

The Gooey Way

Our Philosophy

So we started a game company

Weird. Seriously.

We've got an interesting group. Some of us have only been playing for a few years (and a few for only a few months). Some of us are readers, not players. And a few of us think that the rest of us are just crazy.

On the other hand, some of us have been playing and GM'ing for more than 40 years. There are few things we love more than the game. We've collected adventures and supplements and all manner of amazing and wonderful works by incredible authors. We've read hundreds of fantastic fantasy books and magazine articles, follow all kinds of RPG bloggers, and seen the evolution of the game from a little white box to the 5th edition. We've played in enthralling worlds created by others, and we've journeyed in incredible universes of our own making.

And we've GM'd, perhaps, thousands of games (we kinda' lost count 20 years ago).

All this to say that we, collectively, have come to believe what (at least for us) makes for the best game. Now we don't at all want to throw shade at folks who like other styles and other ideas that are different from ours. That's the wonderment of the FRP world. The diversity of it. The extensiveness of it. The imagination of it. And, most of all, the freedom of it.

But for us, it comes down to two words:

Immersive stories.

The belief that immersion and tale are the foundation of great games, infuses all we are doing at Gooey Cube. It colors our imaginations, pushes our creativity, and drives us to develop supplements and scenarios that will help others in their quests to craft amazing sagas that will wow and enthrall their players.

This section presents our philosophy in our quest to create awesome fantasy roleplaying games. These principles, we believe, make for adventures that players are motivated to play, highly engaged in the game when playing, and still talking about their exploits for years to come.

We truly believe that if you embrace these concepts as a GM, you'll likely find that your games are much deeper, way more intense, and far more engaging. If you already use some of these ideas currently, then you know how they enhance a game. Below are the principles that guide us. **Note:** If you'd like to watch some (hopefully) interesting videos on these and other topics, please visit Gooey-Cube.com and check out "Gooey University" (or, Gooey U for short).

Great lore makes the game epic

Great lore doesn't happen overnight. It begins as just small threads that grow, and twist, and spin over time – like a magical fabric – to form a vibrant, colorful, and rich tapestry of adventure. This ultimately results in amazing, complex, and rich backgrounds and backstories that will make your game stand out from others. While fantastic lore doesn't have to begin at the beginning, we have found it helps if it starts there.

Within the pages of our modules, you'll find intriguing introductory stories that will feed into campaigns that are replete with multiple, intersecting storylines, mysterious strangers, dark and dangerous places, hateful antagonists, surprising plot-twists, and more than a few beguiling paths for your players to choose. These key facets are what separate roleplaying games from tabletop combat games. And the difference couldn't be more important if you love RPGs.

All of our Pre-Generated Characters are created specifically for the campaign in which they're destined to play. They always have intricate backgrounds, fascinating attributes, and even some unique talents. We believe they will offer some "wow" to your players – even those who've played for a long time. These characters help further the game-lore and will enhance the overall campaign, but it is never required that your players use them. If they would rather play their own created characters – or you would prefer they do so – do it!

Typically, our Pre-Generated Characters are also relatively tough in terms of stats and hit points – though often they aren't very well-geared. If you run a more "standard" group of first-level characters through most of our starting adventures, it's going to be really tough for them (heck... it's going to be tough for any party of first-level characters). That said, we always give you some options to help keep encounters from being overwhelming for a standard party.

Oh... one more thing. Most of us GMs want to make sure we lawfully follow the rules to give a fair deal to our players. We agree with this. But we don't agree that your players should miss awesome and amazing parts of an adventure just because they skipped an encounter, failed a pick-pocket roll, didn't find a certain secret door, failed to spot an object they needed, or missed the roll to locate the hidden niche with the map inside it.

So... for the sake of the story... for the sake of fun and interest and mystery... and for goodness sakes, because we put so damn much effort into that area of the plot line...

We nudge.

There. We said it. And I, for one, feel so much better now that the air is finally cleared. Because the truth is that most GMs do nudge. And they're absolutely in the right by doing so. Because nudging really can enhance the game.

This means that sometimes we may (reasonably and appropriately) push the players in a certain direction... fudge a spot roll... drop a hint... or make sure an encounter happens for the sake of the story. We don't do it all the time... but when it's needed, we think that good GMs will intercede to make sure an important action is completed, a critical item gets found, or a required clue is discovered.

That's all we're going to say about this.

Tales really do grow in the telling

We agree with the writer of what may be the greatest fantasy story ever written that this statement is true... the tale really does grow in the telling. And we know that many GMs like to add to the story with their own creativity and imagination. So, while the lore we present is evocative and rich, it also gives plenty of room for you to make our adventures your own. Just add or adjust as you see fit to make it special for you and for your players.

Now, you'll find in Gooey Cube adventures that there's a lot going on. You may decide when you wrap your arms around it that you don't really need to do a lot of extra work to run the game. If that works for you, we'll have accomplished the mission. Part of our belief set is that if we can truly provide a rich, complex, evocative, and deep story, coupled with the details for much of it already fleshed out, it helps the GM to not have to spend so much time. Most of the work's already done for you. Master the material, add your own personal flair, and run the game. That said, if you want to add more to the campaign, there's plenty of opportunity to do so.

We also believe that mystery and intrigue are the key cornerstones of a great campaign. Returning antagonists, betrayals by "friends," sinister plots with unexpected turns, and dark nemeses that skulk about in the background (and are only spoken of in whispers)... all this and more make for amazing tales. The seeds of these are sown in all our adventures. And those seeds grow and expand as the campaigns play out.

Now, while it's tempting to give secrets away early... resist the urge. Let the mystery smolder in your player's minds. Give hints and clues over time, and only enough to keep them guessing. This will truly make your game epic!

Awesome GMs use all the tools (Structure, Randomness, and Improvisation)

To be honest, we're kinda' more in the "scripty-game" camp than we are the "wide-open game" camp. We've found that, for most of the GMs we're acquainted with (and for more than a few we follow), having a solid adventure foundation makes for a deeper, more engaging game. But here's the truth. We also know that trying to force the table to stay on a path can frustrate players and even create tedium.

Likewise, randomness has an important part to play in the game. It brings challenge, uncertainty and risk – all of which make the game better. That said, basing your entire game on random rolls, and encounter and event charts, where there is no real theme or storyline can create a more thin, less experiential adventure. On top of that, it's really hard to build an immersive and abiding tale.

In the same way, improvisation is critical to running a fantastic game. You need to be prepared to move with your players. To give them their chance to add to the tale themselves. But – without taking away from the amazing, improvising GMs out there – ad-libbing with only small amounts of structure (and constantly having to keep track of the last bunch of things you've ad-libbed) can frustrate players, and create a less than fulfilling game session. Because the truth is that effectively improvising an entire game session (let alone an entire campaign) requires some fairly impressive skills.

But all that said, if you've been GM'ing for a while, you likely know where we're going with this. Because each of these aspects of running a game significantly contribute to a better game experience. So the only answer, at least for us, is to bring all three to the table.

