

Unmotivate The Role-Play

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Change Log

<i>Game Version</i>	<i>Change Date</i>	<i>Sections Affected</i>	<i>What Changed</i>
1.1	2025-10-11	4.5	Creation of Advantages and Disadvantages for attribute rolls.
1.0	Initial	All	Creation of Player's Guide

1. Introduction

- **What This Game Is:** A collaborative drama role-playing game where players portray characters navigating personal conflicts, relationships, and ambitions.
 - **Tone & Themes:** Soap operas, reality TV, business rivalries, family sagas, political intrigue, etc.
 - **What You Need to Play:** Dice (d20s), character sheets, and imagination.
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2. The Basics of Play

2.1 The Role of the Players

Each player controls one **main character**. Before the game begins, every player will create their character following the guidelines in **Section 3: Character Creation**.

During play, the player is responsible for:

- **Portraying their character** in voice, mannerisms, and decision-making.
- **Following the rules** of the game as outlined in this guide.
- **Staying in-character** whenever the game is in session.

The game may pause at any time if a player requests to go “**out of character**” to clarify rules, ask questions, or address table matters. Once resolved, the game resumes in-character.

2.2 The Role of the Game Master (GM)

The **Game Master (GM)** is the facilitator of the story and the arbiter of the rules. The GM's responsibilities include:

- **Framing scenes:** describing the setting, time, and situation.

- **Introducing challenges:** presenting obstacles, dilemmas, and conflicts for the characters.
- **Playing side characters:** portraying non-player characters (NPCs), factions, and external forces.
- **Adjudicating rules:** calling for dice rolls, interpreting outcomes, and applying consequences.

The GM does not control the main characters, but they shape the world around them and escalate the drama to keep the story moving forward.

2.3 Core Mechanics

This game uses a **20-sided die (d20)** to resolve actions where the outcome is uncertain or dramatically important.

- **When to Roll:** The GM will call for a roll when a character attempts a major action or decision where success or failure will significantly affect the story.
- **Rolling Against Stats:** The GM will determine which character stat applies and whether any modifiers should be added or subtracted.
- **Results:**
 - **1** = Critical Failure. Automatic failure, regardless of modifiers. The worst possible outcome occurs.
 - **20** = Critical Success. Automatic success, regardless of penalties. The best possible outcome occurs.
 - **2–19** = Standard Roll. Compare the total (die + modifiers) to the GM's difficulty rating for the task. Results determine success, partial success, or failure.

The GM has discretion to set **difficulty thresholds** for rolls depending on the context of the scene. The sliding scale of outcomes ensures that even failures and mixed results keep the story moving forward in interesting directions.

3. Character Creation

Creating a character is the first step in bringing the drama to life. Each player designs one **main character**, who will be the focus of their story throughout the game. Character creation consists of four parts: **Concept, Attributes, Background, and Goals**.

3.1 Concept

Your character begins with a simple idea: **who they are and what drives them**. This includes their **name**, their **profession or role**, and any defining characteristics.

There are no restrictions on who your character can be. You might play a wealthy business magnate, a struggling artist, a politician, a community activist, or someone down on their luck. The only requirement is that your character must have strong motivations that connect them to the story.

3.2 Attributes

Eight attributes define characters. These represent their abilities in social, emotional, and reputational situations.

At creation, players are given **20 points** to assign across the eight attributes.

- Each attribute must have at least **0 points**.
- No attribute may exceed **10 points**.
- You may distribute your points however you choose to reflect your character's concept.

For example, a calm and calculating lawyer might assign 10 points to **Composure**, 5 to **Insight**, and 5 to **Influence**. Meanwhile, a brash celebrity might focus on **Reputation** and **Grace**, leaving other stats weaker.

The Attributes:

- **Influence:** Your ability to persuade, command, or intimidate others. Use this to convince a rival, deliver a stirring speech, or pressure someone into a decision.

- **Grace:** Your social finesse and charm. Determines your ability to navigate delicate situations tactfully, make a good impression, and move with elegance in social circles.
 - **Composure:** Your ability to remain calm and think clearly under social or emotional pressure. Helps you resist manipulation, keep a straight face while lying, or endure a verbal onslaught.
 - **Resolve:** Your inner willpower and determination. Governs your ability to stick to your beliefs, pursue a difficult goal, or resist giving in to temptation or despair.
 - **Insight:** Your skill at reading people and situations. Use this to see through a lie, spot hidden motives, or notice subtle emotional cues.
 - **Deception:** Your talent for hiding the truth, whether through outright lies, careful omissions, or clever misdirection. The counterpart to Insight.
 - **Empathy:** Your ability to connect with, understand, and share the feelings of another person. This is key for offering comfort, forging deep bonds, or emotionally swaying someone.
 - **Reputation:** The weight of your name and past actions. This is not about likability, but how you are known. A strong reputation can open doors or instill fear; a poor one may close opportunities before they begin.
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3.3 Background

Your character's **background** provides depth and story context. This includes where they come from, what relationships matter most to them, and what secrets or flaws they carry. Backgrounds should be written in narrative form, offering a sense of your character's past and how it shapes their present motivations.

