

Campaign 0 — Before You Start

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This is a gaming resource, largely focused on table top roleplaying games or TTRPGs. It's mostly about the 'before you start playing' portion of playing these games, which for some may be part of the 'one session' in a one shot type game, or it may be an entirely separate session.

I am writing this as I'm reading *Avatar Legends*^[1] and wanting to start a campaign/session up to play that, as a nice accessible and family friendly game.

I have heard actual play of the game.

So, here's a bit of a discription of what I want to talk about here.

- Why Sesion 0
- Introducing Game
- Game Master's Perspective
- Players Perspective
- Safety Tools
 - Lines and Veils
 - X Card
 - Consent in Gaming
 - TTRPG Safety Toolkit

- Open Door
- Post Session Debrief

Most of this is coming from other sources, but right now, I've not got an easy way to include those (I've got the tools, just not set them up), and the whole book is more my perspective, as coloured by those resources.

1.1 Chapter Sumaries

This will include the summaries of the chapters that we have as we go along.

They will be one or two short paragraphs, just so you can quickly be able to see where you might want to go with a given topic.

1.1.1 Introduction

This is what you're reading. It hopefully at least the main parts of this will be kept short enough that you can read and get a fair sense of what the overall intent of this book is. Great, 'pick up at the store, read to see if you want to pick up a copy,' type thing.

1.2 Other Versions

This will have a list of known released to the wild other versions. As this is currently being developed on my Forgejo server, versions may be released that we are not aware of.

It will include the current version information on release, and the previous version info. This is intended to be a living document, so if you are finding a version which is on the older side, there may be more recent versions available.

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Chapter 2

Why Session 0?

Some of what I have to say falls into the ‘controversial’ category, and the why of a Session 0 at least in part falls into that category.

By controversial, it is more that there are some people who are opposed to at least some of the functions that come up here (and possibly all of the functions for probably an even smaller minority). Most players are either supportive, or unaware of some of this.

- Familiarity with game
- Setting up game
- Familiarity with players
- Safety Tools
- When have it
- Time it takes
- Where to have it

That’s probably a decent list of the main reasons, and let’s get into each of them.

2.1 Familiarity with game

This may be the least contested part of what a Session 0 can accomplish.

This is ensuring that to some extent all the players involved are familiar enough with the game, that there will not be major issues with failing to understand some of the basics.

Basics such as:

- Core gameplay
- Core setting
- Core characters
- Core themes

These really are not in any sort of order, because they kind of move about as to how one would want to talk about them.

2.1.1 Core Gameplay

This is the basics of the game mechanics. This can apply to stuff like board games or whatever.

This is something that can take a very brief time, or it can be something that will require some explanation.

I would think that some of the ways all of this happens ends up being able to happen in a more woven between different parts of the Session 0 time (and also included in further sessions), or a very laid out format.

Some of what comes up probably depends at least somewhat on what the game is. Some games are intended to be played with minimal pre-knowledge, and simply getting into it, while others really work well with more of that.

Also the people involved (players, game master, et cetera) will change how this will work out.

It is hoped that the game master will know at least a little of who they are dealing with prior to setting up any meeting, or at least have the ability to adapt enough that it ends up working out for most of the other players.

Getting bogged down in the how to play the game, can very much end up very quickly ruining the experience of a game. This is not to say that the learning of the game has to happen before starting to play, but more that to know basics (and for me some of these basics are about how questions about how to play will likely be handled), so little things don't get in the way of playing a game.

Some people really want to be sure that the rules are followed properly, other people are very much on the other end of the spectrum, and don't much care about the rules. Then there are people who are all for the chaos, switching between caring about the rules, and ignoring the rules, as they see fit.

Finding that sort of thing out before trying to play can be a huge measure of how the game is likely to end up working.

2.1.2 Core Setting

This can be very simple, and for some games it is defined very simply. In a lot of cases, you probably don't want to go more into it than a basic understanding of what the characters are likely to all know about the world, and for some that may be at the 'village level'.

