to the GM. A potential progression – with a choice of Summon for each 'slot' – is shown in the table below.

Table 10-5: Summon Availability

SUMMON GAINED AT LEVEL	SUMMON CHOICES
10	Valefor, Lakshmi, Remora, Ifrit, Shiva, Ramuh, Sylph, Siren, Titan, Kirin
22	Cait Sith, Fairy, Atomos, Fenrir, Diabolos, Bismarck, Pandemonium, Syltra
36	Asura, Mist Dragon, Quetzalcoatl, Salamander, Catoblepas, Jormungand, Tritoch, Phantom, Unicorn, Carbuncle, Golem
50	Seraphim, Ark, Doomtrain, Hades, Kjata, Alexander, Anima, Cerberus, Phoenix, Typhon, Leviathan, Lich, Madeen, Odin
65	Bahamut, Crusader, Magus Sisters, Yojimbo

Alongside their White and Black Spells, Callers are expected to acquire 8 Calls over the course of their adventuring careers. As with Summons, the exact Calls gained and the Level at which they are acquired are left up to the GM to decide. A suggested Call progression has been laid out below.

Table 10-6: Call Availability

CALL GAINED AT LEVEL	MAXIMUM MP COST
7	21
13	52
21	77
29	90
35	125
45	139
53	176
57	No Limit

! Learning Alternatives

Because Blue Magic, Calls, and Summons are somewhat awkward to acquire, GMs may wish to look into other ways for PCs to learn them. The easiest way to do so is to replace the traditional learning methods with one-shot items awarded as treasure or drops from monsters. If used, these items automatically teach a character a single Blue Spell, Summon, or Call before crumbling to dust. An Aquamarine, for instance, could be used to learn the *Leviathan* Call; a Bomb Shell the Blue Spell *Self Destruct*.

KEY ITEMS

Occasionally, characters run across items that turn out to be of pivotal importance in the adventure ahead — treasures the party was sent to retrieve and return, ways to unlock barred passages or doors, keys to activating ancient machinery or mechanical devices. In *Final Fantasy*, items like these are called **Key Items**, and are kept separate from the day-to-day consumables. Until they are used, they remain in the party's Inventory, and cannot be dropped or destroyed.

If the party ever comes across a Key Item over the course of play, designate it as such. This ensures the group knows it will be used further down the line and don't accidentally end up throwing it out.

INTANGIBLES

The rewards a party gets for completing a quest or adventure may not always have a material value. In some cases, their rewards could include information, assistance, prestige, or leads to other quests and plot threads. The value of these tends to be more difficult to assess than with other rewards as they are usually a way to move the campaign along, rather than outright increase the PCs' power level.

BUILDING A CAMPAIGN

For a GM, a campaign is the next big step forward once they have a few successful adventures under their belt, a chance to stretch the skills and experience picked up from running quests and give their players a stab at something greater than just the dungeon of the week. Some campaigns evolve naturally out of long-running games — one adventure becomes several, and before long a plot has formed between them, turning a one-off into a long-running chronicle. In other cases, the group decides ahead of time that they're committing to a campaign for the long run, making their plans accordingly.

But as the stakes and challenges rise, the amount of planning and foresight needed increases in turn. This section attempts to take some of the sting out of that process by offering concrete advice on structure and problem-solving during campaign play.

Getting Started

The level of planning required may seem daunting at first, but can be broken down to five simple 'W's: *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, and *why*.

WHO: THE PLAYERS

Who are the heroes? The beginning stages of the campaign will involve quizzing players as to what characters they'd like to bring to the table, then using this information to gauge how your group will work as a unit and advise players on Job selection. The ultimate goal in doing so is to keep the final party's composition balanced. While the **FFRPG** supports a wide variety of professions, there are certain combinations that just don't work together — three Gamblers and a Geomancer, or a group composed entirely of Mimics are almost guaranteed to cause headaches. For best results, an **FFRPG** party should have characters who can fill offensive, defensive, and support roles. Who fills which slot should be left for the players to decide.

The character concepts themselves also need to be carefully looked at before they can be approved. In particular, the GM should ask these questions of any and all characters submitted to the campaign:

Is the character appropriate to the setting and campaign?

Probably the first thing you want to check when reviewing background. While originality is all nice and well, a character should fit into the campaign world, not be at odds with it. This includes the world's background as well as its feel — if you are cleaving towards the PG-13 spirit of the original games, the last thing the party needs is a foul-mouthed sadist with a penchant for torturing and killing anybody who looks at him the wrong way.

Does the character bring something fresh to the cast? A group should also try to achieve a good mix of personality and character types, with each member bringing something distinctive to the ensemble. Running a session starring six brooding antiheroes with a grudge against the world at large might score points for novelty, but doesn't offer much opportunity for conflict, character development, or plain old-fashioned fun. By ensuring that PCs aren't straight-up clones of one another, you open the door to more interesting interactions between them.

Can the character work with the rest of the group? Because the group is expected to work together as a team, it is important that the characters — and players — get along. That means no characters whose backgrounds utterly clash with the rest of the group — placing a straight-edged law enforcer in the middle of a gang of gentleman thieves is just asking for trouble. This also rules out characters who are so antagonistic that they will spend more time fighting their comrades than helping them.

WHAT: THE HOOK

What is the party fighting for? In the *Final Fantasy* universe, an adventuring party tends to be an alliance of convenience between wildly diverse characters, brought together by accident and united

by a common goal. Defining that goal early on helps shape where the campaign goes and what kind of adventures the players can look forward to. Are they valiant eco-warriors battling a polluting mega-corporation? Valiant thieves striking a blow for justice against an evil empire? A secret rebel organization fighting to restore liberty? Young military cadets embroiled in a brutal conflict? A small band of warriors on a religious pilgrimage?

From a GM perspective, this 'hook' can develop in a number of ways. Sometimes, it arises naturally out of the mix of Jobs and characters players bring to the table. In most cases, however, the GM decides ahead of time what kind of game she is interested in running and passes that information on to the players, both as a 'preview' to whet their appetites and as a guide to ensure the characters they create will fit into the overall concept.

WHERE: THE PLACE

Where do the adventures take place? The overall setting for a campaign is known as a 'campaign world,' and influences many things — the characters' backgrounds, races, and professions, the plots involved, the political and social bonds, the kinds of technology players are likely to have access to... If the campaign world is based on an existing **Final Fantasy** or other game, the GM merely has to make sure that everybody in the group has played the game in question. If the world is original, on the other hand, the GM has to decide how to familiarize the players with it.

Developing the history, culture, society, religion, and conflicts of an entirely fictitious world can be an overwhelming task, but effectively relaying that information can be twice as hard. The players in particular need to be eased in gradually rather than bludgeoned with detail — restrict setting information to a short paragraph or two at the outset, giving just enough material to attract the players' attention. The game summaries given in the **Introduction** offer several good models for how to approach this, weaving the 'hook' in with important details regarding the game's setting and atmosphere.

Once the players have digested this information, the next step is to prepare a more detailed summary — a 'gazetteer' — giving a short summary of the world's history and a rundown of major nations and powers. A gazetteer should run between one and four pages, leaving enough space for details to be defined as the game progresses. The more 'wiggle room' the GM leaves for future expansion, the less likely it is that the setting will have to be reworked as a result of events in the campaign.

Players can use the gazetteer to develop their characters, but may need additional help during the process. The GM should always be at hand to answer background questions, even if they may seem trivial — *"What kind of jobs would a Black Mage be able to have?"* *"Are Paladins associated with any particular religion?"* *"Which city has the biggest criminal underground?"* This extends to players who wish to adjust the 'flavor' of specific Jobs or Races to better suit their character concepts — any such changes should be closely monitored to ensure that they stay consistent with the setting.

WHEN: THE TIME

When do the adventures take place? Once you've created a rough history for the campaign world, it's time to figure out where the players are in relation to it. Are they coming out of a period of strife and instability and into a tenuous peace that could be shattered at any moment? Is the world in the throes of a grand era of exploration and adventure where undiscovered continents beckon? Has a magical catastrophe recently wiped out civilization, leaving the players as hard-bitten survivors in a ruined wasteland? Settling on a timeframe will help develop potential plots, as well as determine issues like technological availability.

WHY: THE COMMON BONDS

Why are the characters together? In a one-off adventure, things like background and relationships are an optional extra. In a campaign, they're a near necessity. Given the vast disparity in motivations characters can bring to the table, it is important that each player be able to come up for a reason as to *why* their PC bothers to stick with the party once they've joined up. Though not everyone is equally invested in the party's goals, the heroes should work together for logical reasons, not plot contrivance.

Moreover, even if the party fights for a common cause, their reasons for buying into it can differ wildly, and may lead to conflict. How does the young nobleman whose family was killed by the Empire feel about joining forces with a mercenary previously in Imperial pay? One PC may have known or worked with another years prior, others may be in love with or bear a grudge against one of their comrades — let the players throw out their own ideas and suggestions and run with what works. As with all things, moderation is the key here. Not every PC needs to be connected to another player's character, though a good degree of interconnection leaves the door open for many different kinds of roleplaying.

At this point, players can also discuss using the Traits listed in **Appendix IV**. In Rodger's group, Mint's player may have decided that the chirpy Dancer is in fact a dedicated — if thoroughly incompetent — Imperial spy tasked with keeping tabs on her companions' activities; if so, Rodger can use this particular tidbit of background to weave at least one adventure, if not an entire sub-plot.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

During the character creation process, some players may have special requirements or requests — you may find yourself dealing with PCs built using optional rules, specialized in unofficial Jobs, or equipped with Skills of the player's own devising. As a GM, it is important to resist the temptation to gloss over these issues. Double-checking material like this for balance ahead of time — and being able to say 'no' to anything grossly unbalanced — can save a great deal of trouble further down the line.