Backgrounds not only enrich the roleplay but also provide the GM with useful material to weave into the story.

3.4 Goals

Each character defines a **primary personal ambition** — the thing they most want to achieve during the game. This goal might be practical (*"Win custody of my daughter"*), professional (*"Launch a successful business"*), or interpersonal (*"Expose my rival's hidden scandal"*).

Goals give characters forward momentum and ensure their actions remain tied to their core motivations. Goals may change as the story evolves — once one ambition is achieved (or lost), a new one should replace it.

4. Rolling, Conditions, and Conflicts

4.1 Initiative and Turn Order

At the beginning of a session (or when a new major scene begins), all players roll a **d20 for Initiative**. Initiative establishes the order of play when the game enters **initiative mode**.

- **Group Play:** When players are acting together without direct time pressure, they may discuss and make decisions collectively.
 - **Initiative Mode:** The GM may call for initiative mode when the scene requires structure — for example, heated debates, rapid-fire decisions, or moments of high conflict. In initiative mode:
 - Players act in descending order of initiative.
 - Each player may take **one significant action** during their turn.
 - After all players and the GM's NPCs have acted, the round resets.
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4.2 Opposed Rolls

When two characters are directly opposed, the GM calls for an **Opposed Roll**.

- Each involved player rolls a **d20**.
- The **higher result wins**.
- In case of a tie, the GM interprets the result as a **complication**:
 - **High tie (15–20 range):** Both sides may achieve partial or full success, but with added tension or costs.
 - **Low tie (1–10 range):** Both sides may fail, escalating the conflict or creating fallout.

Opposed rolls keep tension high and ensure no conflict is completely one-sided.

4.3 Conditions

A roll's outcome can sometimes lead to a **Condition** — a temporary modifier applied to one of a character's attributes. Conditions reflect the emotional, social, or reputational fallout of an event.

- **Minor Condition:** ± 1 modifier to an attribute. Duration: 1 turn.
- **Normal Condition:** ± 2 modifier to an attribute. Duration: 2 turns.
- **Major Condition:** ± 3 modifier to an attribute. Duration: 3 turns.

Conditions expire naturally after their duration, though strong roleplay or narrative shifts may shorten or extend them at the GM's discretion.

4.4 Attribute-Specific Conditions

Influence

- **Positive – Leverage:** You've discovered a secret or gained an advantage. Gain a bonus to Influence when interacting with the target.
- **Negative – Discredited:** Your argument was publicly defeated. Suffer a penalty to Influence with those who witnessed it.

Insight

- **Positive – Vigilant:** You're alert to hidden motives. Gain a bonus to Insight rolls.
- **Negative – Blindsided:** A revelation has shaken your confidence. Suffer a penalty to Insight.

Composure

- **Positive – Centered:** You feel emotionally grounded. Gain a bonus to Composure.
- **Negative – Rattled:** You've been shaken by an attack or event. Suffer a penalty to Composure.

Resolve

- **Positive – Inspired:** A victory or ideal strengthens you. Gain a bonus to Resolve.
- **Negative – Doubtful:** Your confidence falters. Suffer a penalty to Resolve.

Empathy

- **Positive – Connected:** You've bonded with someone. Gain a bonus to Empathy when interacting with them.
- **Negative – Jaded:** Cynicism clouds you after betrayal. Suffer a penalty to Empathy.

Deception

- **Positive – Plausible Cover:** You've created a strong alibi or story. Gain a bonus to Deception when maintaining it.
- **Negative – Under Scrutiny:** Someone suspects you. Suffer a penalty to Deception when they're present.

Grace

- **Positive – In Vogue:** You're enjoying a social triumph. Gain a bonus to Grace in that circle.
- **Negative – Faux Pas:** You've committed a social blunder. Suffer a penalty to Grace until repaired.

Reputation

- **Positive – Lionized:** Your recent success has elevated you. Gain a bonus to Reputation.
- **Negative – Scandalized:** A rumor or failure damages your name. Suffer a penalty to Reputation.