First, in virtually every game we've experienced (and again, to not take away from the amazing improv GMs out there), if a GM has prepared well, the game is more immersive. For us, that means:

1. Really knowing and embracing the major plot-lines;
2. Having a solid grasp on the sub-plots and the impacts of those subplots on the major plot-lines;
3. Bringing lore, history, and current events into the tale to help make the world come alive;
4. Knowing your PC backstories and bringing interesting side-plots that advance their individual tales;
5. Being able to know and embody the NPCs in the adventure, and having them react appropriately to PC actions;
6. Having a good variety of interesting, strange, and fearful places to explore that "feel real" with verisimilitude, challenge, and risk;
7. Bringing humor, mystery, danger, intrigue, fearful occurrences, plot-twists, puzzles, and intense situations to the adventures that the players are experiencing; and, ultimately...
8. Weaving a vibrant and amazing tale that entralls your players and gets better and better over time.

Again, for us, that means we need some fairly significant structure and some good effort on a GM's part to really prepare for their game sessions. We also know that some folks look down on more structured games because they say that players don't have freedom. And in poorly structured games that's absolutely true.

But even in epic sagas, getting pushed happens quite frequently. Think if a certain wizard hadn't been forced to take his little fellowship through a certain mine after getting forced off a certain mountain. Would'a pretty much screwed that tale up a bit, right?

Plus, reasonable structure is more true-to-life. Most of us have to go to work or to school. We have authority figures, parents, bosses, and all manner of other folks that tell us what to do. And not doing what those folks tell us often has negative consequences. So the idea that structure in a game is somehow not realistic is a load of poppycock. Structure is probably more realistic, honestly, than a lack thereof. But here's the deal: a more structured game needs to be sensible, logical, reasonable – and appropriate for the PCs the players are running – or nudging them down tracks will frustrate them.

On the other hand, if your players understand that a nudge is in the context of their situation and is character appropriate, they probably won't mind at all. Especially if they are rewarded with excellent locations, mysteries, events, and conflicts at the end.

Now, all that said, really deep, structured games with cool and interesting content have a serious problem. Namely, it takes a ton of effort to create them.

OK, let's talk a bit about randomness and the role it plays in making a great game. For us, the most important thing is that we don't want to predetermine the adventure. We all know that the game is better when chance and risk are at the table. So we have our players make lots of rolls for discovery, interactions, and activity. But we also, absolutely, won't let randomness ruin the game. Because it can. It's in those situations where randomness has become a hindrance to the story that a good GM really shines.

But here's something that we've found over the years of our own gaming experience. The more preparation we've done, the better we are at both applying randomness, and responding when randomness has become a problem.

Now to improvisation. We think most would agree that great improv is critical for good GM'ing. As such, if you want to run great games, you gotta be able to improvise. Your players will enjoy the game more – and you will craft a better tale – if you're able to respond to the things your players do, rather than trying to force them back onto some predetermined script all the time.

That said, over the course of our many years playing the game, we've been in more than a few situations where the GM is, pretty much, improvising the whole adventure. Speaking honestly, at least for us, they weren't that great for the most part. In our opinion, it takes a very talented individual to really play off a game that is mostly improvised. Now we're not saying those folks don't exist. We've played with a few of them. And there are a number of them whom we follow in the Internet. But for most of us mere mortals, trying to mostly (or completely) improvise a game (and worse, a campaign) usually ends with a less than stellar experience for the players.

But here's the interesting thing we've found. The better prepared we are, the better we are at improvising. The more we have set structure and planning, the better we are at maneuvering around that structure when the players do the unexpected. The more we know the storylines, the subplots, the NPCs, and the lore, the better we are at managing things when players throw curveballs. This may not be true for everyone, but it's unequivocally true for us.

What's the final point of all this? Well, for most of us, we likely need to use all three of these aspects of GM'ing to make the best tale. But we've found that great preparation makes for better response when randomness creates a problem, and it enables us to be far better at ad-libbing when we need to improvise. But, as we noted above, trying to create a game on our own that brings all the detail and nuance that great preparation requires is a pain in the old kitooshie.

That's why we make the games we make. They remove the requirement that you fill in all the important little details that a great game needs – but that most of us don't have the time to do. And we structure them in such a way as to give room for the players to play and the GM to respond in kind. And if we encourage a nudge, it's an appropriate nudge that makes sense in the context of the characters that our players are running.

Description and verisimilitude matter

Immersive environments help fuel the imagination. Interesting locations and strange places that are well described add to the experience. Creating intensity and bringing more realistic narrative to conflicts and predicaments makes them feel more real to the players around your table.

For us, long ago, we learned that imaginative portrayals of the locations our players were exploring – coupled with fervent and vivid descriptions of encounters, circumstances, and events – made the experience far better. It helped our players see the situation in the “theater of their minds” in a more intense manner. And when we added visuals that aided the descriptions, it got better still.

That got us to thinking. Could we create adventures that had engaging narrative coupled with expansive, quality illustrations that we could provide to our players? And that's one of the key things we're hoping folks will enjoy in regards to our adventures.

As such, we strive to provide descriptions of locations, combat, events, interactions, and other such things that are unexpected, evocative, and visually stimulating (at least for the mind's eye). And our goal is to always offer a broad array of beautiful illustrations and intriguing handouts to add flavor, mystery, and interest to the scenario for your players.

You'll also find that when your players search for things, there will be a variety of diverse discoveries that they will uncover rather than the standard “you find a dagger, leather armor, and five copper pieces.” We think you, and your players, will really enjoy this.

Now, what they'll do with the small, dried toad, bag of salted Nulgum seeds, drinking skin of Klaugh, small wooden box filled with fingernails, and wedge of very ripe and smelly cheese that they found on the dead Orc remains to be seen!

Levels are relative

If we've learned anything in this tantalizing journey of playing this incredible and imaginative game, it's that one GM's level 1 is another's level 3. Some games are filled with all kinds of magic... and in others, magic is scarce. In some games, characters start with a full complement of extraordinary stats... while in other games

characters start with mundane attributes and only rarely have an exemplary stat at all. In some games, characters start with nothing but a few coppers, dirty rags for armor, and knitting needles for weapons... and in others they start with gold, armor, weapons, and even a magic item or two. Some GMs run tough encounters with cunning opponents... and others run encounters that are less so.

Because of this, we don't try to make our adventures "strict" in terms of the level they are "appropriate" for. The adventure you hold in your hands is designed for a capable, very tough, first-level party of five PCs or so, but might also challenge parties of up to level 3 depending on the style of game you run.

Philosophically, we do lean to the concept of "Hero-focused" fantasy... meaning that we like to have our players start with characters that are exceptionally tough. Why? Well, it often gets boring for a first-level mage to cast her one Magic Missile spell and then have to throw daggers or cast the same couple of cantrips for the rest of the game. And fighting one group of Kobolds and having to run from the dungeon to rest (for the fourth time in a row) kinda detracts from the game (now... we don't judge folks that like this style... it's just not for us). So, if you've decided that you're not going to use the Pre-Gens we've provided, and your players are fielding average characters that are of the "coppers, rags, and knitting needle" persuasion, you better nerf the encounters a bit.

