

SCP

HOW TO GM HORROR AND OTHER GM TIPS



The following text was cut from the SCP Tabletop Roleplaying game by 26letterpublishing.

This chapter/information was cut for thematic reasons, but the information translates to roleplaying games in general. This pdf contains generic advice for GM's (Directors) and players and was written with the goal to help craft better stories in roleplaying.

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The Directors Guide

This section of the chapter is universal advice for Directors. If you are not a Director, or do not plan on becoming a Director, please do not read. Take all advice here with a grain of salt. Not all Directors play the same. Some of this advice may be counter-productive to the way you like to play. Most advice assumes you're playing a longer story-driven SCP campaign. If that's not what you like to do, or you only like to play 1-5 sessions per campaign, ignore it all. Directors should do whatever they want, however they want, to make an enjoyable experience for his or her players. Feel free to break any rule written in this entire book if you think it will help player enjoyment. Directors are the god of their universe, and can change any rule at any time, for any reason. If you are entirely new to roleplaying, see page N/A.

If you've roleplayed before but are fairly new to *Directing*, then the following sets of advice should help. There are additional Advanced Tips to follow later in this section.

Advice for New Directors

FIRST TIMERS

So you're thinking about being the Director for your next game but you're nervous because it's your first time? Keep the following in mind:

- **Keep it light-** Let your players know up front that this is going to be an experiment to see how comfortable you are with Directing.
- **Keep it simple-** You're far better off accidentally making an adventure that's too easy than you are one that's too hard. Keep your puzzles easy, keep your enemies weak.
- **Keep it short-** No need to plan more than 3 sessions. Come up with a simple adventure. Use the experience to see what types of things you didn't prepare for or didn't expect.
- **Don't over prepare-** Under-preparing for your first time is actually a good thing! No sense in creating stats for countless NPCs or Photoshopping a massive underground cave network if it's your first time- there's a chance your players might not even encounter them! Instead focus on keeping the players interest.
- **Improvise-** The most valued skill a good Director will have is their ability to improvise in an unexpected situation, and it can be exciting to never know what is coming up next. Take every opportunity you can to keep yourself on your toes, while still trying to subtly push your players in the right direction.
- **Keep them guessing-** When you start to feel that your players are getting comfortable or that your story is too predictable, throw in something wildly unexpected off the top of your head! This doesn't have to be as drastic as introducing a new SCP into the mix. It could be as simple as having the next NPC they talk to act very quirky or suspicious. The PCs will do everything in their power to try to understand the characters situation. Maintaining your players interest should be your primary goal when you first try your hand at Directing. Keeping the game fun and keeping it interesting are two sides of the same coin.

It's Not Director VS PC

New Directors should keep in mind that even though it's called a roleplaying "game," it's not supposed to be you against the players.

You have to balance helping your players win while also implementing difficulties that should make it feel difficult to succeed. As a Director you have the power to simply say "you all die." That's not the point of roleplaying. The point is to help tell a story in a simulated world with the possibility of failure.

Keep it simple, stupid!

Keep your adventure as simple as possible. It's very easy to over-think a campaign and make things way more complicated than they need to be. Keep it simple, even if you think it feels too easy.

Hol' up

If you get caught off guard and don't know how to handle a situation, it's okay to take a short break! Tell the players you need to take a minute to plan out a few things behind the scenes and check your notes. It's to be expected that your players will do unexpected things. You can't prepare for everything, and often times you'll waste time preparing for an event or occurrence that your players will circumvent entirely.

Reskinning

So your players successfully sneak through the entire Chaos Insurgency compound without raising the alarm? Okay, the stats you made for the Chaos guard encounters are now going to be reskinned for the next part of the adventure. Since your players never encountered the guards, there's no way that they would know you've reused the stats!

SO I DON'T PLAN AT ALL?

No. Planning is important, but you have to understand how to plan. General world-building is important. Come up with a deep understanding of key NPCs, key areas, key SCPs, and anything else you plan on introducing at some point. What do they look like? What are their goals? Who are their family? Ask yourself everything you can about your "keys" and you will have a better understanding of your world, and it will be easier to improvise when the time comes.

YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE MISTAKES

If you mess up something in your plot, do your best to compensate- but if you accidentally create a plot hole come clean with your players. It's okay to retroactively change something that occurred in the past. You're new at Directing and your players will understand. Making mistakes is a good thing! If you never make a mistake, then you'll never remember how important prevention of future mistakes will be. You're going to get a ton of things wrong. You're not going to remember a rule. That's okay! Nobody cares! Not just new Directors, but all Directors shouldn't be afraid to fail. Things will get awkward and you shouldn't sweat it. It's all a part of the learning process. Your friends will forgive, and forget. The more you Direct, the better you'll become.

