# The Setting and Theme

“*I will knock down the Gates of the Netherworld*,

*I will smash the door posts, and leave the doors flat down*,

*and will let the dead go up to eat the living!*

*And the dead will outnumber the living!” - The Epic of Gilgamesh*

* The campaign atmosphere is zombie apocalypse - realistic horror set in a modern world that is slipping into anarchy. This campaign will be “AMC’s The Walking Dead” not “Army of Darkness”.
* PCs are normal people called to do extraordinary things.
* Expect mass hysteria and paranoia. Sometimes people are bad, sometimes people are desperate, and sometimes people have lost it and are dangerous.
* Expect difficult moral choices. <http://www.snorgtees.com/if-zombies-chase-us>
* It’s not all grim. As you peel the onion, sacrifice will have meaning and hope could have a direction.

# Character motivations

* Nihilists, sociopaths, basket cases and emotional cripples need not apply.
* Most of the time, your most important goal will be surviving to fight again tomorrow.
* Sometimes you get to think about finding food to eat next week, or where to find more shotgun shells.
* Your character needs to have something to hope for. Fill in the blank: “Things will be OK, if I can just ….”

# Campaign starting notes

The opening tableau will be pre-apocalypse. The world will be mostly “as-is” and the GMs will provide notes on the significant (Common Knowledge) changes over the last 18 months.

We will start in early 2013 near Austin at the patron’s home. The initial patron will be an ex-CEO who has gone eccentric. Think Richard Garriott with a few little twists. [Easiest ways to get an invitation are probably that the PC is a former employee, school chum, neighbor, or distant cousin.]

Please note that the campaign may not stay near Austin. You may not get a lot of use out of things like area knowledge skills or local connections.

The characters don’t have to trust each other. But they need to trust the patron enough to follow him (at least initially). If the patron says “I know a place that might be safer”, the character should be willing to drop everything and leave. [Yes, maybe you had to abandon loved ones – see “difficult moral choices” up above. Also look at the Vow & Death Wish hindrances, and the Sidekick edge.]

# Building your character

We will use the Savage Worlds RPG system by Pinnacle : <http://www.peginc.com/games/savage-worlds/>

The core rulebook is the Savage Worlds Deluxe Explorer’s Edition (2012). We will also use part of Savage Worlds Horror Companion (2011). Most importantly, we will use the Sanity rules, and the Edges and Hindrances in that book.

* Your initial character starts as a Novice with zero Experience. The normal rules for Replacement Characters apply if that one dies, retires or leaves the party.
* All PCs are human. Or at least they start out that way.
* All PCs start as mundanes (Muggles if you like). The character can believe anything you want them to (e.g. “yes, I can see your future from these tea leaves” or “wicca is truth”) – but they can’t actually make it happen. The specific mechanics consequences are:
  + The following Edges have a minimum rank of Seasoned rather than Novice : Arcane Background, Relentless, Tower of Will, Occultist, One of the Chosen, and Visions.
  + Some of those Edges may have other requirements – more on that as events unfold.
  + Edges & Hindrances with either mundane or supernatural origins should be explained by mundane backgrounds – this includes Weird Edges, Sound Mind, et al.
  + Yes, you can design a character that would benefit from learning Arcane Background upon reaching Seasoned status. But no crying about running four sessions with an “underpowered” character. If you do this, you might want to look at skills like Arcane and Knowledge (Arcana) as well as the Power Points edge.
* The PCs are heroes, not background.
  + Getting critical information and resources into the character’s hands is a GM problem.
  + Getting secondary information to give you a bonus or new options is up to the player.
  + The last 150 years of zombie & horror fiction are Common Knowledge. Maybe that will help, but don’t count on it.
  + If you want Specific Knowledge about the pre-apocalypse history of undead, then buy a knowledge skill. But don’t expect that to really help either.
  + You cannot have Specific Knowledge about what zombies actually are, how zombieism works or where they came from. If you want access to someone who thinks they know the answers, then you want the Connections edge. But expect them to be just as much in the dark as you – at least at first.
  + If you want to figure it out yourself, then think about the Investigation and Streetwise skills. Intimidation and Notice might be useful too. Then we will use the Forbidden Lore rules. (hint, Sanity is over-rated)
* Players are encouraged to build “fish-out-of-water” 21st century urbanites that are ill-adapted to this new world. E.g. expect to explain why your E.R. Doctor doesn’t have Driving or Knowledge (Biology).
* The following Hindrances are available to help ease your transition to the strange new world:

**Warrior of the Concrete Jungle (Major Hindrance)**  
*“Is the pen still mightier than the sword?”*

During character creation:

* Your Shooting, Throwing and Fighting skills may not be higher than d6
* You may not purchase an Arcane skill or Knowledge (Arcana)
* You may not purchase Combat Edges

This hindrance does not count against your maximum number of Hindrances. I.e. you may start with two Major and two Minor.

**Champion of the Corner Office (Major Hindrance)**

*“This is not the world you grew up in, but you have always survived and adapted.”*

As Warrior of the Concrete Jungle, plus you receive an additional Edge during character creation.

After character creation:

* You have a -1 on all to-hit and damage rolls
* You receive one extra Benny per game session

You may buy off this Hindrance by sacrificing an Advance (see Enemy or Habit). If you do so, you may keep the extra edge you received during character creation – you are effectively “downgrading” to Warrior of the Concrete Jungle.

* All of the Medieval, Blackpowder and Modern gear exists – Futuristic gear does not. If you want something that is not on the list, use consumer retail pricing circa 2013. You may not purchase any gear that is marked as “Military”. Please remember that starting wealth is $500 – you may want to look at improvised weapons. Yes, your character probably had more stuff pre-Zed – this is the minimum gear that you “escape” with.

