

Story Games

Story games are for people who love improvisation and freeform roleplay. We go on imaginary adventures in a lighthearted atmosphere with other friendly and creative people. Together we improvise stories from scratch, with no preparation. It is a combination of roleplaying, brainstorming, collaborative storytelling, and improv. If you feel like stretching your creative muscles - come join us on one of our adventures!

How to Play

We use the Story Template to guide us through the game. First, we brainstorm to establish the important elements of our adventure: interesting premise, our goal, setting, characters, and challenges we may encounter.

Then we roleplay - improvise the scenes of our adventure, trying to tell a fun story, making things up as we go. The template contains a list of key plot points, we strive to incorporate them into our story, use them to guide our improv.

One player becomes a Game Master (GM) - the narrator of our story. GM describes the world around the players, plays the role of non-player characters, decides what challenge/obstacle the players will face next, and narrates the consequences of their actions. The rest of the players play as their characters.

Players take turns GMing. One player GMs a scene, we play through it, the next player GMs the next one. Each scene revolves around players trying to overcome the challenge established by the GM. The scene ends when the challenge is resolved.

If the current GM has trouble figuring out what happens next, they can tap out and let someone else continue the story. When necessary, we can pause between the scenes for a quick brainstorm and figure things out together.

All players actively contribute to the story, introduce new ideas, fill in missing information, create interesting situations, help to advance the story and take the adventure in new directions.

We win the game if we have created an interesting story that makes sense and resolves in an awesome and satisfying climax.

Freeform Roleplay

Freeform roleplay doesn't have many rules - there's nothing stopping us from doing anything we can imagine, but we trust each other to play fairly - avoid game-breaking actions, do things that make sense in the story, and try to make it interesting and fun for other players. To get the most out of our games, take a look at our guidelines.

What do you need to play

1. People who enjoy improvisation, storytelling, and roleplay. Ideally, 3-5 players.
2. About three hours. Roughly 40 minutes for brainstorming, the rest is roleplay.
3. Some 20-sided dice (ideally 2 per player, but 1 die for the group will do).
4. Something to write down your ideas on (paper, cards, whiteboard).

Play Online

Join our discord community to find people to play with!

<https://rpgadventures.io/storygames>

Rolling Dice

After you describe your approach to solving a challenge, roll a 20-sided die to determine outcome. If you roll above the target number (set by the GM) - you succeed. Otherwise you suffer a negative consequence, setback, or a complication. If your character is using an ability relevant to the task you're attempting, roll two dice and take the best result.

Setting a target number

The GM considers the difficulty of the task, situation the players are in, and their approach to solving the challenge. GM uses their common sense to decide how likely the players are to succeed. Set lower numbers for easier tasks or clever solutions, set higher numbers for difficult challenges or reckless actions. If you saw characters in a movie attempt something like this, would you expect it to work?

Consequences

The situation always changes after a roll, moving the characters closer to or farther away from their goals. Each outcome moves the plot forward, takes the story in a different direction. Failure always leads to consequences - the characters suffer a temporary defeat, face a complication, or have to try a different approach.

Action and Combat Scenes

Don't roll for separate attacks/actions. Use the dice to determine the outcomes of decisive moments in the conflict, dramatically interesting turning points.

Resolve most fights in one roll. Describe how you're fighting, roll to see if you win. Defeating a fearsome enemy (like a dragon) may require 2-4 challenges (get close enough while avoiding it's attacks, pry open one of it's scales, land a killing blow).

Players don't die, but you can describe how they got hurt and take it into account when deciding the difficulty of future challenges. If the situation gets severe, players may be forced to escape or be left at the mercy of their enemies.

Story Template

Adventure Idea

What will the adventure be about? Exciting premise. Prompt. High Concept. Fantastical "What if" question. Take ideas from movies/books. Mix and match tropes. Combine two ideas into something new. Add a twist.

Problem/Goal

What problem will the heroes need to solve, what goal will they strive to achieve? What Evil Plan must they prevent? The main conflict. Event that will determine whether we succeed or fail, and resolve the story.

Interesting Setting/Locations

Where does the story take place? What's cool about it? Where does the adventure begin? To what interesting or important areas might the adventure lead?