DON'T OVERWHELM PLAYERS WITH SCP LORE

There's a good chance that many of your players will not be quite as familiar to the SCP universe as you are. The key thing to do in this case is to not overwhelm these players with information. Similar to the "everyman" in movie plots, slowly introduce these players with bits of information. Keep these players with a low score in SCP Lore, and treat them somewhat special; like the main character in a new SCP movie. Don't expect them to understand Security Levels or what an SCP even is. Make your plots very generic at first. Maybe even start them off as civilians that somehow got mixed up with the goings on of the SCP world. If all of your players are not that familiar with the universe, you might want to consider starting them all off as D-Class Personnel, whom are ordered by the Foundation to take care of some miscellaneous task in order to win back their freedom, or maybe even become new staff members. Players not yet familiar with the SCP universe will often view the Foundation as the enemy. This is somewhat expected considering the way they do business, but ultimately it should be conveyed that these strict rules and regulations are necessary to keep the world a safer place. If you notice a player lashing out against the Foundation, it might be wise to introduce a terrifying SCP to drive home the fact that the Foundation is a necessary "evil" in order to maintain the future of the human race.

GIVE YOUR PLAYERS WHAT THEY WANT

As a new Director you should let go of any hopes you have to assemble a great story. Yes, that sounds like the opposite of why you decided to start Directing in the first place, but hear me out. Your goal as a new Director is to let your players have fun. All of them! If you notice that a certain player can't wait to use their new double-barrel shotgun, come up with a reason for them to use it! If a player wants to talk in an accent and has a tragic backstory, have an NPC confide in them and mention a similar history. If a player asks if a specific SCP is in the same facility and all they want to do is interact with that SCP let them! Better yet- tell the player that the SCP is not in your game, but somehow incorporate it into the mission! Give your players everything they ever wanted and desired. It's only after you're comfortable as a Director and your players are comfortable with you as their Director, that you should move on to the more advanced techniques listed in this chapter. Remember, that everything you've read up to this point is specifically advice for NEW Directors. Once you've established a healthy relationship with your players, all bets are off.

ROLEPLAYING ≠ VIDEO GAMES

Your players will outsmart you. That is inevitable- but remember that is just a sign that you have good players. Don't take it as an insult or punish them for coming up with a strategy that you didn't account for. If you go into a game planning out that your players will go from A to B to C, you'll quickly realize they go from A, to C, to XYZ. You must maintain flexibility. A good trick is to come up with events that can happen anywhere, at any time. That way your players won't be frustrated that they "don't know where to go" or "not know what they are supposed to do." Help them get rid of that mentality- it comes from playing too many video games. Roleplaying is not about trying to "figure out what you're supposed to do" it's about how to resolve a situation by any means available to you. Help your players realize this every chance you get, while also keeping in mind that veteran Directors still struggle with driving this point home.

DIRECTORS ARE NOT AUTHORS

As a Director your goal is to create situations, not stories. Stories will naturally emerge from how the players handle the situation. Also it's not always your job to have a solution to a problem. You can, and sometimes should, throw a situation at your players that you have no idea how they could resolve it. Then, when one of the players has a good idea that you didn't think of, you can take credit as if you knew that was the correct solution the entire time.

Metagame

Avoid metagaming. Metagaming is when the Director has an NPC act in a way that they normally would not act because they don't know something that the Director knows. Players should avoid metagaming as well. An example would be if a player splits away from the group and sees a golden crown sitting upon a pedestal. The player says they slowly approach it. Meanwhile another player, who's character is in a different room is translating a message on a wall that says "do not touch the golden crown". Neither character has knowledge of what the other is doing, and it would be metagaming for either of them to suddenly attempt to contact the other. As the Director you may force characters to act the most logical way they would act if it avoids metagame. Remember that Directors can metagame too! If a player is hiding in a random locker from a pursuing NPC, don't have the NPC suddenly walk directly towards the locker that they are hiding in. It sounds obvious, but you could quickly forget to not metagame if you are actively trying to prevent the PC from escaping. Don't cheat to get your way!

Never Punish a Good Idea

It can be difficult to outsmart a good Director. They created the universe in which the PCs live, and are holding all the cards. Directors are only human, and eventually your players will find a way to outsmart them. Never punish your players for a good idea. Imagine you were a player and you came up with a smart way to handle a problem, only to be punished when you try to enact it. Good Directors never prevent or disallow players from ruining their plans; They adapt. Award players for creative solutions.

