

Introduction

What is role-playing?

Role-playing is like stepping into a book or a movie, where you and your friends are the protagonists. Together, by talking, listening, and taking cues from each other, you build an imaginary world where extraordinary adventures take place. This world is held together by a few rules that help decide what happens when the characters (that's you!) make decisions or face challenges. As the game progresses, your intertwined actions create an exciting and unpredictable story, a kind of epic tale that develops naturally from beginning to end.

Here are the elements that bring this experience to life:

- **A shared imaginary world:** It's like when you were kids and said, "let's pretend that..." and then imagined being in a castle or in space. Except here, everyone agrees on this "let's pretend that" and you build this imaginary world together. We call this the *imagined space*.
- **Chat and collaborate:** During the game, you will talk among yourselves, listening to each other and building the story together. It's a bit like improvising in a "theater of the mind" where each player contributes their own ideas. We call this *dialogue, listening, and reincorporation*.
- **Players:** Anyone who participates in the adventure. There might also be one person who acts as a guide, called the "Game Master," but ultimately, they are a player just like the others, only with a special task.
- **Procedures:** These are the guidelines that help everyone understand how to proceed together. For example, a procedure might be how you decide who tells the next part of the story, or how to introduce a new character or challenge into the adventure. These procedures ensure the game experience is smooth and that everyone has a chance to contribute to the game.
- **Rules:** Imagine a set of rules that help decide what happens when characters try something daring, like navigating a superstorm or channeling the wind's power. This system guides the game and makes things more exciting.
- **Actions and events:** In the imaginary world, the characters (played by you) will live adventures, facing challenges, solving puzzles, or confronting hostile forces. Your decisions will lead to new developments and surprises.
- **A story created together:** As you play, your actions and decisions intertwine into a unique and unpredictable story. In the end, you will have created together a tale of adventures, heroism, perhaps even betrayals and discovered mysteries, which you will remember as your epic adventure. This is called an *emergent shared narrative*.

In simple terms, role-playing is when you and your friends get together to create stories together, living incredible adventures without moving from the table (or wherever you prefer to play).

Game Principles

Duskara is built on the following game principles:

- **Fiction precedes mechanics:** Before thinking about checking stats or rolling dice, let yourself be carried away by the story and the environment you are creating together. The characters' adventurous decisions and the world's responses bring the game to life. The dice only come into play when things become uncertain or dangerous, and it's our stories that call them into action, not the other way around.
- **The setting is an invisible ruleset:** The world where your adventures take place silently guides the game, suggesting and limiting actions based on its unique characteristics. The twilight belt's eternal wind, the day side's killing heat, the night side's frozen depths—these shape what's possible as much as any written rule. In a world where psychic abilities manifest through environmental adaptation, reaching out to sense thermal patterns becomes natural, just as understanding wind currents does.
- **Play honestly:** Building a game on trust means that players collaborate without hindrance. There's no need to cheat or check every move because you trust each other. This trust encourages bold ideas and creative contributions, making the story a true team effort.
- **In the imagined world, any attempt is allowed:** Remember that in the game, you can attempt any action you imagine, as long as you respect the rules of the setting. The rules help us shape our adventures but should never limit our creativity. The dice help resolve uncertainties, enriching the game with unexpected elements.
- **The game is a dialogue:** Talking and listening are at the heart of role-playing. The continuous conversation not only moves the story forward but also helps explore the characters and the world. It is through this dialogue that adventures come to life and become real for the players.
- **Listening and reincorporation are the main mechanics:** Listening to what others say and building on it is fundamental. It's not just about hearing, but about understanding and integrating everyone's ideas into the story, making the game richer and more engaging.
- **Rules abstract:** The rules transform the complexities of the imaginary world into something manageable and playable, allowing us to immerse ourselves deeper in the adventure. They serve to create a common language for action and conflict resolution, letting players focus on the story rather than technical details.
- **Play to find out:** Venture into the game world without fixed expectations, letting discoveries and unexpected events guide the adventure. This approach values surprise and exploration, leading to rich and unpredictable stories.
- **Let the story emerge:** Instead of following a fixed script, let the story develop through player choices and random events. This process makes every game unique and the narrative directly influenced by those participating, creating a genuinely shared and always-new experience.

Game Materials

Playing *Duskara* requires minimal materials that promote easy immersion in the narrative and interaction between players. Here is the list of what you need to get started:

- **Six-sided dice:** You will need a handful of these dice, ideally in three different colors. One color will be used for the Action Die, which determines the outcome of the characters' actions. The other two colors will be for the Chance Dice and Risk Dice, which introduce positive and negative elements to the roll. Ideally, each player should have a set containing at least one Action Die, six Chance Dice, and six Risk Dice.
- **Character sheet:** Essential for recording the character's specifics, skills, and gear, as well as the progress made in the adventure.
- **Writing materials:** Pens, pencils, and paper are indispensable for notes on the character sheet and for jotting down relevant story details, discovered clues, and maps of explored locations.
- **Index cards or Post-it notes:** Useful for marking notable elements of the game world, such as Tags. These small pieces of paper can be attached to the character sheet, the game map, or kept handy to remember important details or temporary game modifications.

