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Here are my first ideas for adapting the Doctor Who TV series to RISUS:

Preliminary notes for RISUS DOCTOR WHO:

“RISUS: The Anything RPG” is a role-playing game created by S. John Ross. It is available COMPLETELY FREE at the Risus website:

<http://www.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>

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(None of this has been playtested, so I welcome feedback on these preliminary notes. Please e-mail me at karlpaananen@hotmail.com with your thoughts)

Character generation:

I would suggest limiting starting characters to ten dice, but have the option of putting up to six dice in any one cliché. Starting characters should not have any funky dice. Double-pumps may be appropriate for some clichés. The GM can award extra dice for hooks.

However, I would suggest that giving bonus dice for “tales” is not appropriate for this genre. Characters in the Doctor Who TV series often had mysterious pasts that we learned more about as the series went on. This is most noticeable with the central character: “The Doctor”. When we first met the Doctor, all we knew about him was that he was an elderly alien scientist who traveled with his granddaughter in a (probably stolen) time machine called the TARDIS. The series name “Doctor Who” alludes to the mystery surrounding this character. Throughout the 26 seasons the show was on the air, we learned a lot about the Doctor, but many questions still remained unanswered. We don’t even know his real name.

Common PC clichés include:

Scientist

(understanding advanced science, building high tech devices from available resources, operating and repairing high tech devices)

Army Officer

(firing handguns, leading soldiers, keeping your head while all around are losing theirs and blaming it on you, understanding military protocol and regulations)

Tools: handgun

Most PC army officers will be assigned to UNIT (the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce)

Future Human

(using futuristic technology, familiarity with advanced science, recognizing alien races that humans have come into contact with in the future, understanding future society)

Gallifreyan/Time Lord

(living a long time, possessing alien anatomy, understanding advanced science, understanding time travel, speaking and understanding other languages, regenerating, identifying other Time Lords even after they have regenerated, being aware of own dark side, possessing other latent telepathic powers, participating in Gallifreyan politics)

NOTE: most Time Lords and other Gallifreyans need some form of technological aid to use their “other latent telepathic powers” See the Regeneration Rules below for more information on regenerating

Female Companion

(looking pretty, wearing short skirts, screaming, surviving adventures)

Male Companion

(brawling, running around corridors, surviving adventures, rescuing female companions)

Incarnation of the Doctor

(everything listed for Time Lord, and for Scientist, plus: finding useful items in pockets; sharing Time Lord language gift with companions; resisting mind control, mind probes and hypnosis; extensive first hand knowledge of the history and cultures of the universe; stumbling across adventures throughout time and space; saving the universe; saving the earth; preventing Earth's past from being noticeably changed)

Tools: The Doctor uses a sonic screwdriver when building and repairing high tech equipment, without this tool he is at half his cliché score for these activities. The Doctor uses an old type 40 TARDIS to “stumble across adventures throughout time and space”, he has no ability to do this without the TARDIS (but could use half his cliché score if he used some other Time Lord's TARDIS)

This list of clichés is by no means meant to be exhaustive, these are merely common clichés based on the major characters in the series.

Special rules for regeneration:

Regeneration is a special Time Lord ability. Each Time Lord can only regenerate twelve times.

Time Lords usually regenerate voluntarily when they are late into old age, but before they get so old that they “must regenerate”. A regeneration attempt uses the character's Time Lord cliché against a target number of 5. If this roll fails, then the Time Lord has used up one of their twelve regenerations. If the roll succeeds, then the player may redesign their character (provided the GM okays the new character, of course). The new character cannot be built on more dice than the old character. The new character must have the cliché “incarnation of [old character]”. This new cliché can be used as ANY cliché that was possessed by the old character. The player must allocate at least one dice to it, but this new cliché cannot start higher than the old character's highest cliché plus one. The new character does not have to have the same hook or hooks as the old character, but can choose a new hook. The player must write a new description of the new character.

Finally, the player must offer the new character to one of the other players in the group to play. If you do not want players to have more than one character, you should give new incarnations to players who need replacement characters. Otherwise, the new character should become an NPC. But the GM should not allow players to retain characters after they regenerate.

EXAMPLE: Jack plays a Time Lord called “The Lawyer”. He decides to regenerate. The Lawyer's stats are as follows:

Time Lord (4) Attorney (4) Experienced time and space traveler (2) Golf Player (1)

Hook: very elderly

Jack rolls the Lawyer's four Time Lord dice and gets a fourteen, easily beating the TN of 5. So Jack begins redesigning the character. Since the Lawyer is a ten dice character (with an extra dice for the hook), the new character cannot be built on more than ten dice. Jack starts with the cliché “Incarnation of the Lawyer”. He must put at least one dice and cannot put more than five into this cliché, and the player decides to put the maximum of five into this cliché. This new cliché can be used as a “Time Lord” cliché, an “Attorney” cliché, a “Time Traveler” cliché and a “Golf Player” cliché. The player goes on to assign the other five dice to other clichés. He drops the “very elderly” hook (doing this was probably the main reason for regenerating), and with the GM's okay picks a new hook, gaining an eleventh die for his new character. Jack writes a new description for the Lawyer's new incarnation. Jack then asks another player, Tom, if he would like to play the incarnation of the Lawyer, since Tom's last character stayed behind in the last adventure to help a planet rebuild after a Dalek invasion. Finally, Jack constructs a brand new character for himself to play, which the GM will introduce in the party's next adventure.

Additional Regeneration Rules:

If any of a regenerating character's cliché dice have been lost due to injury, add five to the target number for each dice that has been lost. When regenerating, a character always rolls the full dice in their Time Lord cliché, even if this has been reduced due to injury.

A character can use regeneration to prevent death. If a Time Lord character is killed in a life or death contest such as combat, they automatically start to regenerate instead. The target number is five, plus an additional five for each dice they have lost, as above. If this roll is unsuccessful, then the character fails to regenerate, and dies. When a character regenerates to prevent death in this way, they do not have the level of control that they would for a “normal” regeneration. This is handled by allowing the GM to create the newly regenerated character instead of the player.

During a “controlled” regeneration, there is a brief period where the Time Lord can “try on” various bodies, checking themselves in the mirror, asking the opinions of friends, and so on, before settling on the final form of the new incarnation. The form of a new incarnation can even be a duplicate (at least externally) of another person.

After an “uncontrolled” regeneration, there is a period of confusion and partial amnesia. Most clichés are at half score during this period.

A Time Lord can also create a psychic projection. This is a task using the Time Lord cliché at a target number of 10. A psychic projection has all of the same cliché scores as the character, but does not necessarily have the same hooks. After they have created a psychic projection, a character’s own cliché scores all drop to (1). The psychic projection remains separate from the Time Lord until the Time Lord next regenerates. At this time, the psychic projection merges with the Time Lord, guaranteeing an automatic success on their roll to regenerate.

COMING SOON: Cliches for Villains and Aliens!!!