Avoid the "DMPC"

Some Directors want to play a power fantasy and create a super powerful NPC that leads the players, finds all the clues, and deals all the damage. Get rid of this guy. Directors are not there to lead the players step by step and save the day with their superhero each time things start to get messy. It's actually okay to start off with a character like this, but not okay to keep them around for long periods. Get the players to rely on the wise advice of Captain Awesome, only to have an SCP rip them in seventeen pieces just five sessions later. Whatever you do, don't keep these Characters around long. Your PCs are the heroes of the story. Remember that.

Avoid Railroading

Railroading is an old roleplaying term that means the Director has a set series of events and is forcing the players to do what he or she wants them to do in order to keep the story "on track." This is always a bad thing (except for One Shot games). Don't plan on your encounters going the way you thought they would. Don't force your players to go where you want them to go. Don't give the illusion of choice only to have any path they take lead to the same road. Roleplaying is about a truly open world in which the players can do anything they'd like. Never force your players to do anything they don't want to do. Railroading is synonymous with reading your friends a book you wrote. That's not what roleplaying is about.

Don't roll for everything

Pacing is important. Avoid asking players for dice rolls if you can. If players ask if their character can do something reasonable, there's no point to make them roll dice for a chance of failure. You don't have to have a roll for everything. If it's not interesting to roll for, don't bother rolling!

Advanced Director Tips

TIME DELEGATION

This is a very important tip for both old and new GMs (Directors). Make sure that your in-universe clock is always in the back of your mind. Make sure you're allocating time to all players fairly. This is very important. If a player says they are going to walk a short distance away to talk to an NPC, while another player says they are going to investigate a nearby playground and you decide to have the player roll to see if they notice a clue at that playground- quickly explain the clue and then immediately go back to the other player and roleplay out the conversation with the NPC. It's going to feel natural for you to have the player look through the entire playground and examine every single clue and maybe even talk to a child playing on the swing-set. All the while you're going to have a player who feels "paused" waiting to have their turn for a conversation. Do not let this happen! Often times you'll hear that it's imperative to keep your players together. This is why! Keeping your players together in a large group prevents you from having to jump from one player to the next in rapid succession. When the time comes that your PCs do separate, keep in mind your in-universe clock! The best way to do this is with cliffhangers. A great way to keep player interest is to end a break (or a session) on a cliffhanger. TV shows do this all the time, and you should too, when you can. Using the example above, the player goes to the playground and successfully rolls to notice a shoe on the ground. Upon picking up the shoe, they see there is a note inside of it- possibly covered in blood! The player will undoubtedly exclaim "I open it up!" that's when you go to your other player to 'catch them up' with the in-universe clock. It will keep the suspense up and your players interested. On the flip side of this, if a player says they want to go complete a task that they know will take an excess amount of time, let them. Keep an idea on how much time must pass for the PC to complete their task, and don't bother the player until the time for that task has expired. This is fine! Often times players would like to focus on some menial task they feel will help out the group as a whole. This is a great time to provide extra attention to the other players. Remember roleplaying is like dancing. It takes two. If someone wants to dance alone, don't force them into the spotlight. Everyone enjoys roleplaying for different reasons.

TAKE CREDIT WHERE CREDIT ISN'T DUE

One of the things that good Directors do is to take credit for things they didn't intend. It sounds shady, but it helps the narrative of the story and keeps the players under the impression that you've created a real, tangible universe. Avoid telling your players when you've been outsmarted. Avoid telling players that they've ruined "your plans" or that you fudged some dice rolls so that a player wouldn't die too early. Don't tell your players you "didn't plan for them to go that way" or that you are coming up with an NPC off the top of your head and gotta quick think of a name. All this will tell your players is that this NPC is not important and not *"the guy they were supposed to talk to."* Keep your secrets! Do everything in your power to **make your universe feel real**. It's hard enough to keep your players immersed in your game, don't give them reasons to step out of that immersion!

