Game/Dungeon Mastering

The following section is for those interesting in being a Game Master, or who are going to be one. It can be read by players but is not needed to be able to play the game.

Being a Game Master

The Game Master (GM) is the player who creates the world and adventure the other players will play. They will describe the environment to the players and how it changes because of the actions they take. They will roll for enemies, other non-player characters (NPC's), and any events that might happen randomly in the world. In essence, they are the storyteller of the group, and they will work with the players to craft a story that is enjoyable for everyone.

The (2nd) Golden Rule (A Word on Using this Chapter)

Even with this system being fairly rules light for RPG standards, there are still quite a few words in this section and the previous rules. Adhering to them completely at all times during the game might almost be impossible. When being the GM, and thus running the game it is important to have a fairly full understanding of the rules, but any gaps can easily be filled in with a thorough application of common sense and story-telling capability. Strict adherence to the rules can be a fun experience, but the bending, changing, adding or subtracting to those rules as it makes sense for the current situation can make the game great.

Rules

This system is purposefully rules-light, and it is fairly evident that there aren't rules for every possible situation the players or the GM might encounter. It is the responsibility of the Game Master to determine if something can be done in the world, what attribute or skill would apply to it, and whether it needs something other than a standard skill check to see if it succeeds or fails. This rule "bending" to fit the scenario is a job all GM's have, but it becomes much more apparent in a game with fewer rules. In cases like this the rules act as guidelines, a frame on which the story at hand may be built. This could mean changing rules for specific scenarios or writing entirely new ones. This can be done anywhere, with the information remaining in heads, on pieces of notebook paper, or on the rules themselves. You are encouraged to do so, and discussion about how rules should fit together should be had to create a set of rules that make the best possible game for its particular play group.

When the Rules don't Work

There will always be a time eventually when a scenario arises in which rules either conflict with each other, don't cover that specific part of the scenario, or don't cover it at all. When this happens it is the job of the Game Master to "rule" on the events and determine what should and should not be done in that scenario. A ruling should be made with the other rules, the fun of the players, and the sense it makes in the world the characters are in, in mind, but at the end of the day it is the GM's call. If the ruling is on a relatively insignificant or unlikely event it doesn't need to be written down, but the Game Master has a pencil and paper for a reason. If it is related to a subject that comes up often (like combat) it should be written down for reference and even sometimes marked in the rulebook if it is serious. Remember the game might work differently for different sets of players, and something that comes up frequently in one group might not even be thought of by another. The rules are meant to be flexible guidelines to encourage role-playing, and that should be the guiding principal when making rulings.

Preparing an Adventure

Preparing and adventure might be the most important step in beginning to play a role-playing game, and it can be intimidating. It "must" be completed before beginning, and everyone is counting on you to create the story they want to live out. It is also deceptively simple at times.

Not much is required to start an adventure, not even a world name (how many people in a medieval setting do you think would know or care what the "earth" is called) but having one is good, likewise only the names of the area the current adventure will take place in are necessary to write down, the town the players are in, the woods or desert surrounding it, the river that runs through it, and the mountain nearby that nobody dare venture to. Depending on whether the characters are from the area or only traveling to it they may or may not need to be informed of things like the name of the kingdom, the local lord, and several key NPC's in the city. If they are new to the area, none of these things need be prepared, and can be made up on the spot, if one is comfortable with improvising (be sure to make notes if you do this).

If you, as the GM want to create a sprawling world with multiple kingdoms, towns, characters, and backstories for each, feel free to do so, but for your first adventure keeping things light is recommended. That way, if the players wander off course you won't be disappointed, and you will get plenty of opportunity to improvise, a skill that will serve you well even in games where more is planned out. Here are a few simple steps to follow to create your first adventure:

1. Terrain – Think of the type of location you want the adventure to be set in, is it swampy marshland, rolling planes, a barren desert, or a bustling seacoast?

2. Places – Where do the characters begin, are they in a small town, a port city, an army barracks, or a merchant ship? Are they subjects in a kingdom, empire, or principality? Have they come from a far away land and are unfamiliar with the area, or are they all just from one town over? Is the area they start in built on a river, near a cluster of mountains, or on the border of two states? Lay down some of the basic physical and political geography.

3. People – Think of the people the characters would run into first: a random person walking down the street, the bartender, a noble hiring them to clear out an abandoned building or a mineshaft with a band of robbers, a merchant, their commander (either on a ship or in the army), other travelers on the road, a farmer in their house, the person that locked them all in a dungeon, etc. Think of a few of these and jot down names, and other basic information, like their accent, any unusual traits, and a motivation for why they're doing what they're doing when the players meet them. Recognize that players will often not follow where you think they should go, so don't make too many or too complicated a back-story, and be prepared to make some up on the fly (and keep notes) or repurpose ones you've made for newer purposes.