4.5 Advantages and Disadvantages

Your character's score in an Attribute (assigned during character creation, ranging from **0 to 10 points**) determines a permanent modifier that is added or subtracted from any **d20 roll** using that Attribute. This system formalizes a character's inherent competence, creating an automatic *advantage* for high scores and an automatic *disadvantage* for low scores.

When the Game Master (GM) calls for a roll, the result is determined by:

d20 + Permanent Attribute Modifier ± Temporary Condition Modifier

The Staggered Attribute Modifier Scale

The following table details the permanent modifier applied to your roll based on the points you assigned to that Attribute during character creation:

Attribute Points (0–10)	Permanent Modifier Applied to d20 Roll	Description
0	–2	A significant disadvantage. The character is unskilled or completely lacking focus in this area, resulting in a strong penalty to the Standard Roll.
1	–1	A minor disadvantage. The character suffers a slight penalty due to lack of experience or commitment.
2	0	The Neutral Baseline. Investment of at least 2 points is required to avoid a penalty, reflecting baseline competence.
3	+1	Minor advantage. This small investment provides a reliable edge.
4	+2	Normal advantage. This bonus is equivalent to a Normal Positive Condition .
5	+3	Major advantage. This bonus is equivalent to a Major Positive Condition .

6	+4	Enhanced proficiency.
7	+5	High skill level.
8	+6	Expert capability.
9	+7	Near mastery.
10	+8	Maximum advantage. This character excels completely in this ability.

Strategic Implications and Stacking

This scale enhances the strategic weight of the initial **20 points** assigned during Character Creation. Players must weigh the benefit of specializing (achieving high positive modifiers) against the necessity of investing at least 2 points into every Attribute to avoid penalties.

These permanent Attribute modifiers stack directly with the temporary modifiers applied by **Conditions**. For example, a character with 5 points in **Composure** (+3 modifier) who becomes **Rattled** (a Negative Condition, -2 modifier) would roll with a net modifier of +1. Conversely, a character starting at 0 points (-2 modifier) who gains the **Lionized Reputation** Condition (+3 modifier) would roll with a net modifier of +1 for that duration.

When a character advances and earns **additional Attribute Points**, the player must decide whether to reinforce a strength (increasing an advantage) or mitigate a weakness (eliminating a disadvantage).

5. Advancement, Growth, and Defeats

5.1 Character Advancement

At the conclusion of **major story events** — climactic scenes, turning points, or the resolution of a dramatic arc — characters may “level up” to reflect growth.

- **Gaining Attribute Points:** Players may earn additional points to distribute among their attributes, provided no attribute exceeds the **10-point maximum**.
 - **Focused Growth:** Players are encouraged to assign points to attributes that were central to their actions or challenges during the event, reinforcing their character’s evolving story.
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5.2 Growth Through Goals

Every character has a **primary goal** (see Section 3.4). Achieving that goal grants tangible rewards:

- **Attribute Increases:** Success in a goal may grant bonus attribute points to reflect the character’s development.
- **Positive Conditions:** Completing a major ambition often brings temporary advantages (e.g., social acclaim, reputation boosts, or newfound confidence).

When a goal is achieved, the player must decide:

1. **Continue the Character** — Define a new personal goal that will drive the character forward in the ongoing story.
2. **Retire the Character** — Conclude the character’s arc, stepping them out of the story. The player may then create a new character concept and join with fresh goals.

This cycle of ambition, resolution, and renewal keeps the narrative fresh and character-driven.

5.3 Defeats and Death

Dramatic tension is at the heart of this game, and sometimes that tension results in **character defeat** — or even death.

- **High-Stakes Rolls:** In **major events** involving life-or-death stakes, the GM may call for rolls where failure carries the risk of permanent consequences.
- **Failure:** If a character fails the GM's difficulty threshold in such a roll, their fate may be sealed — through death, imprisonment, exile, or other forms of final defeat.
- **End of a Character:** When this occurs, the character's story ends within the game.

The affected player has two choices:

1. **Leave the Game** — Step away if they wish.
2. **Re-Enter with a New Character** — Create a new character concept, background, and goal, joining the story anew.

Character death and defeat are rare and reserved for the most dramatic, high-stakes scenarios. Their purpose is not punishment, but to heighten the stakes and deepen the narrative.

6. Setting & Story Guidelines

Before the first session begins, the group must decide on the **narrative framework** of the game. This is one of the most important steps, as it defines the kind of drama the story will explore and ensures that everyone is working toward a shared vision.