Telling the Story

With the basics in place, the next step is to look at the story the campaign tells. Like all narratives, the success of a campaign on a storytelling level depends on planning, structure, foresight, and knowing what to do with the participants. In some respects, developing a campaign is no different than writing a novel; in others, it's a improvisational free-for-all being tugged in half a dozen directions at once. Knowing which techniques to apply to each situation can well make the difference between success and failure.

PLOT AND METAPLOT

Most adventures have their own plot and follow a rough narrative arc from the time the players are given their objective to the final battle or challenge separating them from success. What makes a campaign different from a disconnected series of adventures is the fact that another, larger plot can be laid on top of these individual 'stories' to create a much grander experience. This second plot is best described a **metaplot** — a story more sweeping than the sum of its parts. The typical **Final Fantasy** game is a perfect example of this, filled with side quests, diversions, and individual plot threads that achieve coherence through the 'big' storyline that overshadows and drives the player's actions.

Creating a metaplot in a tabletop setting requires the GM to create an ultimate outcome to the PCs' adventures and then decide how the players will get there. The defeat of an evil empire might be achieved by leading the party along the path to destroy the empire's power base one city at a time; the revealing of an extra-dimensional menace summoned by a crazed Sage by getting the players involved in the Sage's search for an ancient grimoire; the discovery of a revolutionary ancient energy source capable of driving the world into the next stage of technological development by having the group battle rival forces for control of a thousand-year-old city at the edge of the world.

The events that will eventually result in the climax are then spaced out over the course of the campaign, allowing for a satisfying conclusion while giving the GM an opportunity to expand on the smaller details — how did the empire manage to conquer the world? Who is the Sage, and what drove him mad? Where are the ruins located, and what is needed to find the location?

The important thing to remember is to avoid hitting the players with too much too soon. Metaplots are developed over time, and may not enter play until relatively late in the game, allowing the level of menace to scale with the players. At Level 1, they will be fighting on a local level, protecting small villages from evil forces and battling against rank-and-file soldiers and weak monsters; at Level 65, they determine the fate of entire nations, if not the world itself.

Also, while the meta-plot determines the game's ending and key sections of the narrative, it doesn't have to affect every aspect of the game. If the party's ultimate destiny is to battle Dark Lord and his minion, the Shadow Knight, there will still be times during the campaign when the players dabble in small-town politics, rescue a sickly grandmother's cat from Death Cave, shore up a flagging

merchant company, or become involved in an underground Chocobo racing syndicate. If anything, this variety is key to making the meta-plot work; otherwise, having to deal with the Dark Lord and his henchman in town after town quickly gets tiresome.

Adventures can also be interconnected without being related to the metaplot. The smaller plot 'threads' created by interlinked adventures can be referred to as **arc plots**. For instance, the cat rescue may climax in the revelation that Granny's little kitty is actually a ferocious feline demon summoned by a mysterious sorcerer; the Chocobo racing syndicate could be run by a larger criminal organization that the players eventually must expose and bring crashing down. In both cases, the 'conclusion' leaves plenty of room for further exploration and action. If necessary, you can even use the end of the arc plot to push players back into the main metaplot — in the above example, the cat demon's master could easily turn out to be a sorcerer in the Dark Lord's employ.

STOCK PLOTS

Console RPGs — and **Final Fantasy** games in particular — tend to stick to a few tried-and-true plots in their narratives, mixing and matching elements as needed. GMs can benefit from this by using the genre's cliches and conventions as a starting point for their own stories. Below are a number of 'stock plots' used by **Final Fantasy** titles in the past — use the ones that strike your fancy, and your metaplot is one step closer to being done.

The Megalomaniac. All things told, the world was doing well until now — things were stable, relations between powers were cordial. Then a new figure rose to prominence, bringing along minions, resources, and a desire to topple the status quo. Perhaps they have their own agenda; perhaps they are nothing more than pawns in somebody else's plan.

The Mystery. Strange things are happening. Natural order seems out of balance. Something — or someone — is seeking to change the world, and it may not be for the better. Unless the warnings are heeded and the mystery is unraveled in time, the consequences could be dire indeed.

The Resistance. Evil has already won, and holds the world in its sway. Most have already accepted subjugation, save for the few and proud who refuse to buckle under and will fight to end the tyranny at any price. Can justice prevail when every odd favors the enemy?

The War Story. Conflicts between nations make for strange bedfellows — and desperation for dalliances with powers and weapons best not trifled with. How far will a leader go to win a war? How much are they willing to sacrifice to get their way? And on what side will the players stand on when the first shots are fired?

The Ancient Evil. In a distant land, something ancient slumbers. If awakened, it could very well tear the world apart — and now there are forces seeking its revival at any cost. Can they be stopped before disaster strikes?

The Conspiracy. How do you fight an enemy you never see? In a world in turmoil, deceit lurks around every corner and few things are as they seem. At the center of it all lies a conspiracy of incredible size, controlling the ebb and flow of events and trying its best to

make sure nobody ever puts together enough pieces to learn the truth — whatever it may be.

The Perils of Science. The march of scientific progress has brought many wonderful things to the world, but there's a dark side as well: deadly weapons, strange experiments, perversions of life and nature itself. When bad science gets out of the lab, who will have the strength to put a stop to it?

IN MEDIA RES

Now we are ready to look at the 'opening scene' — that first session where your players enter the world and begin their adventure. Ever since **Final Fantasy II** opened with a desperate battle, most **Final Fantasy** games have started in the thick of the action — good examples of this include the raid on Mysidia in **Final Fantasy IV**, AVALANCHE's attempt to sabotage the Sector 1 Reactor in **Final Fantasy VII**, the kidnapping planning session in **Final Fantasy IX**, Sin's attack on Zanarkand in **Final Fantasy X**, and the infiltration of Nalbina Fortress in **Final Fantasy XII**. In storytelling terms, this narrative device is called *in media res* — 'into the middle of things.'

Beginning the campaign on a dramatic, splashy note like this is a good way to get the players' attention — and almost instantly cuts through the tedious sequence of “*so you all meet in a bar...*”-style introductions usually needed to get characters up to speed with each other. The big advantage of setting up character relationships and common causes during the campaign creation phase is that there is no need to spend time explaining these when the game kicks off in proper — the characters already know where they stand in relation to each other and why they fight together. With this burden removed, all that's left for the GM to do is come up with a big, spectacular action scene or battle to kick things off. If the players want to spend time getting to know each other, they can do it after the rubble has settled.

BRINGING THE PLAYERS TOGETHER

Only under the rarest of circumstances does a **Final Fantasy** game begin with every character already in the party. In most cases, the party is assembled gradually over the course of many hours and events as the protagonists slowly drift together through a combination of fate and purpose. This device gives GMs a fair bit of leeway in enlarging the party as needed, allowing them to start with as few as one or two players and gradually building up to a full group of six or eight. The challenge lies in making sure that new additions are kept up to speed on campaign events prior to entering the game and that their entrances are handled with a modicum of grace.

Ideally, new arrivals should be planned for at least one session in advance. This allows the session prior to new character's debut to accommodate an ending that sets up the character's arrival. In the next session, the player then officially joins the group, and the adventure moves on without a break in the action.

THE CATALYST

With your campaign plot established and the party assembled and in the game, something — an event, an item, a character — must draw your players into that metaplot. This something is the *catalyst*. As long as it is strong enough to hook the players, it isn't necessary for the catalyst to be directly related to the metaplot; the games themselves have taken both routes over the years, to varying effect. Some examples of catalysts with a direct bearing on the plot include the meteorite strikes in **Final Fantasy V**, Sin's attack in **Final Fantasy X**, or the kidnapping in **Final Fantasy IX** — each of these introduces characters and events that remain relevant later in the game. By contrast, the catalyst of the original **Final Fantasy** — the kidnapping of Princess Sara — is merely an excuse to bring the players into contact with the fallen knight Garland. Once the players have confronted Garland and free the princess, she disappears from the story. In narrative terms, her kidnapping is what the great director Alfred Hitchcock called a 'MacGuffin' — the actual event is irrelevant to the plot, as its main importance lies in introducing the player to the game's antagonist and overarching threat to the world.

When planning a campaign, the catalyst should be an integral part of the process. Ask yourself: What form will the catalyst take? At what point do you introduce it? How will the players be exposed to it? Is it strong enough for the players respond to it? It's the last point that's the arguably the most important — the last thing you want is your group waltzing past the catalyst and ignoring the plot you've spent weeks developing.

The best way to make the catalyst work is to entice the players with something that will directly interest or benefit them. Tangible rewards are the easiest way to get attention — the classic example in fantasy role-playing games is the bartender who accosts the party, telling them that he knows of a place where hidden treasure can be found. The second-easiest is the 'background hook,' where the catalyst is based directly on a character's background — say, a family member begging for help or an old nemesis eager to even the score. In this case, the party — or player — follows because they have a chance to take center stage in the events that follow. Of course, there are other possibilities, and knowing what motivates your players will take a lot of the guesswork out of this step.

SKINNING AN ONION

An important part of making a metaplot work is figuring out how exactly to deliver it to the players. How much should they know about the overarching plot from the outset? How much will they stumble upon as time passes? Many **Final Fantasy** games devote their plots to the gradual unraveling of mysteries as the characters find out how the world really works — and who pulls the strings. For this reason, a lot of weight hinges on that initial 'reveal' when the characters realize they're part of something bigger than they ever could have dreamed of. As characters progress from Level to Level, their knowledge and understanding increases; they become privy to dark plots and hidden secrets, and may find things they once held true are far from it.

For the sake of convenience, it's easiest to envision the various

'reveals' as peeling back the layers of the onion until you reach the center — at this point, the PCs know the whole truth and are ready to act on it. You can use this analogy to develop your reveals by assigning one major revelation to each layer of 'skin'; once one layer is removed, the next comes to light.

