AN INTRODUCTION TO RECREATIONAL ROLEPLAYING

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Rediscovering Your Creativity
(DRAFT ONLY)

This is a draft copy of a work in progress. It is available for comment and discussion, on the understanding that succeeding versions may be substantially different. All information contained in this work is based on the experience and sometimes faulty memory of the author, who appreciates correctionsand suggestions very much.

*The work is translated from Microsoft word to html, via the **rtftohtml** program, and the author's ignorance of this processhas resulted in some strangeness in thedocument references, which should be fixed in the final version If you have any advice about this process, please contact the author.*

Introduction

. "Let's pretend you're the mother and I'm the father."

"Say that you're a space hero and I'm an ugly, bug eyed monster!"

"Let's say the carpet is a swimming pool!"

These are games we all remember as kids. Through roleplaying, children rehearse social skills, trade wisdom and knowledge, explore new concepts, and develop their creativity.

Among grown-ups, roleplaying has found wide use in business, education and training, psychology and recreation, and it's no wonder that it has enjoyed such success: roleplaying employs skills we develop before we even learn to read and write, and rests on the building blocks by which we learn identity.

But in the stratified, rules-bound world of our adult lives, many of our childhood talents -- our creativity, social flexibility, our capacity to suspend judgement and just throw ourselves into fictional situations -- may become stiff with disuse. With the growing pressure of responsibilities, on our passage through adulthood we may leave behind some important things that help make our lives worthwhile -- our spontaneity, creativity and social flexibility.

This article doesn't set out to tell the beginner how to roleplay, because roleplaying is something we can all do -- it's as innate as talking or breathing. The purpose of this document is to acquaint the reader with the structured world of *adult* roleplaying -- to offer a map of new terrain in which it's hoped that the reader will also recognise plenty of familiar territory.

Organisation

The layout of this article is as follows: Section 0 introduces the article. Section 2 defines roleplaying. Section 3 breaks recreational roleplaying into its common elements and discusses their purpose. Section 4 considers what we learn from recreational roleplaying. Section 6 covers professional uses for roleplaying, and section 7 gives a short history of recreational roleplaying.

Whats Roleplaying?
Roleplaying is a cooperative game of improvised drama involving one or more people. In the game you take the part of a character reacting to fictional situations. The game stops when the players agree to stop -- at a predesignated event, or when some conditions for satisfaction are met.

Roleplaying parts may be spoken, as if in a radio play, or acted, as if on a stage. Among adults, it's more common to sit around a table and speak the parts, while

among children it's more common to perform the part with your whole body, and whatever props you can find around you.

To roleplay, you need only your imagination and some way to communicate it. Because adults normally prefer more structured roleplaying though, there are lots of extra resources in the form of background books, rules books, forms, dice, graphics, music, pencils, erasers, maps, model figures, character and story notes. A daunting array of such merchandise can be found in most games stores.

Elements of Recreational Roleplaying

The Players
Most roleplaying is done in groups. Usually, each member takes charge of a single character, except for one player who is designated the Game Master (or narrator, or archaically, Dungeon Master). This role is normally abbreviated GM. The GM's job is described in Section 3.3.

Each player, including the GM, has characters to play. The job of the players is to understand their characters, to work out what makes them tick, to bring their own experience and insights to the characters by interpreting them with sincerity, honesty and compassion.

The Audience
The players are both the performers and the audience of their own production. In a roleplaying game, all the audience normally participates and this is what makes roleplaying different from watching a movie or reading a book. A good roleplaying game is one where every player is both challenged and satisfied. There is no better measure.

The Game Master
The GM's job is to keep the game organised and focussed. The GM describes settings, background plays "extras" in the story. For historic reasons, these extras are confusingly called Non-Player Characters, or NPC's, even though the GM plays them. The main difference between NPCs and Player Characters (PCs) is that PCs take main parts in the story, while NPCs take supporting parts.

Where needed, the GM also arbitrates on story consequences, resolves confusions or disputes among players, and acts as the voice of the story, interpreting it for the group as a whole. Very often, the GM is also the person who writes the bones of the story, which the players then flesh out.

The group may delegate any of the GM's jobs to other players -- for instance, an extra character may be given to a player, or a player may be asked to describe a setting, or to determine consequences of character actions.

A good GM is coequal with the other players, acting as a facilitator for the story without obstructing players, and ensuring that everyone gets something out of the game. GMing normally needs experience, understanding, organisation, enthusiasm, some ability to negotiate and the capacity to do fast, credible improvisation.