4. Names – There are several good name generators online specifically meant for fantasy RPG's. There are also long lists online which can be printed out in chucks and from which names can be 'randomly' selected from for places, rivers, people, religions, etc. If you prefer to make up your own names or don't have time to look up these resources, think of the first series of syllables that come to your mind (try to only have 2-4) and then say it again to yourself, if it doesn't sound silly to you, or too close to anything else, use it, and write it down (don't be afraid to spell in weird ways, or with umlauts, accents, or apostrophes).

5. Maps – The number and amount of detail in maps that needs to be present will vary depending on the type of game you're running and how comfortable you are with improvising. Maps can be made for the city or area the players start in, the local country-side (county), a nearby dungeon or mine (or 2), the country they are in, the continent they are on, and the world. But none are completely necessary, nor do they have to be accurate. Remember, maps in medieval times weren't particularly well done, that only began with modern technology, and magic may be both a help and hindrance in this case. Don't be afraid to change the map a little if things don't work or make sense.

If you're not great at drawing, that's okay. Many times maps are just for the reference of the GM (who was able to even see, let alone buy a map in the olden times? Or why would there be a map of an abandoned mine or cave system?) so as long as you can read it, it will work. There are also plenty of existing adventure supplements, available both in print, and online (sometimes for free!) that have a variety of great maps that can be used for an adventure, just change a few names and back stories.

If you do want to create your own maps it's still quite simple:

Begin with a piece of paper (graph works best) and a pencil (you'll want to erase)

For towns or cities: draw several lines in both directions relatively evenly spaced (avoid making them perfectly straight) for roads (obviously there will be more roads in a city), they can be as long or as short as you want (but longer and more spaced out gives you more room to write). Then think of a list of things any town or city should have and begin adding them, putting them mostly within the street grid, but adding things on the outside as necessary. Some things to include might be: a city wall, guard tower, guard barracks, a gate, an inn, a tavern, a market, the house of a local lord, a church/temple, a bathhouse, a restaurant, a guildhouse, a forum, and some government buildings (courthouse, jail, firehouse, delivery service etc.). Don't over-clutter your map by including all of these things (at least at first) but do include enough that the areas seems real and for the players to be able to advance their story. Most buildings can be denoted with simple rectangular shapes within the street grid, and new places can be labeled as the players decide to go there.

For area maps begin with a major geographical feature: a mountain, river, lake, canyon, etc. Mark this down as either a blob or with a map symbol (such as large "v" or triangle shape for a mountain) and place the city or town you created in the vicinity, add several other towns, villages, and even cities (denoted by different size and shape markings, such as triangle, squares, and circles) around the area (you can make maps for them now or when the players decide to visit them). Connect the towns with roads represented by solid lines, and then a few dashed line paths too "x's", points of interest the players might go to like an abandoned mine or a goblin encampment. Mark down a few points of interest, where the players would start, and the approximate time in days it would take to travel to any of the locations.

When creating dungeons or lost mines one should generally start with an entrance (such as stairs or a cave face) that leads a large landing room. From this there are usually a number of rooms of varying sizes roughly equal to the number of players in the party (the size will likely increase as the players characters ability increases). Underground rooms such as these tend to be round, but can sometimes be squarer like typical rooms. Circular rooms are more likely to be connected by corridors and hallways, while rectangular rooms are simply separated by walls and doorways. These rooms can be populated with: tables, chairs, weapon racks, trunks, cooking pots, beds, chests, and probably a command post for the leader of the group in the dungeon.

For the buildings the players will be in, (mostly taverns, inns, and houses) think of the places you've seen in movies, read in stories, or seen in real life. And keep things simple, with roughly rectangular walls, and simple geometric shapes to represent tables, chairs, mantles, cooking equipment, counter space, statues, beds, etc. Remember, in all of these cases, this stuff isn't for an art competition, or even the players in many cases since you'll be describing the world to them, so you only have to make is good enough for future you to understand it. So keep it simple, easy, and make a key if you need to. (Larger, more detailed maps that the players can read would be necessary for a game played with miniatures however. This would take more preparation time, and, depending on how you wanted it to look, some amount of drawing or digital editing skill)

Larger area, continents, and country maps can also be made, but they will not be covered here, as they are less "necessary" for just getting started with the game.

6. Enemies – Once the characters have places to go, they'll need some enemies to fight. Enemies can either be created by copying and filling out this table

Name:

Know:		**Dex:**	
End:		**Str:**	
Per:		**Aura:**	
Dodge:		**Attack:**	
Weapons:			
Armor:			
Description and Abilities:			

(using the guidelines in the monster section) or simply copied from a set of pre-built monsters (as found in the monster section). Pick a few different monsters that fit the area and build a few "encounters" of several monsters for the players to fight. Try to not make the encounters too specific as the players might go somewhere you didn't expect and you'll have to repurpose one or a few. Encounters should generally scale and get harder as the players progress (though the scaling should be relatively unnoticed by the players); if this is the players first game, consider having their first encounter be only a few weak creatures. After one or two introductory fights a good rule is that an encounter should be #ofplayers + 1 weak monsters (getting harder as the characters abilities go up) or 2-3 x the number of players vermin (rats, coyotes, giant cockroaches, etc). Monsters difficult for the players to beat (intermediate to hard) should typically be placed in encounters nearing the end of a campaign (which will take several game secessions to complete {giving you more time to think}) where they will serve as boss monsters to test the players skill and guard greater treasure.