BUY-IN

The level in which players are invested and care about your game is called "Buy-In" and it's the most difficult thing to achieve as a Director. Roleplaying is you and your friends talking to each other about imaginary characters in silly voices while using pens and pencils to keep track of numbers that don't mean anything. Everything is working against you. Keeping your players immersed in your game very challenging, but even more challenging is getting them to care. The worst thing you can do as an SCP Director is to tell your players up front that you're playing a horror game. As soon as you tell them that, they will expect to die. They will expect a monster. They will expect to face creepy things and be confused and never reach a satisfying conclusion. That's what makes most horror - being underprepared for something you don't fully understand. If you want to incorporate an element of horror in your SCP game (and you do) then don't tell your players it's a horror game. As soon as you do, all hopes of attaining Buy-In are lost. There's no secret formula for Directors to create Buy-In in their worlds. Try your best to make your universe as realistic as possible with interesting NPCs and rich, intriguing histories. Utilize PC backstories and keep your NPCs talking. Do everything you can to make your players care about someone or something. Many people think this is impossible, but trust me it is not. Getting your players to actually care about something is difficult, but not impossible. Once you get someone to care about something in your game (even if it's the players character!), take advantage of that. Fear of losing something held sacred can be a powerful tool in storytelling, and especially so in horror. Never expect Buy-In to occur, but when it does capitalize on it hard!

Fail Forward

If your players fail at something that was critical to keep the plot moving forward, then allow them to fail forward. Never grind your story to a halt just because of a bad dice roll. If the PCs all failed to see the ruby gem hidden on the doorhandle, then have the ruby fall to the floor the next time the door is closed. It's okay to allow some aimless wondering and searching for clues, but make sure it doesn't feel like a dead end. If your players go in the wrong room and are convinced that the next clue they are seeking is in that room, just put it there! Don't force clues down your players throats, but if they aren't catching on to what you're trying to convey, keep things moving forward and throw them a bone. Never let the dice set the pace if things become slow and dull.

Don't force GAMING

Let go. Don't beg your players to stay. Some groups just don't mesh well, and if one of your players keeps coming up with reasons to not play, don't try to force them to stay. Remember you can roleplay with as little as one player! The important thing is to keep playing. Also on this note, keep it consistent. If you and your players agree to meet "whenever everyone is free to game" I guarantee you your campaign will not last. Pick a day of the week/month and stick to it. Make sure the schedule for gaming is clear and available to everyone. Make sure that you check in with everyone to see who can and cannot make it. If they can't make it one or two sessions, don't be bothered by it. People have lives. But also don't let it ruin your story. Make up a reason why their character has to leave the party for a short while if they are going to be absent more than one session. The important thing is that you keep the game going forward!

Actions have Consequences

Don't let your players become murder hobos. Murder hobo is an old roleplaying term that describes a player that treats every NPC they come across as a "bad guy" or players that cause city wide chaos because they are still new to the roleplaying aspect of "you can literally do whatever you want." A very important thing to keep in mind as the Director is that actions have consequences. If a player decides to shoot a police officer, that's not something that the Foundation will be willing or able to sweep under the rug. Maybe don't have your consequence occur immediately, but make sure there are consequences happening in the background. If you notice that your players are becoming murder hobos, it may be a sign that you're being too easy on them. If your players treat the Director as a pushover, then that is reflecting their characters treating the world as their oyster. Give them a strong dose of reality. But also keep in mind that consequences are not just about the Director being cruel. It's about matching the appropriate level of consequence to the irresponsible action.

PCS ARE BLIND UNTIL THE DIRECTOR TELLS THEM WHAT THEY SEE

This next tip may seem obvious, but it needs to be on your mind at all times: Your players won't know anything that you don't tell them out loud. The Director is the source of all information within the game, and it's important to remember that your players cannot read your mind. When describing things remember the five senses. Explain everything as vividly as possible when appropriate. If there's something obvious that your players aren't catching onto, find ways to bring it up more often in case they didn't hear you mention it the first time. As a Director you're holding all the cards. You know that the janitor acting suspicious and mopping that red liquid is an obvious clue, but your players might completely miss it. Your puzzle to open the locked door is super easy, but your players just feel frustrated because they thought it was just a door they weren't allowed to enter!

NPCS ARE PEOPLE TOO!

Even if you come up with an NPC on the fly, or you have a battle encounter with some random nobodies, remember that your NPCs are people too! Some of them might run or surrender. Some might want to trade sides. These people grew up in this world and have childhoods, parents, maybe even brothers, sisters, spouses, or children. Don't roleplay these characters as cannon fodder. Likewise, when you do have time to create an NPC, treat them like a real person. Ask yourself who they are. Don't just describe what they look like or what their job is. Really get in deep. Who have they loved? Do they like animals? Why do they have that scar? What was their childhood like and how has that shaped their life goals? Ask yourself as many questions about WHO each NPC is. Get as deeply into their history as you can. The evil wizard isn't just trying to take over the world because he's bored. Find a reason behind every motivation, and then each interaction you'll have a deeper understanding on that characters choices and the way they choose their words.