Scenes and Interactions
Like books, movies and plays, roleplaying games are commonly built up out of scenes. A scene is a setting in which one or more characters interact -- with each other, and with the environment. For example:

GM: *It's a dank jetty, and the pale moon is wreathed in a clammy mist turned amber by the glare of the warehouse lights. The smell is of rot -- rotting seaweed, rotting wood, rotting fish, and over the sluggish lap of the sea against the piles can also be heard the furtive scurry of rats. Far off behind you, against a warehouse door, a drunken vagrant is singing a strange song.*

GM: *(singing)* "Thar wuz a man... he had two sons... and these two sons were brutherrrrrrs."

GM: *He mumbles some more words, then starts again.* **What are you doing?**

Player1: *Selena produces a flashlight from her pocket, and walks cautiously in her high heels on the soft jetty planks.*

GM: *Blurred by the mist, your sweeping light catches a shape moving among some boxes at the end of the jetty. It's a man shape, but it makes no noise at all.*

Player1: *I pause, sweeping the flash over the boxes, trying to see what it is.*

GM: *The light glints off the oiled blue steel of a heavy pistol, then sweeps over the squinting face of your old chum Lord Horace.*

Player2: **Can Lord Horace see anything?**

GM: **He's heard a woman's footsteps, and now there's a light in his face. He's had no view yet of the woman holding the flashlight.**

Player 2: *I retreat for cover, taking the pistol off safety.*

Player 1: *Selena calls uncertainly*, "Lord Horace?"

Player 2: "Selena! You idiot, I almost shot you! What are you doing here?"

Example 1-- A Typical Scene Interaction
In the little scene of Example 1 we see the basic elements of a roleplaying interaction. Here the GM sets scenes, resolves outcomes, and plays the part of a drunk support character. The GM provides entry points for two players into a scene, and sets up some dramatic tension to give the players something to play off.

The players interact with the GM and with each other. Players swap dialogue, state actions and ask the GM questions about the scene. The GM answers questions and narrates consequences if needed, but otherwise stays out of the way.

As written, the scene looks a lot like the script for a play. In italics are the parts of the scene that would normally appear as scene direction. Between quotes are lines of literal dialogue. In bold are discussions that actors might have with the director, but which wouldn't normally occur in the script. These discussions help clarify the scene.

Notice how the job of narration is shared between the GM and other players, and how each player incorporates ideas from the previous player -- Selena's player uses the idea of the rotting jetty to decide that the planks are soft. The GM uses the idea of the flashlight to narrate more of the story. Lord Horace's player uses the idea of his temporary blindness to make his character jumpy. The group works together as a unit to make a coherent, seamless tale, and each player is careful to give the others clear descriptions of what's happening.

First, Second, Third Person
Example 1 shows how the interactions can drift between first, second and third person in the story. This happens because players have multiple roles. Sometimes the player is an actor, enacting the dialogue, and it's useful to think of the character in first person. At other times, the player is narrating the action to the rest of the audience, and the character is thought of in third person. The GM often asks players second person questions like, "What are you doing?", in their role as actors. Sometimes the GM will ask a third person question instead, "Does Selena have a flashlight?", appealing to the player in the capacity of narrator.

This constant hat swapping can be very confusing to an outside observer -- it looks like the players are uncertain of their own identities, and has led to some popular misunderstandings about roleplaying. Swapping hats is something that players quickly get used to though, and it becomes invisible in their play of the game.

Gender Swapping
There are times when playing opposite gender characters works, and times when it doesn't. If the players are all of one gender, then it would limit the game to have only characters of that gender, so it makes sense to play female PCs or NPCs at times. There's also a lot you can learn by playing characters of opposite gender, and some players are happy to play either gender equally. Some players don't feel comfortable doing so, or are dissatisfied with the effect, and so don't. Both of these approaches are sensible.

It's important that your character be credible to the other players, and so it's important to know the limits of your acting ability, and what is acceptable to you and to the group. Playing a scene that makes someone uncomfortable is a sure way to make a game fail.

Players are sometimes criticised for swapping genders in roleplaying, as though this means they have no strong sense of personal identity. In truth, it makes as much sense for players to play characters of either gender as it does for an author to write characters of the either gender into a play, movie or novel. The challenges, and the opportunities for growth and learning are the same.