(Still, don't be too afraid to put some characters around that are clearly beyond the skill capacity of the players in and around the places they visit, it wouldn't make sense that higher level, more powerful beings suddenly appear as the players get more powerful. Just be sure to include a way for the players to escape if trouble comes)

Guiding Players (Character Creation and Playing)

Since you are the Game Master and running the game, players will likely seek advice from you, especially as they are starting out. In order to do this you should familiarize yourself with the rules as much as possible, as much to know where to look to answer a question as to actually answer the question.

When creating characters be ready to answer questions about where on the character sheet information goes or what each box is used for. Advise the players to create a balanced party (at least one healer is probably needed, and one at least of each class typically works well) but let them make the decisions about what they want to be on their own (remember not to "punish" the players in the game for decisions made here, play the adventure as normal, and if they fail suggest improvements they could make). Give a general idea of what the consequences for how they create their character are: rolling for stats might be better, but could be a lot worse than dividing points, mages can't wear the better armor so they won't be hacking and slashing, having a low aura means character will be put off by you, etc. But emphasize the players ability to choose, and they should experiment, even if they don't make a "perfect" character this time they will likely have an opportunity to try a different one soon enough.

(In some cases when creating character players will choose to roll for their attribute scores {this can be done in order or by recording the numbers on a scrap piece of paper and choosing which stat they should be attributed to} and this can lead to characters with a set of ability scores that seem "hopeless". While it is not possible to

roll a character that can't be any class (and thus be unplayable) or a character that has a penalty roll in skills this can lead to a character that isn't as powerful or as "fun" as the player would like. This is a risk inherent in rolling characters, and it can lead to players being very creative with how they manage their character and making interesting stories along the way. But if the player is convinced they can't play the character, allow them to create a new one and highly suggest they use the "point-buy" system. Do not allow a player to simply roll and roll and roll until they get a "good" character.)

The players will also likely ask for advice when playing the game, again try to be as familiar with the rules as possible in order to best assist them (either by knowing what a rule is or where to look it up). Make note in your head which players are asking for rules clarifications (or just the rules themselves) more often then others and try to determine if they're just not "getting" something. At an opportune time, ask these players if there is something you can do or explain to make their help them with their experience.

When answering questions bout the game environment be sure to answer as best as possible, but try to keep it within the bounds of what the character would know (i.e. "your character thinks that with their lack of experience with a bow and the snowy conditions that they wouldn't be able to hit the enemy"). If a new player is unsure about what to do you could provide a quick list of things to do that might be running through the characters head in a flash. Try to end these suggestions with something like "or something else you think you can do" so the player is aware that they are not confined by your suggestions. The options presented shouldn't be entirely what you want the players to do, but in showing a preference for certain actions you can lead the player to (or from, depending on their defiance) the general area where you want them to go. Players should realize that in general they and the GM are attempting to tell a cooperative story, not a string of silliness and bad decisions, or unconnected actions randomly made up on the spot.

Telling a Story

In general GM's have a story to tell, and everyone around the table wants to participate in the story. And while the story is a cooperative story as previously mentioned, players generally don't want to be lead around on a path they have no control over. In many cases the balance between doing things that do or don't progress the story will come naturally while playing, but in cases where the players are bent on not following the obvious path the GM will need to be flexible.

Give as many parts of the story as possible the ability to be told in various ways. Tales of the evil nightwalkers can be obtained from frightened peasants, innkeepers, or guards. Details about the plans of the wicked demon-summoning sorcerer can be gained from his gang of intimidating thugs or band of kidnapping thieves. The tyrant that rules over the land can have multiple similar strongholds in various directions. Fleeing enemies can either be tracked or followed up on near the next civilized area encountered. Et cetera, et cetera.

By telling events and giving clues to more the story forward in this way the players won't feel trapped in a world where the decisions have already been made. It also helps if an "end" goal is stated at the beginning of the game, especially if it placed them in their current predicament. We're they stranded after bandits robbed their caravan? Was their village burned down by an orc warband? Have they been impressed into service by an evil warlord? Are they stranded in a far off land they were warring with? Or simply being hired to clear out a nearby dungeon whose creatures are bothering the nearby village? All of these scenarios present a fairly obvious end goal, and usually one they must face for fear of death. If there is one (or perhaps a few) obvious end goal(s) that the players might be killed if they don't face, they are likely to "artificially" limit themselves to pursuing that goal, making the story easier to tell. And by using the flexible events as detailed above the players are essentially "forced" to follow the story, but are able to make it their own.