How to Create a Good Story

This Section contains various advice to help Directors better govern their games and tell better stories.

Character Backstories

Directing is like baking a pizza for your friends. You have to do your best to pick the toppings and how much to add. Character Backstories are like requests for pepperoni, extra cheese, or pineapples. Some players won't care about too much about backstories (toppings), while others will go into deep detail and maybe even write up several pages worth. Ultimately it's still your game (pizza) so it's up to you how you make it, but try to make sure everyone enjoys at least one aspect of your adventure. It's vital that you encourage a long and detailed backstory from your players, but never force it. Some players just want to jump in and figure out who they are along the way, and that's perfectly fine. Some will provide a full biography from childhood to adulthood. As a Director you should read each backstory you are given and really let yourself love that character. They are the main protagonists of your story after all. Come up with reasons why you like the characters so much you dread the thought of if they come to an untimely demise. Craft your story around each players backstory. Treat them as threads to your story that you must tie in to some degree. Your goal is to make each player feel like the entire story was made just for them. Expand on any loose ends your players give you and incorporate everything you can. Here's an example: Karen makes a character who's backstory says she used to be a police officer who got mixed up with an SCP, and the Foundation was so impressed with the way she handled it they decided to recruit her. Karen hasn't decided which SCP she would like to have interacted with, and the Director makes a suggestion that SCP-552 would work best. Karen agrees. The Director already had in mind that 552 was going to be pivotal to an upcoming Mission. Now that this seed is set, it allows for a dramatic moment in game. When Karen finds out that 552 is going to be involved she will be more helpful to the party since her Character has inside knowledge. She will tell the other PCs about her history, and as a result, her Character will feel like they are all the more that "real". This was a somewhat "easy" example. Most backstories are not going to be so simple to incorporate, but it is important that you try to maintain this type of narrative.

Why Though?

This all seems unnecessary! SCP is a game based on the horrors of the unknowable and supernatural. The game at its core is horror. Pretend you've sat down and made a Character. The Director says that while on a mission given to you from the Foundation, you are investigating a house thought to be anomalous. While inside a door opens up and a deep blue mist makes it impossible to see though to the other side. What do you do? Your first instinct may be to go through and see what is on the other side. But what if it's nothingness? What if it's a terrible creature that will eat you whole? You think "Well, only one way to find out!" and you leap through. Now as yourself if you were in a creepy house in real life, and a door opened up into darkness as a feeling of dread and terror chilled up your spine, wouldn't your first human instinct be to run? Why is there a discrepancy here? It's because in the first example you were playing a nameless avatar. An avatar you didn't care about. Now the more life, personality, and soul you put into this avatar the more "real" the Character will feel, and the closer we get to you roleplaying them with that element of fear. That's what horror is all about, right? Fear. You dismiss fear outright the less you care about your Character. This is the secret to horror. This is how to get your players to experience fear in-game. Getting them to care about something- their Characters lives. The more you bring in elements to their backstory, the more real their Characters will be to them, and horror will come naturally when encountering SCPs.

Sounds Easy!

It's not. Don't even expect this to happen. It's very rare to get players to care about anything in your pretend world. Only players that allow themselves to care will enjoy your game. This is true with all horror movies. Only someone who is willing to allow a movie to scare them will enjoy a good horror movie. Think of the scariest movie you can. Now picture watching that movie alone in the dark under a blanket. It's scary! You've seen it before and you remember how scary that movie is. Now picture yourself with your friends at a party, eating pizza and that same movie is playing on the TV. Your friends and you are all laughing. Why? Shouldn't you all be scared? It's because you've all decided that now is not the time to be frightened. Now is the time for socialization. Most of you are probably making fun of how fake the blood looks. Now think about roleplaying. You're gathered around a table with your friends trying to scare them by just using the words coming out of your mouth. Horror in roleplaying is possibly one of the most difficult tasks to undertake, so you're going to need to use every trick in the book to your advantage.

So How Do I Make Things Scary?

Now that you have your players attention and they care about your world, how do you implement horror? Well, that depends on which SCP you're involving. Each SCP has an element of mystery and unknowingness about them. Often times SCPs are mundane objects. Its when you take something mundane and add something "off" about it is one way to bring about SCP horror to your campaign. Take something simple you see or use everyday. A can of soda, for example. Now place that object where you normally wouldn't see it and suddenly you have a creepy factor. NASA comes back with mars rover footage. The players review it and see a can of soda on the planets surface. No explanation. Or, the more common SCP formula is to take a normal everyday object and make it anomalous. SCP-4339, for example is an everyday black ink ball-point-pen. It just happens to bend reality to whatever someone writes with it. This is just one technique on how to incorporate horror.