In the play examples given throughout the book, Rodger's group is fighting to accumulate the materials to repair the airship *Excelsior* to allow it to be used against the vile Deathstight. At this point, they have already been delving into the metaplot for some time, and have peeled back several layers in the process. The first 'layer' of the metaplot sees the players reaching the Wind Kingdom of Cassia, only to discover that there are double agents scheming to undermine the monarchy. The second 'layer' occurs once the players find that the King's seniormost Dragoon, assigned to assist the players with their investigation, is actually the plot's ringleader.

The third layer reveals that he himself is taking his orders from another — a shadowy figure seemingly bent on subverting the world's nations by replacing their nobility with puppets under his control. The fourth layer reveals the mastermind's identity as Deathstight, and lays out his plan to the players — using relics divided between the members of the world's noble families, he intends to revive the Omega Series, twelve powerful ancient mechanoids. In time, the group will reach the 'core,' discovering Deathstight's ultimate intentions for the Omega Series. Until then, however, many more adventures remain...

CONTINUITY

Continuity — the idea that changes in one session carry over into the next, affecting everything else down the line — is crucial in differentiating a campaign from a simple series of one-off adventures. But continuity means more than just making sure the Red Keep *stays* destroyed after the party nearly met their deaths shutting down that Hellfire Reactor. It also means revisiting characters, locations, and plot threads on a consistent basis, especially if they are important to the party. While most campaigns go through a steady supply of one-off NPCs, key allies and enemies shouldn't just pop up for one session and then disappear indefinitely. Similarly, any important plot issues raised in one session should continue to be developed and addressed until they are resolved.

Running a plot-intensive campaign also means keeping your facts straight. The best way to do this is to get into the habit of keeping a running track of location and character names, of events and key setting details. Expecting your players to take the story and world seriously means putting the same effort into it that you would expect from the rest of the group.

CHARACTER MOMENTS

Most tabletop roleplaying games treat the group as a single entity. **Final Fantasy** games, however, frequently pull the focus onto a single character for portions of the narrative, shifting the spotlight from the group to the individual. These 'character moments' are an integral part of the **Final Fantasy** experience, and offer GMs a way of bringing characters and story closer together without shutting any

one player out.

A character moment is essentially a revolving limelight that moves from character to character over the course of several sessions. Character moments will tend to take up part of or the bulk of a session, and take the form of events, plot twists, and side-quests directly involving one or two related characters. Opponents, locations, and complications for these should be drawn directly from the character's background or Traits, and offer their player a chance to flex their roleplaying muscle and further define who they are playing.

The main trick to pulling this off is to restrict character moments to a single session at most before moving on to the next person, ensuring every character has his or her own day in the sun. Focus too much on a single player's exploits and you alienate the rest of the group, no matter how fascinating their character's backstory may be. On the other hand, having the spotlight rotate on a regular basis can create positive anticipation as players know that it's only a matter of time before they get a chance to step in that limelight again.

GOOD ROLEPLAYING

An entertaining and rewarding campaign requires good performances from the players to work. This may be easier if the GM takes an active interest in rewarding good roleplaying in the group. While each GM will have their own ideas of what makes a performance 'good' enough to merit a reward, it is possible to establish some basic criteria by which to judge your players' performances. Factors to consider include:

Characterization **Characterization** begins with establishing an actual character: a thought-out backstory and rounded personality, supported by an appropriate choice of Advantages, Disadvantages, Skills, and Traits. It should be noted that a character doesn't necessarily have to be deeply flawed or riddled with psychological trauma to be interesting. Even stock characters can be distinguished by small, subtle quirks — an irrational fear of insects, a collection of old war injuries, or an encyclopedic knowledge of ancient languages.

The true challenge lies in bringing these ideas to life in a convincing manner. In many ways, quality roleplaying is nothing so much as the process of turning that concept from 'telling' into 'showing.' The easiest way to assess a player's performance is to compare what's on the character sheet to how that character acts during the course of each session. A self-described gallant knight in armor whose only devotion is to the code of chivalry shouldn't be indulging in petty theft or bullying blameless peasants into surrendering information. While educated scholars with a *Language** rating in the high 90s would be expected to talk — and act — the part.

A GM should also be mindful of excessive metagaming. 'Breaking character' is not just limited to personality and background, but also applies to using out-of-game knowledge and repeated violations of the fourth wall.

Character development. At the same time, no character should remain completely static. Attitudes and personalities that change

convincingly over time are as much part of the roleplaying experience as establishing them in the first place. A Thief who robbed rich and poor without qualms may realize there's more to life than just lining your own pockets. A once-proud Paladin may find his devotion wavering, gradually becoming consumed by self-doubt. The taciturn Fighter whose heart closed off the day his lover died may yet let down his barriers again. The possibilities are nigh-on endless.

Interaction with other characters. No group exists in a vacuum; part of the roleplaying experience means characters interacting with one another, building up strong relationships with both PCs and NPCs — romances, friendships, feuds, and everything in between. Take note of where players work actively to create chemistry between characters; this goes doubly for romantic relationships, which require a great deal of courage and commitment from all parties involved. Players willing to take the plunge and act these out in-game should definitely be eligible for GM recognition.

Memorable lines. Where would the **Final Fantasy** games be without their dialogue? Several of the series' more memorable *bon mots* are sprinkled throughout this rulebook, but there are many others, ranging from the outright banal to the strangely profound. With this in mind, reward those players whose characters can crack inspired one-liners or deliver memorable speeches off the cuff to encourage others to do the same.

Death and Sacrifice

As a narrative element, death can be great — after all, nothing underlines the threat a villain poses quite like an entire village wiped off the map in a single magical cataclysm. But when death strikes the party, the fun quickly evaporates.

In **Final Fantasy** games, protagonists tend to be almost invincible, underlined by the fact that only two main characters have died over the course of the first twelve games. From a storytelling perspective, this makes good sense — after all, it's hard to keep a coherent narrative going if your heroes die an hour into the plot. But GMs cannot control everything their players do, and when the rolls go bad or your Fighter suddenly gets it into his head to charge the Imperial Army single-handedly, you may find yourself with a casualty on your hands. Fortunately, there are several ways for you to work with this.

FUDGE THE DEATH

As GM, you have the power to prevent any death that might disrupt your stories — otherwise murderous rolls can be ignored, bad judgment countered, certain-death experiences can become near-fatal ones instead. In gaming terms, this is known as **fudging**. Fudging can be a good way to prevent 'cheap' deaths, but carries its own risks; use it too often, and you end up taking the sting out of dangerous situations, especially if players become aware that you're going out of your way to prevent fatalities. Once they realize that they're working with a GM-imposed 'safety net,' they may take your challenges less seriously — or deliberately take ludicrous risks to see how far you'll go to save their hides.

REPLACING CHARACTERS

Because there are extensive rules for generating experienced PCs in **Chapter 2**, coming up with an equivalently powerful replacement for a fallen hero isn't impossible, though it may be necessary to tweak Gil, Artifacts, and Legendary equipment to bring him or her up to an equal footing with the rest of the party.

The bigger problem is what to do the web of relationships and contacts the character's predecessor brought to the table, especially if they were heavily involved with the metaplot. The cheap and easy way out is to connect the character's replacement to the original PC in some way. Perhaps she's a family member out to avenge the death of her sibling or father; perhaps she's a former arch-nemesis who feels robbed by the fact that she wasn't the one to kill him, and has decided to join the PCs to make his killer pay for that slight. Either way, this leads to a situation where many of the plot threads and contacts can be picked up with only minimal adjustment.

The alternative is to simply ride with it and let those relationships be severed. Beyond lending the campaign a bit of dramatic punch, a death in the party also opens the door for extensive character development as the survivors cope and move on. Moreover, death doesn't need to be the end for a character — in a **Final Fantasy** game, it's not unheard of for the spirit of a fallen hero to pop up at pivotal moments to encourage former comrades or offer words of wisdom.

SACRIFICE

While most PC deaths are unplanned, players may occasionally want to sacrifice their characters for the good of the party. This sort of dramatic heroism is in the best traditions of **Final Fantasy** heroism, and should be rewarded in kind. For the duration of their final Scene or battle, 'sacrifices' enjoy infinite Hit and Magic Points, and ignore any detrimental Status Conditions that would normally affect them. Once that time period is over, however, they are dead. This death is final, and may not be reversed through the use of Spells, Items or Key Points.

In rarer cases, characters may also sacrifice their lives in an attempt to return another character to life. It should be noted that 'acting as a substitute' has a significant ground in Japanese folklore, but rarely has any success in **Final Fantasy** games. Whether such attempts succeed or not is ultimately up to the GM.

Campaigning Pitfalls

Every GM can make mistakes, but some can easily kill a campaign off in a matter of sessions if not remedied. This section examines some of the most common problems and errors associated with campaign play, and how to circumvent them.

PET CHARACTERS

They're stylish. They're skilled. They're charismatic. They leave enemies broken at their feet and admirers standing in line everywhere they go. They're the toast of royalty and the scourge of

evil. And they're not the players.

A 'pet character' can be defined as any ally that steals the spotlight from the party, taking center stage in roleplaying, combat, or storyline. Left unchecked, they turn the players into glorified catspaws, good only for holding the pet's coat for him while he goes bare-knuckle boxing with Dark Lord or laughing obligingly at his witty humor. This is outright poison to a campaign, and will turn your group against you in record time.

This doesn't mean that the players can't have powerful allies — indeed, the narrative may demand it in places — but they should be there to support the party, not vice versa. Avoid making them a crucial part of the plot and limit their appearances; if the players need the aid of an all-powerful NPC to overcome the monsters and challenges thrown at them on a regular basis, you may need to rethink your challenge level, not step up the level of support you give them.

