



# Story Games

## **Welcome!**

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. 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.

Players take turns GMing. One player GMs a scene, we play through it as our characters, then 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.

## **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.

## **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>**

## Story Template

### Adventure Idea

What will the adventure be about?  
Exciting premise. Prompt. Fantastical  
“What if” question. Take ideas from  
movies/books. Mix and match tropes.  
Combine two ideas into something  
new. Add an unexpected twist.

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### 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, and resolve the story.

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### Setting/Locations

Where does the story take place?  
What makes it interesting/unusual?  
Where does the adventure begin?  
To what interesting or important  
areas might the adventure lead?

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### Non-Player Characters

Who is the main antagonist? What do  
they want, why? Who are some other  
important characters our heroes will  
meet? Their appearance, personality,  
occupation, motivations.

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## Challenges

What steps might the heroes take to accomplish their goal? What's our plan?  
What problems might we encounter, obstacles we need to overcome?  
What unexpected complication might change the direction of the story?  
What final, epic, climactic challenge could resolve the main conflict?

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## Create and Introduce 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**

Play through the scenes, take turns GMing, face and overcome challenges.  
Strive to incorporate plot points into our story, use them to guide our improv.

### **Exciting Adventure Hook**

The first scene that draws our heroes into action, gives them the first set of tasks to accomplish. How do the heroes encounter the problem?

### **The First Steps**

First obstacle the heroes need to overcome as they strive towards their goal.  
First milestone they need to reach.

### **Surprising Midpoint**

Difficult challenge. Unexpected complication changes the direction of the story.  
Crisis, major setback, everything goes wrong? Antagonist makes their move?  
Important Milestone. Surprising reveal. Raises the stakes and threat level.

### **Awesome Climax**

Final, most important/dangerous challenge that resolves the main conflict.  
Epic scene at a cool location.

### **Resolution**

The aftermath. 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 ideas. Add an unexpected twist. Change a key element of the idea (genre, setting, goal, etc.) What makes it different from what we've seen before?

### **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.

## **Keep up good pace**

Aim for a 3-hour game. 40 minutes for brainstorm, 30 minutes per plot point (adventure hook and resolution can be shorter, climax can be longer). Keep scenes short. Start scenes as close to the action as possible, end them as soon as the interesting part over.

## **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.



## **Idea Prompts**

Use these ideas as inspiration for your adventures. Combine two prompts to create a fun premise. Change one of the elements to something unexpected.

### **Setting Prompts**

Wild West. Cowboys, bandits, gold.  
Pirates. Tortuga. Ships. Treasure.  
Egyptian/Aztec Pyramids. Mummies.  
Ancient/Lost Civilization. Atlantis.  
Battleground between two factions.  
Prehistoric. Dinosaurs, mammoths.  
Land of Outcasts/Exiles/Criminals.  
Vehicle. Zeppelin, Train, Submarine.  
Magic forest. Elves, druids, unicorns.  
Abandoned spaceship. Space station.  
Remote island. Tropical Jungle. Oasis.  
Extreme weather.  
Maelstrom, radiation.  
Exotic Building. Castle, Tower.  
Steampunk. Elaborate machines.  
Magic School. Adventuring Academy.  
The world of the dead. Heaven/Hell.  
Horror movie. Old cabin. Halloween.  
Underground. Glowing plants.  
Secret organization. Spies. Agents.  
In Virtual Reality, Game, Illusion.  
Underwater. Merfolk. Kraken.  
Secret Society/Conspiracy/Cult lair.  
Mad Scientist/Wizard laboratory.  
Monster lair. World of monsters.  
Post-apocalyptic fallout.  
Colony, scientific expedition.  
Research facility/labs.  
Ninja/Samurai temple.  
Dark evil empire.  
Floating islands.  
Alien planet.

## **Fictional elements**

Creatures/objects turned sentient.

A person turned into an animal.

Alien cultures, creatures, invaders.

Portal to another world.

Undead. Zombies. Ghosts. Vampires.

Mythical creatures. Sphinx, Yeti.

