



# Freeform Interactive Drama Traits

## The Freeform/Players Thread

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*This is a compilation of a series of posts made to the [aus.games.roleplay](mailto:aus.games.roleplay) newsgroup on traits of good and bad interactive drama scenarios.*

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Author: Scot with One T  
Email: [onetus@ozemail.com.au](mailto:onetus@ozemail.com.au)  
Date: 1998/10/06  
Forums: [aus.games.roleplay](http://aus.games.roleplay)

I think from my experience with GMing - Often designers are more worried about the players who play a character over the top - and way to loud in an effort to gain attention and control the freeform around them, gaining a certain character who needs to be played in a certain way.

And on a different note:

There is a difference between a good freeform and a decidedly average freeform. This can be easily summarised:

- In a good freeform each character is of equal importance to plot.
- In a good freeform each character can exert some influence over what is going on in total. (This can be hard, but it can also be indirectly)
- In a good freeform each character is capable of joining into a plot/idea that was not even thought of originally.
- In a good freeform no player is constrained and bored by another player having some unbreakable hold over them
- In a bad freeform, some characters are core characters and other characters are filler.
- In a bad freeform, actions depend on certain characters doing things, no minor character can overstep these characters
- In a bad freeform, characters are restrained from doing things not intended for them
- In a bad freeform, you are restricted by other characters from talking to a different group of characters where it is not integral to the plot



- In a bad freeform, characters can order other characters out of locations in a location based game.

Any other thoughts on what's good and bad in a freeform?

Scot with One T  
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Author: Grant Chapman  
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Forums: aus.games.roleplay

That list seems very concise and well thought out. Most of it seems comon sense after I read them but I had never thought of them.

*There is a difference between a good freeform and a decidedly average freeform. This can be easily summarised:*

Almost all of those listed could be applied to tabletop games.

These two are Freeform specific but the rest might prove usefull for game desginers.

*In a bad freeform, you are restricted by other characters from talking to a different group of characters where it is not integral to the plot*

*In a bad freeform, characters can order other characters out of locations in a location based game.*

The only other point I would touch on is a good freeform **\*\*MAY\*\*** not require players to be costumed.

A good list.

thanks

Grant

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Author: Hoju  
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Forums: aus.games.roleplay

Scot with One T wrote in message <3619fce9.2485451@news.ozemail.com.au>...

*Any other thoughts on what's good and bad in a freeform?*

see, i can snip now...

i always thought waking up and realising it was a dream was pretty cool... sorry...

a bad freeform is where an NPC gets a GM award. a good freeform is where a second time freeformer wins an award. (giving a prize to a first time freeformer can cause an inflated head and lead to years of post roleplaying therapy (i am one of those hideous first time winners))

hoju

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It's not easy to get a snooker when there's only one ball on the table...

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Forums: aus.games.roleplay

Well, as usual, I jumped in without reading the full backlog. Scot dear, you have best summarised the good and bad of freeforms. I wish I could have appended this to my post on the subject.

Megan

(posting from a spouse account)

Michael Hitchens

University of Sydney

As to opinions - I have mine they have theirs

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Author: Butterfly

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Date: 1998/10/13

Forums: aus.games.roleplay

Scot with One T wrote:

*There is a difference between a good freeform and a decidedly average freeform. This can be easily summarised:*

*< list of good and bad stuff >*

Scot - you got it on the nose. Everything you put in your post was absolutely right.

And I disagree with it entirely.

There is no reason why any of the "bad" things you put down can't happen in a good freeform - as long as there is sufficient reason for them in the plot. And there is no reason why a bad freeform can't have every one of the things you put in the "good" list.

The way I see it, there is only one criteria to a good freeform - everyone has a good time. And a bad freeform (thinks back to a certain board-game based freeform run at SydCon a few years ago...) is one in which not everyone has a good time.

-Madi.

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Author: Scot with One T

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Forums: aus.games.roleplay

On Tue, 13 Oct 1998 01:55:08 +1000, Butterfly wrote:

*Scot - you got it on the nose. Everything you put in your post was absolutely right. And I disagree with it entirely. There is no reason why any of the "bad" things you put down can't happen in a good freeform - as long as there is sufficient reason for them in the plot. And there is no reason why a bad freeform can't have every one of the things you put in the "good" list.*

Yup. Most likely.

I should clarify my comments and state that What I thought were Bad ideas are the things that I dislike in a freeform. In fact these things usually spoil a freeform for me, by reducing my freedom to interact with other people. Given my caustic personality of yesteryears -

sometimes in important to be able to roleplay and plot with people in freeforms that don't know me.

I would also say - maybe Players ideas of what they should do in a freeform is slightly confused among us all. Is it more important in a freeform to "complete your objectives" or to willingly sacrifice completion of an objective to allow other players a chance to complete their plot - or infact spawn a new one with them?

It can be more fun to "WIN WIN WIN"the freeform, but I'd say that by helping other players at my own expense - this has increased my chances of Getting the GM award at cons. By the way, is it ethical?

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Author: melinka  
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Forums: aus.games.roleplay

sorry scot i did not see your list of good and bad things but, as a person who has played many freeforms over the years and has written a few freeforms as well as helped in the writing of a major freeform campain i think that the most import thing is for the players to enjoy it regardless of wether they manage to achieve they objectives or not.

one of the ways i feel that freeform writers can help players have a good time is to try and avoid the old "paper chase syndrom" that u will find in many freeforms, for example player A needs somthing that player B has but player be will only trade it for something that player J has and J will only give it up if he can get what player D,G and L have and so on and so if you are play B and player J is just a plain shit head (yes they are out there and they do play freeforms) then it can mean that you will not be able to achieve your goals no matter what.

i feel that a good freeform should encourage the player to interact with as many of the other players as posible. after all freeforms are the most social aspect of our hobby.

it should also provid the player with enough info so that he can play his character without having to resort to "ill give u this slip of paper if u give me that slip of paper". its a freeform not a swap meet.

if u give the player a reason to be there and make make sure that the character is involved with as many plots as possible it should stop the dreaded cry of " im board and my character has nothing to to do" that we all fear.

but what can the players do to help i hear you ask

they can relax for a start. the writers and GM are only human and so will probably make a mistake or two, but as a player if you just go with what the GM tells you and ask questions politely u may just have a good time. players can also try not to mob GMs. while many of us have fantasies of people yelling our names and begging for us to pay attention to them the people in these fantasies are young sexy and desperately in love with us. thats not how i think of most freeform players. so again give them a chance and wait your turn. by all means let them know that u are waiting for them but do it nicely Please.

and dont complain about the freeform until its over, nothing will put a writer in a bad mood faster than some little shit telling him that his games sucks the concept is stupid and he should never play let alone write a freeform again if he thinks his game is up to standard. I have seen this happen. not only will it piss off the writer but the other players may be put off by it . save those sort of comments till the game is finished or tell the GM u just dont want to play and leave . again Please

The above comments are directed at no one in particular and are only my thoughts on freeforms.

