

Running The Game Session



The Session Toolkit



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- **On the Shoulders of Dwarves** Podcast
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The Session Toolkit

The Toolkit

- ◆ Immersion
- ◆ Description
- ◆ Pacing
- ◆ Managing the Spotlight
- ◆ Rolling with the Unexpected
- ◆ Supporting Improvisation
- ◆ Making Rulings on the Fly
- ◆ Creating Satisfying Session Endings
- ◆ Taking notes
- ◆ Combating GM anxiety

1. Tools for Immersion

Encourage Immersion

Immersion is “a state of deep mental involvement”

Basic tools to encourage immersion:

- ◆ Lead by example
- ◆ Don't leave anyone out
- ◆ Acting
- ◆ Using the first person
- ◆ Generate the right atmosphere



Plan ahead for a scene that will utilise all these aspects

02. Tools for Description

Interesting Descriptions

- ◆ Provide perceptions, not facts
- ◆ Specificity
- ◆ A GM does not read or recite, a GM describe
- ◆ Make it personal (The personal is more interesting than the general)
- ◆ Evoke emotions (bold colors, nasty smells, extreme temperatures ...)
- ◆ Varied sensory descriptions



Use a sense table and always add an additional sense to your descriptions

03. Tools for Pacing

Pacing Rules of thumb

- ◆ For roleplaying scenes
 - ◆ Leave breathing room
 - ◆ Encourage open discussion
 - ◆ Use descriptive cut-scenes
- ◆ For action scenes
 - ◆ Use quick cuts
 - ◆ Leave no breathing room
 - ◆ Use a lot of verbs
 - ◆ Address the next player immediately

 Watch a movie and after every scene reflect, what scene type was it?

04. Tools for Controlling the Spotlight

The Spotlight (Focusing Attention)

The spotlight is mainly comprised of the GM's attention

Practical tools to make sure everyone gets their time in the spotlight:

- ◆ Use an ordered list (e.g. initiative)
- ◆ Use direct question
- ◆ Invite player to share the spotlight
- ◆ Give players control over the spotlight



In your next session, notice who speaks, who doesn't, and when


05. Tools for Dealing with the Unexpected

Expect The Unexpected

Rule 0 of GMing: “You will not run the adventure as intended”

Differentiate between:

- ◆ Essential elements
- ◆ Optional elements

 Watch a movie and decide for each scene if it was essential or optional

06. Tools for Supporting Improvisation

Improvisation

Useful & practical Improv tools:

- ◆ “Yes, and”
 - ◆ *The Chandelier Rule*
- ◆ “No, but”
 - ◆ Always leave a route forward
- ◆ “The next logical step”
 - ◆ Don’t be afraid to be banal
- ◆ Use your players
 - ◆ Ask for ideas and specifics
- ◆ Reskin & Reuse
 - ◆ “A rose by any other name”

07. Tools for Rulings on the Fly (+The Rule of Cool)

Rulings on the fly

We are required to make ad-hoc decisions in the following cases:

- ◆ We are not familiar with the specific rules
- ◆ The rules themselves are unclear or ambiguous
- ◆ There are no rules for this specific case

Guidelines

When making a rule call consider:

- ◆ Does this support the goal of my game?
- ◆ The “One time pass”
- ◆ PSD (Post Session Discussion)
- ◆ The Rule of Cool
- ◆ (Retro Justification)

The “Rule of Cool”

- ◆ The Rule of cool is a concept, not an actual rule
- ◆ The Rule of Cool states that if something is cool and you want it to be in your game - let it
- ◆ This can refer to ideas by the players or the GM

The “Rule of Cool”

We encounter the rule of cool in two major areas:

- ◆ In relation to the **story**
 - ◆ we want something to happen but it is unrealistic in the story or setting
- ◆ In relation to the **rules**
 - ◆ we want something to happen but it is in contrast with some game mechanics

Practical Tool: Retro-justification!

08. Options for Ending a Session

Classic Stopping Points

- ◆ Before starting a big event
- ◆ After a big event just concluded
- ◆ In the middle of a happening (Cliffhanger)
- ◆ Time's up



Watch an action movie and find good points for the first 3 stopping points

09. Taking Notes

Take Notes

- ◆ As the GM, we are expected to remember everything that happened
- ◆ A few bullet points is fine
- ◆ Use whatever tool most comfortable for you to keep track of events
- ◆ File unexpected events under “suggestions” rather than “mistakes”

When to Take Notes?