Important Non-Player Characters

Who is the main antagonist? What do they want, why? Their appearance, personality, occupation, motivations. Other NPCs we'll meet (Quest Giver, Allies, Minions).

Challenges

What steps might we take to achieve the goal? What's our plan? What problems/obstacles we might encounter? What unexpected complication/reveal might change the direction of the story, raise the stakes and threat level? What final, epic, climactic challenge could resolve the main conflict? Awesome scene at a cool location.

Create Player Characters

Description: Who are you? Name, appearance, personality, occupation.

Abilities: What can you do? Cool powers, special skills, useful items.

Motivations: What do you want from this quest? What are your goals?

Relationship: Pick at least one PC to establish a relationship with.

Connection - How do you know each other? What do you think about them?

Tension - What do you want from them? Why do they refuse to give it to you?

Key Plot Points

Exciting Adventure Hook

How do we encounter the problem? Draws our heroes into action, gives us the first set of tasks to accomplish.

The First Steps

First step of the plan. First obstacle the heroes need to overcome as they strive towards their goal.

Surprising Midpoint

Difficult challenge. Unexpected complication changes the direction of the story, raises the stakes and threat level? Important Milestone. Twist/reveal redefines the goal? Setback, everything goes wrong? Antagonist makes a move?

Awesome Climax

The final, epic, most important/dangerous challenge that resolves the main conflict. Exciting ending. Cool setpiece.

Resolution

Outcomes/consequences of the adventure. How does the world (and heroes' lives) change after the climax.

Guidelines

Follow these guidelines to get the most out of our games. If you're new - don't get too overwhelmed by all these tips. Practice them one at a time - pick one principle you'd like to get better at, and focus on that one thing for the duration of the game. When GMing, try to encourage players to follow these principles.

Brainstorm what's hard to improvise

During the brainstorming part, try to make sure we have prepared everything that would be hard to improvise on the spot, but no more.

Take inspiration

If you're struggling to come up with a creative idea - use one from your favorite Movie, Game, or a TV show. Mix and match tropes. Combine two different movies, characters, settings, or plots. Try to add an unusual unexpected twist to an idea. Reverse one of its key aspects of the idea, switch the genre, setting, goal, important character traits, etc.

Grounded Story, Funny Roleplay

When brainstorming/GMing, focus on creating a good, interesting story with a solid plot, establishing the base reality that makes sense. Don't try to make it funny - try to create a grounded believable world on top of which we can improvise funny and entertaining situations.

Play to find out what happens

Do things that result in a good story, optimize for fun instead of "winning".

Yes, and

Treat the ideas suggested by other players as awesome (even when they may seem silly). Don't shut down people's ideas - embrace them, help them succeed. Adopt ideas, build on top of them, add something new, find a way to make them work, make them better. Help other players be awesome. Actively help others to have cool moments and achieve their goals, create opportunities for other characters to shine. When GMing, listen to players and build off of the ideas they contribute.

Ask Questions

When GMing, draw players into the story by asking questions "How does your character feel about [x]?", "What's going through their head as they do [y]?", "Describe how you want to do [z]."

Contribute to the story

Don't be afraid to add information to the story. Help the GM to establish the scene, point out interesting details in the world around you. Vividly describe what you do. Answer unanswered questions, provide explanations for information that seems inconsistent, help to create a story that makes sense. Help the GM to move the story along. If you notice that players are stuck talking to each other and going nowhere - make a decision, conclude this scene, and move on to the next one.

Develop your Character

What is their current goal? What do they want from this quest? What are their values and ideals? What do they fear? What flaws/weaknesses do they need to overcome? What is their backstory, significant events that shaped them? What is their deep dark secret? Do they have a strong opinion about what's going on? What's going through their head at this moment?

Be an active player

Don't wait for others to entertain you, assume the responsibility for making the story more fun for yourself and others, try to actively contribute ideas to the story, enhance everyone's experience. Positive energy and enthusiasm are always welcome.

Be a proactive character

Don't wait for the GM to provide every detail and tell you what to do. Figure out what your character wants, form your own goals, pursue them, and creatively overcome obstacles on their way.

Stay in character

Try to immerse yourself in playing your character, like an actor. Try to make other people love and care about your character. Think about your character's distinctive features, quirks, unique speech patterns. Act it out, do a silly voice.