Because we like Hero-focused games, you'll see with all of our Pre-Generated Characters that they have really good stats, a few extra hit points, and, in a couple of instances, even a wee bit of "starting magic." In our experience, this really does make the game more fun for the players. And it really doesn't matter to us as GMs. We can always make a game challenging for our players. No matter how bad-ass they are (or think they are).

So let 'em be tough. And give 'em (maybe) just a little stuff. What the heck... they are heroes after all.

If your preference is to not play a Hero-focused style, just dial back the Pre-Generated Characters as you see fit and, as we noted above, cut back the encounters some. But if you've never played this style before, give it a whirl. We think it's more fun for GMs too.

We also tend to level our players quite a bit slower than most. Over the years, we found that going from level 1 to level 12 in a couple game-months hurts the overall richness of the campaign (plus it's just not realistic... if anything can be realistic in an RPG). As such, we slow the progression of our Player-Characters and then give "Interlevel Rewards" as appropriate. These have the effect of players still feeling that they are advancing without having them always rushing to get to the next level. More on all this in our "House Rules" section (it follows this one).

Uncertainty is way better

One of the things that happened to our groups over the years is that we started knowing the monster stats like the backs of our hands. This created a much less interesting game as the players would often be able to know, generally or specifically, how dangerous an encounter would be just by looking at the monsters

they were encountering. They also knew, quite often, whether they should use certain magicks or techniques to defeat them. We are not fans of meta-gaming... but it's tough to not have it happen sometimes. There is, however, something we can do in regards to the problem of players knowing too much.

To combat this circumstance, we made a significant change that quite a few GMs have made. That change was that virtually every creature would no longer be level restricted – and even could have differing attributes, strengths, weaknesses, etc.... Under this philosophy, the monster level and general stats are similar to the pirate code... more like "guidelines."

Hence, in our games, monsters have level ranges (typically four or more levels around their "standard" level). Not only does this concept add much more uncertainty to encounters, it's also far more "true-to-life."

Think about it.... a strapping young woman who has been swinging a blacksmith hammer since she was ten in her father's blacksmith shop is going to be a far more dangerous opponent than the small, sickly young man who spends his days reading, fishing, and doing no work. But they're both people... and in many games... they're both "basic humans"... with perhaps only a hit point or two separating them. The same is true with all manner of monsters. In the quest for realism, there should be big ones, strong ones, tough ones, quick ones, smaller ones, less-agile ones, and weak ones. It's both natural and reasonable.

So now... when the players in our games run into a bunch of Kobolds, they really don't know if they're just a bunch of "weak slummos" or a group of tough, organized, and capable adversaries. And that makes for a way better game. By the way, for the rules junkies at your table – who know every stat of every monster by heart – you might want to give them a warning that this is what you're doing so they don't go all "dungeon-lawyer" on you. But once you put this in play, never again will you have to hear.. "Hey, that Goblin has too many hit points..." or, "Wait a minute, that Specter should only be able to hit me on a 20..."

This concept also affects groups like city watch, military members, militia members, and citizen populations. In our games, it's not unusual to encounter guards that are in the level four to five range with superiors being even higher level. It's also not unusual to find a lowly, army private being a fifth-level warrior-type – as rank is not necessarily synonymous with fighting skill. And that big burly farm boy... he just might kick your brawny, over-confident Fighter's keister! How we do this is provided in the "House Rules" section.

We've also added a significant number of monsters of our own creation into the campaign. We like the variety that these provide, and we're pleased to tell you that they're not of the "silly creature" type. If folks like our stuff, we'll do a monster guide in the near future.

Exploration can be so much more

In far too many games, a dungeon (used here as a placeholder for any place the party is exploring) is often just a bunch of hallways connecting to rooms. Nothing really happens in the hallways ex-

cept for a wandering monster or two at best. We didn't really like this aspect of most of the games we'd seen and experienced, so long ago we changed it up, and abandoned the "room-to-room" method of exploration.

Our goal was to make any creepy place our heroes were exploring both interesting and perilous. That meant that you could end up with a problem (or a discovery) wherever you were. And the game was far better for it. Because, when anything could pretty much happen anywhere, the overall dynamic of the game is substantially improved.

We also think that travel is one of the most underutilized aspects of the game, as it offers so much wonderful opportunity for adventure. When traveling, the Player-Characters get many chances to experience all manner of strange, unexpected, evocative, interesting, funny, and scary things. Plus, there's just too many great places out there to visit and explore to keep all the action restricted to defined locations.

This was the genesis of what we now call our Not-So-Random-Encounters (or, NSREs for short). We started creating lists of interesting events, occurrences, intrigues, and happenings that had nothing to do with combat. And we created more interesting and adventure-appropriate "random" encounters that, while they involved combat, also were additive to the game.

In every Gooey Cube adventure, you'll discover a wonderful variety of these NSREs. While some of them involve combat, more than a few will have nothing to do with fighting. Some will help set the mood... some are designed to make the players concerned or nervous... and some might bring a clue or some humor. Never more will your players look at a dark hallway, an overgrown trail, a road between towns – or anyplace else – quite the same.

Likewise, what happens in one room very well could affect someone, or some "thing," that is nearby. This is not a unique concept to our games... but it is often overlooked in gameplay. Much of this will come at your discretion, but you will find quite a number of instances where, if the party isn't being smart, they might bring more problems their way.

We also believe that these adventure locations are dynamic and continuously evolving. Our NSREs try to take this into account. We don't believe that the denizens of an area just sit in their rooms all the time. They congregate... they do things... they move about... and they react when the characters' actions affect their domiciles. This is where the true art to being a GM comes into play. We'll give you some great direction and interesting ideas on how to make your adventures come alive, but you are the one that will ultimately make it "feel real" or not.

One final note in this area. As we said earlier, we don't believe that a dungeon or adventure always needs to "match" the level of the players. That said, for the most part, it does need to have some balance, or it's a just a death trap with the party on the bad side of the deal. But for the game to be really amazing, there are times when a smart party needs to run away to fight again another day.

What this means is that we might have an area in a "first-level" dungeon where a Hydra makes her home. This is where a prudent party is not just blundering through a cavern complex but does some scouting ahead, perhaps. Maybe some clues are given that a terrible monster lairs nearby (huge footprints... bones of those it consumed... a bitten-in-half corpse... etc...). Then, when they discover these things, they avoid that area and perhaps return to the dungeon later when they are more capable and experienced. On the other hand, if they do blunder into the Hydra's lair, perhaps she's content with eating just one member of the party before pursuing the rest of them... allowing the others to escape.

And there... a valuable lesson is learned by the survivors...

Lastly, our campaigns, and the adventures that comprise them, are pretty non-linear. So your party may be exploring a dungeon and discover a room with a locked door that they cannot force open or otherwise get past. In most games, the party will be convinced that they missed something. In Gooey Cube games, they might not discover the key until three chapters later when they're halfway across the country. Or perhaps they see a wanted poster for a certain murderer in Shuugenshire while adventuring in Chapter 2. Then, in Chapter 4, when they're in the great city of Darkenhaven, that same murderer turns up at Strongarm McGillan's inn... dating a party member's brother!