Once again, remember that everyone at the table is playing the game. If the players are resisting going along with your story or obviously feeling uncomfortable with it: loosen your grip on the story, create alternatives, or in the worst case offer to end the campaign and possibly start another one everyone would be comfortable with.

If players are seeming lost as to what to do, or complaining that things are taking too long tighten your grip on the story, and lead them where it will advance. In either of these instances the players may want to forgo story entirely and play a giant "dungeon crawl" where players simply fight an endless stream of monsters. If the style of play the players want and the style you want are different, consider trying to find a "better" GM for the and a "better" group for you.

Role Playing

How in-depth the players "role-play" their characters is something the entire group will be decided either consciously by discussion, or sub-consciously through play. What's most important is that each of the players feel comfortable when playing. This is especially important to the GM, who has to play many more characters than the players, (albeit with much less rounded personalities) and must do so in a way that not only they are comfortable with, but also keeps the rest of the players comfortable.

For this reason, and to make things easier, GMs should keep their role-playing of characters minimal, but effective at the start of the game and watch as the players

progress to see if they want a more in-depth story or a faster game. For instance, at the start of the game a grand villain speech, lengthy back-story about how this kingdom came to be, or conversations with NPC's about the weather might be out of place, while an inn keeper might share some local lore, a city guard might be easily bribed because he's paid to little, or a band of thieves might retreat as soon as the players begin to fight back and go off looking for an easier kill.

The amount and type of role-playing the players and the GM do can and will shift as the group decides how it wants to play. Remember, as the Game Master, even though you are telling the story, it is everyone's story, and the goal of it is for everyone to have fun.

How to Speak to Players

During the course of the game it will be necessary to speak to the players as the "Game Master" a player, as the "Gmae Master" a describing voice in their heads, and "in character" as one or more of the various NPCs in the game world. It might be hard to distinguish between them at times early on, but getting down which is which is very important to avoiding confusion and making the game more fun for all. In the first instance, be clear and concise "you will make that roll with a dexterity modifier" or "now add the weapon damage and your strength to that". In the second more flowery and sometimes deceptive language can be used "the dim morning light danced off of the stained glass and gave the whole area a pale look" or using "you don't see any traps" as opposed to "there are no traps". And the third will depend on the character your playing at the moment, your voice and the words you choose should change depending on the character or how the game is being played. And while it certainly isn't necessary to growl when playing every orc, you might quickly find such things fun!

Being and Impartial Judge

One of the main jobs of a Game Master is, like a computer in a video game, to take the input of the players and provide them the results of what happened in the game world. Unlike a computer however, the Game Master has human biases and some veto power over the rules.

There may be times when a GM might be tempted to "fudge" rolls because otherwise the players won't go where they want them to, or the PCs will die, or the PC's will live and the adventure won't have been "challenging" enough. This should be avoided. The reason the GM is given the power to fudge die rolls, veto rules, and change up others is to allow for human error ("I didn't know that rule" "okay, we'll let it go this time" or "oops, this character actually has a 4 for this stat, oh well, let's roll with it) and greater storytelling potential. The above scenarios all have their place, but overuse of such power will turn off the players who will feel they are not really in control of their characters.

In general the GM should be as impartial as possible, a roll is what it is, and a player decision is too. If that means the players don't follow the exact path you (the GM) laid out, or that one dies, or survives then so be it. (In general; sometimes players can abuse this and make the game less fun for all, see "problem players" below) But sometimes impartiality is impossible, whether because of errors (forgetting rules, misreading dice, etc) or because it would decrease the fun (no one wants to die in their first combat, and who says they can't try to swing on that chandelier just because "there's no rule for it") and in those cases it is the GMs call on what happens and remembering that everyone should be having fun is most important part.

Fudging Dice Rolls

It is possible for a GM to fudge their dice rolls (usually only if they are behind a GM shield, it's hard to roll on a table in front of everyone and them come up with a different result). This is an extension of the GM's power to fudge on skill check modifiers, which is an extension of their ability to make rulings on incomplete failures of skill checks. Basically, this is part of the Dungeons Masters ability to decide what happens over the course of the game to tell a story. And while it is possible, and in this system actually in line with the rules, it is discouraged, as in general it is not in the spirit of the game. All decisions the GM makes, but especially those having to do with potentially fudging die rolls, should be made with the fun of the game group in mind, and should be done sparingly, otherwise why have dice, or rules, at all?

Character Death

With danger being a core tenant of adventuring death is something that might be lurking around the corner for any of the characters, player or not. While character death isn't too big a deal for NPCs the story is different for player characters. Most players have spent time inventing and investing in their character and don't want to see them die outright, even if they can be revived in some way. But if the adventures can't die, then the adventure can't be truly challenging. And while some groups would prefer to just explore the world, others will prefer a genuine challenge, or the sense that things are dangerous and they need to be careful. Making it so that PCs essentially can't die also has the problem of the GM "losing control" of the players (or more often, one player) and having them do ridiculous, "stupid" things, or not even pay attention and ruining the fun for one or more players.