Create and Explore the Relationships

How does your character feel about the other party members? Do you have history? Create interesting tension, conflict dynamics between the characters in the party (while still collaborating as players). What does your character want from another PC? Why do they refuse to give it to you? Could your goals be at odds with each other? As the story goes on, can your characters resolve the conflict, find an agreement, a win-win outcome?

Idea Prompts

Combine two prompts to create a fun premise. Change one of the elements to something unexpected.

Setting Prompts

Wild West. Cowboys, bandits, gold rush.
Pirates. Tortuga, Freeport. Ships. Treasure.
Egyptian/Aztec Pyramids. Mummies. Curses. Traps.
Ancient/Lost Civilization. Atlantis. El Dorado. Ruins.
Post-apocalyptic fallout. Aftermath of a disaster.
War zone. Battleground between two factions.
Prehistoric. Dinosaurs, mammoths, tribes.
The Land of Outcasts/Exiles/Criminals.
On a vehicle. Zeppelin, Ship, Train, Submarine.
Magic forest. Elves, druids, unicorns, creatures.
Abandoned spaceship. Space station.
Colony, scientific expedition. Research facility/labs.
Remote island. Tropical Jungle. Oasis. Bayou.
Extreme weather. Cold, heat, maelstrom, radiation.
Exotic Building. Castle, Tower, Skyscraper.
Steampunk. Elaborate machines, inventions
Magic School. Adventuring Academy.
The world of the dead. Heaven/Hell.
Horror movie. Old cabin. Halloween.
Underground. Glowing plants/creatures.
Inside a secret organization. Spies. Special agents.
In Virtual Reality, Game, Illusion.
Underwater. Merfolk. Kraken.
Secret Society/Conspiracy/Cult lair.
Mad Scientist/Wizard laboratory.
Monster lair. World of monsters.
Ninja/Samurai temple.
Dark evil empire.
Floating islands.
Alien planet.

Fictional elements. Technologies/Magics

Creatures/objects turned sentient/superintelligent.
A person turned into an animal or vice versa.
Alien cultures, creatures, parasites, invaders.
Portal to another world. Unsealed Gate.
Undead. Zombies. Ghosts. Vampires.
Mythical creatures. Sphinx, Minotaur, Sasquatch.
Time manipulation. Slower/Faster/Loop/Travel.
Change age. Kids turn into old people or vice versa.
Mind control. Possession. Memory wiping/alteration.
Multiple personalities. Voices in your head.
Pokemon. Training monsters/creatures.
Artificial Intelligence, sentient construct.
Shared dreams. Dreams turned real.
Drugs with unusual/magical effects.
Djinn. Monkey's Paw. Wishes.
Ancient Curse/Prophecy.
Ancient evil awakened.
People shrunk to a tiny size.
Monster (alien/dragon) egg.
Love potion. Succubus.
Body swap. Freaky friday.
Truth serum. Anti-lying field.
Big monsters. Dragons, Kaiju.
Robots. Mutants. Aliens.
Body Snatchers. Shapeshifters.
Superheroes/Supervillains.
Holograms/Illusions.
Deal with the devil.
Clones. Evil twins.
Hivemind. Swarm/Horde/Tribe.

Goal Prompts

Goal

Obtain/Steal McGuffin/information.
Capture/Kidnap/Chase a person/creature.
Find a missing person/creature/item.
Save/Rescue/Protect a person/creature/item.
Escort/deliver/smuggle a person/creature/item/info.
Journey to a distant location through dangerous lands.
Explore/Survive a hazardous environment.
Kill/Destroy a Person/Creature/Item/Info/Location.
Smuggle/Plant an Item/Info/Rumor.
Invade a location, or defend it from invaders.
Escape from pursuit. Break out of captivity.
Investigate. Solve mystery. Strange events, secret, plot.
Heist/Robbery. Enter/exit guarded location.
Infiltrate and spy, go undercover.
Uncover a conspiracy, secret plot. Find a spy/traitor.
Find evidence. Prove guilt/innocence. Clear the name.
Perform/sabotage a task. A ritual, research, project.
Convince/manipulate someone into doing something.
Negotiate. Resolve conflict, broker peace, close deal.
Cause conflict, pit people/factions against each other.
Make allies. Impress/Befriend someone. Find love.
Seize political power. Gain status, influence, fame.
Run a society/group/organization/army/team.
Ensure that an important event goes without a hitch.
Defeat a horde or a swarm, clear out an infestation.
Deal with a big threat/disaster. Protect innocents.
Put down or incite rebellion/mutiny/conspiracy.
Win a competition. Put on a show.