The challenge is paramount

A challenging adventure is always important. But for some, challenging has become synonymous with deadly. We don't subscribe to that concept (again, no disrespect to the folks who love running and playing in high death-rate games).

For us, a great challenge can definitely be a tough boss fight. But it can also be solving a mystery, attaining an objective that required thinking not combat, or dealing with a serious problem without raising a sword. All of these can bring challenge and satisfaction.

Now, we also learned long ago that wiping the party wasn't really very much fun (at least for us). But we also know that if there's no danger, that isn't fun either. The balance is to create a game that really pushes your players (and their characters) to the limit, but doesn't end up being a wipe-fest every third time you play. Players get attached to their characters and, if your players are like the many we've played with, they don't like losing them (can you say, "nerd rage" – like seriously). Now, sometimes deaths will happen. But if they're happening all the time, and folks aren't enjoying the game, you should probably change things up a bit.

This is also why randomness, as we've said, can create problems. We've all played in a game where the dice just went hard against the PCs. And while some subscribe that to "it's just the breaks," the fact is that, over time, randomness is *guaranteed* to run hard against a party. That's just statistical fact of playing over a long period.

We truly believe that the best GMs create a challenging and taxing adventure that has the potential to kill a character or two... or even wipe a party... but, for the most part, rarely does so. This is a difficult balance to achieve – but if you can achieve it – most

players will enjoy your games more, and want to play more, than if they think you're a "Killer GM." We also give you some interesting tools to help manage this type of thing in all our adventures. We hope you like what we've done in that regard.

Now, all that said, should the party stumble stupidly into deadly encounters, or not think through riddles and puzzles, they're probably going to find themselves rolling up new characters.

Great roleplay is magic

This is perhaps the most important part of playing the game – at least for us. They are called "Fantasy Roleplaying Games," after all. We push our players to try to immerse themselves in their character. To interact in their character's voice... to see the world through their character's eyes... to act in the way their character would act. This aspect of the game really does make a difference and, for most tables, the games will be better by emphasizing it.

To help make this happen, we give rewards for great roleplay and even punish a bit those who are constantly playing "over the table." (See the "House Rules" section below.) This is not to say that folks sometimes speak out of character in our home games, but for the most part, we try to have them be their character from the time they sit down to the time we finish a session.

That also means that you, as the GM, need to interact and roleplay – bringing the differing NPCs to life. What motivates them. How they act. How they speak. And, of course, having them enact those horrible little things they have planned for the party.

But, part of getting your players to roleplay well is also to get them to embrace their characters. That means you've got to make their characters special. We've found that creating interesting, individual backstories, adding in player secrets, and crafting other intriguing bits for our PCs to experience helped make our players engage with the characters far more. And that really helped to improve our roleplay.

Great GMs are well prepared

We've already spoken quite a bit in the "tools" section above about our lean towards the importance of preparation in crafting truly epic adventure. We don't think there's a substitute for it. A truly amazing game requires too much detail, complexity, and nuance to be able to run it well without preparing.

But, as we noted above, preparation takes a ton of time – whether you're running a pre-published adventure, or GM'ing in your own world. There's just so much to create, expand, and design if you're going to really give it life.

This is one of the reasons why improvisational GM'ing has grown in popularity. Many GMs can improv a game without having to spend hours fleshing out the published adventure (or even more hours crafting their own world). But, as we've said, most normal Humans can't improvise a deep, epic, complex, and nuanced game – let alone a comprehensive campaign. It's just too much to keep track of.

That's why we do what we do. We really believe that if we can:

1. Create a deep, intense, and intriguing adventure with much mystery, conflict, complexity, and nuance, and...
2. Make that game entertaining for the GM to read and review so that preparation isn't drudgerous, and...
3. Provide awesome tools and handouts to make running the game smoother and easier (and more engaging)...

Then we can help all manner of GMs out there run more intense, expansive, and enthralling games.

Music, light, noise & sound effects

We like music in our games as it adds to the ambiance. There are great music tracks that you can purchase on DrivethruRPG.com (and other places). We love the music and effects from Ambient Environments, Bailey Records, Plate Mail Games, and Sonic Legends. On the web... Ambient-mixer.com and TabletopAudio.com are great sites (be sure to give 'em a little donation!). Darkravengames.com offers some truly amazing, epic tracks, and Battlebards.com and Syrinscape.com are really great (both are subscription services... very cool). You can also get music on Soundcloud.com, and there are a number of free sites that you can use for music.

We also light our game room to enhance the mood. Candles can be cool (but you should probably avoid torches). Interesting lighting techniques such as electric lanterns and dimmable, color-changing lights are also very fun.

Sound effects are great, you just gotta' be careful not to let them get in the way of the game (i.e. you spending so much time cutting them up that the game loses its pace). But you can also make sound effects and noise yourself... the rustling of the leaves... the blowing of the wind... the hooting of an owl. Sounds are better than descriptions if you can make them work at your table.

We love tabletop terrain and miniatures for visualization and immersion. In our home games, we use Dwarven Forge® game tiles, terrain bits from folks like Thomarillion, Ziterdes, Zealot Miniatures, Scotia Grendel, Tiny-Furniture, Table-Top World, Mystic Realm (and others). We use miniatures from Reaper, Dark Sword, Privateer Press®, Cadwallon, Wyrd Games, Lead Adventure, Wiz-Kids™, and more. These let the players see areas, encounters, and events for themselves right on the table.

Note: None of the companies named above have paid us or even asked us to include their business names here... nor do they in any way endorse our products. We just really like what they produce and felt it appropriate to give them some props.

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So, there you have it... our philosophy in a nutshell. We hope it will help color your philosophy as well. In the next section of this introduction – the "House Rules" – we'll provide some very intriguing rule options that you might like. Some of these impact our adventures, so please be sure to read them before you play.

The House Rules

Our Methods

The following is a synopsis of some “House Rules” that we’ve adopted that have made our home games better. They’re easy and most players won’t take issue with them. As noted above, a few of these are required in Gooey Cube adventures.

Mitigation of critical hits

If you play critical hits (and we do), you know they’re really fun and add wonderful verisimilitude to battles. But, if you’re a math person, you also know that the characters are like gamblers in a casino and the GM is “the house.” That is, a GM has infinite numbers of monsters to throw at the characters, but each player has, typically, only one character in the game.

Because of this, the math would tell us that, over time, *every* character is going to take a bad critical hit. And by a bad critical hit, we mean the “cut-off-your-head-and-dead” variety. In truth, most will take multiple bad criticals over time (assuming they were somehow able to survive the previous ones they took). When you look at criticals this way, you begin to understand that they really have the potential to ruin a campaign. That is, unless your players like to regularly see their characters split from ear-to-ear, gutted like a science-class toad, separated from their arms and legs, and/or blasted into piles of bone and gore.