The Conflicts
The essence of drama lies in conflict, and conflicts come in all kinds. There is emotional conflict, when two feelings collide. There's physical conflict, where a fight breaks out. There's the conflict of intrigue and ignorance, or the conflict of debate. There's overt conflict, where the issues are stated outright, and covert conflict, where the real issues are hidden. Conflict is the essence of drama, and drives every roleplaying game. It's conflict that tests our skills, challenges our ideas and stimulates our creativity.

Pure conflict on its own is not constructive though. Like children playing at cops and robbers, conflict without structure can spill out into personal conflict at a moment's notice, and lose the point of the exercise. Drama is *structured* conflict, and this section and those to follow deal briefly with the issues of conflict in roleplaying games, and how to contain it.

Audience Sympathies

Audience sympathies toward characters determine the heroes and villains of a story. This is as true in roleplaying as in movies or books. A plot only has meaning to the audience once the audience sympathies and antipathies are established.

In movies and plays, authors may work hard to establish audience sympathies early, so that the plot has the intended effect on the audience. For instance, Shakespeare has the otherwise heroic Macbeth admit to outright villainy, when in plotting the death of his King Macbeth says:

I have no spurs to prick the sides of intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'er-leaps itself
And falls on th' other.

This sets the audience up to expect something bad to happen to an otherwise sympathetic character. It keeps the audience convinced that it is right for Macbeth to die in the end -- because he had a tragic flaw.

Among children playing cops and robbers though, the cop and the robber are both sympathetic characters -- because each is played by a member of the audience. When it comes to a showdown, neither child wants his character to die at the gun of the other, and so arguments break out. Conflict between two sympathetic characters needs special kinds of reconciliation.

The essence of drama lies in conflict, and in a roleplaying game, the conflicts are normally between sympathetic characters, because every character is played by a member of the audience. Thus, we need structure and this is often implemented through the use of rules and negotiation.

Rules and Negotiation

In roleplaying, the outcomes of character conflicts are often structured through the use of rules. For example, in a cops and robbers game, the first child to point at the other and yell **BANG!** normally wins. This is a rule well known to children.

In adult roleplaying, the rules are more complicated, and differ from game to. Rules aren't needed if the players are all of one mind about the outcome -- if the group agrees that the robber should be dead, then dead he is since the group need please only themselves.

Rules in roleplaying games are a contract by which outcomes are decided when the issue is in conflict. The earliest roleplaying rules derived from military simulations (see Section 7), and involved dice and probability tables. The rules would normally

be interpreted by the Game Master, then the outcome would then be left to chance -- thus, every player had some hope of getting what he wanted. This created challenge, and helped to avoid arguments among players.

Most published roleplaying games come with a set of rules and guidelines -- often called Game Mechanics, or a Game System. These typically use different shaped dice, or cards, and some formulas to remember, to help work out what is reasonable in conflict situations. The rules vary from genre to genre (for instance, comicbook superheroes have different rules to mediaeval knights).

But numeric rules are often insensitive to story needs -- for instance, it might be probable that the hero won't survive a fall from thirty thousand feet, but will it satisfy the audience? For this reason, rules are often applied creatively in roleplaying games, rather than literally, and negotiations often take precedence over the blind application of rules.

Part of effective negotiation in a game is to make sure that whatever outcome is arrived at, all the players have a good time. This gives rise to the idea of *yielding* to other players -- giving them what they want now, in the hope that you'll get what you want later. If the players all trust each other to make the game work, then players are more willing to get *into* risky character situations, because they trust the group to help them get *out* of the situation later. This increases the drama and thrills you can pack into a game.

It's part of the job of every player to help avoid confusion and misunderstanding in the game, as this can lead to player conflict. If the players are to trust one another, then they must be appraised of what the other players want. In a good group, the players know how to read one another, and will talk where necessary to keep track of where each character is heading, and will adjust their own play to help further a coherent story that everyone can enjoy.

Every player has attachments and sympathies that affect where they want the game to go -- this is true even of GMs. There's an obligation on GMs and players to communicate with one another, to keep their purpose in alignment.

Myth and Content

Recreational roleplaying draws much of its content from the world of myth. There are some very practical reasons for this. People share a lot of myths in common, and many psychologists and sociologists have argued that our identities are founded in myths. Myths are powerful, symbolic, instantly accessible, and embody

much of the language of our creative selves. They're easy to talk about, easy to understand, and don't need complex pictures or explanations.

By drawing on common myth, roleplaying games let us find and explore those things that are important to us -- the heroes and monsters of our social and personal subconsciousses. Many stories told by roleplaying games are so deeply rooted in myth that they're instantly recognisable to a stranger entering in the middle of a game. The symbols are clear, and the issues are common to us all.