Change the Goals:

Go on a mission to...
Solve a problem with...
Help someone else to...
Prevent the antagonist from...
Combine goals. Main goal requires 2-3 subgoals.

Difficulties/Restrictions:

Stealthy, without getting noticed. No clues/witnesses.
Avoid violence, collateral damage. Target unharmed.
Multiple goals that are at odds with each other.
Achieve the goal through social/political means only.
With incomplete/false information, limited resources.
Sympathetic/innocent antagonist. Evil allies/clients.
Without resources/powers/weapons you relied on.
While competing with the rivals.
While forced to cooperate with an enemy.
While pretending to be someone else.
While being supervised/observed.
While on the run from the law.
While protecting someone.
Under time pressure.
No one can be trusted.
Local custom/law/power limits what heroes can do.
The people you're helping don't want your help.
Protect innocents/bystanders.
Villain has hostages or dead man's switch.
Clever villain. Traps, decoys, spies, political power.
Everything goes wrong. Deal with problems that arise.

Midpoint Complications

Objective changes or becomes much more complicated.
Turns out opposition is more powerful than expected.
Enemy is working for someone much more dangerous.
Environment becomes much more dangerous.
The path to the objective is blocked.
Completing the objective requires a big risk/sacrifice.
Success requires heroes to commit a dishonorable act.
A rare/unique item is required to complete the objective.
Heroes are captured/trapped/ambushed.
Betrayed by a key ally. Double agent, traitor, mole.
Lose a key ally. Captured or killed by the opposition?
Ally becomes disgruntled and turns on heroes.
Key item is lost/stolen/sabotaged/fake.
Key information is lost/missing/wrong/misleading.
An important location has been destroyed.
Transportation fails, is broken/sabotaged/stolen.
A player or ally is badly injured.

Objective is moved/hidden/destroyed.
A key ally must follow a strict code of conduct.
Heroes or allies have been framed for a crime.
Antagonists get backup.
Lose a major advantage/ability/power.
Opposition discovers heroes' biggest weakness.
The mission was designed to fail from the beginning.
Antagonist presumed dead turns out alive/resurrected.
Captured enemy escapes.
Opposition discovers heroes' biggest weakness.
Antagonists has fled and heroes must give chase.
Antagonist has hostages or captured an ally.
Antagonist controls a player or key ally.
Opposition has advance warning of heroes actions.
There's a high probability of innocents being harmed.
Small mistake or terrible luck leads to ruin.
Someone dies.

Abilities

Special talents, skills, or superpowers your character has. Useful items in your inventory.

Don't limit yourself to these options, use these lists as an inspiration for making up your own.

Skills/Powers

Strength - You're as strong as a bodybuilder.

Stealth - You are very good at sneaking, hiding, avoiding unwanted attention.

Acute Senses - You can notice all the imminent threats around you.

Deception - You are cunning, excellent liar.

Expert - You are a master of a profession of your choice.

Crafting - You're good at putting together makeshift devices.

Vehicles - You can drive/pilot any vehicle.

Darkvision - You can see in pitch darkness like it's an overcast day.

Fireball - Set stuff on fire. Hold in your hand as a light source.

Hacking - You're a technology expert, you can break into any system.

Deadeye - You can make an extremely precise shot at the tiny objects extremely far away.

Pet Pal - You can speak with animals.

Illusion - Create an illusory object no larger than a horse, complete with sounds, smells, movement.

Charm Person - The target regards you as their friend for 1 hour. When the spell ends, they know they've been charmed.

Technomancy - Control electrical devices with your mind.

Telekinesis - Levitate small objects.

Walk on Walls/Ceiling - Walk on walls/ceiling as if it was a regular floor.

