D&D ADVENTURERS LEAGUE

Heightening Engagement & Table Control

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Outline

- Part 1: Rules of Engagement
- Part 2: Table Control
- Part 3: Roundtable Discussion

Rules of Engagement

Or how to keep your players entertained

What is Player Engagement?

- A process where players feel motivated and derive pleasure from playing a game.

- Fueled by goals (either set by the players or the system) and successfully accomplishing those goals.

- Increased engagement leads to immersion and encourages player curiosity about the game world.

- Understanding what these goals are can keep the players coming back for more.

In D&D

- Character Progression (e.g. Leveling Up)

- Character Development (e.g. Personal Story or Roleplaying elements)

- Storyline Objectives (e.g. in Hardcovers)

- The DM plays an important role in increasing player engagement

What's your Role?

- **YOU** are how the players see and interact with the world.

- **YOU** entertain and excite, shaping the overall game experience.

- **YOU** define the narrative, directing the flow of the story.

- **YOU** lose. The **PLAYERS** win. Everyone has a jolly good time.

Quick! Roll a character on the Ah Kong server!

Rule #1: Don't trip over the Plot

- Experiencing the narrative is an important part of D&D.

- Make sure you are familiar with the background for the adventure so you can tell a good story.

- World knowledge helps. Use the lore to enhance the story.

- TLDR; Read the f*cking module.

THIS TOTALLY ISN'T ABOUT LICH-KUN & DARK-ELF HUNTING FOR A CAT IN THE WOODS, GUYS.

Rule #2: Get to know the Characters better

- Ask about the characters, their backstories, their experienes and their exploits.

- Weave these snippets of information into the narrative to keep the characters invested.

- Give helpful tidbits of information to the characters if they might logically know something that can further the plot.

- Offer them opportunities to contribute to the storytelling experience.

THOSE BOOKS AREN'T JUST FOR SHOW.

Rule #3: Give Everyone A Chance to Shine

- Offer everyone a chance to respond and contribute out of combat. Going around the table can help facilitate this.

- Take characters aside to present them with things only they know. Let them work with you to present the information in character.

- Encourage discussion and RP at the table. Give them the breathing room to banter, discuss and plan things, both in and out of character, and ask characters to recap story beats.

It's actually Goblin Slayer, and friends.

Examples of Character Knowledge

- A sage

- A bricklayer

- A child who grew up in the kitchen of a brothel

- An aristocrat

➢ The name of a rare flower that grows on the coldest mountain peaks and only blooms every 300 years.

➢ Something concealed behind a shoddily bricked up wall.

➢ The name of the local pimp.

➢ Heraldric symbol of an ancient house.

Rule #4: Don't just read at your Players

- Avoid falling into the trap of just reading boxed text or directly lifting from the module. Paraphrase and make the delivery your own.

- Be descriptive. There may be things in the Environment the players can interact with that may pleasantly surprise you.

- You don't have to do the voices or RP if you're uncomfortable with it. Use simple language if it helps get your point across.

YOU MIGHT BORE YOUR PLAYERS TO DEATH.

Rule #5: Avoid Mechanical Language

- The characters live in the fantasy world. Describe scenes as they would see and experience them.

- Encourage the players to use less mechanical language when they describe their actions.

- Encourage the players to add their own unique flavour to the things they do, and don't be afraid to let them flavour their spells and attacks.

What if I told you those were all Magic Missiles?

Rule #6: Describe Action Cinematically

- Make the players look and sound cool. They are the stars after all.

- Describe action in a dramatic and dynamic manner.

- Work important plot points into your descriptions to give the players important hints about whether their actions have any tangible result.

IT MIGHT BE A LOT COOLER THAN IT SOUNDS.

Rule #7: Say Yes Often

- Don't be afraid to permit players to do things if it is logical, well thought out and is likely to enhance the story.

- Don't worry if the players decide to take the adventure off the rails. Improvise and innovate!