To fix this, and still get the fun of critical hits, we make all monsters and opponents (except for boss-types, leader-types, and the major antagonistic NPCs) have to roll a 20 to achieve a critical and then roll a second 20 to confirm it (so they don’t just have to confirm by hitting the character’s AC). Even then, we don’t necessarily allow these types of opponents to roll all over the critical hit tables. We may restrict them to the less lethal tables, or just give these crits double damage.

Yes, it’s an advantage to the Player-Characters. But there comes a time at most tables when the players start getting frustrated at losing arms, legs, heads, and all manner of other pieces of their characters simply because of the math being stacked against them.

Level ranges for opponents (and everyone else for that matter)

As we noted in the “Our Philosophy” section, in real life, you meet all kinds of “regular” people – some very strong and some very frail. Some very smart, and some dumb as rocks. You meet people who served in the army, who practice martial arts, or are just tough as heck. And you meet people that are scared of their own shadows, weak as kittens, and can’t fight their way out of a paper bag.

It’s the same way for animals in our world. Some dogs are big and scary... some less so. In the wild there are larger and more powerful creatures of the same species and there are weaker ones. This is why, in our home games (and in our adventures), all NPCs, crea-

tures, citizens, monsters, and pretty much everybody else can be of any level either below their “statted level” or above it as long as it’s reasonable and at least somewhat believable (cuz a 20th level “normal snail” with 120 hit points is kinda stupid, right? OK... maybe not...). Anyway, you get the point. This is also why our games are a bit more “Level-Variable” – so you can play them easily in a range of levels rather than just a single level or in a couple-level range.

Adjust encounters to make it fun

Far too many GMs just take a published module and run it “as is” without any significant adjustments. The problem with this is what we noted in the “Our Philosophy” section above. Namely, that character levels are relative.

And they are.

Because of this, trying to “balance” a pre-created set of encounters without knowing if the game has “heroic characters” with great stats, “quality characters” with good stats, or “standard characters” with average stats is the first problem. Then, it gets worse. Do you give out a lot of magic? A medium amount? Almost none? Even at 1st level, are they starting with no armor and a rusty sword? Are they starting with some decent armor and maybe a fair weapon? Are they starting with a good complement of armor and weapons? Or are they really well-geared, with extra spell capacity and, perhaps, even a magic item or two?

It gets more perplexing when you consider your players. First, how many players are playing? Three? Four? Eight!?!? Are they inexperienced and a bit bumbling, so their characters are always doing stupid things? Are they pretty smart and “kinda’ capable,” but not the best? Are they really good at playing their characters and do a good job of managing encounters? Or are they like a flippin’ group of Green Berets with incredible tactics, an excellent grasp of the rules, and know every little thing that their character can do?

You can see the problem. You can’t write a module that will be challenging for a group of four relatively inexperienced players who are playing standard characters... that will also challenge a party of six that’s well-equipped, with experienced players that game like special forces troops.

Not. Gonna. Happen.

There is only one solution. Adjust the encounters for your group!

Only you, as the GM, know your players. Only you know what type of characters they are playing. So change ‘em up. It’s easy. If they’re a really tough party... up the ACs of the monsters a bit. Add some hit points. Add to their strength and damage. Give them a couple more spells. Even add a couple more creatures to the encounters. We help this by offering GM-discretionary adjustments in our

scenarios that you can make to the basic encounters. These adjustments are **Weaker Party**, **Advanced Party**, **Make it Tough**, and **Make it Tougher**. You'll see how these work in the adventures. So now, you don't have to spend time adjusting. We do it for you!

Just so you know... we've even adjusted encounters on the fly when we figured out a module was too tough or too easy for our players. Some might have an issue with this. We don't. Because, we believe our job is to entertain our players first and referee the game second. In our minds, that means the key is to make your games a significant challenge for your players without wiping the party on a consistent basis. A little death here and there is acceptable. If they're dying a lot, they're probably not having fun.

Start 'em a little tough

Because we extend leveling (see below), we like to let our PCs start a little tougher than some. We typically let them roll five dice for starting stats (keeping the best three) and oftentimes give them a few extra stat points ($d3+1$ or $d4+2$) to add at the end. We might even give them an attribute switch so they can get the stats appropriate for the class they want to play. It's unequivocal that most players like having tougher characters, and we don't care how tough they are, as we can easily adapt the game to match their toughness.

Likewise, we typically have our players start their first-level characters with maximum hit points (in 5e, that's standard which we were glad to see). We might even give them a few "bonus" hit points depending on how difficult the adventure is going to be. We even sometimes give them a little magic to start (such as a ring that stores three spell slots or a finely crafted longsword).

We used to do this simply because the balance between spellcaster classes and non-spell caster classes was, in our opinion, a bit broken (low level warriors, for example, never run out of swings – and often did far more damage than the pitiful Cantrips that Wizards and Clerics used to wield). This was helped a lot with the changes made to the game in recent times, especially the changes to Cantrips that are cast at will. But we still, often, give a little starting magic to our casters. Seriously... the only real effect of giving a caster or a healer a couple more spells is the party gets a little more time in the adventure before they need to rest. And we're all about playing more and resting less.

Now, as an alternative to an item (or even in conjunction with), you might want to consider something we've done for years. Namely, give all our spell casters three extra first level spell slots at the beginning. Yep. Three. This really doesn't unbalance the game at all and makes it much more fun for the casters. Truly, all it really does is reduce the need for resting as often which is better. This can also make it more fun to play a Cleric which is a bit of a problem at more than a few tables (and why we believe that "short resting" became a thing in 5e). For another idea to bring to the table for Clerics, see "Help With Healing" below.

In any case, whether you amp the stats some, give additional spell slots, or even throw a little "starting magic" to your PCs, we have found, over the years, that the idea of "toughening up" PCs at first level really does make it more fun for our players. It also helps be-

cause we are slow leveling our PCs (see below). But it's your game. If you don't want to bring this idea to your table, don't. It'll be easy to nerf any of the Pre-Generated PCs we've provided if you'd prefer a more "lowbie" start. But you'll also need to nerf the adventure some.

Important though. Tough doesn't necessarily mean rich. Poverty is a great motivator to get your butt up and start adventuring.

Managed leveling

This is one we have really come to believe in. Through the years, we found the game structure to be such that, after just a few adventures, a group of low-level characters were quick to become supremely powerful heroes. As such, some of the pleasure of the struggle to advance was lost. So, quite a long time ago we started "managing leveling" for the characters in our home games. And we've brought that concept to our published games as well.

Managed Leveling means that we're going to level characters, for the most part, based solely on the major objectives they've achieved (typically at the end of a chapter of the campaign in which they're playing). But even that isn't always the case. Sometimes they may go through two chapters before achieving a level. This makes tracking experience unnecessary (at least for leveling, see Gooey Rewards, below). As such, if you want, all the machinations of totaling it up at the end of the game can be eliminated (which allows more time to actually play the game).