- ◆ Moments when a new ongoing mystery affects the setting
- ◆ Memorable game moments
- ◆ Moments when a change to the setting takes place



Practice: Write notes for an episode of your favorite TV show

10. Combating GM Anxiety

GM Anxiety & Imposter Syndrome

GM Anxiety is a form of performance anxiety

- ◆ Can Happens before any game session
- ◆ Is a sign you care
- ◆ Often stems from fear of the unknown
- ◆ “The Matt Mercer Effect”
 - ◆ You are not a professional doing this for a living
 - ◆ Every table is unique
 - ◆ Constant comparison is the death of creativity

GM Anxiety & Imposter Syndrome

- ◆ Build yourself a personal support structure (a place to vent and relax)
- ◆ And a professional support structure (a place to consult and brainstorm)
- ◆ The proof is in the pudding (No one is forcing your players to play)
- ◆ You are not one the players, you can't know if or how much they enjoyed the session

GM Mantras

- ◆ Your **mistakes are not as obvious** as you think
- ◆ **Unexpected events are suggestions** for a new direction
- ◆ Every **suggestion can be rejected** or accepted
- ◆ **NO** is a valid response
- ◆ Roleplaying is a **group activity**
- ◆ Trying is the first step toward success, **all the dice rolls you didn't roll are misses**



Recite these before every session



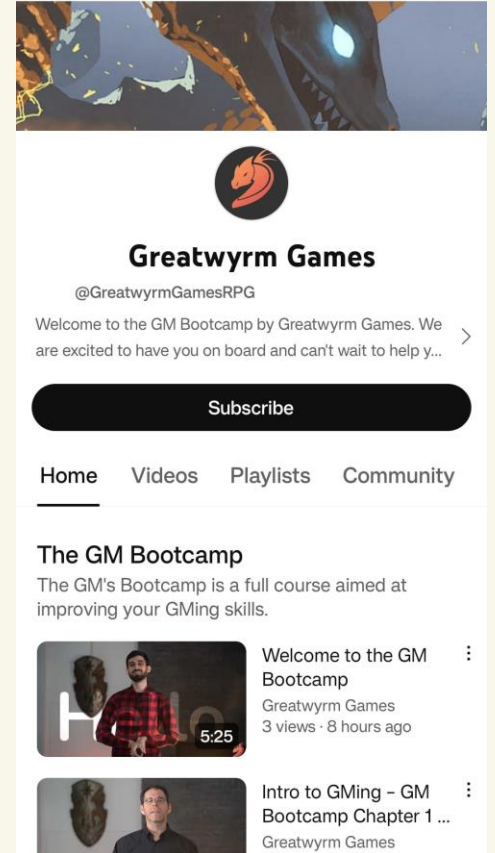
Summary

Takeaways

- ◆ These tools can help you improve in every aspect of running your game
- ◆ Different groups and different games requires different emphasis on different tools
- ◆ Remember that your players are your partners
- ◆ Don't freak out
- ◆ **You got this.**

The GM Bootcamp Course

- ◆ This lecture is based on chapter 6 of the GM Bootcamp course by Greatwyrm Games
- ◆ The course is available on YouTube (one lessons every week) at <https://www.youtube.com/@GreatwyrmGamesRPG>



The image shows a screenshot of the YouTube channel page for Greatwyrm Games. At the top is a banner image of a dragon's head. Below it is the channel's profile picture, a circular logo with a dragon head. The channel name "Greatwyrm Games" is displayed in bold, followed by the handle "@GreatwyrmGamesRPG". A welcome message reads: "Welcome to the GM Bootcamp by Greatwyrm Games. We are excited to have you on board and can't wait to help y...". A black "Subscribe" button is prominent. Below the button are navigation tabs for "Home", "Videos", "Playlists", and "Community". The "Videos" tab is selected. The video list shows two videos: "Welcome to the GM Bootcamp" (5:25, 3 views, 8 hours ago) and "Intro to GMing - GM Bootcamp Chapter 1...".

**Thank You For
Listening.**