Time manipulation. Slower/Faster.

Reverse/accelerated aging.

Mind control. Possession.

Memory wiping/alteration.

Multiple personalities.

Artificial Intelligence.

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.

Holograms/Illusions.

Deal with the devil.

Clones. Evil twins.

Witches. Shamans. Voodoo.

Hivemind. Swarm/Horde/Tribe.

Body swap. Freaky friday.

Truth serum. Anti-lying field.

Big monsters. Dragons, Kaiju.

Robots. Mutants. Aliens.

Body Snatchers. Shapeshifters.

Superheroes/Supervillains.

## Goals

Go on a mission to...  
Solve a problem with...  
Help someone else to...  
Prevent the antagonist from...

Obtain/Steal McGuffin/information.  
Capture/Kidnap a person/creature.  
Find a missing person/creature/item.  
Save/Rescue a person/creature/item.  
Escort/deliver a person/creature/item.  
Journey to a distant location.  
Explore/Survive a dangerous place.  
Kill/Destroy a target.  
Smuggle/Plant an Item/Info/Rumor.  
Invade/defend a location.  
Escape from pursuit.  
Break out of captivity.  
Investigate. Solve mystery.  
Heist/Robbery. Enter a guarded place.  
Infiltrate and spy, go undercover.  
Uncover a conspiracy, secret plot.  
Find a spy/traitor.  
Find evidence. Prove guilt/innocence.  
Complete/sabotage a project.  
Organize/Sabotage event.  
Convince/manipulate someone.  
Resolve/Cause conflict.  
Negotiate, close a deal.  
Make allies. Impress/Befriend.  
Seize political power.  
Gain status, influence, fame.  
Run a society/organization/team.  
Ensure the event goes as planned.  
Defeat a horde or a swarm.  
Deal with a big threat/disaster.  
Put down or incite rebellion/mutiny.  
Win a competition. Put on a show.

## Difficulties/Restrictions

Add them to the goals to modify them  
and create new interesting ideas.

Stealthy, without getting noticed.  
Avoid violence, collateral damage.  
Target must be unharmed.  
Use social/political means only.  
Incomplete/false information.  
Limited resources/preparation.  
Against the will of authorities.  
While on the run from the law.  
Under scrutiny/supervision.  
Sympathetic/innocent antagonist.  
Evil allies/employers.  
Bound by rules/laws.  
Must compete with the rivals.  
Must cooperate with an enemy.  
Pretend to be someone else.  
Under time pressure.  
While protecting someone.  
No one can be trusted.  
They don't want your help.  
Enemy has hostages  
Enemy has a dead man's switch.  
Enemy has political power/influence.  
Multiple goals at odds with each other.  
Main goal requires 2-3 subgoals.

## **Midpoint Complications**

Halfway through the adventure things go horribly wrong. Here's how.

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.

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

### Skills and Powers

Strength  
Stealth  
Acute Senses  
Deception  
Expertise at  
Knowledge of  
Crafting  
Piloting Vehicles  
Darkvision  
Fireball  
Hacking  
Deadeye/Marksman  
Speak with animals  
Create Illusions  
Charm Person  
Technomancy  
Telekinesis  
Telepathic message  
Walk on Walls  
Control Insects  
Summon Familiar  
Shapeshifting  
Fame/Reputation  
Connections/Allies

### Items

Grappling Hook Gun  
Walkie-Talkie  
Sentient Rope  
Disguise Kit  
Forgery Kit  
Infrared Goggles  
Trampoline  
Super Magnet  
Spring Shoes  
Anti-gravity device  
Hoverboard  
Truth Serum  
Tracking Device  
Invisibility potion  
Shrinking potion  
Chloroform  
Pokeball  
Smoke Grenade  
Catnip  
Neuralizer  
Clay Golem  
Loyal Robot  
Wingsuit  
Trusty Steed

## **Motivations**

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

Wealth. Respect. Knowledge. Fame/glory/recognition. Revenge. 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. Protection. Promotion/Raise. Truth. Connections/Influence.