The net effect of this is that the characters don't go from 1st to 10th level in just a few adventures. Which makes leveling far more exciting and special for the players. It's also, honestly, quite a bit more realistic in the context of "game time."

Important: Because we exclusively use objective-based leveling in all our published games, if you determine not to use it, your PCs will likely be pretty over-powered by about halfway through the campaign. You'll need to adjust encounters significantly in this case. That said, we really think you should employ objective-based leveling. It really does add to the game experience.

Plus, we're going to add an additional twist to leveling that should really appeal to your players and keep them motivated. These are called "Gooey Rewards," and they're all about making it more fun for your players as they advance – even though their advancement is not as fast. See the section below for how Gooey Rewards work.

Lastly, be sure to tell your players that they'll be leveling slower before you begin playing so they are prepared for the change in the way their characters advance. And, as we noted above, you absolutely should bring Gooey Rewards to the table. **Note:** All our adventures provide suggestions at times for Interlevel Rewards, but you can offer them how you like. Just be careful to not over-use them because they can also make a party pretty OP.

Gooey (Interlevel) Rewards

Important: Gooey Rewards are not mandatory for a Gooey Cube adventure. We do think they make the game far more enjoyable, but if you'd rather not use them, it will not create an unbalancing effect with the campaign.

Gooey Rewards are a concept that we put in place originally in our home games because the characters were leveling more slowly. They became so popular that we determined to add them to our published games (in concert with Managed Leveling).

Gooey Rewards give players a feeling of advancement even though they haven't hit a level (in some ways they're even more fun than leveling). Keep in mind, however, that they should be used sparingly. As noted above, being too liberal with them will unbalance the game over time. All Gooey Rewards may be used only once and then they expire. Some of the Gooey Rewards that we provide are:

- Temporary hit points. This is a great reward as players like this one a lot, but it doesn't have much of an unbalancing effect on the game. We typically give 2d8+1 per level of the PC.
- Advantage on a single saving throw of the player's choice (including death saving throws).
- Advantage on a single initiative roll of the player's choice.
- Advantage on a single attack roll of the player's choice.
- Advantage on a single ability check of the player's choice.
- Extra attack. This allows the PC to add a single additional attack in a round or cast a Cantrip for free in a round. As with all Gooey Rewards, it may only be used once and then it expires.
- A single, permanent hit point. These are much rarer but are a lot of fun for players when they get them.
- A Rep Point: This is a very rare and special Gooey Reward. Rep Points can really add some fun for your players. A Rep Point can be spent when a Player-Character is interacting with an NPC to help influence the outcome of the interaction. When spent, the PC will get advantage on any required Charisma checks (Intimidation, Persuasion, Bluffing, etc...) for the duration of the interaction with the NPC. They also get an additional +2 on all Charisma checks during the interaction. What the player is trying to do must be reasonable and in the spirit of the game. Using it to try to get a merchant to sell a magic sword for five silver coins is unreasonable... but using it to get the merchant to cut the price by 20% or so is in the right direction. A Rep Point may be used for only one interaction. Again, these should be rare and special.
- A Hero Point: This is a very rare and wonderful Gooey Reward. It allows the character to spend it to achieve something significant and "heroic." Each Hero Point may only be used once. What the character is attempting must be "heroically reasonable" and the GM has full discretion as to the effectiveness of the action. Some examples include: leaping a chasm that is a bit too far to be crossed; adding a big bonus to help disarm a difficult trap; automatically hitting or doing max damage on a single attack; holding up a falling gate that the character would not normally be able to hold up; getting off a max heal; and the like. These are really fun when used how they're intended... such as when the character grasps the frayed, hanging rope and swings across the room to the other side to grab a fallen comrade, swinging back just before said comrade gets swallowed by the giant demonic toad... truly epic!

- A Fate Point: These are also very rare and wonderful. A Fate Point allows a character to "spend" it to "reasonably alter an outcome or event." Like the Hero Point, the change needs to be reasonable, and the GM has full discretion as to whether the player is using the Fate Point appropriately, or if he or she is "stretching." Some examples are: Automatically succeeding a saving throw; changing the effect of a missed save (like grabbing the edge of a cliff, instead of falling into the chasm); eliminating the effects of a fumble; reducing or eliminating a single spell effect – or the effects of a trap; or causing a single attack made on the Player-Character to miss. Like Hero Points, these can be a lot of fun as long as the players understand they must be used reasonably, and the GM doesn't let the players use them in an OP fashion (or give out too many).

All of these (in varying quantities) are included in the Gooey Rewards Cards that are provided with this adventure. As time goes on and you play more of our adventures, you will find new cards that your players have never seen before. This will continue to keep your Gooey Rewards deck growing and offer new and interesting rewards to give to your players in future games. Below is how we use them to make the player experience better.

The Gooey Rewards Cards

Gooey Rewards are a great way to provide a feeling of advancement and gain when a group is leveling slower. Though we highly recommend you use them, if you'd prefer to not, don't.

We recommend that you give them out in two ways:

1. **At the end of each game session.** When a session is complete, have all your players roll a single d20. Any who roll a 19 or a 20 get to draw a single Gooey Rewards card from the deck. If you have a party member or two who distinguished themselves that game session and they didn't roll a 20 on the first roll, you can give those players a second roll.
2. **Keep track of experience points.** Here's how you can use experience points to add even more flavor to the game when slow leveling. Let the players track Exp as normal. When the players get enough experience where their character would have achieved a level under normal circumstances, let each player roll a d20. Any who roll a 17 through a 20 in this circumstance may draw one card from the Gooey Rewards deck.

Note: Under the Managed Leveling system, when a PC achieves enough experience that they would normally reach level 20, thereafter, every time they achieve 50,000 experience points, you can give them a roll for a Gooey Rewards card using the method described in #2 above.

There is one more way that you can give Gooey Rewards away. But you need to be a bit measured in doing this. We do, once in a while, give a player a free draw when they have done something truly exceptional in a game session. This is solely at your discretion.

So give them 'em rewards. Just don't overdo it.

Help with healing

In the newest edition of this amazing game, healing has been a bit nerfed. There are some things we like about this... but some things we don't. We understand that, for the most part, players don't like to play healers because healing all the time can be a bit boring. So, the changes in the Clerical class are generally positive for those who play Clerics (and to a certain extent Druids as well).

That said, we also have found that the game bogs down with so much resting being required. And, because we have lots of cool and interesting things we want our PCs to do with their money, we don't want them having to buy healing potions all the time.

As such, we may (more often than not) provide an item or two to our first-level (or generally lowbie) Player-Characters that provide a few healing spells or capabilities. These may not always be just for a healing class, by the way. Sometimes we provide items that can heal but can be used by any class of player. In our opinion, it makes the game better because our players spend more time playing and less time resting. We also, as noted above, give three extra first level spell slots to all casters (including Clerics).

Now one last idea you might also consider... but we have not fully play-tested this so you might want to be prepared to pull it back in later levels if needs be. We call it Healer's Grace and you can give this only to a Cleric PC. Here's how it works:

The cleric gets an additional pool of magical energy from which they can manifest only healing spells. They may cast a healing (evocation) spell that they have prepared, at a spell slot equal to half their proficiency modifier rounded up, without expending a spell slot. They may do this a number of times per long rest equal to 1 + Proficiency Modifier.