RAILROADING

'Railroading' occurs when the party's options are deliberately restricted by the GM, usually to ensure that the plot proceeds as the GM has planned it. How this works varies from one game to another, but it ultimately boils down to the GM striking down alternate paths with an elaborate variation of *"You can't do that."* The second the plot demands that the party explore the nearby cave, the main bridge out of town suddenly collapses, the roadways are populated by high-Level Notorious Monsters, and the townsfolk can't stop talking about the MARSH CAVE to the NORTH. The result is a game on rails — all the players can do follow the path the GM has set out for them.

This is fine in moderation — after all, *Final Fantasy* games are picturebook examples of railroading — but can frustrate players if it becomes too frequent or obvious. For this reason, it is important to keep your options open; instead of developing rigid story structure, use the 'web of events' model set out earlier in the chapter to lay out potential campaign paths and be prepared to improvise if needed.

CHALLENGE FACTOR

There's a fine line between keeping the players on their toes and destroying the party so comprehensively that their toes are about all that's left after the dust settles. Keep current copies of your players' character sheets when designing encounters so you have a reasonable idea of what challenges are suitable for their overall ability level, and pay attention how the group deals with the obstacles you put in their way. If you notice that they are having more problems than expected on a regular basis, don't dismiss it as bad playing and plow forward — adjust the difficulty down to compensate and give them a chance to get their bearings. And if the worst should come to pass and the entire party is wiped out as a result of a badly-designed encounter, apologize and rewrite the fight so the players have a fair shake — otherwise, you may be looking for a new group the week after.

At the same time, it's perfectly possible to be *too* generous with

the difficulty level, showering the party with high-level equipment for defeating creampuff monsters that crumple after just two hits. Though some may enjoy this kind of campaign, in general it's more satisfying for all involved if they have to sweat a little to gain something in-game. Remember: difficulty adjustments go both ways. There's no shame in quietly raising a monster's HP if it's dying faster than expected, or adding new challenges if existing ones don't seem to be taxing your group.

MARGINALISING PLAYERS

Players select Abilities, Skills, Traits, and special equipment because they believe they will get a chance to use them. As a result, the easiest way to frustrate your players is to either ignore their characters' capabilities or shut them down entirely. If the party has invested heavily in Social Skills, the last thing you want to do is keep them on the road or crawling through monster-infested dungeons for the bulk of the campaign. If your party's resident Black Mage signed on with the expectation of throwing some lightning bolts around, don't have monsters slap *Silence* on him at the start of every battle. If the group is capable of using a lot of Status Conditions, try to avoid giving their opponent blanket immunity to everything the group can throw at them. Your players want to use their toys — let them. If things get too out of hand, there are still plenty of ways you can cut them down to size.

LOSING PLAYERS

Even the best-run campaigns suffer from attrition. Scheduling conflicts, loss of interest, personal problems, or moves can all whittle down your player numbers. Overlooking the need to find replacements, the departure of any player leaves you with a hole in your cast, story-wise — and three ways to deal with it.

If the player may come back at a later date, contrive a reason for the player's character to temporarily leave the party. Perhaps their kingdom is in trouble, or they've been called back by their old gang for one last heist — whatever the situation may be, this approach leaves the door open for an eventual comeback. If the player decides to return to the group, you can arrange for a surprise reappearance during the next session; if not, the character has already been relegated to the background, making their permanent departure less jarring.

If the player is gone for good, one option is to bring in someone else to take over the character, or turn said character into an NPC. This kind of 'recasting' should only be done with the original player's consent, and may yield mixed results — for better or worse, characters are almost inseparable from the person playing him or her.

If the player is gone and having the character continue under somebody else's direction isn't feasible, the final option is to simply kill them off in a spectacular fashion. This can offer you some nice dramatic possibilities, but should be reserved for players who definitely aren't returning — the last thing the group needs is for said player to show up out of the blue a few weeks down the line, demanding to know what happened to his PC.

CREATING NEW RACES

While **Chapter 3** tries to offer a diverse selection of races for players to choose from, GMs may find themselves in a position where the 'stock' races don't meet their campaign's needs, especially if the campaign world sports an unusual setting or background.

In situations like these, there are two possible options. The first is to 'reflavor' an existing race by changing the name and particulars but retaining the Racial Maximums. As the **FFRPG** races are intended to cover a broad range of strength, speed, durability, and magical aptitude, chances are one of them will fit your needs.

The second, but more involved, alternative is to create a new race from scratch using the existing lineup as a model for your own ideas and concepts. Before beginning the process, however, consider the following questions:

Does the race fill a niche? Every race should have a place in the campaign's universe as well as a clearly-defined role within the system. Humans are great everymen, Galka make superb warriors but mediocre mages, and Tarutaru are magically unparalleled but physically helpless. Think about where your race fits into this spectrum — is it strong and fast, but physically fragile? Does it combine durability and magical power at the expense of physical damage?

Is the niche not filled by an existing race? Once you've figured out the race's niche, see where it stands in relation to the existing races. If that niche overlaps with one or more of the races described in **Chapter 3**, it may be easier and more sensible to simply reflavor the races in question.

Is the concept distinctive enough to warrant a race of its own? Sub-races are a common phenomenon in classic fantasy, and even seen in later **Final Fantasy** games. The reptilian Bangaa with their four sub-groups are an excellent example of this phenomenon. But is it worth drafting separate Maximums and backgrounds for all four when one writeup will do? Is a unique Ancient race needed when the same could end result be accomplished by making a Human character with specific Traits? If the new race is nothing more than a minor variation on an existing race, you should consider using this 'base' race instead.

Will anyone be willing to use or talk to the race you make? While an animated stuffed animal might be interesting as a concept, your players may balk at bringing that concept to the character stage. Think about the player appeal first and foremost when developing the race — nothing is worse than wasting effort on something nobody wants.

If the answers to those four questions are 'yes,' it's time to begin racial creation in earnest.

RACIAL MAXIMUMS

From a mechanical standpoint, creating a new race is relatively easy — the only thing needed a Racial Maximum for each of the six Attributes. 10 is the 'average' value for each Attribute, and is equivalent to the capabilities of a healthy adult Human. Using this as

a baseline, you can figure out which value is appropriate for the new race in question. For instance, if a race is slightly stronger than Humans, their Racial Maximum for STR should be 11 or 12; if they are significantly weaker, 6 or 7 would be more suitable.

Bear in mind that the combined Racial Maximums for all Attributes must equal 60, with no Maximum higher than 15 or lower than 5.

APPEARANCE

Once the raw numbers are finalized, it's time to consider what the race looks like. A little imagination goes a long way here — after all, the races of **Final Fantasy** run the gamut from the almost-human Lunarians to the brutish, piglike Seeq and Orcs. It's best to stick with a generally humanoid shape, however, as humanoids can use all of the equipment, Skills, and Abilities given in this book with no difficulties or significant leaps of logic. Introducing a race with a more unusual configuration means a number of potential headaches — how will they hold a sword or pick a lock if they walk on all fours? If they have four arms, how do you justify the character only being able to wield two swords at any one time?

HEIGHT AND WEIGHT

A race's average height and weight can say a fair bit about their physiology at a glance. While height can be easy to calculate, however, weight is somewhat trickier. To get a 'realistic' average weight for a humanoid race of medium built, use the following formula:

$$\text{Weight (in kg)} = 22.85 \times \text{Height (meters)} \times \text{Height (meters)}$$

The results of this formula may need to be adjusted depending on your concept; a stockier race would have notably higher weight where a slimmer race would be lighter.

SOCIETY

Society looks at a race's civilization, from social organization and familial structures to military and religion. How a race structures itself reflects on its personality, and vice versa; rigid, highly organized races are likely to be sober and serious when compared to ones with laid-back and loose-knit societies.

The best place to get ideas for a racial culture is our own world. Many of the societies explored in **Chapter 3** are based on real-world cultures, and serve as a good example of what you can do with this kind of approach. Of course, not every race has to be a slavish copy of a human counterpart — mix and match customs, beliefs, structures, and ideas as needed to create something new and unique. The important thing to watch out for is that the final combination of traits still makes sense — don't create a technologically advanced society of scientists and thinkers, then write that their culture is repressively conservative and opposed to any and all change.

ROLEPLAYING

The 'Roleplaying' section of a racial writeup looks at aspects and quirks that are likely to have an impact on how an adventuring

character of that race gets along with fellow party members and existence in general. Personality traits tend to emerge naturally from a race's social structure — members of isolated societies will be either highly suspicious or deeply enthralled by the outside world, whereas wanderers and nomads are more at home with the sights and experiences of the questing lifestyle.

Adventuring characters in particular may deserve special mention. Those who are willing to leave behind the comforts of home and family for the uncertainties of life on the road can do so either because of or in spite of their social backgrounds; if anything, repressive, conservative societies are just as likely to spawn rebels and wanderers as permissive, open-minded ones. If the kind of characters that would normally be found in an **FFRPG** party fly in the face of social norms for their respective races, explain why, and how their personalities differ as a consequence.

CREATING EQUIPMENT

Though the lists given in **Chapter 6** are meant to be comprehensive, GMs may find themselves needing hard numbers for equipment types and options that just aren't covered in this book. As with races, the easiest way to do this is to use the nearest comparable piece of 'official' equipment as a starting point and run with the numbers. A Qu Battle Fork can be treated as roughly equivalent to a Polearm; a War Fan to a Ninja Knife. With Armor, only the names change; with Weapons, you just need to adjust the Weapon type, the individual names, and the Skill needed to wield it.

For GMs interested in creating completely new equipment, this section contains the rules needed to whip up an original list or augment an existing one. Note that the system presented here is not the same as the one described in **Appendix I** — these steps here are meant exclusively for 'behind the scenes' work, and produce slightly different numbers than player-crafted items.

Creating Weapons

To create a Weapon, you must decide four things: the Weapon's damage die, the Attribute used in the Weapon's damage code, the Skill used to wield it, and whether or not the Weapon takes up the Shield Slot. In general, d12 Weapons take up both Slots for balance reasons — it is better to carry this rule of thumb over to any 'homemade' Weapons created with this system.

