

Defining Key Terms

This section is for those inexperienced or unfamiliar with Role-Playing Games and their terminology. It will define several key terms that aren't in use in the common language. It contains all of the definitions in the basic rules as well as several more words common to the nomenclature.

Dice – Most Role-Playing games use special polyhedral dice, usually in 6 sizes: 20-Sided, 12-Sided, 10-Sided, 8-Sided, 6-Sided (The Common Die), and 4-Sided. Typically these dice are referred to with the notation D(number of sides) or d(number of sides) so an 8-sided die is referred to as a D8 and so on. There are a large number of dice with more or fewer faces, but these are rarely used in games and will not be used for the purposes of this game.

Percentile Dice (D10-D%) – are two 10-sided (D10) dice that are rolled together achieve the same effect as having rolled a 100-sided die (to randomly create a “percent” number) these dice have faces with numbers ranging from 0 to 9 (D10) and 00 to 90 (D%), these represent the ones place, and the tens place respectively. For example, a roll of a 6 and a 40 would be a 46, and a roll of a 7 and a 00 would be a 7. A roll of a 0 and 00 would be counted as a 100.

RPG (Role-Playing Game) – A role-playing game is a type of game where the players create and assume the role of a character in a fictional world. These characters are then able to increase their abilities and equipment in order to be better at their tasks in the game world. They can be video games, “live action”, or “board games” (many aren't played with a traditional “board”). For the rest of this explanation, we'll be talking about the latter.

Generally speaking, a “board” or “pen and paper” role-playing game will have the players using their characters to collaboratively create a story and solve problems that are presented by the Game Master (A special player, who is part storyteller, part impartial referee, and part antagonist). These problems are solved by the players deciding what their characters will do and seeing if they succeed by rolling dice and adding or subtracting from the roll based on the environment, their equipment, and their abilities. There is usually no set “end” to the game and the goal is to have fun being a group of hero's or villains in a made-up world.

Dungeon Master (DM) – or Games Master (GM) as in this game is a player in a Role-Playing game whose job it is to set up the game environment and describe the aspects of the adventure to the other players. They will also play for all of the enemies and other characters not controlled by the players. They are, in essence the teller of the story the players are participating in. Their title comes from the Dungeons & Dragons Role-Playing Games, which were among the first of their kind.

Dungeon Master Shield – a piece of cardboard or plastic the DM keeps their notes and dice rolls behind, obscuring the players view of them to prevent metagaming or cheating, and to add an air of mystique to what the DM is doing. This object is purely optional and some feel that games are more “honest” without one. But they can allow the DM to make decisions more privately and impartially, or to “fudge” in favor of either the characters or the enemies.

PC (Player Character) – is a character that a player in a role-playing game has direct control over for the duration of the game (except under specific circumstances).

NPC (Non-playable Character) – is a character in a role-playing game that is controlled by the Game/Dungeon Master (or in the case of a video game: the computer) and that no player can take control of for a permanent amount of time.

Fudging – is when the Game/Dungeon Master, or someone with the power to “bend” the rules adds a modifier to a die roll because they feel it should be that way. This can be good for the party: “Yeah, you just.. find the trail” or “It's just a rat of course you kill it”, or bad for the party: “You can't seem to catch up to him” or “It's too slippery to climb the rope”.

Metagaming – is the process whereby players make in-game decisions based on actions outside of the game. Such as a player catching a glimpse of another players card when getting a drink and changing their strategy, going after another player in this game because that player beat them in a previous game, using a joke or the context of a joke from earlier in the evening to get a greater laugh than an original one in a party game, or hearing the Game/Dungeon Master tell another player who is inside a cave hundreds of feet away they are fighting snakes, and having their character get ready to fight snakes, even though in-game there was no way their character could have known.

In games like role-playing games metagaming can also be meant to mean something along the line of “treating the game like it's a game” as opposed to an interactive story. Knowing a characters hit-points, class, alignment, special abilities, ect. is something you as a player can do but the character you are playing would not be able to do (since the game mechanics are just abstraction of real life, you reading this wouldn't know what “your” “hit-points” would be do you?). This takes many people “out of the game” and is usually discouraged, both by the rules and the players. Most RPGs are meant to be played as if the player is the character in the story, and the dice and rules are arbiters for that story. They aren't meant to get in the way of letting the players immerse themselves in the game world. (though one could make a strong argument that many of the rules in older RPG's are meant to

be thought of as “game rules” that can be exploited and not necessarily as “storytelling devices”

Metagaming is typically considered distinct from cheating in that it is mostly not intentional. Players “can't help” but act on this information gained outside of the game. Though it should still be highly discouraged.