Tension

Delay your explanations. Do everything you can to prevent answers from being readily available. Let's say your players are in an abandoned factory. Faintly, from the bathroom, (after the proper Perception rolls are made) the PCs hear ".....thump.....scrape.....thump.....scrape" They go to investigate. They get closer and closer..... "thump.....ssshhhhh.....thump.....ssshhhhh...." A PC slowly creeps around the corner and shines a flashlight inside the bathroom and sees..... a broken ceiling fan hitting a pile of clothes with enough power to still slightly function. Good Directors know that you must build up tension and then release it over and over and over in waves. Make the players anxious to finally confront the monster and stressed each encounter that they barely miss it, all the while building and releasing tension.

Session Zero

Before you start your first gaming session, it's usually a good idea to do a "Session Zero." Session Zero is a gathering of your players to corroboratively establish what is to be expected once roleplaying begins. Think of it like a movie preview. You're better off knowing at least a little of what to expect jumping in. Players can work together and tie in their backstories together, and give a brief explanation of the Character they intend to play. You can also use session zero to finish up (or start!) making your Characters, buy gear, and finalize everything. The Director could even take each player aside and do a quick roleplay of portions of their backstory if there is enough time, and ask the player if they could modify small aspects to better fit the story. This is also the time when the everyone should be asking each other what they expect from each other. Lay down any house rules and prepare for any scheduling conflicts. The Director can use this time to tell the players things their Characters already know about the world, and help explain the SCP universe to those not as familiar as the rest. Plan real-world things as well, such as when to take breaks, how to handle food and drinks, etc. Then when the official "session 1" begins, the Director will hand out a small amount of experience for Session Zero, and the game will officially begin.

Types of Campaigns

Directors have several options on how to start their campaign. Your primary goal is to find a reason why all your players are working together to resolve various issues caused by SCPs and the surrounding SCP lore. Depending on how you go about this, your PCs will start off in various initial situations. See below for some suggestions, but Directors are allowed to go about their storyline however they would like.

1) PCs are in a Mobile Task Force

Your players begin the game already belonging to a Mobile Task Force. It is up to you and the players to decide how long they have been involved with the MTF. This scenerio is easiest for Directors to get the ball rolling. Commands will come from the director of Task Forces (or whoever the Director chooses) and the PCs are expected to undertake any Objective they are issued. All PCs will begin at Security Level 02, and have a Personnel class of C. The Director should decide on what starting weapons or gear all PCs get, or provide initial funding of around \$1000 per PC.

2) PCs are in a Tactical Response Team

PCs begin the game as part of a run-of-the-mill Tactical Response Team. These teams take orders from various staff members to deal with internal issues within a single Foundation Site. Typically they have a list of duties they must perform, such as guard a hallway or escort D-Class Personnel to various locations, and have duties that change daily to fit the needs of a Site. Tactical Response Team members occasionally will be ordered to leave the Facility to help procure an SCP or to provide MTF backup. If a Tactical Response Team impresses the Foundation, they may be given permission to form their own MTF. All PCs should begin at Security Level 01, and have a Personnel class of C. The Director should decide on what starting weapons or gear all PCs get, or provide initial funding of around \$500 per PC.

3) PCs are Class D Personnel

PCs start off imprisoned by the Foundation and are expendable D-Class Personnel. These Characters are highly expendable and treated as such. Guards will often order them into situations directly interacting with SCPs and rarely will any Foundation member go out of their way to keep them safe. Usually D-Class Personnel are there for a reason. They could be death-row inmates purchased by the Foundation, or they could be staff members that pissed off the wrong person. Let your players decide why they are behind bars. Choosing this option starts your players off with a severe disadvantage. All PCs should begin at Security Level 00, and have a Personnel class of D. PCs get no starting weapons or equipment.

4) Outsiders

PCs start off as non-Foundation staff. They could be FBI agents, civilians, or even work for an outside organization (see pages N/A). The Director should decide what careers the PCs begin with, and the players should decide how they ended up working there. How the Director decides to involve SCPs into the story is entirely up to them. You could even play a campaign in which the Foundation is barely involved. All PCs should begin at Security Level 00, and have a Personnel class of C. The Director should decide on what starting weapons or gear all PCs get, or provide initial funding which he or she deems appropriate.

What is Horror?