DAMAGE DIE

The Weapon's damage die — d6, d8, d10, d12 — determines how much damage the weapon will do as well as how much it costs. The size of the Weapon tends to be reflected in the choice of damage die — smaller Weapons like Knives use d6s, while larger weapons like Polearms use d12s.

ATTRIBUTE

The Attribute used in damage calculations are also defined by the Weapon's type. STR is used for cutting or slashing Weapons, as well as missile Weapons that depend on muscle power to do damage, like Bows. AGI is used for piercing Weapons where dexterity has more effect than brute force, as well as ballistic Weapons that do not depend on strength, like Rifles and Crossbows. Finally, MAG is used for Weapons that focus the wielder's own magical power to do damage. Choosing an Attribute other than STR will reduce the Weapon's Availability by 1 and increase its base cost by **x 1.1** on top of any other price modifiers the Weapon is subject to. Regardless of which Attribute is chosen, the Weapon continues to deal Physical damage unless it is given the *Magical Attack* property.

EQUIPMENT TIER

Once the basic details of the Weapon have been settled on, the next thing to figure out is what Tier the Weapon is. For complete equipment tables, you will want to create two Weapons for each Tier from 1 through 10 — one with Equipment Abilities, one without. It is also possible to create individual Weapons within those Tiers.

SLOTS

In order to determine the cost of Equipment Abilities as well as make sure that a Weapon's Abilities remain appropriate to its Tier, adding special properties to a Weapon is handled with a simple system based on Slots. Every Equipment Ability takes up a certain number of Slots on a Weapon, and each Tier only has room for a certain number of Slots. If an Equipment Ability takes up more Slots than a Weapon of that Tier can support, it cannot be added. The exact breakdown of Slots per Tier can be seen below.

Table 10-7: Equipment Slots per Tier

EQUIPMENT TIER	NUMBER OF SLOTS AVAILABLE
1	2
2	2
3	3
4	3
5	4
6	4
7	5
8	10

To find out a new Weapon's cost and Availability, determine how many Slots its Ability occupies — checking en route whether the Ability can actually be supported by a Weapon of that Tier — and check the result against **Tables 10-8 to 10-11**.

Note that the tables on the following pages only go up to Tier 8 — as Artifact and Legendary Weapons have no price attached to them, creating Weapons like these is just a matter of assigning appropriate Equipment Abilities and tracking down the corresponding damage code on the tables.

+x [Attribute]: +x Slots
 +10 ACC: +1 Slot
 +10 DEX: +2 Slots
 +10 EVA: +1 Slot
 +10 EXP: +1 Slot
 +10 M. ACC: +1 Slot
 +10 M. EVA: +1 Slot
 +10 MND: +2 Slots
 +20 ACC: +2 Slots
 +20 DEX: +3 Slots
 +20 EVA: +2 Slots
 +20 EXP: +2 Slots
 +20 M. ACC: +2 Slots
 +20 M. EVA: +2 Slots
 +20 MND: +3 Slots
 +30 ACC: +3 Slots
 +30 M.ACC: +3 Slots
 +30 EXP: +3 Slots
 +10% HP: +1 Slot
 +10% MP: +2 Slots
 Auto-Agility Up: +3 Slots
 Auto-Float: +1 Slot
 Auto-Magic Up: +6 Slots
 Auto-Power Up: +6 Slots
 Auto-Reraise: +5 Slots
 Auto-Regen: +4 Slots
 Auto-Haste: +6 Slots
 Auto-Protect: +3 Slots
 Auto-Shell: +3 Slots
 Auto-Spirit Up: +3 Slots
 Auto-Reflect: +2 Slots
 Berserk Proof: +2 Slots
 Berserk Strike: +3 Slots
 Berserk Touch: +2 Slots
 Blind Proof: +1 Slot
 Blind Strike: +2 Slots
 Blind Touch: +1 Slots
 Charm Proof: +4 Slots
 Condemned Proof: +2 Slots

Condemned Strike: +4 Slots
 Condemned Touch: +2 Slots
 Confusion Proof: +3 Slots
 Confusion Strike: +3 Slots
 Confusion Touch: +2 Slots
 Critical+: +2 Slots
 Critical++: +4 Slots
 Curse Proof: +3 Slots
 Curse Strike: +2 Slots
 Curse Touch: +1 Slots
 Death Proof: +4 Slots
 Death Strike: +6 Slots
 Death Touch: +4 Slots
 Disable Proof: +2 Slots
 Disable Strike: +3 Slots
 Disable Touch: +2 Slots
 [Element] Ward: +1 Slot
 [Element] Proof: +2 Slots
 [Element] Eater: +4 Slots
 [Element] Strike: +1 Slot
 [Enemy Type] Killer: +2 Slots
 [Element] Enhancer: +3 Slots
 Headhunter: +2 Slots
 HP Drain: +3 Slots
 Immobilize Proof: +1 Slot
 Immobilize Strike: +2 Slot
 Immobilize Touch: +1 Slot
 Mini Proof: +2 Slots
 Mini Strike: +3 Slots
 Mini Touch: +2 Slots
 MP Damage: +1 Slot
 MP Drain: +2 Slots
 Petrify Proof: +2 Slots
 Petrify Strike: +4 Slots
 Petrify Touch: +2 Slots
 Piercing: +2 Slots
 Poison Proof: +1 Slot
 Poison Strike: +2 Slot
 Poison Touch: +1 Slot

Sensor: +1 Slot
 Silence Proof: +2 Slots
 Silence Strike: +2 Slot
 Silence Touch: +1 Slot
 Sleep Proof: +1 Slot
 Sleep Strike: +2 Slot
 Sleep Touch: +1 Slot
 Slow Proof: +2 Slots
 Slow Strike: +2 Slots
 Slow Touch: +1 Slot
 SOS-Agility Up: +1 Slot
 SOS-Aura: +3 Slots
 SOS-Berserk: +1 Slots
 SOS-Esuna: +3 Slots
 SOS-Float: +2 Slots
 SOS-Haste: +3 Slots
 SOS-Magic Up: +3 Slots
 SOS-Power Up: +3 Slots
 SOS-Protect: +2 Slots
 SOS-Reflect: +1 Slots
 SOS-Regen: +2 Slots
 SOS-Reraise: +4 Slots
 SOS-Shell: +2 Slots
 SOS-Spirit Up: +1 Slot
 SOS-Vanish: +3 Slots
 Stone Proof: +4 Slots
 Stone Strike: +6 Slots
 Stone Touch: +4 Slots
 Toad Proof: +2 Slots
 Toad Strike: +3 Slots
 Toad Touch: +2 Slots
 Triple Critical: +3 Slots
 [x] Break Proof: +2 Slots
 Venom Proof: +2 Slots
 Venom Strike: +3 Slots
 Venom Touch: +2 Slots
 Zombie Proof: +2 Slots
 Zombie Strike: +3 Slots
 Zombie Touch: +2 Slots

These options and Slot costs are also used in creating Armor, though not every option will apply in that case.

PRICING SPECIAL WEAPON PROPERTIES

Some Weapons have innate properties that apply to all Weapons of a given class. These properties may also be given to other Weapons, though this will usually change the price listed in **Tables 10-8 to 10-11** by a certain amount. A Weapon's properties may never reduce its Availability by more than 3.

AMMUNITION

Effect: Characters equipped with this Weapon may elect to use specialized ammunition instead of the basic ammunition used by default. Ammunition must be purchased beforehand, and can be

used to add additional Equipment Abilities to the Weapon being used to make the Attack; the Weapon itself will have no Equipment Abilities. *Ammunition* can only be used with Ranged Weapons. This innate property is found on Bows, Crossbows, and Rifles.

Cost Modifier: x 1.0 **Availability Modifier:** 0

DOUBLE CUT

Effect: When equipped with this Weapon, the character may use the *Two Weapons* Skill to make two Attack Actions as if he had equipped two separate Weapons. This innate property is found on Gloves and Claws, and must be combined with the *Two-Handed* property.

Cost Modifier: x 1.1 **Availability Modifier:** -1

DOUBLE STRIKE

Effect: Any Attack Action made with this Weapon may roll to hit twice, applying the better result of the two. This innate property is found on Swallows

Cost Modifier: x 1.2 **Availability Modifier:** -2

ENTANGLE

Effect: Any Attack Action made with this Weapon will inflict the Status Condition *Immobilize* (2) on a successful Critical Hit. This innate property is found on Flails.

Cost Modifier: x 1.2 **Availability Modifier:** -2

LOOPING STRIKE

Effect: Any Attack Action made with this Weapon may roll to hit a second time if the first attack misses. This innate property is found on Boomerangs

Cost Modifier: x 1.1 **Availability Modifier:** -1

MAGICAL ATTACK

Effect: Damage inflicted by this Weapon's attacks is treated as Magical rather than Physical, and will be reduced by M. ARM rather than ARM.

Cost Modifier: x 1.0 **Availability Modifier:** 0

MANA CHANNEL

Effect: When calculating damage inflicted by this Weapon, the wielder's STR or MAG score can be used to determine the final damage. This innate property is found on Staves.

Cost Modifier: x 1.2 **Availability Modifier:** -2

QUICKSILVER

Effect: When calculating damage inflicted by this Weapon, the wielder's STR or AGI score can be used to determine the final damage. This innate property is found on Knives.

Cost Modifier: x 1.2 **Availability Modifier:** -2

RANGED

Effect: The Weapon's attacks are treated as being Ranged. This innate property is found on Boomerangs, Bows, Crossbows, Instruments, and Rifles.

Cost Modifier: x 1.1 **Availability Modifier:** -1

TWO-HANDED

Effect: The Weapon takes up both Shield and Weapon Slots. Must be taken by all d12 Weapons. This innate property is found on Axes, Claws, Gloves, Polearms, Greatswords, and Rifles.