This idea might encourage more people to play Clerics which may reduce the need for so many short rests in your game. It is also a suggestion that came from more than a few of our Gooey Contributors who think it could be a really fun addition. BUT... only once per long rest. **Important:** Healer's Grace cannot be recharged on a Gooey Short Rest (see below). And note that Revivify, Raise Dead, Resurrection, and the like are not evocation spells. Lastly, using Healer's Grace is totally optional. If you do put it in play, however, consider giving us feedback on how it works for your table.

Help with resting

In the newest edition of this amazing game, we kinda' found long rests to be a bit problematic – at low levels in particular. With spell recovery being generally, only achievable after a long rest, lowbie parties were very quickly in a position where they had to long rest to recover spells, or continue to adventure in a fairly weak condition. Now, we aren't saying that we should always be babying our PCs so they never have to face difficulties (and we don't), but we also like keeping the game rolling. And the whole rest thing (we found at least) bogged the game down a bit (again, we're not throwing shade, it's just our preference).

So we made a modification to the resting thing. Once per 24-hour period, if the party is in a place where they are relatively safe – such

as an inn, a civilized area that has protections, a friendly temple, the troupe camp, a guardhouse (assuming they aren't prisoners), the mayor's home (assuming the mayor isn't a psychopath who's hunting them through secret passages in the walls), etc... the spellcasters in the party can recover only their first and second level spells during this "Gooey" short rest. Again, just once per 24 hour period.

This lets us run longer and have more fun. And there's really no unbalancing effect on the game. You just play more and rest less. We highly recommend you bring this "Gooey Rest" rule to any Gooey Cube adventure you run (and to your other games as well).

Magic detection and identify spells

Certain characters in 5e can cast Detect Magic at will with no limitation. And while we are loath to take too much liberty to nerf a Player-Character class, this can create a situation where the character is a bit overpowered (because in every room and situation, the first thing he or she does is Detect Magic... and hence... discovery and mystery are severely diminished). Now, as you know, we like surprises and discovery in our games and don't want one character to spoil that for the folks at the table.

That said, we also don't like nerfing classes, so... before you decide to reduce the character's abilities, some things to keep in mind are: 1) Detect Magic is blocked by stone, earth, and, in our games, wood and other dense materials; 2) Magic Aura can be used to great effect; and 3) Magical auras can, and do, overlap and interfere with each other. So, a magical room's auras might overcome the aura of a magic item hidden therein. Additionally, we may cover special items with our home-grown spell, Mask Magic, and its sister spell Mask Curse. We added these because we're about story, discovery, and interest more than we are about loot. And most of us can see how automatically discovering all magic in a room via a spell that a PC can cast at will kinda' ruins the discovery aspects of the game.

For the same reason, we also modified the Identify spell a bit when spellcasters are evaluating items. We do this so things like curses, negative effects, and strange aspects and abilities are harder to discover. This is achieved by having the character make an Intelligence check (with us rolling the GM Skill Modifier Roll – see below) and give them what they find out based on that roll (with a low roll being less informative and a high roll being more). Also, remember that the Identify spell requires a pearl of 100 Golds value (and we have the pearl being consumed in the casting). Making this rule more strict often means that you don't have to do anything to stop the "auto-ID" process that happens in many games.

Now you have to be a bit careful here because our goal is not to try to trap our players into donning cursed items all the time. And we also aren't trying stop them from learning the properties of magic items they discover. If they're playing well and doing a good job trying to find out about an item, we're not going to penalize them. But part of the fun of the game is discovery. And a good curse can be a lot of fun once in a while. Likewise, a magic item that reveals powers over time can be a lot of fun. So, we don't want to totally have these awesome aspects removed from the game by "auto-Detect Magic" and rich characters that have hundreds of 100 Gold-value pearls. Again... just make sure your players know.

The GM “Skill Modifier Roll”

You clearly know by now that we like to flavor our games with good amounts of uncertainty and mystery. The reason for this is that it's more fun... but it's also more true-to-life. As an example, if a player rolls a 20 on a Perception check, she knows she rolled a 20 (and added her Wisdom modifier) and she is now virtually positive of the result. She perceived correctly “for sure.”

But in the real world, even highly perceptive people don't know for certain that they are correct. While they can be relatively confident, they really can never be fully certain that they are perceiving something correctly. No poker player knows for certain that the player across from them is bluffing, but they can have a high degree of confidence that they are. In the same way, a Rogue searching for traps in the real world could be fairly confident that she didn't find a trap, but she really can't know for sure until she opens the door...

With the max roll example noted above, however, the player basically knows for sure that her character perceived correctly in the game. And what fun and mystery is that? So to fix this, we do a GM roll behind the screen that modifies these types of skill rolls (either up or down).

Basically it works like this. The player rolls their skill roll and gives the result. The GM then rolls the modifier on a 10 sided dice and uses the modifier to either: Add to the skill roll, or, subtract from it. So then when the player gets her answer... she may be fairly confident in the result, but she is never certain. And this is way more true-to-life. The modifier is +1 for every number over 5 on the 10 sided dice and -1 for every number from 5 on down. It's easy, fast, and adds way more realism to things like searching for traps, trying to interrogate a nemesis, seeing if one perceives something correctly, wooing an NPC to the player's point of view, riding a horse, and the like. **Note:** We don't use the GM Skill Modifier Roll for attack rolls, DC “save rolls,” or for things like removing traps, concentration checks, avoiding falls, and the like. Most players prefer to have their roll be the one that counts in these situations.

Keep the required DC number a secret

Keeping the number needed for a skill roll or for a “save-roll” secret is way better for keeping drama in the game. So if the DC needed is a 16, we ask the player to make the appropriate DC roll and ask the player the result of their roll without telling them what was needed. We then tell them what happened... “It appears you have successfully removed the trap,” or, “You dive to the side and avoid the full burst of the Fireball,” or, “You feel like someone is trying to take over your mind for a moment, but you are able to shake it off,” or, “You feel a little nauseated, but it doesn't seem as if the poison is affecting you.” It's just way better than truly knowing. And again, a bit more true-to-life.

Now, that last answer – the one about the poison – that could also be used in the event that the character was actually affected by the poison, but it's a slow-acting venom. So the player thinks that he or she has avoided the toxin, but then, a bit later in the game, the character may take some damage. At the same time, we then tell the player that her character is “starting to feel a

burning tingle all over and the nausea is getting worse.” This is far more dramatic for the players than saying... “Roll a DC to see if the poison affects you. You need a 17.”

Lastly, sometimes it's good to delay when you ask a player to make a DC save-type roll. Like (as an example) a character is in a monster den and gets infected with Funk Bugs. These are not really harmful but will be annoying to the infected character. Rather than having the player roll the DC precisely when their character is searching the monster's bed... perhaps wait a bit and have them roll at a later time. This makes the surprise of missing a DC where the effects are not immediately obvious much more impactful.