Hollywood has given horror a bad name. When most people think horror movies, they think about some killer wearing a mask going around killing teenagers with a knife. The movie is full of jump-scares and usually the killer ends up escaping or coming back from the dead. The focus of horror in movies is on the gore, and the monster that is causing the gore. When telling a good horror story, however, you must remember that it is a story first, and then include horror second. You must get your players immersed into your universe and make them feel like their Characters are real people. Have the first several sessions be almost boring. Maybe the Foundation sends them on some routine fetch-quest and they must deliver something mundane from point A to point B. This will be a good time for Character development. Allow the players to really get into the roleplaying aspect of their Character without having to worry about fighting for their lives. Keep it up until your players almost feel like the entire campaign is going to be boring tasks, because after all- their Characters wouldn't think anything is going to change either. Then, just when your players start to get comfortable, pull the rug from underneath them and bring in the big guns. Perhaps the Foundation goes into Red Alert, several SCPs have escaped, the O5 Council gives the party a secret mission, or a zombieapocalypse occurs. Point is that you must get your players to feel comfortable with their Characters before you throw them into the deep end. It's very tempting to start off your game with a bang, and for shorter games this can be very effective. You need to grab your players attention early on. However with roleplaying, allowing your players to come to terms with who their Characters are, how they talk, how they interact with each other- these are the things that are most important to establish first, and only after that has been done, should you bring in the 'threat' to everything they know and love. ***Good horror comes from getting your players attached to their Characters, immersed into your universe, and then putting them in a situation they don't understand and are not equipped to handle.*** Getting your players attached and immersed is the hard part. Once you do that, bring in some Keter-class SCPs and the horror will come naturally.

The Story Circle

This Story Circle was created by Dan Harmon as a simplified version of Joseph Campbell's "The Hero's Journey." It proclaims that (most) stories go by the following formula:

A character is in a zone of comfort or familiarity.

They desire something.

They enter an unfamiliar situation.

They adapt to that situation.

They get that which they wanted.

They pay a heavy price for it.

They return to their familiar situation.

They have changed as a result of the journey.

As a Director you should **never expect** your campaigns to follow this formula, however laying down a pathway for a Story Circle can never be a bad thing. You may have noticed that most of the Story Circle relies on personal introspections (desire something, adaptation, having changed) this is because half of the Story Circle relies on your players' roleplaying to fulfill. Never ask your players to force any part of a Story Circle. Directors should only lay down a pathway -like *planting a seed*- and do their best to cultivate an environment in which a Story Circle naturally emerges from the campaign.

So what does this mean to you as the Director? As a tool for roleplaying the Story Circle needs to be reworked to reflect that which the Director has control over.

A character is in a zone of comfort or familiarity.

They desire something.

1) Create a Primary Goal

The primary goal should be the thing that the players know they must try to accomplish in order to succeed. Directors should try to present a clear objective to resolve that will be accomplished near the end of the campaign. This is not always possible. Often times this goal could simply be to "defeat the bad guy" but more complex goals are used as well.

They enter an unfamiliar situation.

2) Create New Locations and Characters

Create stats for enemies that will hinder the party, as well as new friendly characters that can aid the party. Try to come up with unique locations that the PCs feel very out-of-place in.

They adapt to that situation.

3) Complicate Things Further

Force the PCs to discard things that they used to hold precious in order to move forward. Complicate the situation with nuance. Force the PCs to adapt to this new environment. It is at this step that the PCs should be nearing their prime.

They get that which they wanted.

They pay a heavy price for it.

4) Achieving the Goal

After much sacrifice the PCs accomplish their goal at a cost. Perhaps the cost was the loss of a life. Perhaps it's losing their jobs at the Foundation. Whatever happens, the PCs must lose something to gain something. If the goal is simply taken without resistance, the climax will feel anti-climactic. It is at this step a "final boss" or "final trial" will occur.

They return to their familiar situation.

They have changed as a result of the journey.

5) Return

The return in roleplaying could mean that the PCs go back to the Foundation and receive a new objective, or they return to their normal lives in some way. This step is not something the Director needs to plan on persay, but it is something that at least a full gaming session should be devoted to. The return could be the punctuation to the end of a campaign, or it could be a resting period before the next adventure.

Additional Reading

Check out the following link for additional advice for role-playing plot structure: tinyurl.com/ycsh4zpl
Below is a summary from this link

1) Something's Wrong.

2) The PCs try to right it.

3) They put themselves at risk doing so.

4) They face trials that give them a greater understanding of the situation.

5) They come to find not all is as it seems/face death

6) Find what they need to Make It Right.

Please check out totalpartythriller.tumblr.com for more great advice.

