

Social Contract

General Expectations

I'm a roleplayer and a world builder. I like to create an interesting story for my players. I also like to create a world that can bend and change according to your actions (which is why I prefer to run my own setting rather than limit myself with one that is pre-published). I am also happy with that world changing somewhat according to your input, so don't be shy about writing about your character's families or contacts, for example.

I believe that adventures should be just that, so my stories tend to have some exploration elements. I also believe that adventures should have an element of real danger. I will be using the standard PHB rules for character death so the risk is real. However I believe in continuity of story... and it gets kind of boring to be rerolling characters all the time. So death is a real possibility in adventure, but when it occurs, it should be special.

Chances are good that I am slightly more 'simulationist' than the average CARP GM. The world has physical rules, and rules in its magical systems that are consistent. I believe fantasy is more powerful when there is an element of the familiar or a grounding in 'reality.'

Your failures and successes are your own. I feel victory and defeat are cheapened if I openly cheat in your favor or mine. I do want you to own what you've done, so there won't be those cases where the whole situation is fated to go one way or another and you are just along for the ride.

It may happen that I have an NPC or two that joins with your party from time to time, but they will be temporary. NPCs are characters just like you are - they have their own agendas, and they do things while you aren't around. Things go on in the world around you; there are politics that can be altered by your input or go on uninterrupted depending on your interest.

I like for players to feel comfortable with one another and be open in their expectations. I like for players to occasionally help one another out. None of us have all of that much experience yet with 4th Edition, so I'm comfortable with people double-checking my rules calls, or helping other players with the tactical side of the game. Players should not, however, attempt to play one another's characters (Unless special permission is given such as 'make my attack roll while I go to the bathroom.').

Content

Sex and violence, and assorted "rating" issues will probably start around the PG-13 or "action movie" level during the play of the game. For one, we are gaming in a public place, but, primarily, I like to feel out where players are with particular taboos before I introduce them in to the game. I think that campaigns and stories have a tendency to "darken" with age and I like to start off easy at the beginning and see where people's comfort levels are.

I'm okay with bad and naughty words, so no shame if that slips out from time to time.

If there is something that bothers you or makes you extremely uncomfortable don't hesitate to pre-warn me, or talk to me in private about it post-session. Not everyone knows where their 'buttons' might be at first.

Character Conflict

I do not consider in-character interpersonal conflict to be taboo in my games. If you think to most of the interesting ensemble television shows you have watched, for example, people do not always agree on the right course of action or share the same values. This makes their interactions interesting and meaningful. That's the kind of interaction I occasionally like to foster in my games because it can be a lot of fun!

Party conflict is bad, however, when it goes out of character and causes hurt feelings. It's also bad if it stalls the game unnecessarily - for example, one player refusing to go along with the plans of the others despite quorum just to make a session extend longer. So keep this as a storytelling aspect, for the most part, and I'm totally comfortable with it.

Game Rules Considerations

Languages

PCs will be assumed to speak Common. Common is a perfectly robust language that has a large vocabulary and is reasonably easy to communicate with (along the levels of English), rather than a pidgin trade-type languages. However, some languages may have more words for specific concepts important to them. Like English, Common is frequently assumed to borrow useful terms from other languages as it appropriates them and becomes more universal.

Other languages are as in PHB. There may be regional dialects of languages, but they will not be considered as a factor in to whether or not you know a language (ie, if you speak Goblin, you can be reasonably assumed to speak any dialect related to that).

Based on player feedback about the limited language system in 4th Ed, I will allow players to begin with one additional starting language of their choice - if they so choose. PCs can learn languages at a rate of up to one additional language per two levels, if they are actively working on the language and have had significant in-game exposure to the language. (This means, that, for example, if you hadn't ever encountered Primordial, then you have no way of learning it, but if you had some books in that language you might pick it up.)

What is primarily important to me is that people are able to communicate with one another!

Skills and Training

The 4th ed system is relatively lean on non-combat skills for characters. This is by design, primarily to streamline the skills system and to force players not to have to do a lot of bookkeeping, so I want to preserve this flavor for the skills list whenever possible.