Make exceptional spells tough to get

Because of the potential for certain spells in particular to completely change the balance in the game, we have made the exceptional spells (and certain magic items) very difficult to acquire. This is especially true for spells such as Wish, Time Stop, and other, potentially world-changing magicks (especially if you allow non-canon spells). This works great as long as you remember that the bad guys should also have a horribly rough time acquiring them as well (which means that they are very rare). Getting one of these in our games typically requires a significant and arduous quest, and getting the material components is always a difficult proposition at best.

Resurrection, Raise Dead, and Revivify (and all the rest of those “bring-ya’-back” spells)

What never made sense to us is how come anybody died for good in the game, especially higher-level types (other than of old age, that is). Seriously, Raise Dead is a 5th-level spell! As time went on, anytime anybody died (unless it was something crazy like a Sphere of Annihilation or whatnot), they just got brought back. This meant that death to higher-level characters became meaningless. And what fun is that, right? Again, if there's no risk, the game loses its “fun-ness.” So we added a few adjustments to the game that make these types of magicks a little more rare. First... we multiplied the diamonds needed by 10 (so Raise Dead needs a 5,000 Gold-value diamond, not a 500, etc...).

Secondly, we made the rule that the diamond(s) to be used in the spell must be flawless. And for Reincarnate, we added a 5,000 Gold-value flawless diamond to the required material components. Even Revivify needs a 3,000 Gold-value flawless diamond. Anyway, you get it, we now have a very rare material component.

Next, every time a Cleric, Bard, Druid, Sorcerer, etc... uses any of these types of spells (but not if they use a scroll or a power from an item), he or she must make a Constitution Save or lose one point of Constitution permanently (no restoration). And lastly, the character being resurrected loses one Con point permanently as well (though we don't make them knock their hit points down... they just lose the bonus, if applicable, going forward (again, no restoration allowed)).

So now, dying is meaningful... at any level. Because getting brought back comes with expense and consequences. And the

Player-Characters that are thinking about resurrecting, reincarnating, raising, or “revivifying” someone has to think about their potential loss as well. Note, however, that as was said above, using a scroll to cast these types of spells does not have the same effect on the caster. The one who made the scroll had the consequences.

Make money easy

Long ago we determined that always having to consult the book for the prices of things was a pain. And, speaking honestly, the economic system didn’t always make sense to us. Like sometimes, a beer cost just a single copper piece in a certain tavern, but in another tavern (that was pretty similar to the first one) a beer cost five silver pieces.

As such, we made a modification to the value of money that made buying and selling far easier and faster (for the most part). We simply equated money in the game to money in our real world. What we found is that it matched up pretty well with the game books, but got rid of a lot of the totally goofy outliers: like in the book, a piece of chalk is one copper but a live chicken is just two coppers. Now, since we’re Yanks, in our world, a piece of chalk is going to be a few cents... but a live chicken is like \$20 or so. Most importantly, we weren’t having to dig in the book all the time to figure out what something’s price because we generally know what most things cost in our world.

So, copper pieces (which we call Copps or Pips) equate to 10 cents. Silver pieces (we call them Silvs, Silvers, or Sils) equate to a dollar. Electrum pieces (we call them Ells or Lecs) equate to a \$10 bill. Gold pieces (we call them Golds or Yels) equate to a \$20 bill. And lovely platinum pieces (we call them Plats or Shines) equate to a \$100 bill.

Now, generally, we don’t really have to look up anything in the book to know that a poor laborer would make about 75 Golds a month (or around \$1,500), a common worker would make around 125 Golds per month (or like \$2,500), a skilled laborer perhaps 150 to 250 Golds per month (around \$3,000 to \$5,000), an artisan or merchant, maybe 200 to 500 (or more) Golds a month (so \$4,000 to \$10,000), and rich dudes would make what rich dudes make. In rural areas these wage levels would be adjusted down a bit. In cities... we’d kick them up somewhat.

If you’d like to know more about all this (plus a whole lot more about a really amazing setting), check out Chapter One of the Cyclopaedia Zyathica, entitled The Wy’rded World. Zyathé is a totally fresh, interesting, and enthralling world – with all kinds of new races, some really interesting classes, deep and intriguing lore and history, and an incredible array of sovereignties, territories, cities, towns, badlands, and so much more. You can get it at GooeyCube.com.

A few other House Rules (that you might like)

Fitting Non-Magical Armor: The Gooey Cube “quick” way to fit non-magical armor when the size isn’t stated works as follows:

If the “category size” is not already provided (such as when it says in the description that it’s a “small suit of leather armor”), first determine if the armor is “small-sized or medium-sized on a d4. On

a 1 or 2 it’s a small. On a 3 or 4, it’s a medium. Then, if the player’s character fits the category size, he or she should roll a d6. Then the GM rolls a d6. If the number the character rolled matches the GMs number it’s a perfect fit. If the number the character rolled is either + or - 1 on either side of the number the GM rolled, it’s close enough to wear but will be somewhat uncomfortably tight or loose. Any other number and the character cannot wear the armor.

Fitting Magical Armor: Like most games we allow magical armor to “adjust” in size to fit a character. But we only allow it within a “size category” (either Small or Medium). Rings, bracers, and other such items, however, will magically adjust to fit anyone.

The “Late Saving Throw” Concept: As we noted earlier, sometimes having a player make a saving throw exactly at the time they are exposed to something (like a disease or slow-acting poison) gives them too much information. To combat that, sometimes we have players make a “Late Saving Throw” well after they were exposed. It’s more interesting... and there’s nothing like seeing a player’s face when she’s in a tavern hitting on the hot bartender and you ask her to make a DC 16 Constitution (Fortitude) saving throw!

The More Perception Checks the Merrier idea: So the problem with asking folks to make Perception checks, is that you’re telling them that there’s something to perceive at that time and in that place. Big opening for those meta-gamers (and even tempting for those that aren’t), right? So we often have folks make Perception checks when there isn’t anything to perceive (modified of course, by the DM Skill Modifier Roll – see earlier in this section). That way, we mitigate some of that “over-the-table” play.

Stick with Old-School Initiative Rolling: We like to have folks roll initiative on each round rather than doing it once for the entire combat. It does take a little more time, but it’s more realistic as we don’t always act at exactly the same moment in real life. It’s also more dramatic as it adds verisimilitude to the combats.

Afterword on the House Rules

There you have ‘em. The Gooey Cube “House Rules” in a nutshell. We give them to you (for the most part) purely as an option for your games to incorporate as you see fit.

Important: As noted earlier, there really isn’t much of an option to not use Managed Leveling in Gooey Cube adventures as the party will become too tough for the later adventures in a campaign. In the case where you really don’t want to use Managed Leveling, you’ll need to amp the encounters in later chapters.

But just to be clear: These rules might not be for you and your group. So, feel no pressure. You are the GM, after all. You’re like a god. But without a 30 Charisma.

And you can’t move mountains.

And you can’t blow up cities.

And you poop.