- Work with the players and their choices and think about how the world (and NPCs) will react to those choices.
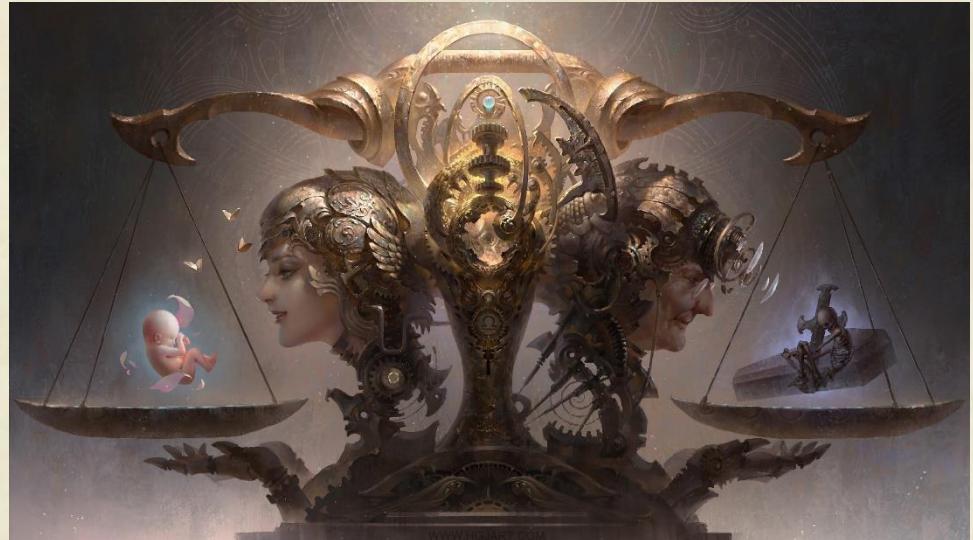
For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction right?

Rule #8: Find your own Voice

- Recognize that becoming a great DM is an ongoing process.

- Know your strengths, play those up.

- Identify your weaknesses. What can you do to improve them?

- Don't force yourself to DM if it's not fun for you.

- Play more!

Remember, kids. You are not this guy.

Table Control

Reining it in at the table

Maintaining Table Control

- Losing table control happens when players are less engaged and their attention wavers.

- Identify the signs when players appear bored, fidget with electronic devices, or become less attentive to you.

- Table control can be maintained by increasing engagement with the players and steering them back to the story.

- Don't be afraid to let the players take short breaks to refocus and refresh themselves.

- Set a good example as the DM and facilitator of the story.

Code of Conduct

- In Adventurers League, the Code of Conduct spells out what is and what isn't suitable at the table.

- Gameplay venues have a copy of the Code of Conduct available and prominently displayed at all times.

- Be aware of what is in this document, and don't be afraid to call out or warn players who may be in violation.

See lah? See lah? Fight some more.

The Importance of Communication

- Sometimes, expectations are not clearly defined at the table and this can lead to poor experience.

- Communicate effectively with your players to understand the sort of game they are looking for.

Don't let the campaign burn down.

Be Considerate

- While it's expected that players will get excited, be sure to keep a handle on noise, especially if the store or venue is incredibly crowded.

- Be mindful of the volume if playing music or sound effects at your table too.

- Cooperate with other tables and players so everyone has a good time.

IT'S ALL FUN AND GAMES UNTIL SOMEONE LOSES THEIR TEMPER.

Conflict Resolution

- As the DM, you may have to adjudicate disputes among players or call out bad behavior.

- Don't be afraid to tell the players if they are overstepping boundaries, if they are making you or someone else uncomfortable, or if they are just generally being obnoxious.

- Some behaviour may be in violation of the Code of Conduct and can be surfaced to the store or the ALSG team.

- Be stern but polite.

- Remind players about the Code of Conduct.

- Remember that you can decline to seat someone at your table if you are uncomfortable with their presence or behavior.

Q&A