Some mainly roleplay oriented skills, such as playing an instrument, cooking, or sewing, are not really covered by the official skill list in the Player's Handbook. Within reason, it's acceptable to claim aptitude at any roleplay skill that you think is appropriate for your character. As an example, a Cleric of Aladra may know a lot about farming or cooking, skills which do not have an enumerated component in the game. It's also OK to choose something that falls under the umbrella of a particular skill that you think you are best at. "Thievery" covers a wide range of possible skills, but if, for example, you'd like to roleplay

being primarily a pickpocket that is fine. This won't give you a bonus to your rolls but is an all right RP touch.

I trust players not to abuse this freedom or "game" this system. If someone arbitrarily decides to be an expert at everything not numerated in the Handbook just because they can, their privilege to pick anything not explicitly on the list is revoked. This is primarily for roleplay flavor and to be a more well-rounded character, not to give you bonuses on coded rolls.

It may be possible to partially train skills you do not start the game with without taking a feat to do so, for example getting a small circumstance bonus on a new skill you have been practicing. For now, I will be using the standard PHB rules about choosing a feat to be trained in a skill until I see how much partial bonuses alter skill challenges in practice.

Equipment

It will be important in most sessions which equipment you have, and how you are carrying that equipment. Many people are not used to having to monitor this because they play in campaigns with certs where they may be assumed to be carrying a lot of things at any given time, but since this campaign may occasionally have elements of wilderness travel it's important to me a) what you stow and b) how you're stowing it.

Since things tend to shake out a little bit at the beginning, you don't have to worry about this too much for the first session. After you get comfortable with the game and setting I may audit equipment so everyone knows what they have and is comfortable that they haven't taken anything that will turn out to be useless. If you've taken equipment for the first session that it turns out you don't need, don't worry about that, as we can revise.

You will be in the mountains a lot and a mount would slow you down especially at the beginning of the campaign. If you decide to purchase them later, or pack animals, that's OK, depending on where you travel.

Magic Items

I like for magical items to feel special. I may change the descriptions in the Player's Guide/DMG of how magical items appear so that their use isn't immediately obvious. I will be adding my own designs for magical items to the mix, particularly in the case of legendary items or artifacts. You won't encounter any of the artifacts in the DMG in this campaign. You may encounter some of the standard PHB items, items I invented, or items from older D&D supplements updated for 4th ed.

The merchants and caravans of Wanderlust Pass occasionally do trade in exotic and magical items, so it is possible to purchase some magical items in the town. Other magical items can be bought sold in other towns depending on what is common in the region (You'd have better luck searching for Elvencraft items if you headed in to elf territories, for example). Generally speaking, the stranger and more potent the item, the less likely it is purchasable.

If there is a particular magic item you have your heart set on from the start of the game, you'd probably be smarter to attempt to find it for purchase, or have it crafted in some manner, rather than hoping I will include your favorite item in a treasure drop. However, if there is something you desperately want it doesn't hurt to let me know, even if that is no guarantee!

Potions are generally available for purchase, as there is a market for them in this town. Some Churches/Temples, or the Wizard's College, can perform Rituals at market price.

XP and Rewards

We will use the standard rate of enhancement for this game. XP rewards will be given out per encounter. Most sessions will include one or two Quests, which also receive XP bonuses on completion.

At this rate, in practice you should level up about once every two or three game sessions. If this turns out to be too slow I may alter the rate, but not without consulting players on this matter.

Non combat encounters also give you XP in this game. During a non combat encounter some bonus XP may be handed out for roleplay or handling a situation in a particularly clever way. This is generally awarded 'per party' since it becomes a shared victory.

XP is not awarded for out of game roleplay such as on the e-mail list, but that kind of thing can be fun and its own reward!

If you are present for a session you will get the full rewards for that session. For now, you do not get XP for sessions you are not present for, though I may decide to alter that policy if our group becomes steady enough that we are all growing at the same rate and someone falls far behind. Again, I won't change this without consulting you.

Tokens and Minis

My preference is to hand out physical tokens to track 'spendable' resources like Healing Surges and Action Points. This makes bookkeeping easier on me. I will hand out tokens at the start of the session and ask for them back at the end.

I don't have a robust collection of minis, so I use chips, placeholders, or candy a lot for bad guys. I do have enough minis that I can provide some for Player Characters, or feel free to bring your own!