While this is usually established **before character creation**, some groups may choose to create characters first and then collaborate to make sure those characters fit naturally into the chosen narrative. Both approaches are valid — the key is that the group reaches consensus.

This process has three main parts: **Collaborative Worldbuilding, Themes, and Tone Dial**.

6.1 Collaborative Worldbuilding

The first step is deciding **where the story takes place** and what kind of world the characters inhabit. This is not limited to a physical location, but also the social and cultural environment.

Examples include:

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- A **small town**, where everyone knows each other's business.
- A **big city**, full of opportunity, corruption, and ambition.
- A **corporate empire**, where office politics are as cutthroat as any battlefield.
- A **reality TV show**, where every interaction is staged for drama and reputation is everything.

Worldbuilding should be **lightweight and collaborative** — just enough detail to establish the foundation, leaving plenty of room for improvisation and discovery as the game unfolds.

6.2 Themes

Next, decide which **themes** the group wants to highlight. Drama roleplay thrives on strong emotional and social stakes, so the group should agree on the core conflicts they're excited to explore.

Common themes include:

- **Betrayal** — friends and allies turning on one another.
- **Loyalty** — bonds that survive against the odds.
- **Ambition** — striving for power, success, or recognition.
- **Family** — exploring generational ties, love, and dysfunction.
- **Romance** — heartfelt connections, love triangles, or doomed affairs.
- **Scandal** — public humiliation, rumor, and the struggle for reputation.

As part of this discussion, the group should also establish **boundaries**. Use tools like “lines and veils”:

- **Lines** = Topics or themes that are **off-limits** and will not appear in the game.
- **Veils** = Topics that may exist in the background, but will **fade to black** or be handled off-screen rather than roleplayed in detail.

This ensures the drama remains engaging without crossing anyone's comfort zones.

6.3 Tone Dial

Finally, the group should agree on the **tone** of the story. The tone acts like a “dial” — once set, it influences the style of play and the interpretation of character actions.

Examples of possible tones:

- **Melodramatic (Soap Opera):** Big emotions, shocking twists, and cliffhangers.
- **Gritty Realism:** Grounded, serious, and consequences-first storytelling.
- **Satirical or Dark Comedy:** Over-the-top exaggeration, parody of dramatic tropes.

The GM will use the chosen tone to frame scenes, describe outcomes, and shape NPCs, while players should interpret their characters’ actions in line with that tone.

By defining **world, themes, and tone** at the start, the group ensures a consistent narrative style that supports character goals and keeps the drama compelling.

7. Running the Game (For the GM)

As the Game Master (GM), your role is not to win against the players, but to **facilitate the story, raise the stakes, and keep the drama moving forward**. You provide the world, the side characters, and the complications that challenge the players’ ambitions.

7.1 Scene Framing

The GM frames scenes by setting up the **who, where, and what** of the situation. A scene should always have a purpose — something at stake, even if it’s small.

When framing a scene, consider:

- **Who is present?** Which player characters, NPCs, or factions are involved?

- **Where is it happening?** Define the environment in evocative but concise terms.
- **What is at stake?** Every scene should contain tension — a decision to be made, a relationship to be tested, or a secret at risk.

Examples:

- A heated boardroom meeting where a promotion is on the line.
 - A late-night family dinner where hidden resentments bubble up.
 - A celebrity gala where one wrong word could spark a scandal.
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7.2 Escalation and Complications

Drama thrives on escalation. Ask yourself: **What's the worst that could happen?** Then put it in play.

Ways to escalate:

- **Personal:** An NPC reveals a secret or betrayal.
- **Social:** Rumors spread, reputations shift, or alliances fracture.
- **Material:** Jobs are lost, fortunes ruined, or lives endangered.

Complications should not stop the story, but instead **create new opportunities for action**. Even failures should push things forward — often in ways that are more interesting than success.

7.3 Using NPCs and Factions

NPCs and factions are tools for the GM to **embody the world's pressure points**. They give the players someone to debate, betray, romance, or fight against.

- **NPCs** can be allies, rivals, mentors, or obstacles. Keep them vivid, but not overwhelming.

- **Factions** (companies, families, social groups, fanbases) can represent long-term forces that reward or punish the characters' choices.

NPCs and factions should evolve in response to player actions. A humiliated rival might scheme for revenge, while a grateful ally might defend a player's reputation later.

7.4 Pacing the Story

Balance is key. Alternate between:

- **Big confrontations:** heated debates, public showdowns, shocking reveals.
- **Quieter moments:** private conversations, introspection, tender or awkward connections.