How often player characters die, and whether they are in any real risk of dieing is something to be determined by the groups play style, or possibly in discussion before the game. Do the players prefer high adventure, or high stakes? Are they

playing to get a more "realistic" version of what they would experience or do they just want to mess around with their abilities. There is merit to both sides, and the mood may change within the same group of players if they start a new game.

In generally though, character death should be infrequent and a major event, if possible. Dying at the hands of a warlord at the end of a long campaign where you've prevented him form conquering your people and cornered him, then watching your companions go on to beat him is a lot more dramatic and interesting than dying to random orc #247. That doesn't mean that if things go poorly they shouldn't die, but groups prefer to have something interesting and dramatic that increases the fun come from it (like having to carry on the characters mission, or having to resurrect them). It could be possible to resurrect the dead character (it usually is) but that has to come at a large cost to prevent players from losing interest in keeping their characters alive (and it means someone isn't doing something for quite a while probably, which is no good). Alternatives the enemies might take to killing the players are in the "being the enemy" section. In the end player and the GM should remember that it is just a game, and players shouldn't get so invested in their character that them dying "ruins" the game for them, even if it is unfortunate at the time.

Still, some might prefer the older style of play where character death is frequent. This "meatgrinder" style of play has more in common with the wargames RPG's grew out of than it does with many modern RPGs. But it is still a legitimate way to play. One way to get this to work is to take a mechanic from these older wargames and have each player create multiple characters at a time. These additional characters are part of the adventuring party, and still take actions, but are controlled by the GM until the character the player is currently playing is killed, in which case they will swap to the new character. This system will only work for certain groups though, and if the subject isn't really brought up by the players it might be wise leave it be.

Partial Completions/ Incomplete Failures

In some cases it is possible (or very likely) that if a player fails a roll their character won't simply "fail" at what they were doing. At most times in life there is a sliding scale between success and failure, and something similar should be reflected in gameplay. It is the GMs call as the what exactly happens when a character doesn't quite complete their action and what roll would count as an impartial completion (the general rules state between 1-5 under the roll needed to succeed {which is in general 15 or more}, but that number, as well as the number needed to succeed can be changed as it makes sense for the GM), but players can make their case for less severe "punishment" out of character. A Rouge attempting to climb on a roof could fail and fall off, or simple not be sneaky or silent while doing so. Someone trying to lift something could fail to pick it up, knock it over, or injure their hand, arm, or shoulder. Someone attempting to retrieve something from a bag on the table or cross the room (something they are quite unlikely to roll for) might fail and even on the roll of a 2, simply waste (sometimes precious) time. If the player is able to convince you (and they certainly should at times) then allow for a bend in the rules in that situation. But the final decision does rest with the GM.

Initiative Order

The order of initiative is a set of numbers from each of the participants in combat (whether or not it is actually fighting). These numbers are ranked from highest to lowest and let the GM know who is first to react and take actions in combat (the highest first, proceeding down to the lowest). The initiative order changes every time combat is entered to vary up the game (since in a real-life scenario, people wouldn't react in the same order each time). For the most part the set up of turns or rounds in combat should be followed, but there are a few possible exceptions to this rule (as there would be in real life). If characters want to wait on their turn and take an action at a later time (perhaps to intercept an enemy about to attack a comrade) or skip their turn later and help a character with an action (like pulling a rope) they may do this. Both of these actions would skip their "turn" or "round" in combat and replace it with only one action/movement. This and other creative ways to spend a turn should be dealt with as they come up and make sense in the game world, with an emphasis placed on teamwork, creative thinking, and role playing. More information about what a turn or round in combat is, and how they abstractly represent parts of the stories that can be assembled creatively into a narrative are in the next section.

A common mistake that one can make is having a character take "two" actions during the first go around of combat by initiating the combat. For instance, a player who fires a crossbow at a group of hoodlums gets to fire the crossbow at them, and is placed first in the initiative order. They do not roll a separate initiative to be placed later in the order and thus receive a "second" action.

What Does a 'turn' or 'round' Really Mean in Combat?

Technically a "round" or "turn" in combat is a 5 second period of time where a character does something, this is preceded and succeeded by (except when beginning and ending) a different character doing something for 5 seconds of in-game time. This can be modified slightly based on what the character does, meaning a round could potentially be as short as 0 seconds, or as long as around 30 seconds. Obviously though, in a real scenario, other characters wouldn't be waiting around

for someone else to take their "turn" of 5 or so seconds, they would be doing something. Dodging somewhat mitigates this gap in game and real world thought, as characters being attacked are still doing something even if it is not their 'turn'. The reason for turns in the game is to have an easy way for players to communicate what they are going to do in an orderly fashion and to have a way to determine who is reacting first in each encounter (as it obviously wouldn't be the same person, or going around in a circle). This game playing restriction does not necessarily apply to the in-game world though.