Roleplaying games are very eclectic in the myths they draw on. The stories of knights, princesses, dragons and dwarves are familiar fare. So too are the myths of modern adventure heroes, wild west heroes and comic book heroes. As well as drawing on the heroes and villains of Christian and pre-Christian myth, myths are drawn from the rich legacies of all kinds of other cultures. Many roleplayers have become skilled tale-weavers in the myths of cultures far different to their own.

The myths of our culture develop constantly, and nowadays, each development is reflected in roleplaying. As the dystopian vision of Cyberpunk developed in the eighties, with the novels of Gibson and others, the roleplaying reflections of these books came not after. As vampires came to the book and screen in the early nineties, they came too to roleplaying games. Born of our current interests, roleplaying offers its players a way of expressing and reflecting those social changes that move about them, in the language of myth.

Violence in Recreational Roleplaying

Our myths are often violent things -- from myths dating back centuries through to the modern myths of today, much of the emotional and conceptual conflict in our culture is captured by myth and manifested as physical conflict -- knights fight dragons, good cowboys fight bad cowboys, children trap witches in ovens. Sometimes the violence is overt and immediate, as in the legends of Odysseus, or the Arabian Nights. Sometimes, it sits in the background and colours the drama -- like the movie legend, *Casablanca*. At other times, it's merely the threat of violence that drives the drama -- as in the tales of Bre'er Rabbit.

In roleplaying you can find the same range of themes, and typically players suit their own tastes. In fact, the myths of Odysseus, the Arabian Nights, Casablanca and Bre'er Rabbit have all been used to make entertaining games. Just as a narrator chooses a story-book to suit the audience, so a GM chooses the game content to suit. The quality of the game often depends on the wisdom of the GM in picking suitable content.

That's roleplaying the craft. On the shelves of commercial game-stores, though, it's a somewhat different story. It's an adage that violence sells, whether the merchandise is movies, novels, toys, games or roleplaying supplements. Violence is eye-catching, provocative, and titillates the thrill-seeker with promises of extreme vicarious experiences. Ultimately, when it comes to roleplaying commercial material, the responsible consumer must be the judge.

Growth from Recreational Roleplaying

Recreational roleplaying is often criticised for being escapist, and of course it is -- just as plays, movies, books and paintings are escapist. If we choose, we can escape through roleplaying. We can bury our needs in wish fulfilment, hide our problems in a borrowed identity, leave our worries behind for a brief while before they come crashing down on our heads again.

Unfortunately, this problem isn't confined to roleplaying. It's there in just about every social activity people engage in. We can escape into movies, into books, into alcohol and other drugs, into work, into parties, into food... These things do us no good if we use them to hide from what we really need to grow.

Roleplaying is foundational to our childhood growth, and the same basic skills that children learn may be used among adults. Indeed, many adults roleplay without realising it. If we rehearse a job interview in our minds, asking ourselves questions in one voice, and answering in another, then we are roleplaying. If we ever "put ourself in someone else's shoes", we are roleplaying. If we change our behaviour just from putting on a suit, we are roleplaying. Roleplaying lets us grow our skills through the use of persona and lets us test our skills in imaginary worlds.

So what is a persona? Why do we use them? Is it some sort of hypocrisy to act as something other than ourselves, or is our notion of self really a chimera? Are we nothing more than bundles of personas tied together in one body -- a jigsaw puzzle of social conditioning, or is there some underlying sense to it all?

These questions have plagued philosophers and behavioural scientists for centuries, and this article doesn't propose to delve into them. Instead, it confines its treatment to personas as they're used in roleplay, and what we can learn from them. But the questions are deep ones, the kinds of things that many roleplayers think about, and are part of the mystery and magic of drama.

For roleplaying purposes, a persona is a collection of behaviour, explained by a set of motives. Each depends on the other. Action without motive is meaningless to

the audience -- without a sense of motive, the audience can't tell whether the player is playing one character or twenty -- there's no connectivity. But motive without action is invisible to the audience. If the character doesn't display what it feels, it has no effect on the story.

We learn through roleplaying by exploring new behaviour and the beliefs that support it. If the character shares beliefs with us, but has different behaviour then we learn something by seeing what the character does differently and why. If the character shares similar behaviour with us, but has different motives, then we can scrutinise our own motives in a new light, and learn something from that.