Use downtime to let characters breathe and reflect before throwing them back into the storm.

7.5 Player Agency and Flexibility

The GM should guide, not dictate. Players must feel that their **choices matter** and shape the story.

Tips for maintaining agency:

- Say "Yes, and..." or "Yes, but..." whenever possible, rather than shutting down ideas.
 - Redirect unexpected actions into new storylines instead of blocking them.
 - Let dice results and conditions drive the drama, even if it takes the narrative in surprising directions.
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7.6 Keeping the Tone Consistent

Refer back to the **Tone Dial** (Section 6.3). If the group agreed on a melodramatic soap opera, push for dramatic monologues and cliffhangers. If gritty realism, emphasize consequences and subtlety. If satirical, lean into irony and parody.

Your job is to **hold the story's center**, ensuring that all the pieces fit together into one coherent style.

7.7 Ending Sessions and Arcs

A session should end with either:

- **Resolution** of a small conflict (e.g., a deal struck, a relationship tested), or
- **Cliffhanger** leading into the next session (e.g., a shocking reveal, an unexpected betrayal).

Major arcs (family feuds, business rivalries, romantic entanglements) should end with decisive outcomes that push characters into new territory.

8. Safety & Boundaries

This game thrives on **drama, conflict, and high emotional stakes**. To ensure that play remains fun and respectful for everyone, both **in-character roleplay** and **out-of-character interaction** are guided by the following rules.

8.1 In-Character Boundaries

While characters may scheme, argue, betray, or even destroy one another's reputations, the following rules keep in-character play appropriate:

- **Stay in Character:** Roleplay actions and dialogue as your character would, keeping personal feelings separate from your character's behavior.
- **Respect Lines and Veils:** Themes or topics marked as off-limits (see Section 6.2) must never appear in play. Veiled topics may exist in the background but fade to black if they would otherwise surface.
- **Conflict Is Not Personal:** Betrayals, insults, or rivalries are part of the story — not attacks on players themselves.

8.2 Out-of-Character Rules

At any time, a player may request to go “**Out of Character**” (**OOC**). When this happens:

- **The Game Stops Immediately.** The current scene pauses until the issue is addressed.
 - **The Player Has the Floor.** That player may ask questions, clarify rules, revisit a decision, or correct an oversight (such as forgetting to apply a negative condition to a roll).
 - **Respectful Discussion:** All players are expected to listen and respond respectfully. Once the matter is resolved, the game resumes in-character.
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8.3 Group Responsibility

Safety is a group effort. All players share responsibility for keeping the table respectful and ensuring boundaries are upheld.

- **Speak Freely:** Every player has the right to voice concerns at any time, without fear of judgment or dismissal.
 - **Respect Session Flow:** Raise OOC issues when necessary, but do so with respect for the story and the group’s time.
 - **Removing a Player:** If a player repeatedly disregards safety, boundaries, or respect, the group may **unanimously vote to remove them**.
 - If removed, their character will immediately become a **non-player character (NPC)** controlled by the GM for the remainder of the game.
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9. Appendices

Table Etiquette Quick List

General Etiquette (In-Person or Online):

- **Stay in Character:** When the game is in session, roleplay your character's actions and words.
- **Respect Turns:** Don't interrupt another player's spotlight — let them finish their scene or action.
- **Be Present:** Minimize distractions. Stay engaged even when it's not your turn.
- **Yes, And....:** Build on others' ideas instead of shutting them down. Keep the story flowing.

Out-of-Character Etiquette:

- **Call OOC Anytime:** If you need to step out of character, say "OOO" (or type it in chat). The game stops until the concern is addressed.
- **The Floor Is Yours:** Speak clearly, whether it's a rule clarification, correction, or concern. Everyone else listens.
- **Respect First:** Discuss issues with patience. The story can wait; the players come first.

Virtual Play (Online Sessions):

- **Mute When Not Speaking:** Helps reduce background noise and keeps focus on the active player.
- **Use Chat Wisely:** Type "OOO" in chat for quick rules questions without breaking immersion.
- **Cameras Optional:** Decide as a group if cameras are required or optional. Respect each other's comfort levels.
- **Tech Prep:** Test your mic, connection, and dice roller before the session.

Group Harmony:

- **Conflict Stays in Character:** Rivalries, betrayals, and insults are part of the drama, not the friendships at the table.
- **Boundaries Matter:** Honor all agreed-upon lines and veils.

- **Consensus Rules:** Group decisions (such as removing a player) must be unanimous.