In the game world the characters are assumed to be acting almost simultaneously, and this should be reflected in the description of the battle. For instance if a battle is taking place between 4 PC's and 1 NPC (5 characters) each characters turn would last about 5 seconds, but the total combat length wouldn't be about 25 seconds, but rather closer to 10 seconds, with the action of the character going first beginning before, but possibly ending after another characters actions. This idea can be hard to get across when the game is being played, and it is not entirely necessary to do so, but keep it in mind if players start asking questions about the subject, if you are recounting a battle to players or just use it as a general reference for when things are taking place in combat. Being able to effectively communicate this idea will help a players suspend their disbelief and encourage role-playing.

Being the Enemy

In many cases it is easy to interpret the fact that the GM controls all of the enemies in an RPG to mean that they are the enemy, or somehow on a different team than the players. As hopefully indicated by the fact of these rules that is not the case, if it were the GM could simply kill all of the players in a "rocks fall, everyone dies" scenario. But that does not mean that the entire point of enemy characters is the help the player characters by dying; at least, it shouldn't be played that way.

Enemy characters and monsters, while they shouldn't be nearly as flushed out as PCs in most cases (with the exception of enemy NPCs who the story revolves around), they should be played with a degree of nuance.

Not every set of raiders or brigands are smart enough to flank, but some are. Some prefer sneak attacks, while those with honor prefer open combat. Most sentient creatures and injured animals will retreat if the tides turn against them and there is a reasonable escape path. Those in dungeons and camps usually have something to defend like families and animal herds. Give each enemy a little bit of thought as to their motivations and what they would do in the given scenario (not too much though, in all likelihood they won't be around for too long). It'll add to the realism of the game and make the telling of the story much more natural feeling.

In that vein there is the question of "what do enemy character do with downed PCs?". There are several answers to this question depending on the situation. Enemies should always be trying to "win", otherwise what is going though their heads? But winning means different things at different times. For instance most enemies will refrain from killing downed characters until the rest of their up and fighting friends are dead (downed) (unless they know how easily a healer can bring up a mighty warrior). And even if they win they may choose to flee and leave the downed party for fear of attracting the attention of another party. They could also choose to steal away a downed character to sacrifice, use as a slave, ransom, sell, or eat; which could give the party a quick (or not so quick) way to rescue them.

The decision of whether or not to apply the downed character rules to enemies is up to the GM. Should all defeated enemies simply die outright, need to be finished off individually, or a combination of both? This decision can also change if the characters decide they need to keep an enemy alive for information, or to act as guides or baggage carriers (though probably not after the enemy has already been killed).

Items

When enemies are slain (or anyone really) or areas are searched there are many different items that the players could find; the following table lists some of the more (or less) common ones. (This list is not intended to be a random generator, but to inspire and provide a basis for what could be in someone's pockets or bag)

Item	Rarity
Rings	Common
Necklaces	Common
Holy Scriptures	Common
Letters	Uncommon
Pocket or Belt Knives	Common
Toys	Uncommon
Statuettes	Uncommon
Fetishes	Uncommon
Candles	Common
Soaps	Uncommon
Towels/Rags	Common
Flasks/Waterskins	Common
Bags of Salt	Rare
Caltrops	Rare
Checkers/Dice	Uncommon
Deck of Cards	Uncommon
Herbs	Common
Vegetables	Common
Pins/Slivers	Uncommon

How many items are in X bag?

There are several items that the players either start with, or can buy/find that are a "bag" filled with multiples of an item (like "a bag of marbles"). While it isn't necessary to have the number in the bag exactly defined, it would be helpful to know, and many players would want that information. How would the number in the bag be determined? The short answer would be that it is the GM's call. If you as the Game Master don't want to pick an arbitrary number, a die can be rolled. For example, if you want to determine how many stones are in "a bag of interesting looking stones, roll a D12.

In most cases the size of die to roll will be determined by the GM (Should the bag of marbles have D20 or D100/D% marbles in it? Or, there can't be more than D12 sticks of charcoal in a bag or charcoal sticks right? etc). But in some cases there will be a suggestion for which die to roll presented by the item.

Magical Items

Below is a list of a few magic items to consider adding to the loot in later fights or as rare, expensive items in shops. More items can be invented or these effects subtly tweaked as necessary (magic is a crazy thing).

Common Magic Item	A regular piece of equipment that has been enchanted to do its job better. (e.g. a Shortsword that has a damage rating of 3 or Leather (H) armor with an armor rating of 7)
Cloak of invisibility	The wearer is made invisible to eyes for as long as the cloak is fully wrapped around them and they are concentrating.
Ring of Strength	The wearer receives a +2 bonus to any skill check for strength or skill with strength (ex. attack and handle)
Unbreaking Chain	A 1D10 x 2 foot chain that is unbreakable by pulling on the ends but can be smashed or cut.
Rope of Detection	A 50 foot rope that when being held will move toward a creature of the holder's desire.
Finger of Algon	A bronze-looking metal cast finger that gives the holder a subconscious awareness of evil in a 50ft radius
Lamp of Chaos	A lamp that can be rubbed once per day, and will produce the effect of a random spell, or with an equal chance of any spell, explode.
Horn of Blasting	Allows the user who blows through it to be heard up to a mile away. Injures anyone within 2 feet when being used.
Sapphire of Tranquility	For as long as a user holding the stone can concentrate they can neither move or be injured.
Spell Scroll	A scroll with a one-time-use spell that can be read on a successful knowledge skill check, and after an attempted cast will disappear. (identifying the spell does not use it)

Loot Table

The following table is a general reference for use in lower level and beginning campaign encounters to be used as a basis for what "loot" the PCs could collect.