# Combat mechanics in Savage Worlds

Savage Worlds has a tag-line of “Fast! Furious! Fun!”

Combat can be brutal and deadly even for PCs. “Get ‘em” might not always be the best choice.

* Shaken characters get in a death spiral quickly. Fewer actions and easier to damage.
* Everyone always has the same number of Wounds (i.e. hit points). Experienced characters have better attacks and defenses, but they can fall down just as fast.
* The initiative order changes each round. The bad guys could get two attacks before you can run away.
* Any bite \*could\* get you infected. The only known cure is decapitation.

John and Ed are not trying to kill the characters. But we want you to be prepared. We are used to fantasy tropes of ever-victorious PCs, but this is horror and encounters aren’t always “fair” or balanced. PCs will however have all the normal Savage World advantages.

* The generic zombie is an Extra. They get one Wound, and off the board.
* PCs and major NPCs are Wild Cards. Four wounds to Incapacitated, the Wild Die (roll two dice take higher), and you get Bennies every session (reroll to-hits and soak damage).

# Fighting the Zed

Always remember that

* Zombies are slow and stupid. An alert, rested, healthy human has little to fear in broad daylight with a full clip. But night is coming … and there is always more where that one came from …
* Zombies prey on the weak and wounded. Zed’s favorite action is their signature Finishing Move (“Eat Brain”) on an incapacitated human.
* Zed hunt in groups. You will be outnumbered in every fight, and the Gang Up bonus sucks.
* Zed is always looking for flesh, and I think they are attracted to noises and lights.
* Sometimes you get the ominous moaning. Sometimes you have eerie, unearthly silence.

# PC Questionnaire

Character Name:

How would your PC react to losing a limb?

How would your PC react to getting infected?

Who was the closest person to the PC before “the event”? Where is that person now?

What moral line would your PC never cross?

What moral compromises is your PC least proud of or most guilty about?

Food / group (family) safety / personal safety. How does your PC rank these in their mind?

Follower or leader?

Fight or flight?

# Character Archetypes

Here are some possible character archetypes for your review. (pg. 18-19 of core rules)

**Driver**

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6,

Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Driving d8, Fighting d4, Notice d6,

Shooting d6, +7 additional skill points

**Charisma:** –; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** One Major, two Minor

**Edges:** Ace, Quick

**“Face”**

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8,

Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d4, Intimidation d6, Notice d6,

Persuasion d10, Shooting d4, Streetwise d6,

Taunt d6

**Charisma:** +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** One Major, two Minor

**Edges:** Attractive, Strong Willed

**Fighter, Fencer**

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6,

Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d12, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Taunt

d8

**Charisma:** –; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** One Major, two Minor

**Edges:** Florentine, Two Fisted

**Fighter, Great Weapon**

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6,

Strength d10, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Intimidation d6, Notice d6,

+4 additional skill points

**Charisma:** –; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 6

**Hindrances:** One Major, two Minor

**Edges:** Brawny, Sweep

**Investigator**

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6,

Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Investigation d8, Notice d8,

Persuasion d6, Shooting d6, Streetwise d8

**Charisma:** –; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** One Major, two Minor

**Edges:** Connections, Investigator

**Leader**

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8,

Strength d4, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge

(Battle) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting

d6, +3 additional skill points

**Charisma:** –; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** One Major, two Minor

**Edges:** Command, Natural Leader

**Mage**

**Attributes:** Agility d4, Smarts d10, Spirit d8,

Strength d4, Vigor d4

**Skills:** Fighting d4, Investigation d6, Knowledge

(Arcana) d6, Notice d6, Spellcasting d10, +4

additional skill points

**Charisma:** –; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 4

**Hindrances:** One Major, two Minor

**Edges:** Arcane Background (Magic), New Power,

Power Points

**Marksman**

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6,

Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d10, Taunt

d6, +5 additional skill points

**Charisma:** –; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** One Major, two Minor

**Edges:** Alertness

**Martial Artist**

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6,

Strength d8, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Intimidation d6, Notice d6,

+6 additional skill points

**Charisma:** –; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** One Major, two Minor

**Edges:** Martial Artist

**Pilot**

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6,

Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d4, Notice d8, Piloting d10, Repair

d6, Shooting d6, +1 additional skill point

**Charisma:** –; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** One Major, two Minor

**Edges:** Ace, Alertness

**Pirate**

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6,

Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Boating d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6,

Notice d6, Shooting d8, Taunt d6

**Charisma:** –; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** One Major, two Minor

**Edges:** Acrobat, Steady Hands

**Pistoleer**

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6,

Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d10, Taunt

d6, +4 additional skill points

**Charisma:** –; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** One Major, two Minor

**Edges:** Ambidextrous, Two-Fisted

**Priest, Healer**

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8,

Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Faith d8, Fighting d6, Healing d8, Notice

d6, +4 additional skill points

**Charisma:** –; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** One Major, two Minor

**Edges:** Arcane Background (Miracles), Healer

**Rogue**

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6,

Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Lockpicking d6,

Notice d6, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6, Taunt d6

**Charisma:** –; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** One Major, two Minor

**Edges:** Assassin, Thief

**Scientist**

**Attributes:** Agility d4, Smarts d10, Spirit d6,

Strength d4, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Investigation d6, Knowledge (Science)

d10, Knowledge (Other) d10, Notice d8, Repair d6

**Charisma:** –; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** One Major, two Minor

**Edges:** Jack-of-All-Trades, McGyver, Scholar

**Scientist, Weird**

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6,

Strength d4, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Knowledge (Science) d8, Knowledge

(Other) d6, Notice d6, Repair d8, Shooting d6,

Weird Science d10

**Charisma:** –; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** One Major, two Minor

**Edges:** Arcane Background (Weird Science),

Gadgeteer