Cost Modifier: x 1.0 **Availability Modifier:** 0

Table 10-8: d6 Weapons

TIER	SLOTS FILLED	BASE COST	BASE AVAILABILITY	DAMAGE
1	0	75	96%	2 x Attribute + d6
1	1	180	94%	2 x Attribute + d6
1	2	300	92%	2 x Attribute + d6
2	0	450	90%	3 x Attribute + d6
2	1	630	88%	3 x Attribute + d6
2	2	810	86%	3 x Attribute + d6
3	0	1000	84%	5 x Attribute + 2d6
3	1	1250	82%	5 x Attribute + 2d6
3	2	1500	80%	5 x Attribute + 2d6
3	3	1750	78%	5 x Attribute + 2d6
4	0	2000	75%	6 x Attribute + 2d6
4	1	2300	73%	6 x Attribute + 2d6
4	2	2500	71%	6 x Attribute + 2d6
4	3	2800	69%	6 x Attribute + 2d6
5	0	3100	66%	7 x Attribute + 3d6
5	1	3400	64%	7 x Attribute + 3d6
5	2	3800	62%	7 x Attribute + 3d6
5	3	4100	60%	7 x Attribute + 3d6
5	4	4400	58%	7 x Attribute + 3d6
6	0	4700	56%	9 x Attribute + 3d6
6	1	5100	55%	9 x Attribute + 3d6
6	2	5400	54%	9 x Attribute + 3d6
6	3	5800	52%	9 x Attribute + 3d6
6	4	6100	50%	9 x Attribute + 3d6
7	0	6400	48%	10 x Attribute + 4d6
7	1	6800	47%	10 x Attribute + 4d6
7	2	7100	46%	10 x Attribute + 4d6
7	3	7400	44%	10 x Attribute + 4d6
7	4	7800	42%	10 x Attribute + 4d6
7	5	8100	40%	10 x Attribute + 4d6
8	0	8400	37%	11 x Attribute + 4d6
8	1	8800	36%	11 x Attribute + 4d6
8	2	9100	35%	11 x Attribute + 4d6
8	3	9400	34%	11 x Attribute + 4d6
8	4	9700	33%	11 x Attribute + 4d6
8	5	10000	32%	11 x Attribute + 4d6
8	6	10200	31%	11 x Attribute + 4d6
8	7	10500	30%	11 x Attribute + 4d6
8	8	10800	28%	11 x Attribute + 4d6
8	9	11000	26%	11 x Attribute + 4d6
8	10	11300	24%	11 x Attribute + 4d6

Table 10-9: d8 Weapons

TIER	SLOTS FILLED	BASE COST	BASE AVAILABILITY	DAMAGE
1	0	100	95%	2 x Attribute + d8
1	1	240	93%	2 x Attribute + d8
1	2	400	91%	2 x Attribute + d8
2	0	600	89%	3 x Attribute + d8
2	1	840	87%	3 x Attribute + d8
2	2	1080	85%	3 x Attribute + d8
3	0	1350	83%	5 x Attribute + 2d8
3	1	1650	81%	5 x Attribute + 2d8
3	2	1950	79%	5 x Attribute + 2d8
3	3	2300	77%	5 x Attribute + 2d8
4	0	2700	74%	6 x Attribute + 2d8
4	1	3000	72%	6 x Attribute + 2d8
4	2	3400	70%	6 x Attribute + 2d8
4	3	3800	68%	6 x Attribute + 2d8
5	0	4200	65%	8 x Attribute + 3d8
5	1	4600	63%	8 x Attribute + 3d8
5	2	5000	61%	8 x Attribute + 3d8
5	3	5400	59%	8 x Attribute + 3d8
5	4	5900	57%	8 x Attribute + 3d8
6	0	6300	55%	10 x Attribute + 3d8
6	1	6800	54%	10 x Attribute + 3d8
6	2	7200	53%	10 x Attribute + 3d8
6	3	7700	51%	10 x Attribute + 3d8
6	4	8100	49%	10 x Attribute + 3d8
7	0	8600	47%	11 x Attribute + 4d8
7	1	9000	46%	11 x Attribute + 4d8
7	2	9500	45%	11 x Attribute + 4d8
7	3	9900	43%	11 x Attribute + 4d8
7	4	10400	41%	11 x Attribute + 4d8
7	5	10800	39%	11 x Attribute + 4d8
8	0	11200	36%	13 x Attribute + 4d8
8	1	11700	35%	13 x Attribute + 4d8
8	2	12100	34%	13 x Attribute + 4d8
8	3	12500	33%	13 x Attribute + 4d8
8	4	12900	32%	13 x Attribute + 4d8
8	5	13300	31%	13 x Attribute + 4d8
8	6	13600	30%	13 x Attribute + 4d8
8	7	14000	29%	13 x Attribute + 4d8
8	8	14300	27%	13 x Attribute + 4d8
8	9	14600	25%	13 x Attribute + 4d8
8	10	14900	23%	13 x Attribute + 4d8

Table 10-10: d10 Weapons

TIER	SLOTS FILLED	BASE COST	BASE AVAILABILITY	DAMAGE
1	0	120	94%	2 x Attribute + d10
1	1	290	92%	2 x Attribute + d10
1	2	500	90%	2 x Attribute + d10
2	0	750	88%	4 x Attribute + d10
2	1	1050	86%	4 x Attribute + d10
2	2	1350	84%	4 x Attribute + d10
3	0	1700	82%	6 x Attribute + 2d10
3	1	2050	80%	6 x Attribute + 2d10
3	2	2450	78%	6 x Attribute + 2d10
3	3	2900	76%	6 x Attribute + 2d10
4	0	3300	73%	8 x Attribute + 2d10
4	1	3800	71%	8 x Attribute + 2d10
4	2	4200	69%	8 x Attribute + 2d10
4	3	4700	67%	8 x Attribute + 2d10
5	0	5200	64%	10 x Attribute + 3d10
5	1	5700	62%	10 x Attribute + 3d10
5	2	6300	60%	10 x Attribute + 3d10
5	3	6800	58%	10 x Attribute + 3d10
5	4	7400	56%	10 x Attribute + 3d10
6	0	7900	54%	11 x Attribute + 3d10
6	1	8500	53%	11 x Attribute + 3d10
6	2	9000	52%	11 x Attribute + 3d10
6	3	9600	50%	11 x Attribute + 3d10
6	4	10200	48%	11 x Attribute + 3d10
7	0	10700	46%	13 x Attribute + 4d10
7	1	11300	45%	13 x Attribute + 4d10
7	2	11900	44%	13 x Attribute + 4d10
7	3	12400	42%	13 x Attribute + 4d10
7	4	13000	40%	13 x Attribute + 4d10
7	5	13500	38%	13 x Attribute + 4d10
8	0	14000	35%	15 x Attribute + 4d10
8	1	14600	34%	15 x Attribute + 4d10
8	2	15100	33%	15 x Attribute + 4d10
8	3	15600	32%	15 x Attribute + 4d10
8	4	16100	31%	15 x Attribute + 4d10
8	5	16600	30%	15 x Attribute + 4d10
8	6	17000	29%	15 x Attribute + 4d10
8	7	17500	28%	15 x Attribute + 4d10
8	8	17900	26%	15 x Attribute + 4d10
8	9	18300	24%	15 x Attribute + 4d10
8	10	18700	22%	15 x Attribute + 4d10

Table 10-11: d12 Weapons

TIER	SLOTS FILLED	BASE COST	BASE AVAILABILITY	DAMAGE
1	0	140	93%	2 x Attribute + d12
1	1	350	91%	2 x Attribute + d12
1	2	600	89%	2 x Attribute + d12
2	0	900	87%	4 x Attribute + d12
2	1	1260	85%	4 x Attribute + d12
2	2	1620	83%	4 x Attribute + d12
3	0	2050	81%	6 x Attribute + 2d12
3	1	2450	79%	6 x Attribute + 2d12
3	2	2950	77%	6 x Attribute + 2d12
3	3	3500	75%	6 x Attribute + 2d12
4	0	4000	72%	9 x Attribute + 2d12
4	1	4600	70%	9 x Attribute + 2d12
4	2	5000	68%	9 x Attribute + 2d12
4	3	5600	66%	9 x Attribute + 2d12
5	0	6200	63%	11 x Attribute + 3d12
5	1	6800	61%	11 x Attribute + 3d12
5	2	7600	59%	11 x Attribute + 3d12
5	3	8200	57%	11 x Attribute + 3d12
5	4	8800	55%	11 x Attribute + 3d12
6	0	9500	53%	13 x Attribute + 3d12
6	1	10100	52%	13 x Attribute + 3d12
6	2	10800	51%	13 x Attribute + 3d12
6	3	11500	49%	13 x Attribute + 3d12
6	4	12200	47%	13 x Attribute + 3d12
7	0	12800	45%	15 x Attribute + 4d12
7	1	13600	44%	15 x Attribute + 4d12
7	2	14200	43%	15 x Attribute + 4d12
7	3	14900	41%	15 x Attribute + 4d12
7	4	15600	39%	15 x Attribute + 4d12
7	5	16200	37%	15 x Attribute + 4d12
8	0	16800	34%	17 x Attribute + 4d12
8	1	17500	33%	17 x Attribute + 4d12
8	2	18100	32%	17 x Attribute + 4d12
8	3	18700	31%	17 x Attribute + 4d12
8	4	19300	30%	17 x Attribute + 4d12
8	5	19900	29%	17 x Attribute + 4d12
8	6	20400	28%	17 x Attribute + 4d12
8	7	21000	27%	17 x Attribute + 4d12
8	8	21500	25%	17 x Attribute + 4d12
8	9	22000	23%	17 x Attribute + 4d12
8	10	22500	21%	17 x Attribute + 4d12

Creating Armor

Creating a piece of Armor follows the same steps as creating Weapons, using the Slots system to determine the price and Availability Rating of the final item. The number of Slots consumed by Equipment Abilities remain the same as those given for Weapons earlier. The one key difference is the breakdown in categories – rather than determine pricing and Availability by the damage die, the actual type of Armor is used. This somewhat limits the system's ability to create entirely new kinds of Armor, though the existing categories are vague enough to allow most possibilities.

