Campaigns

Last Odyssey is a game designed to facilitate long-form storytelling. Each round of play of Last Odyssey is called a *session*. A session of play is a 2-5 hour long period in which the players and GM tell a single story involving their characters from beginning, to middle, to end. You can think of a session like an episode of television. Sessions will often spotlight particular events, such as a siege, a battle, or an important part of a character's story arc. A group of sessions with a single overarching narrative is called an *adventure.* An adventure should also have a defined beginning, middle, and end, and functions much like a season of television. A string of adventures that serves to create an even larger overarching narrative is called a *campaign.* In Last Odyssey, the campaign is both the story that drives every other part of the narrative, and also a ladder of progression. As characters progress through the campaign, they will also progress through each character tier, growing more powerful and gaining better equipment. While a campaign can be as long or short as the group desires, the ideal Last Odyssey campaign takes players all the way from tier 1 to tier 10.

The Framework

For a campaign to function, there should be an overarching narrative framework that guides the plot forward. This could be as simple as defeating a single Villain or Monster or as complex as uncovering a world-spanning conspiracy. The group does not have to have a framework in mind when starting the campaign, but if they do decide on one they should do so before character creation begins. Here are a few suggestions for frameworks that work well with Last Odyssey's ruleset:

Wanderers. Some campaigns don't have an overarching narrative. Instead, they players are dropped into a large, interconnected world and explore it at their leisure. This type of campaign will have a more intimate scope than others, and allow the group to focus down on character Aspirations and Relationships.

Pilgrimage. The players need to go somewhere from somewhere else. At the beginning of the campaign, the group should decide where they need to go, and why. What happens when they get there could be a known quantity, or could also be a matter of Lore they discover along the way.

Incursion. A force from another world is entering this one, leading to escalating conflict. The nature of this force and their intentions could be a known quantity, but leaving much of it a mystery or even not revealing its presence at first are both good ways to up the intrigue.

Civil War. Two or more competing factions have decided or are on the verge of deciding that they can no longer peacefully coexist. The player characters might be a member of one of these factions, or might be a neutral third part doing their best to prevent the outbreak of all-out war.

The Beginning of the End. The signs are clear: the apocalypse is coming, and it's up to the party to stop it. The player characters will struggle to prevent not just the triumph of a single villain but the end of the world as they know it. This type of framework lends itself well to games that are high-stakes and often bleak in nature.

Whatever framework the group decides on, the GM should avoid doing too much long-term planning if possible. The reason for this is a practical one, as the truth is that no planned adventure ever survives contact with the players. Instead, the GM should focus on creating the world, the Antagonists and enemies, and setting goals for the players to achieve, and then let the players accomplish those goals however they like. Depending on player choices, one framework for a campaign may even become another, as Last Odyssey campaigns tend to be long enough to allow the story to branch out in increasingly chaotic ways.

Distributing XP

The progress of the player characters through a campaign is measured in the amount of XP they earn. In total, it takes 2,310 XP to progress a character from the beginning of tier 1 to the end of tier 10. Planning out the relative amount of XP that players will earn from different sources is one way for the GM to determine what elements of a campaign to emphasize. There are five different ways that player characters can earn XP:

Combat XP is earned by defeating enemies and Antagonists in battle. Defeating a Normal enemy in combat is worth 1 XP, defeating an Elite enemy is worth 5 XP, and defeating an Antagonist is worth 10 XP per Form defeated, adjusted for the relative tier of the players and their enemies.

Discovery XP is earned by discovering new and interesting places in the overworld. Coming across a landmark, discovering an ordinary location, discovering a new level of a dungeon, and overcoming a natural hazard are all worth 1 XP, while discovering a hard-to-reach or secret area is worth 5 XP.

Lore XP is earned by learning and recording previously unknown or actionable knowledge about the world. Each small piece of Lore is worth 1 XP, each secret or larger chunk of Lore is worth 5 XP, and campaign-defining revelations are worth 20 XP each.

Puzzle XP is earned each time players successfully solve a stage of a puzzle. Each stage of a puzzle is worth 5 additional XP.

Quest XP is earned when player characters advance the story. Each stage of a quest the players complete is worth 5 XP, while completing a whole quest that is more than two stages long is worth an additional 10 XP.

Quests

Whenever characters in Last Odyssey set a significant goal for themselves or are assigned one by a third party, they should also receive a *quest.* Quests serve two purposes in campaigns. The first is to ensure that players always have a thread they can follow in order to advance the plot. The second is to create quantifiable story milestones they can cross that will grant them XP regardless of what else they accomplished along the way. Every quest the GM assigns to the players will have a definite series of *stages,* much like a puzzle, which are subtasks that, when completed, will net them

5 XP. The completion of a quest that has more than two stages will net players an additional 10 XP.

At minimum, every quest has three components: a quest giver, a task or set of tasks, and an expected reward. GMs should encourage players to set their own goals over the course of the campaign. Perhaps they learn Lore about a monster and want to track it down, or perhaps they decide to take down the corrupt mayor of a small town. Every new quest the players take on should have a clear set of conditions under which the quest is resolved, as well as a set of conditions under which it can no longer be completed. Due to the natural unpredictability of tabletop roleplaying, GMs should keep the tasks assigned to players both simple and specific. In addition, if players are able to resolve a quest without completing all of the planned tasks, they should receive all of the additional XP they would have received if they had completed it the intended way. However, if players fail a quest, they should not receive any additional XP. That being said, it's bad GMing to simply lock the players out of continuing the story if they fail a quest. Instead, failure should make the narrative more interesting by creating new quests for the players to complete and having tangible consequences that are reflected in the game world.