Summon Familiar - Summon a small creature who will be your pet and a friend. You can communicate with it telepathically, give it commands, sense through its senses.

Shapeshifting - You can turn into an animal once per day for an hour.

Spread the Word - You can spread any rumor. Say a couple of sentences, and they go viral. Not everyone believes them, but everyone is talking about them.

Connections - You're on good terms with a group of people of your choice. They'll do their best to help you to the best of their ability.

Famous - You are well known. Choose what reputation you have in a this region (Hero, Villain, Philanthropist, Sex Symbol, etc.)

Items

Grappling Hook Gun - Shoot the hook, reel it back in.

Friendship Bracelets - Magical walkie-talkie. Enables you to talk telepathically to anybody who has one.

Ropey - A sentient piece of rope. 50ft. As smart as a puppy. Obeys simple commands (coil, uncoil, tie a knot, etc.)

Horseshoe of Attraction - Turns into a powerful magnet when activated. Can switch polarity and repel objects instead. Can be activated telepathically.

Cloak of Disguise - Enables you to create an illusion around yourself, assuming an appearance of any person you've seen.

Reverse Gravity Device - When activated, reverses gravity inside 10 meter radius around it.

Ring of Tracking - The owner of the ring always knows it's location.

Book of Oath - A vow written in this book can't be broken.

Ring of Crawlies - Use it to control every insect within 100 meter radius.

Spring Shoes - Allow you to jump 10 times normal distance.

Pokeball - Stores a friendly or defeated animal.

Smoke Grenade - Creates a huge cloud of black smoke.

Invisibility Potion - Turns you invisible for 10 minutes.

Chloroform - The one who inhales it instantly falls asleep for 1 hour.

Shrinking Potion - The drinker shrinks to be 20 times smaller for 20 minutes.

Hoverboard - Floats above ground, frictionless, supports any weight.

Immovable rod - Activating it makes it magically fixed in place. Until someone deactivates it, the rod doesn't move, even if it is defying gravity.

Neuralizer - In a flash, wipes the last 15 minutes of memories for everyone looking at it. Can be used once per adventure

Clay Golem (or Droid) - Slow and stupid servant, capable of obeying simple commands.

Teleportation pyramids - Two small pyramids. Activating one pyramid teleports anyone who touches it to the location of the other pyramid. Can be used once per day.

Wingsuit - Allows you to glide through the air.

Trusty Steed - A friendly creature you can ride on.

Motivations

(What do you want from this quest? What are your goals?)

Wealth. Respect. Knowledge, discover the truth. Fame/glory/recognition. Revenge. Infamy, invoke terror. Romance. Humiliate the opponents. Gain skill/experience. Gain power. Get out of this alive. Honor/Ideals - do the right thing. Change the status quo. Impress someone. Redemption, atone for my sins. Escape, leave my past behind. Make new allies. Help/save a friend. Bring justice. Freedom. Acceptance. Rebellion. Ambition. Greed.

Relationships

Use these prompts to establish your relationship to at least one other PC.

Connections (How do you know each other? What do you think about them?)

Is a sibling of. Was saved by. Served with. Protected by. Adventured with. Is a friendly rival of. Childhood friend of. Is magically bound to. Survived with. Escaped with. Apprentice of. Acolyte of. Idolizes. Drinking buddies with. Business associate with. Is indebted to. Was trained by. On the run with. Relatives. Former co-workers. Old buddies. Partners in crime. Rivals. Romance. Boss and hired hand. Fanboy/Rockstar. Mentor/Apprentice. Former-pirates. Former prisoners. Keepers of ominous secret. Rescuer/rescuee. Reluctant allies. Brains and Brawn. Blood debt. Former enemies that now work together. Bounty hunters. Former soldiers in a losing war. Lord and serf. Ward and protector. Business partners. Former slaves.

Tension (What do you want from them? Why do they refuse to give it to you?)

Friendship. Obedience. Mentorship. Romance. Respect. Loyalty. Trust. Forgiveness. Support/help. Attention. Truth about x. Protection. Promotion/Raise. Connections/Influence. Keep our shared secret.

Adventure Idea

Problem/Goal

Interesting Setting/Locations

Important Non-Player Characters

Protagonists (Player Characters)

Challenges