Game Modes

Duskara offers two game modes:

- **Classic:** In this mode, players immerse themselves in the game world under the guidance of a Game Master (GM), who narrates events, manages encounters and challenges, and responds to the characters' actions. It is the traditional approach, where the GM creates and maintains the world, while the players explore and interact with it through their characters. **This mode is used as the default in the game examples.**
- **GM-less:** This mode transforms the game into a unique collaborative experience, eliminating the role of the GM. Thanks to the action resolution system based on closed questions, with outcomes determined in an oracular manner, each player becomes responsible for their own action and can ask questions concerning their character. This system not only facilitates a fluid and shared narrative but also encourages a sense of collective discovery. In this way, all participants contribute equally to the story, guiding their adventures through the answers provided by the game itself.
- **Solo:** We recommend using [Loner](#), a derivative of FU specifically designed for solo role-playing. *Loner* guides the player through organizing a game independently, providing tools and advice on how to manage the narrative, encounters, and challenges without the need for other players. It is the perfect choice for those who want to venture alone into the imaginary worlds of RPGs, also offering support to newcomers on how to set up and experience their adventure in a fulfilling and complete way.

Game Roles

Players

- **Move the player character (PC):** Each player controls their character's actions and movements within the game world.
- **Give voice and characterization:** Through narration and dialogue, players bring their characters to life, defining their personality, goals, and background.
- **Ask questions:** A fundamental part of the game is asking questions to explore the world, solve mysteries, or clarify aspects of the narrative.
- **Collaborate with others:** Players work together to build the story, avoiding using their character as a shield for behaviors harmful to the group.
- **Listen and reincorporate:** It is essential to listen to what other players add to the story and find ways to integrate these elements into your own play.

Game Master (GM)

The GM is also a player, but with specific tasks:

- **Manages the world and Non-Player Characters (NPCs):** Curates the setting and controls the NPCs, enriching the narrative with their presence.
- **Listens and reincorporates:** Like the players, the GM must be attentive to everyone's contributions and know how to weave together the elements brought to the game table.
- **Presents challenges:** Creates situations that test the characters, pushing them toward new adventures and personal growth.
- **Describes risks:** When players face important decisions, the GM clarifies the possible consequences of their actions.
- **Maintains clear dialogue:** Answers players' questions and asks new ones to ensure everyone understands the story's developments.
- **Adopts a participatory approach:** The GM acts in cooperation with the players, not as their adversary, to ensure a rewarding game experience for everyone.

Safety and Accessibility

In a game like *Duskara*, the well-being of all participants is fundamentally important. This is not about protecting players from challenge or consequence—the fiction is real and sometimes harsh. It's about communication and ensuring everyone can play authentically.

All safety tools in *Duskara* are built on **transparency and conversation**. There are no silent signals or hidden discomfort. When something surfaces that doesn't work, we talk about it.

Before Play: CATS

Before the first session, use [CATS](#) to establish shared expectations:

- **Concept:** What kind of story are we telling? (exploration, political conflict, survival, community drama, etc.)
- **Aim:** What are we trying to do together? (have fun, tell a meaningful story, explore Duskara, develop characters)
- **Tone:** What's the emotional quality? (hopeful, tense, contemplative, gritty but not grimdark)
- **Subject Matter:** What topics might come up? What do we want to explore or avoid?

This one conversation happens once, and everyone knows what to expect.

During Play: Script Change

When something uncomfortable surfaces *during* play, anyone can use [Script Change](#):

- **Pause the scene:** "Let's pause here."
- **Name what doesn't work:** "I don't want to play that out" or "Can we make that less graphic?" or "Let's skip forward past that conversation."
- **Continue:** The facilitator acknowledges it, adjusts, and play resumes.

This is **explicit and communicative**. Everyone at the table understands what changed and why.

During Play: Lines & Veils (Emergent)

Lines & Veils are **not** established before play. They emerge when play surfaces something uncomfortable:

- **A Line:** Something you won't play. The facilitator hears "that's a Line for me" and the scene moves away from it entirely. No details, no fade-to-black—just: we don't go there.
- **A Veil:** Something that happens but you don't detail. "That's a Veil for me" means the scene plays out, but we fade to black or gloss over the specifics. "The negotiation becomes hostile. We skip past the difficult parts—they come to an agreement, shaken."

Lines & Veils **require communication**. Someone has to speak up when they emerge. This is honest and collaborative.

Accessibility (Practical & Ongoing)

Make the table accessible to everyone:

- **Dice:** Use colorblind-friendly dice or announce results verbally so everyone hears
- **Text:** Print character sheets and adventure notes in dyslexia-friendly fonts if anyone needs it
- **Pacing:** Some people need breaks more often. Offer them without commentary: "Break in five minutes"

- **Sensory:** Not everyone processes sound/text/maps the same way. Offer multiple ways to receive information
- **Neurodivergence:** Be clear about expectations. Some people need explicit guidance ("We're playing for 3 hours, with a 10-minute break at the midpoint")
- **Participation:** Not everyone engages the same way. Someone quiet might be fully engaged; someone talkative might be performing. Trust that people are playing as they need to

Accessibility is **ongoing conversation**. After the first session: "Is there anything that didn't work for you? What would help?"

The Principle Behind All of This

Safety in *Duskara* is not about softening the world. Duskara is harsh. Characters die. Failures matter. Relationships break.

Safety is about **ensuring everyone can engage honestly** with that harshness. It's about communication. When something doesn't work, we say so. When something shifts, everyone knows why. When someone needs something different, we adjust.

This is why every tool requires speaking up. Silence doesn't help anyone. Only conversation does.

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