Enemy or Area	D6 Roll	Items
Animal	1-5	Hide, teeth, claws, meat, antlers, horns, any other applicable body parts.
	6	All listed above and an arrow or arrowhead stuck in flank. Or possible dagger in their stomach if a predator.
Individual or group of humanoids	1-4	Number x4 (or party number) silver pieces. Weapons and armor they were carrying. One item from the list of items. One ring or necklace per individual. Possibly pouches, rope, lamp oil, waterskins, and food.
	5	All of the above with one potion of healing and a backpack of the same gear the players started with.
	6	All of the above with one random potion.
Humanoid leader or chieftain	1-2	Weapons and armor at least one grade higher than underlings. Several silver or gold pieces of jewelry. A backpack containing the same gear the players started with.
	3-4	All of the above with a 2 potions of healing.
	5-6	All of the above with a random magic item.
Encampment (more than 20 individuals)	1-3	1D20 sets of adventuring/soldiering gear (backpacks, weapons, and armor) + individual gear, 2 pack animals, 2D6 gold pieces, 1D20 times number of players silver pieces, 1D6 sets of jewelry (earrings, necklaces, rings, etc), 1D20 odds and ends (other items), 2 undeciphered books, food, water, 1 magic item, 5 potions of healing.
	4-5	All of the above with 1 magic item, 2 potions of healing, and one set of Plate (L) armor.
	6	All of the above with 3 random potions and D100 (D%) gold pieces

Lair/Cave	1-2	1D12 sets of adventuring/soldiering gear (backpacks, weapons, and armor) + individual gear, 1D6 gold pieces, 1D12 times number of players silver pieces, 1D4 sets of jewelry, 1D4 sets of cookware, 1D20 odds and ends (other items), 2 undeciphered books, 2 religious texts, food, water, 1D6 torches, 5 potions of healing.
	3-4	1D12 sets of adventuring/soldiering gear (backpacks, weapons, and armor) + individual gear, 1D12 times number of players silver pieces, 1D4 sets of jewelry, 1D4 sets of cookware, 1D4 sets of fire making materials , 2 religious texts, 2 fetishes, food, water, 1D10 torches, 6 potions of healing.
	5	1D20 sets of adventuring/soldiering gear + individual gear, 1 D4 gold pieces, 1D12 times number of players silver pieces, 1D4 sets of jewelry, 1D6 sets of cookware, 1D4 sets of fire making materials , 2 religious texts, 2 fetishes, food, water, 1D20 torches, 1 pack of cards, 2 sets of dice, 6 potions of healing.
	6	All the contents of 5, with one chest, and one magic item.
Dungeon Chest	1-2	2 weapons, 2D20 copper coins, 1D20 silver coins, 1D12 gold coins, and a set of armor.
	3-4	1 regular weapon, 1 enchanted weapon (+1), 1D20 copper coins, 1D12 silver coins, 1D10 gold coins, a set of armor, and 2 potions.
	5-6	1 regular weapon, 2 enchanted weapons (both +1), 1D12 silver coins, 1D10 gold coins, a set of armor, 3 potions and a spell scroll.
Large Monster	1-4	Any item that can be taken from the monster (hide, head, claws, etc), any equipment the monster may have had (likely won't fit PCs), two days worth of provisions, and money (1D10 Copper, 1D6 silver, 1D4 Gold) times the number of players.
	5-6	Any item that can be taken from the monster (hide, head, claws, etc), any equipment the monster may have had (likely won't fit PCs), an enchanted weapon (+1) one day worth of provisions, 2 potions (healing and random), 1D3 partially used adventurers packs, and money (1D12 Copper, 1D10 silver, 1D4 Gold) times the number of players.

