



ADVANCED DM WORKSHOP
RUNNING HIGH LEVEL GAMES

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OUTLINE

- Leveling up as a DM
- Advanced DM Tips
- Q&A

LEVELING UP AS A DM

- As a DM, you have a responsibility to entertain, engage and excite.
- **You** are how the players see and interact with the world.
- In higher level play, where the stakes and **power levels** are high, it's even more important to work towards creating a consistent game experience.
- A DM can improve by brushing up on **game and rules knowledge**, as well as better storytelling techniques.



*T4, WHERE AH KONG EXPECTS
A VISIT EVERY OTHER DAY.*

UPPING YOUR DM GAME

- D&D is a shared experience. It's a game of heroic triumphs and challenges facilitated by the DM.
- Recognize that it's not a case of you vs. them. There's no need to salt when the PCs wreck your encounters, beat your BBEG, or go off script.
- Remember that you're rooting for the PCs to succeed (but they don't need to know that).



*CONFLICT IN GAME SHOULD NEVER
BE ABOUT PLAYERS VS. DM.*

UPPING YOUR DM GAME (CONT'D)

- Each DM has their own style, and that's perfectly okay.
- Recognize that it's important to find your own voice.
- Developing your cool DM powers comes with time and practice. Don't rush it.
- Don't force yourself to DM if it's not fun for you.



*HE'S A GREAT ROLL MODEL,
BUT YOU'RE NOT THIS GUY.*

A detailed illustration of a massive red dragon with a long, spiny tail and a large, open mouth from which a powerful stream of fire is erupting. The dragon is positioned inside a stone castle tower, with its head and upper body visible. In the foreground, a small group of characters is shown in a dynamic pose, seemingly engaged in a fierce battle with the dragon. One character is in the foreground, another is to the right, and a third is partially visible at the bottom. The scene is filled with smoke and fire, creating a dramatic and intense atmosphere.

ADVANCED DM TIPS

Players especially love Tip #3.

TIP #1: READ THE F*CKING MODULE

- If you're unprepared and are waffling, it shows.
- Take note of important **story beats, characters, locations, and quest objectives**. Expect players may ask you for all sorts of information.
- Pay attention to **stat blocks** and take note of **story specific changes**.
- **You are empowered**.

If something is not explicitly covered in the module, don't be afraid to give a thematically appropriate answer.



HOW DO YOU SET A SCENE LIKE THIS? :O

TIP #1: READ THE F*CKING MODULE (CONT'D)

- Sometimes, you will need additional research to create a more coherent gaming experience.
- In the case of AL, it is helpful to familiarize yourself with the history of FR, recent happenings and in-universe lore. FR Wiki is not a terrible resource.
- Dropping little snippets of information that paint a clearer picture of the setting and the context for the adventure can be beneficial.
- If you're not sure about something, don't be afraid to ask for a time-out to quickly devise a strategy or to check.

TIP #2: PLAN AROUND YOUR PLAYERS

- Ask the players about their characters and backstory, their Backgrounds and affiliations.
- Get them to pen down their character names, important stats, and details.
- Don't be afraid to ask for a character audit so you can get a quick glance at their character sheets.
- Modify the adventure to play to the strengths of the group, create opportunities for each player to shine, and challenge them to overcome obstacles by working together.



*OH NO! WE'RE IN TROUBLE!
WHATEVER SHALL WE DO?*

TIP #2: PLAN AROUND YOUR PLAYERS (CONT'D)

- If you are unfamiliar with the abilities of a PC, be sure to read up and check.
- Familiarize yourself with the spells enemies & PCs commonly use so you can adjudicate effects quickly and efficiently.



*BECAUSE THEY'D RATHER PET A DOG THAN
FIGHT THIS GUY*

TIP #3: ALWAYS ALLOW “IT”.

- Never just say “No” to your players. Ask them to describe what they intend to do, then decide if it would logically work in the narrative.
- Encourage and reward players for thinking outside the box or coming up with interesting solutions to a problem in the adventure.
- Don’t be afraid to grant a player advantage at your discretion, or to award inspiration for intelligent/creative plays.



*“I WILL ALLOW IT” IS AH KONG’S
CATCHPHRASE.*

TIP #4: IMPROVISED SKILL CHECKS ARE GREAT

- Sometimes, players may ask for something that isn't already covered in the rules. That's when Improvised Skill Checks come into play.
- Pick a Skill or Ability score that fits the situation and is logical for the game world.
- Reward your players if they come up with an especially intelligent or creative use for a Skill.



CAN I TRY TO FIND A LEAD USING INVESTIGATION (CHA) INSTEAD?

TIP #5: USE PASSIVE CHECKS

- To speed up play, maintain immersion and reward players who have invested resources in Skills, don't be afraid to use Passive Skill checks.
- Typically, you apply this to Passive Perception, Passive Investigation and Passive Insight.
- You can also use $10 +$ the value of other Skills as a gauge to expedite gameplay as needed. e.g. Passive Arcana.



*WHAT DO I SEE WITH MY 27 PASSIVE
PERCEPTION?*

TIP #6: BE DESCRIPTIVE

- Describe the world as much as possible, while **avoiding mechanical language**.
- Tell the players what they see, what they hear, what they might immediately notice about their surroundings and the situation they find themselves in.
- Give the players information to work with.
- Don't withhold information from the players or deceive them if the adventure doesn't call for it.



*THAT SWAMP GAS IS NASTY... OR SOMEONE
ATE BEANS FOR LUNCH*

TIP #7: ALWAYS ASSUME CHARACTER COMPETENCE

- Always assume that a character has some degree of in-universe knowledge.
- A character exists in the game world, and has training, knowledge and abilities that matter.
- Reward players for their choices and their investment in resources, by offering them relevant information if it's thematically appropriate to do so.
- Remind players if their choices may be sub-optimal despite their character's knowledge.



*CHARACTERS SHOULDN'T ALWAYS PAY FOR
A PLAYER'S SINS*

TIP #8: DESCRIBE ACTION CINEMATICALLY

- In D&D, combat and action sequences are part and parcel of the game. Encourage heroics, and work with the players to draw them in.
- Combat is not a slog of rolling dice and hitting/missing. Learn to describe actions in a dramatic and engaging manner and make the PCs the stars of the show.
- Use descriptions in combat and action sequences to give players important cues and clues about the dangers they face. This can prompt better decision making and is integral to gameplay.



“YOU SEE ORCUS STANDING OVER A BIG BRAIN” DOESN’T REALLY CUT IT

TIP #9: KEEP PLAYERS INVESTED

- Give everyone a chance to respond and to contribute at the table.
- Go around the table, and ask each player what they might want to do in a given situation.
- Give players enough opportunities to discuss, plan, and execute their plan in character.
- Draw players into the game by working their backgrounds, stories, and training into the adventure.
- Offer chances to each player to shine.



*ALL THIS PLANNING, JUST TO FIGURE OUT
HOW TO OPEN A DOOR*

TIP #10: THE DICE DON'T ACTUALLY MATTER

- Don't fixate on the dice.
- Sometimes, it is perfectly okay to fudge dice rolls to heighten suspense, or to reward players for their efforts.
- The dice are there to create an illusion, but the results that you call should always favor of a positive narrative and success on the part of the players.
- Focus less on the mechanics, and on telling a great story.



THE DRAGON IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE DRAGON!

Q&A