For a complete explanation of The Story Circle by Dan Harmon check out channel101.fandom.com/wiki/Story_Structure_101:_Super_Basic_Shit

(All links mentioned above are not affiliates of the SCP wiki or 26letterpublishing and are used as reference only)

Proactive Protagonists

A major factor in having likeable or interesting character is whether or not they are proactive. Let's look at two examples from movies.

In the 1986 movie *Aliens*, our protagonist Ripley starts off reacting to events. She wakes up from hypersleep, has nightmares, is asked to join a military group to investigate some missing colonists on LV-426, and gives a presentation on why the creatures are dangerous. She reacts to events around her instead of causing them. But then something changes. Their captain Gorman freezes up and doesn't know how to react when their team is being slaughtered. If Ripley was a purely reactive character, she would run to a corner and hide and hope that someone else would come save her. But Ripley is a Proactive character. It is at this moment in the movie that the audience really wants to see Ripley succeed because she doesn't hide. She takes action. She rushes to the driver seat and does everything in her power to save the dying soldiers. The music builds up and some awesome action ensues.

In the movie *Captain America*, Steve Rogers remains somewhat reactive even after becoming "Captain America." His turning point is when Chester Phillips (played by Tommy Lee Jones) tells Steve that there's no way to save some missing POW's, and it's better to assume they are all dead (including his brother Bucky). But Steve decides that's unacceptable. Instead of reacting to the situation and trying to get a flight home, he parachutes down into an enemy camp and single-handedly rescues all the POW's and saves the day.

Why mention these two scenes? Because in roleplaying, players don't always think they have the option to be proactive. It is up to you as a player to decide when enough is enough and to take the situation into your own hands, and good Directors will capitalize on this.

Directors: Getting your players to become proactive protagonists is more important to your story than the story circle. Interesting moments that revolve around your PC's are what make the best roleplaying experiences. The Story Circle is good to be aware of when placing the scaffolding of your plot, but proactive protagonist moments are the cement of your story.

5 Tips to Become a Better Player

This page contains five *general* tips for Players/PCs to follow to help make a better roleplaying experience.

Tip #1

STAY OFF YOUR PHONE

The biggest distraction at the table rests in your pocket. Please stay off your phone while roleplaying. Obviously there are exceptions if you're looking up a dice rolling app, or something else related to gaming, but if you're checking your feed you're going to miss vital information.

Tip #2

TALK IN-CHARACTER AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE

It's hard enough to keep your friends on track with roleplaying, help out everyone by talking in-Character to other players as much as possible. It will also help everyone stay focused on roleplaying and avoid small talk about last night's episode of their favorite TV show.

Tip #3

TALK TO NPCs IN-CHARACTER AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE

Not sure what to do next? *Talk to an NPC in-Character.* Need to find an important clue? *Talk to an NPC in-Character.* Bored? *Talk to an NPC in-Character.* Not sure what roleplaying is all about? *Talk to an NPC in-Character.*

Tip #4

STAY TOGETHER

Splitting up can cause a splitting headache for Directors, *and* it will reduce how much you get to play the game, since the Director will have to go back and forth between two or more parties (*while you sit around and wait for them to finish*). Stick together! You could wander off from your group and accidentally open the door that leads to a huge boss fight intended for five or more players!

Tip #5

COMMUNICATE IN-CHARACTER

Remember you must tell the Director **EXACTLY** what you do and make sure that your fellow PCs know what you know! If the Director gives you new information, the rest of the PCs won't know about it until you ***tell them in-Character!***

Imagine the following scenario. You and the rest of the PCs are searching a field looking for the lost keys to a Jeep. Everyone searches around various areas of this field and the Director tells you that your Character finds the keys!

Scenario #1)

Director: You find the keys, what do you do?

PC: I take them to the Jeep and we leave.

Director: Okay, so you start heading to the Jeep.

PC: Yeah.

Director: What's everyone else do?

(Rest of the PCs): We go to the Jeep!

Director: You can't do that, that's considered Metagaming.

PC: OH! Okay, before I go to the Jeep I tell everyone what I found.

Director: Okay, so how do you do that?

PC: What do you mean? I yell it.

Director: Okay, so you start yelling. What do you yell?

PC: I yell that I found the keys!

Director: Okay, but what words do you yell?

PC: I yell "*I found the keys*" and I start heading to the Jeep holding the keys above my head, jingling them!

Compared to...

Scenario #2)

Director: You find the keys, what do you do?

PC: I yell "*I found the keys*" and I start heading to the Jeep holding the keys above my head, jingling them.

***Never assume other PCs know what you know!
Never neglect your Characters phrasing!***