HP (Hit Points) – are a number used to abstractly represent the health of character or creature. When a creature has it's maximum hit points it is as healthy and strong as it can be, this goes incrementally down (in most cases it has no in-game effect on the creature's abilities) until its HP reaches 0, at which point it is either dead or incapacitated.

Dz – is a “2-sided die” or coin, used for making binary choices. If a coin isn't available any even sided die can be substituted by making even numbers “2” and odd numbers “1”.

Point Buy – A system where, when creating characters, players are allotted a certain number of “points” that allow them to “buy” the attribute scores for their characters (in various ways) as opposed to rolling them randomly.

Min-Maxing – When players use flaws in a games mechanics to create characters that are impossibly good or “broken” either at a specific task or all around in the game. These characters are usually no good at playing the game for its intended purpose, but instead are tailored to trigger some unlikely scenario or “prove” the player is “better” at the game than other players.

Dump Stat – An attribute, skill, or other measure for a character where a player “dumps” their low scores. These stats are either deemed generally unnecessary (“who needs ‘wisdom’ anyway?”) or not needed for the character build (“my fighter doesn't need intelligence”). This is sometimes related to min-maxing, or “gaming” the game where stats not relevant to “breaking” the game are ignored.

Ending? – Role-Playing games do not end in the traditional sense, they can continue on indefinitely as characters continue on new adventures that are brought to their attention. Most games tend to end when player groups drift apart or decide to start and new campaign or game.

Play Session – The individual times a game is played, usually several hours in the evening weekly (sometimes daily or monthly) where the players meet (either in person or over the internet) to play the game. Adventures are made of multiple play sessions, campaigns of multiple adventures, and games of multiple campaigns.

Adventure – A portion of a game where players have a single goal to be achieved, the usually take multiple play sessions to play through, but it can take one if the goal is simple enough.

Campaign – A series of adventures with a few additional side goals and usually one over arching, much more difficult goal. Though they can be a simple series of adventures that happen to involve the same adventurers and are loosely tied together.

Game – The total amount of time a single game is played with the same group of characters (or players in the same world if original characters don't survive), if they do not decide to quite or restart. It can range from one play session to multiple campaigns, depending on how enthusiastic or available the players are.

Class – A class is a general descriptor of a characters role in the game and what abilities they will be able to have (fighter, thief, decker, faceman, etc). It is usually related to their last profession, but not necessarily, as usually adventuring professions aren't “standard”

Race – A race is a characters species (elf, dwarf, human, vampire, etc) and provides a framework for their average height, weight, and other general statistics. As well as determining what abilities they may have that other species don't, such as seeing in the dark or innate magical ability.

Party – A group of adventurers controlled mostly by players who are on a journey or quest together, sometimes referred to as an “adventuring party”.

Dungeon Crawl – An adventure, and possibly a campaign or whole game where the PCs simply move from room to room in a dungeon, smiting what enemies come up, avoid traps, and collect loot. It is usually a simpler style of play that is equated with older games and is easier for a game master to run.

Meatgrinder – A meatgrinder can be anything from an adventure to a game, where a characters rate of survival is very low, including player characters. They are often considered too hard, and unfun to play considering the number of character sheets and potential metagaming or “evil GMing” required to play them. But when done well will provide the players with a sense of satisfaction at being able to succeed.

Rules Lawyer – A player who has an encyclopedic knowledge of the rules of a game and attempts to, at any possible moment, correct every other player on their adherence to the rules.

Roll-Playing – Or “Roll-Players” are players or a style of play that is more centered on game mechanics, dice rolls, and statistics (see: Min-Maxing) to “win”, “be the best”, or “break the game” as opposed to creating a story or immersing themselves in a fantasy world.

Multi-Classing – A set of rules by which, in a role-playing game that uses a “class” based system, a character can be of more than one class, with various hindrances or advantages stemming from that.