We also learn through roleplaying by testing existing beliefs against new circumstances -- how do we resolve moral dilemmas, or emotional conflicts? Which is more important: Love, or duty? Honesty or compassion? Friendship, or justice? How well do ideals hold up under pressure? These moral tests are the meat of myths from every culture, and hold a major place in roleplaying games. Just as lawyers have test cases and precendents, so our beliefs can be tested under hypothetical circumstances, and measured against the reality of our behaviour.

Another way we learn through roleplaying is by comparing the behaviour of our characters to the behaviour of people we know. Many characters are inspired by our experiences with others. By putting ourselves in someone else's place -- by dealing with problems the way that they do, we can learn insights, wisdom and compassion for the people around us.

In adults as in children, roleplaying is a social pastime that relies heavily on organisation, effective communication and a strong sense of group participation. For this reason, roleplaying is used to help teach many organisational development and negotiation courses, using exercises little different from the kinds of stories you can see in recreational games.

What we learn from roleplaying depends very much on what we seek to learn. If we choose, we can ignore the lessons and just see roleplaying as purely entertainment -- a way of socialising, of switching off and tuning out. If we choose to learn though -- if we approach our problems and interests with an open mind, a sense of adventure, and a healthy curiosity, roleplaying is both a fun and effective way to gain insights.

Professional Uses for Roleplaying
Roleplaying has found uses in a variety of professional applications, both as a vehicle for demonstrations, and as an exercise tool to help train and teach. In

professional use, roleplaying is often a tool for*reperceiving* a problem -- for applying creativity to a problem for which there are no obvious solutions. Some short examples of professional roleplaying applications appear below.

- In psychology and therapy, psychodramas are often used to lead patients to face their conflicts or hurdles in dealing with others. The patient is asked to enact the conflict, often with the therapist or other patients taking roles of the others. By doing it in a controllable, fictional environment the patient can come to insights not possible in the real situation. Also, the interactions can be recorded and analysed later, to help the patient to new understanding. For example, a common family argument may be re-enacted as a roleplay, and then worked through with the patient.

- In child psychology, the dominant influences in a child's relationships are analysed by monitoring the child's play with others. Cases where children are lacking nurture or are in conflict on some issues, can show up as patterns in their play, even if the children themselves aren't yet capable of saying exactly what it is that's bothering them.

- In regression therapies, patients are asked to play the part of children of different ages, to help understand the influences shaping the adults they've become.

- In professional development courses -- such as group management, negotiation, team building, conflict resolution or presentation skills, roleplays are used to instruct and train. Sample situations are constructed and presented to students to demonstrate particular features in controlled environments. Students are asked to participate in such roleplays to hone and demonstrate their own skills. For example, eight students may be told they're in a sinking ship, with one lifeboat that can take at most six people. How do they resolve the situation?

- In drama, roleplays are often used to refine ideas for characters and interactions in plays and movies. For instance, a director of *Romeo and Juliet* might ask the actors to all go bowling -- as their characters. This creates a sense of dramatic cohesion among the troupe, deepens the character insights of actors, and makes the performances more fluid and spontaneous.

- In theatre, roleplaying exercises with improvised characterisation are performed commercially, under the title *Theatresports*. These games teach actors how to improvise characters, scenes and story, and perform them unrehearsed to a live audience. Each exercise has a limited amount of time (typically 2-5 minutes), and is structured by rules (eg, all freeze when the bell rings, and a new actor enters the stage and starts a new story).

- In law, participants are asked to take the roles of plaintiff, defendant etc... to test the concepts behind the legislation. Is justice being served? Could society do better? Such roleplays have been televised in Australia under the title *Jeffrey Robertson's Hypotheticals.*
- In foresighting, roleplays are used to create scenarios by which planning may take place. These scenarios are fictions created by groups of experts, based on the alternate accounts of future events. The scenarios are analysed afterwards to look for early indicators of change. Many successful strategic contingency plans in business and defence have been developed this way. For instance, suppose that tomorrow, oil prices doubled. Now explain how this could have happened.
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A Brief History of Recreational Roleplaying

Recreational roleplaying for adults grew out of military simulations or war-games. These are competitive games that normally use model figures on sculpted terrain maps. Each player takes the part of the commander of some military force, represented by models. The games were traditionally played with armies, battalions, companies, platoons or squads. When the games started to be played with a single figure per side, then the player part gradually shifted from being a commander to being an actor, and the game gradually shifted from being competitive and ends-driven, to being cooperative and means-driven.

The first recreational roleplaying games for adults were designed and sold in the late sixties. Sold as *fantasy roleplaying games*, the first settings for these games drew from the fantasy literature of authors like J.R.R. Tolkien, and from the rich world of European myths. These games quickly caught the imaginations of fantasy readers, and bore titles like *Dungeons & Dragons, RuneQuest, Chivalry and Sorcery*.