Missed Thrown Items Table

If an item is thrown (either in combat or not) and the player fails the skill check necessary to throw the item where it needs to go the item will end up somewhere else. If the GM doesn't want to decide this themselves they may roll a D% and consult this table:

1-10	Welp... - The item is dropped at the players feet
11-20	Heads Up! – The item is thrown about 10 feet into the air and begins to come back down
21-30	Watch Where You're Throwin'! – The item is thrown at the nearest character in the direction rolled on a D4: 1, t the right. 2, to the left. 3, in front of. 4, behind.
31-40	Butter Fingers – The items slips when being readied and is thrown behind the player
41-55	A Little to the Right – The item is thrown a good distance to the left of the target
56-70	A Little to the Left – The item is thrown a good distance to the right of the target
71-80	Good Arm – The item goes sailing past the area until it reaches the maximum distance it could be thrown or a solid surface. (if the item was being thrown at a wall it lands much higher than expected)
81-100	Just Short – The item lands a few feet to a few inches in front of what it was thrown at

Scaling Difficulty (Advantage/Disadvantage)

As the characters abilities increase, the threats of outside forces will decrease. A standard skill check of 15+ will be much easier to get with a +10 modifier than a +3. And while monsters and traps have built in effects that allow for variation, the basic principles of most everything else doesn't quite. This is where applying disadvantage to a roll would come in, subtracting from the players roll for more difficult options, or, more accurately, moving the difficulty of the action from 15+ to something higher like 19+ etc. The basic rules say that this ability goes from -3 to +3, but this is a general guideline for starting players. Once the party has gotten to high enough levels that skill checks are trivial for them the GM should be comfortable enough with the game mechanics, improvising, and storytelling to be able to raise the difficulty of some skill checks in a way that seems natural (like climbing a wall vs. climbing a cliff). Remember, rolling and having everything succeed until a 1 is rolled (automatic failure) isn't a very fun experience.

Wishing

Don't let players do it.

Where do Characters go in between Sessions?

When an adventure is over (the characters have returned to town from their quest) it is important for them to have a place to stay where they can "stretch their legs" more than the average inn (but one might do in a pinch). Maybe a place where they've known the owner for a while, or, after several adventures, a place they privately own. A place where they can heal, re-equip, and learn new skills with less stress and scrutiny (though they should never fully let their guard down).

Problem Players

There are many different types of people who are disruptful to the gaming environment, a few examples of which are listed below. In general though, the way to deal with such players is to take them to the side at an appropriate time (after the game or during an extended break) and bring up the fact that there is a problem. Usually people being disruptive are unaware that they are creating a problem for others and hen informed politely will attempt to rectify their mistake(s). In some cases more extreme measures might need to be taken, (like "kicking" them out of the group) But a few simple, polite conversations possibly followed by warnings usually do the trick.

Players who sacrifice the fun of the group for their own fun – These types of players could be the easiest or hardest to deal with, as they can occupy many different head spaces. If what they are doing is a problem outside of the game, telling them privately that they are making things less fun or uncomfortable for other players will usually work. If the problem is an in-game one reminding them of the consequences both in game and out will likely help (though follow through is necessary in-game), whether it's: that their character is unlikable enough that other characters wouldn't be around them, ultra specialization or optimization that sidelines other players or makes them have to pick up the slack, or poor decisions that would get their characters and possibly all of the characters killed, bringing it up and following through with a little in-game display is usually enough to get them on the right track.

Players who refuse to listen to anyone – These players are the hardest to deal with and if they truly won't listen to anyone in or out of the game they will need to be removed from the group.

Players who refuse to be/always want to be serious – The tone of the game being played should be set up and understood as, or possibly before the players begin. If a player doesn't seem to be getting that or is always going against the tone s few gentle reminders is usually all it takes to get them on the right track. But if they continue to be problematic it might be a sign that they need a game or a group that matches their style of play better, and aren't a fit for they one they're in.

Players who constantly try to "correct" the GM – These players, who repeatedly attempt to correct what they see as errors made in the game because they have a "better" understanding of the rules and source material are sometimes difficult to deal with because it seems arguments stem from everything they say. These arguments shouldn't be allowed to happen during the game. If necessary state before the game (or each session) that even if the group is playing in an established setting the GM has complete control over the game narrative, and thus, other material set in that universe may or may not be applicable. For corrections on the rules, allow the player to make their case briefly then make a decision and move on, do not allow the player to take up considerable time arguing about how a rule works (again the GM has complete control) as this will only make for a bad experience for everyone at the table. If necessary, talk to the player after the session about the rule, you may even decide to change your ruling on how it works for later portions of the game, but this shouldn't be taking up game time.

Players who don't understand the game – It can sometimes be hard to discern if players don't quite understand the game (either mechanically or thematically), but usually it is quite easy, and annoying (what die do I roll again? what do I add to that? Etc). Resist the urge to snap at them and instead ask "is there something your not understanding?" (in a situationally appropriate way) (in some cases the game might have to stop for this question to be asked , but it can usually wait until after a secession to avoid embarrassment). If they are indeed not understanding something, walk them through either the appropriate mechanics or setting and explain even a simple explanation usually goes a long way.

Are you the problem player? – In some situations it might become clear that most players are having a problem, but there seems to be no source of the problem within the players. In these cases you, the GM, might be the problem. Try varying up how you play the game and see if players react better too it. If not, try asking players individually what they think of the campaign and where they want it to go, and incorporate some of their answers. It might be easier than you think to get to a place where everyone is enjoying the game.

Remember, the key to using everything here is that at the end of the day, everyone should be able to say they had fun, and I hope these rules can provide the basis for that.