Table 10-12: Armwear

TIER	SLOTS FILLED	BASE COST	BASE AVAILABILITY	ARM	M. ARM	EVA	M. EVA
1	0	60	95%	1	2	+0	+0
1	1	145	93%	1	2	+0	+0
1	2	250	91%	1	2	+0	+0
2	0	370	89%	3	4	+0	+0
2	1	520	87%	3	4	+0	+0
2	2	670	85%	3	4	+0	+0
3	0	850	83%	5	6	+0	+0
3	1	1050	81%	5	6	+0	+0
3	2	1250	79%	5	6	+0	+0
3	3	1450	77%	5	6	+0	+0
4	0	1700	74%	8	8	+0	+5
4	1	1900	72%	8	8	+0	+5
4	2	2100	70%	8	8	+0	+5
4	3	2400	68%	8	8	+0	+5
5	0	2600	65%	11	10	+0	+5
5	1	2900	63%	11	10	+0	+5
5	2	3200	61%	11	10	+0	+5
5	3	3400	59%	11	10	+0	+5
5	4	3700	57%	11	10	+0	+5
6	0	4000	55%	13	13	+0	+5
6	1	4300	54%	13	13	+0	+5
6	2	4500	53%	13	13	+0	+5
6	3	4800	51%	13	13	+0	+5
6	4	5100	49%	13	13	+0	+5
7	0	5400	47%	16	16	+5	+5
7	1	5700	46%	16	16	+5	+5
7	2	6000	45%	16	16	+5	+5
7	3	6200	43%	16	16	+5	+5
7	4	6500	41%	16	16	+5	+5
7	5	6800	39%	16	16	+5	+5
8	0	7000	36%	19	19	+5	+10
8	1	7300	35%	19	19	+5	+10
8	2	7600	34%	19	19	+5	+10
8	3	7800	33%	19	19	+5	+10
8	4	8100	32%	19	19	+5	+10
8	5	8300	31%	19	19	+5	+10
8	6	8500	30%	19	19	+5	+10
8	7	8800	29%	19	19	+5	+10
8	8	9000	27%	19	19	+5	+10
8	9	9200	25%	19	19	+5	+10
8	10	9400	23%	19	19	+5	+10

Table 10-13: Gauntlets

TIER	SLOTS FILLED	BASE COST	BASE AVAILABILITY	ARM	M. ARM	EVA	M. EVA
1	0	65	96%	2	1	+0	+0
1	1	160	94%	2	1	+0	+0
1	2	275	92%	2	1	+0	+0
2	0	420	90%	5	2	+0	+0
2	1	580	88%	5	2	+0	+0
2	2	750	86%	5	2	+0	+0
3	0	950	84%	8	4	+0	+0
3	1	1150	82%	8	4	+0	+0
3	2	1300	80%	8	4	+0	+0
3	3	1600	78%	8	4	+0	+0
4	0	1800	75%	11	6	+5	0
4	1	2100	73%	11	6	+5	0
4	2	2300	71%	11	6	+5	0
4	3	2600	69%	11	6	+5	0
5	0	2900	66%	14	8	+5	0
5	1	3200	64%	14	8	+5	0
5	2	3500	62%	14	8	+5	0
5	3	3800	60%	14	8	+5	0
5	4	4100	58%	14	8	+5	0
6	0	4300	56%	17	10	+5	0
6	1	4700	55%	17	10	+5	0
6	2	5000	54%	17	10	+5	0
6	3	5300	52%	17	10	+5	0
6	4	5600	50%	17	10	+5	0
7	0	5900	48%	20	12	+5	+5
7	1	6200	47%	20	12	+5	+5
7	2	6600	46%	20	12	+5	+5
7	3	6900	44%	20	12	+5	+5
7	4	7200	42%	20	12	+5	+5
7	5	7500	40%	20	12	+5	+5
8	0	7800	37%	23	15	+10	+5
8	1	8100	36%	23	15	+10	+5
8	2	8400	35%	23	15	+10	+5
8	3	8600	34%	23	15	+10	+5
8	4	8900	33%	23	15	+10	+5
8	5	9200	32%	23	15	+10	+5
8	6	9400	31%	23	15	+10	+5
8	7	9700	30%	23	15	+10	+5
8	8	9900	28%	23	15	+10	+5
8	9	10100	26%	23	15	+10	+5
8	10	10300	24%	23	15	+10	+5

Table 10-14: Hats

TIER	SLOTS FILLED	BASE COST	BASE AVAILABILITY	ARM	M. ARM	EVA	M. EVA
1	0	80	96%	1	3	+0	+0
1	1	200	94%	1	3	+0	+0
1	2	350	92%	1	3	+0	+0
2	0	530	90%	4	6	+0	+0
2	1	740	88%	4	6	+0	+0
2	2	950	86%	4	6	+0	+0
3	0	1200	84%	7	9	+0	+0
3	1	1400	82%	7	9	+0	+0
3	2	1700	80%	7	9	+0	+0
3	3	2000	78%	7	9	+0	+0
4	0	2300	75%	10	13	+0	+0
4	1	2700	73%	10	13	+0	+0
4	2	2900	71%	10	13	+0	+0
4	3	3300	69%	10	13	+0	+0
5	0	3600	66%	13	17	+0	+0
5	1	4000	64%	13	17	+0	+0
5	2	4400	62%	13	17	+0	+0
5	3	4800	60%	13	17	+0	+0
5	4	5100	58%	13	17	+0	+0
6	0	5500	56%	16	21	+0	+0
6	1	5900	55%	16	21	+0	+0
6	2	6300	54%	16	21	+0	+0
6	3	6700	52%	16	21	+0	+0
6	4	7100	50%	16	21	+0	+0
7	0	7500	48%	19	25	+0	+5
7	1	7900	47%	19	25	+0	+5
7	2	8300	46%	19	25	+0	+5
7	3	8700	44%	19	25	+0	+5
7	4	9100	42%	19	25	+0	+5
7	5	9500	40%	19	25	+0	+5
8	0	9800	37%	22	29	+0	+5
8	1	10200	36%	22	29	+0	+5
8	2	10600	35%	22	29	+0	+5
8	3	10900	34%	22	29	+0	+5
8	4	11300	33%	22	29	+0	+5
8	5	11600	32%	22	29	+0	+5
8	6	11900	31%	23	15	+10	+5
8	7	12300	30%	23	15	+10	+5
8	8	12500	28%	23	15	+10	+5
8	9	12800	26%	23	15	+10	+5
8	10	13100	24%	23	15	+10	+5

Table 10-15: Helmets

TIER	SLOTS FILLED	BASE COST	BASE AVAILABILITY	ARM	M. ARM	EVA	M. EVA
1	0	70	95%	3	1	+0	+0
1	1	170	93%	3	1	+0	+0
1	2	300	91%	3	1	+0	+0
2	0	450	89%	5	4	+0	+0
2	1	630	87%	5	4	+0	+0
2	2	810	85%	5	4	+0	+0
3	0	1000	83%	9	7	+0	+0
3	1	1250	81%	9	7	+0	+0
3	2	1500	79%	9	7	+0	+0
3	3	1750	77%	9	7	+0	+0
4	0	2000	74%	13	10	+0	+0
4	1	2300	72%	13	10	+0	+0
4	2	2500	70%	13	10	+0	+0
4	3	2800	68%	13	10	+0	+0
5	0	3100	65%	17	13	+0	+0
5	1	3400	63%	17	13	+0	+0
5	2	3800	61%	17	13	+0	+0
5	3	4100	59%	17	13	+0	+0
5	4	4500	57%	17	13	+0	+0
6	0	4800	55%	21	16	+0	+0
6	1	5100	54%	21	16	+0	+0
6	2	5400	53%	21	16	+0	+0
6	3	5800	51%	21	16	+0	+0
6	4	6100	49%	21	16	+0	+0
7	0	6500	47%	25	19	+5	+0
7	1	6800	46%	25	19	+5	+0
7	2	7200	45%	25	19	+5	+0
7	3	7500	43%	25	19	+5	+0
7	4	7800	41%	25	19	+5	+0
7	5	8100	39%	25	19	+5	+0
8	0	8400	36%	29	22	+5	+0
8	1	8800	35%	29	22	+5	+0
8	2	9100	34%	29	22	+5	+0
8	3	9400	33%	29	22	+5	+0
8	4	9700	32%	29	22	+5	+0
8	5	10000	31%	29	22	+5	+0
8	6	10200	30%	29	22	+5	+0
8	7	10500	29%	29	22	+5	+0
8	8	10700	27%	29	22	+5	+0
8	9	11000	25%	29	22	+5	+0
8	10	11300	23%	29	22	+5	+0