Not long after came the first run of science fiction roleplaying games, such as *Space Opera,* and *Universe*. For the next decade a plethora of roleplaying games were published in fantasy or science fiction settings, competing for basically the same narrow market. Collectors appeared, and game conventions were formed where people could play or trade games.

By the early eighties superheroes had established itself as a viable roleplaying genre -- presumably because many of the people who read fantasy and science fiction also read comic books. Titles like*Champions, and Marvel Superheroes* appeared. By this time many roleplaying titles had surfaced and died, leaving only a few hardy survivors clinging to the same market. Roleplaying was

rules-laden, dramatically straight-jacketted, and appealed to a specifically male audience with its stories of power fantasies, violent conflict and one-dimensional characterisation.

By the mid eighties, the character of roleplaying changed. Horror *(Call of Cthulhu, Chill!)* and the cartoon genre *(TOON)* had appeared, along with more romantic genres *(James Bond, Pendragon)*, and the focus of stories had shifted from ends-based (achieve your objectives) to means-based (quality of story, dialogue and atmosphere). Increasingly, roleplayers began to think of roleplaying as an art or craft, and began to look at what made for a good drama.

As games paid more attention to character, the range of good female roles increased, and roleplaying began to draw more female players. In response to changing qualities in the market, roleplaying publications shifted emphasis from rules and technical manuals to story and character support. Rule systems got simpler and easier to use, and publications offered fewer rules and more inspiration to fire the imaginations of players.

By the mid nineties, the boom roleplaying market of the seventies is now middle-aged, with jobs, spouses, children and mortgages, while three more generations of roleplayers have appeared. For older roleplayers, the increased life experience, the increased disposable income and the limited recreation time has meant that their games have to be sharp, pithy, and polished. Just as we have novels and movies to treat almost any subject, so now we have roleplaying games to cover just about every aspect of our lives and interests.

A Glossary of Common Roleplaying Terms
Just as in the world of theatre, roleplaying has generated a lot of jargon. The following list is far from complete, and not used in every roleplaying group, but should help the novice with language for some basic ideas central to recreational roleplaying.

1D6
> A six sided die -- as in "roll 1d6". 2D6 would mean two six sided dice (adding their values together). Likewise, 2D10 would mean rolling two ten sided dice, and adding.

Block
> A response that forces a player to backtrack, without developing the story.

Buddy
> A player who comes to be with friends, but is indifferent to the game.

Campaign

A series of connected roleplaying stories, typically featuring the same main characters. (Derives from military simulations).

Character sheet

A summary of the important details of a character according to the *game mechanics* (qv).

Critical

A critical success or failure is an extreme result for good or ill, determined randomly by dice or other means.Usually, describing *skill rolls* (qv).

DM

Dungeon Master (from the *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* roleplaying game). The game coordinator in charge of the "dungeon" -- an underground area of traps, monsters and puzzles which the characters would explore.

Fumble

A badly failed *skill roll*, often with disastrous effects.

Game Mechanics

A system of rules for determining contested outcomes in a reliable, predictable fashion.

Game System

See *Game Mechanics*.

GM

The coordinator of the game. Usually the narrator and arbiter of the story. Sometimes called the DM.

Hack and Slash

A roleplaying game with a lot of violence, and not much else.

Module

A pre-written story skeleton, complete with background, plot and supporting characters. Typically, bought commercially.

Monty Haul

Named after a Canadian game show host, a Monty Haul game is one where characters are showered with power and wealth, beyond taste or credibility.

Munchkin

A young player who exploits the game for his own personal ends, to the cost of the rest of the group.

NPC

Non Player Character -- a supporting character, typically played by the *Game Master* (qv).

Percentiles

Rolling a random number between 1 and 100. Usually, using two ten sided dice, calculating ten times the first roll, then add the second in.

PC

Player Character -- a main character in the story.

Roll-playing

A style of roleplay that adheres blindly to rules, without regard for the quality of story or characterisation.

RPG

Abbreviation for roleplaying game.

Scenario

A single roleplaying story.

Skill roll

A die roll used to determine if some character skill was successful.

Source Book

A game book providing source material for a series of stories in the same setting or genre.

Stats

A character's physical characteristics, described numerically. For instance, strength, intelligence or dexterity are often recorded as stats.

Supplement

A game book published as supplementary material to a roleplaying source book.