Whether a quest is given to the players by a third party or they decide on one themselves, they should also come with rewards besides XP (and the satisfaction of a good tabletop session, of course). Unique equipment, battle items, and heaps of cr are all additional incentives that characters who hire the players will offer them as a reward for completing tasks. GMs should be aware that higher tier enemies are balanced around the assumption that characters will be facing them with equipment of at least the corresponding item rating. While balancing rewards in a tabletop context is not an exact science, a good rule of thumb is that the amount of cr and/or equivalent cr value of the reward for a quest per quest stage should be approximately one to six multiplied by 100 multiplied by the characters' current tier. The way that players acquire these rewards ought to vary wildly so as to avoid a feeling of video gaminess that tends to result from round numbers. For example, player characters may come across an old weapon on the corpse of a dead adventurer in a dungeon, while in the woods they may be granted an item or set of items as a boon from a forest spirit. It is also good to avoid whole, round numbers when assigning quest rewards to enhance the organic feeling of player progression.

Dungeons

A *dungeon* is any enclosed, hostile area made up of interconnected encounters. It could be a cave system, a castle, an insect hive, or any other space that can be subdivided into different distinct areas where each different encounter takes place. Last Odyssey is not a game about dungeon crawling per se, but dungeons are a natural way to contain quests or even entire adventures. In particular, the Domains of Monsters will often be dungeons. There are no hard and fast rules for creating dungeons, but GMs should think of them as a series of *rooms* connected by *doors*. Each door has a specific requirement for passing through it, and each room either hosts an encounter or is an empty area for them to rest. Most dungeons should be represented by a single node on the overworld, but extremely large ones might instead contain two or more, in which case GMs should treat the paths between them the same way they treat paths in the overworld, with encounters, a navigation difficulty, and a weather table if appropriate. In addition, many dungeons will also be divided into *levels,* which are distinct zones that represent different interconnected areas. In some cases, a level will be a literal level of a building, while in others levels might be adjacent systems of caves or mark the transition between different biomes. Whenever the players enter a new level of a dungeon, they should earn 1 XP from Discovery.

As the player characters progress through a dungeon, they will accrue injuries, status effects, and lose HP and MP. If they manage to make an area safe enough, the GM may let them rest. If players rest inside of a dungeon, they should play out a camping phase as though they were traveling. If there any enemies remaining that would theoretically be aware of the characters' presence and able to invade their resting place, the danger rating of the dungeon counts as being equal to 10 for the purposes of determining if an ambush occurs. In the event that the player characters are ambushed, they should be ambushed by a group of enemies that already exists within the dungeon. Resting advances time as well, which could have other consequences. Smarter enemies might prepare ambushes for the player characters to walk into, traps might reset, and creatures may move from level to level.

To create a new dungeon in Last Odyssey, the GM should employ the following steps:

1. Create a reason for the player characters to enter the dungeon, usually in the form of a quest. They could be trying to slay a Monster, rescue a friend learn Lore, or anything else. While players will often be motivated by the simple promise of more gameplay, this alone is not enough to keep the narrative going.
2. Give an overview of each level of the dungeon. While it's perfectly acceptable to make the dungeon a giant building the players climb up or climb down (or both), it's better to theme each level around a different concept. An old temple might lead down into a series of natural caverns, while a tower to the sky might be a route up into a castle in the clouds.
3. Create a list of encounters for the players to run into on each level. A mix of combat, puzzle, and Lore encounters is best. GMs should also make sure there are opportunities for players to rest. Dungeons might also contain natural hazards, benign encounters with friendly NPCs or with interesting landmarks, and the occasional encounter that exists purely to enhance the dungeon's atmosphere. GMs should also plan for what happens if players fail an encounter. Are there alternate paths into the same room? What will their enemies do if they are victorious?
4. For each level, map out the rooms within them and the doors that connect them. It's customary to assign each one a room in which players are expected to come across it, but having a few encounters that "roam" the dungeon is also a common way to increase both the sense of danger and verisimilitude on a given level. GMs do not have to map out the dimensions of each room in agonizing detail, but should at least have a general idea of the size of each one.
5. Create items, equipment, and Lore for the players to find as they explore the dungeon. Material rewards are of course an integral part of why players would risk a dungeon in the first place, but Lore can often be just as valuable. Plus, a dungeon filled with Lore will feel that much closer to a real place as opposed to the window dressing for a set of combat encounters.

6. Finally, create at least one climactic encounter to serve as a capstone for the dungeon. This could be a fight with a Monster, a deadly trap, or a particularly challenging puzzle. The capstone encounter should be more difficult than the other encounters, and should also be foreshadowed throughout the rest of the dungeon.