That being that at the start of the game, they basically know nothing beyond much of their immediate surroundings, and in some cases may wake up not really knowing anything.

That said, it may be worthwhile to have the players know more than the characters.

2.1.3 Core Characters

This is more about the types of characters the players will be playing and encountering than any details about any of that (though some of the details will come up in the setting up of the game).

This is sort of similar to the above about the setting, it would be about making sure the players are aware enough about what

the characters are likely aware of.

2.1.4 Core Themes

This can be the start of where things start to be more of a discussion than simply describing the way the game is setup. The game master will likely have some degree of where they want to take things, but most are usually willing to move that around in response to what the players are interested in.

Most games have some sense of defined themes that they are wanting to deal with. Some despite maybe being more open at the core, will have some rules like, ‘No Fascists Allowed,’ which largely speaks for itself, but there has been significant discussion, as it seems it doesn’t seem clear enough to some people.

Then there are the players. They have similar ideas as to what type of game they may want to play, and what type of game they don’t want to play.

This part isn’t about really going into the details of that, as some of that ends up going into the safety tools section, but all of this ends up interacting with everything, so this is probably going somewhat into that.

With that all said, I think that is the basics of dealing with the familiarity of the game.

Let’s move on to setting up the game.

2.2 Setting up the Game

This is sometimes the most important part, with the creation of characters, and the start of looking at where the game will start.

Now for some games such as *Querent*[2], are meant to have “No Session 0.” Which I personally would put more in a, “Session 0 and Session 1 are the same time,” as it more means that the goals of Session 0, can be accomplished quickly enough to not be separated from the main session.

Important things about this, is setting things like the starting location and the different characters that the players will be playing. Some of which may not need to be discussed in terms of in person (or more “realtime” with how online games can be), but through email or whatever.

This can be important to start to get a feel for the dynamics of the group, to be able to see where potential pain points may come up.

The details about this will change for each game or game system you are working with, and as I have worked with some games where it can more or less run with little more than a brief (like a couple minutes at most), introduction before playing, to games that I have spent hours myself trying to prepare enough to present to players in advance, I feel that talking further would be very individual to the different games.

2.3 Familiarity with Players

This applies to all the sort of interactions between all of the different players, and to some extent the characters. This may be where one starts to talk about personal and group boundaries.

This is getting into the territory where some people start to say, “We don’t need that sort of thing.” Some people are saying that from a perspective of “We are all friends, so we don’t really need to do that sort of thing.” Other people are less charitable in their criticism, and consider that it is an outright bad idea.

I would like to suggest a couple of reasons for those who feel that they are all friends, so it’s not needed, and also for those who feel it’s just a bad idea, but might not be stuck in that idea.

- We Don’t Need It
 - Hidden Boundaries
 - Hidden Interests
- This is a Bad Idea
 - Then don’t do it

- Let your players know
- Direct players to other places

2.3.1 We Don't Need It

So, if you are friends who have run around these types of things you can think there's not really any reason to consider these things but I kind of think there are a couple of pretty important things to think about in terms of that.

Appendix A

Appendix

Here, maybe having an appendix, with each of the other things as sections? Let's see.

A.1 Bibliography

References

- [1] Sharing Biswas et al. *Avatar Legends. The Roleplaying Game*. English. Ed. by Monte Lin and Kate Unaru. Viacom International Inc., 2022. 305 pp.
- [2] Adrian Taul et al. *Querent. The Cartomancer's Tome*. English. Magpie Games, 2019. 439 pp.

A.2 Todo Items

This is here (the appendix), so it will show up in the table of contents.

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Todo item

Todo list

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Appendix B

Book Development History

This will include some idea of how this book has progressed along time each section will cover that day's work...

B.1 2024 January 16

Created the document, and started with setting up the basic formatting.

Started writing about "Why Session 0?"

Currently taking a break (any further writing will have to be tomorrow (or later) if I take more than a very brief break), part way through writing about 'Familiarity With Players'.