Table 10-16: Mail

TIER	SLOTS FILLED	BASE COST	BASE AVAILABILITY	ARM	M. ARM	EVA	M. EVA
1	0	110	93%	5	3	+0	+0
1	1	260	91%	5	3	+0	+0
1	2	450	89%	5	3	+0	+0
2	0	680	87%	11	7	+0	+0
2	1	950	85%	11	7	+0	+0
2	2	1220	83%	11	7	+0	+0
3	0	1500	81%	16	11	+0	+0
3	1	1800	79%	16	11	+0	+0
3	2	2200	77%	16	11	+0	+0
3	3	2600	75%	16	11	+0	+0
4	0	3000	72%	21	15	+0	+0
4	1	3500	70%	21	15	+0	+0
4	2	3800	68%	21	15	+0	+0
4	3	4300	66%	21	15	+0	+0
5	0	4700	63%	26	19	+0	+0
5	1	5200	61%	26	19	+0	+0
5	2	5700	59%	26	19	+0	+0
5	3	6200	57%	26	19	+0	+0
5	4	6600	55%	26	19	+0	+0
6	0	7100	53%	32	23	+5	+0
6	1	7600	52%	32	23	+5	+0
6	2	8100	51%	32	23	+5	+0
6	3	8600	49%	32	23	+5	+0
6	4	9200	47%	32	23	+5	+0
7	0	9600	45%	38	27	+5	+0
7	1	10200	44%	38	27	+5	+0
7	2	10700	43%	38	27	+5	+0
7	3	11200	41%	38	27	+5	+0
7	4	11700	39%	38	27	+5	+0
7	5	12200	37%	38	27	+5	+0
8	0	12600	34%	44	31	+5	+5
8	1	13200	33%	44	31	+5	+5
8	2	13600	32%	44	31	+5	+5
8	3	14100	31%	44	31	+5	+5
8	4	14500	30%	44	31	+5	+5
8	5	15000	29%	44	31	+5	+5
8	6	15300	28%	44	31	+5	+5
8	7	15800	27%	44	31	+5	+5
8	8	16100	25%	44	31	+5	+5
8	9	16500	23%	44	31	+5	+5
8	10	16900	21%	44	31	+5	+5

Table 10-17: Robes

TIER	SLOTS FILLED	BASE COST	BASE AVAILABILITY	ARM	M. ARM	EVA	M. EVA
1	0	95	93%	3	5	+0	+0
1	1	230	91%	3	5	+0	+0
1	2	400	89%	3	5	+0	+0
2	0	600	87%	7	11	+0	+0
2	1	840	85%	7	11	+0	+0
2	2	1080	83%	7	11	+0	+0
3	0	1400	81%	11	16	+0	+0
3	1	1650	79%	11	16	+0	+0
3	2	1950	77%	11	16	+0	+0
3	3	2300	75%	11	16	+0	+0
4	0	2600	72%	15	21	+0	+0
4	1	3000	70%	15	21	+0	+0
4	2	3400	68%	15	21	+0	+0
4	3	3800	66%	15	21	+0	+0
5	0	4200	63%	19	26	+0	+0
5	1	4600	61%	19	26	+0	+0
5	2	5000	59%	19	26	+0	+0
5	3	5400	57%	19	26	+0	+0
5	4	5900	55%	19	26	+0	+0
6	0	6300	53%	23	32	+0	+5
6	1	6800	52%	23	32	+0	+5
6	2	7200	51%	23	32	+0	+5
6	3	7700	49%	23	32	+0	+5
6	4	8100	47%	23	32	+0	+5
7	0	8600	45%	27	38	+0	+5
7	1	9000	44%	27	38	+0	+5
7	2	9500	43%	27	38	+0	+5
7	3	9900	41%	27	38	+0	+5
7	4	10400	39%	27	38	+0	+5
7	5	10800	37%	27	38	+0	+5
8	0	11200	34%	31	38	+0	+5
8	1	11700	33%	31	44	+5	+5
8	2	12100	32%	31	44	+5	+5
8	3	12500	31%	31	44	+5	+5
8	4	12900	30%	31	44	+5	+5
8	5	13300	29%	31	44	+5	+5
8	6	13600	28%	31	44	+5	+5
8	7	14000	27%	31	44	+5	+5
8	8	14300	25%	31	44	+5	+5
8	9	14700	23%	31	44	+5	+5
8	10	15100	21%	31	44	+5	+5

Table 10-18: Shields

TIER	SLOTS FILLED	BASE COST	BASE AVAILABILITY	EVA	M. EVA
1	0	80	94%	+4	+1
1	1	195	92%	+4	+1
1	2	330	90%	+4	+1
2	0	500	88%	+9	+3
2	1	700	86%	+9	+3
2	2	900	84%	+9	+3
3	0	1150	82%	+14	+5
3	1	1400	80%	+14	+5
3	2	1650	78%	+14	+5
3	3	2000	76%	+14	+5
4	0	2200	73%	+19	+7
4	1	2500	71%	+19	+7
4	2	2800	69%	+19	+7
4	3	3100	67%	+19	+7
5	0	3500	64%	+24	+9
5	1	3800	62%	+24	+9
5	2	4200	60%	+24	+9
5	3	4500	58%	+24	+9
5	4	4900	56%	+24	+9
6	0	5300	54%	+29	+11
6	1	5600	53%	+29	+11
6	2	6000	52%	+29	+11
6	3	6400	50%	+29	+11
6	4	6700	48%	+29	+11
7	0	7100	46%	+34	+14
7	1	7500	45%	+34	+14
7	2	7900	44%	+34	+14
7	3	8200	42%	+34	+14
7	4	8600	40%	+34	+14
7	5	8900	38%	+34	+14
8	0	9300	35%	+39	+16
8	1	9700	34%	+39	+16
8	2	10000	33%	+39	+16
8	3	10300	32%	+39	+16
8	4	10700	31%	+39	+16
8	5	11000	30%	+39	+16
8	6	11200	29%	+39	+16
8	7	11600	28%	+39	+16
8	8	11900	26%	+39	+16
8	9	12100	24%	+39	+16
8	10	12300	22%	+39	+16

Table 10-19: Suits

TIER	SLOTS FILLED	BASE COST	BASE AVAILABILITY	ARM	M. ARM	EVA	M. EVA
1	0	100	94%	4	4	+0	+0
1	1	240	92%	4	4	+0	+0
1	2	425	90%	4	4	+0	+0
2	0	640	88%	8	8	+0	+0
2	1	900	86%	8	8	+0	+0
2	2	1150	84%	8	8	+0	+0
3	0	1450	82%	13	13	+0	+0
3	1	1750	80%	13	13	+0	+0
3	2	2100	78%	13	13	+0	+0
3	3	2450	76%	13	13	+0	+0
4	0	2800	73%	18	18	+0	+0
4	1	3300	71%	18	18	+0	+0
4	2	3600	69%	18	18	+0	+0
4	3	4000	67%	18	18	+0	+0
5	0	4500	64%	23	23	+0	+0
5	1	4900	62%	23	23	+0	+0
5	2	5400	60%	23	23	+0	+0
5	3	5800	58%	23	23	+0	+0
5	4	6300	56%	23	23	+0	+0
6	0	6700	54%	28	28	+0	+0
6	1	7200	53%	28	28	+0	+0
6	2	7700	52%	28	28	+0	+0
6	3	8200	50%	28	28	+0	+0
6	4	8700	48%	28	28	+0	+0
7	0	9000	46%	33	33	+3	+3
7	1	9600	45%	33	33	+3	+3
7	2	10100	44%	33	33	+3	+3
7	3	10600	42%	33	33	+3	+3
7	4	11000	40%	33	33	+3	+3
7	5	11500	38%	33	33	+3	+3
8	0	11900	35%	38	38	+5	+5
8	1	12400	34%	38	38	+5	+5
8	2	12900	33%	38	38	+5	+5
8	3	13300	32%	38	38	+5	+5
8	4	13700	31%	38	38	+5	+5
8	5	14100	30%	38	38	+5	+5
8	6	14500	29%	38	38	+5	+5
8	7	14900	28%	38	38	+5	+5
8	8	15300	26%	38	38	+5	+5
8	9	15600	24%	38	38	+5	+5
8	10	15900	22%	38	38	+5	+5

CHAPTER GLOSSARY

Previous chapter glossaries recapped the most important concepts introduced in that chapter for quick reference. As a change of pace, this glossary also includes a number of common gaming terms that you may encounter in your sessions. Some of these terms originated with pen-and-paper roleplayers, while others are a product of online gaming culture and have filtered back into the roleplayer vocabulary over time.

Buff. Any effect that improves a character's abilities or power, as with Status Conditions like *Power Up*.

Build. A premeditated design or template for a character, usually developed around a specific set of Advantages, Attributes, and Weapon.

Debuff. Any effect that reduces a character's abilities or power. The Weaken Status Conditions are one example of this.

Dot. Derived from the acronym DOT — 'Damage Over Time'. Effects such as *Poison* and *Sap* fall into this category.

Fudging. Ignoring the result of a roll and deciding what the outcome should be, even if it is different from what the roll would have normally produced. Generally done by the GM if the roll would cause serious problems for the game at hand, though some will use it to 'cheat' the players.

Groggnard. Nickname for older, more conservative gamers who

tend to be deeply involved in their hobby.

House Rules. Tweaks and changes made to a basic RPG ruleset.

Key Item. Item significant to the plot or adventure.

Min-Maxing. The practice of juggling character Attributes, Skills and equipment for maximum effectiveness in combat.

Monty Haul. Derisive nickname for adventures that exist allow characters to acquire increasingly ludicrous levels of money and overpowered equipment for relatively little effort.

Munchkin. Nickname for players preoccupied with finding ever more elaborate means of boosting their characters' power to obscene levels. Munchkins may often take advantage of loopholes in the rules to do this; for this reason, the most effective munchkins will also be relentless **Rules Lawyers**.

Nuke. To deal a large amount of damage in a single attack. 'Nukers' usually tend to be Mage Jobs.

Rules Lawyer. Nickname for players with an encyclopedic knowledge of the rules and habit of arguing their minutiae at every possible turn.

Spam. Repetitive use of a single attack over and over.

Tank. Job or character whose primary role in a battle is to fight on the frontline and absorb the bulk of the damage dealt. This role is usually filled by Warrior Jobs.

TPK. Acronym for 'Total Party Kill' — a disastrous event in which every PC dies.

Wainscotting. Over-describing trivial environmental details like wallpaper.