



YOUR VERY OWN VILLAGE

An introductory one-shot adventure for experienced DMs teaching new RPG players to immerse in the game.

PHASE ONE: WORLD BUILDING

Draw a simple village map with your players. You can put a white board on the table, or a gridded piece of paper, or a posterboard. Start with a crossroads and some kind of water feature, and then go around the table, letting each player add something in turns.

FIRST ROUND: Add something functional. Stable, chapel, blacksmith, town hall, grocery, farm, placing it in a logical location on the map.

SECOND ROUND: Add something decorative or cultural. Library, museum, statue, garden, shrine. The placement of these sites can be more whimsical.

THIRD ROUND: Add each PC's own dwelling. The farm, the sewer, above a store, a hovel, an alley, a mansion. Where do they live in relation to each other?

FOURTH ROUND: Add one person that each PC loves. A mentor, sibling, parent, neighbor, or anyone they care about. These NPCs will be in danger later.

THE GM'S JOB: Make sure there is a tavern and a mayor and some kind of cultural theme like lobsters, a strange goddess, a musical genre or another element the town is known for. Encourage specificity. Listen. What are your players enthusiastic about? That element will help you create a threat to this village they love.

PHASE TWO: ROLEPLAY

It's the day of a festival — a wedding, a funeral, a holy day, a memorial of a victory or defeat. Choose something based on the world the players have suggested, their relationships, and the NPCs they created.

VETERAN NPC TEAM: The town has a party of official adventurers that take care of the place, but they are lazy, boastful, distracted, greedy, etc.

NEWBIE PC TEAM: The PCs are the kids, the outcasts, or the losers, but they adore each other and they have people who believe in them! Create your NPCs based on qualities you know your players will despise: rude to animals, disdain for art, bossy. Make "opposites" for the PCs to give them antagonists and encourage roleplay.

CLASH: In this phase the PCs have a run-in with the veterans at the festival. Maybe there is some bullying and taunting. This interaction ends poorly for the PCs, with some kind of embarrassment or failure. During this scene, someone in the town expresses worry about the looming threat, but the "real" adventurers dismiss it.

PHASE THREE: COMBAT

The threat attacks! Yes, today of all days! Someone's trying to steal the village artifact or smash the village asset or kill one of the beloved NPCs or take over the village landmark. The official adventuring party is *immediately and dramatically* wiped out, down to the last person, preferably off camera. After the shock fades, the PCs must step up and be heroes — save the day!

Bring out a wave of lesser enemies before you hit them with the big bad. Drag them around to any interesting village locations, and jeopardize all their favorite NPCs. When they're banged up some, let the tide turn, and when they triumph, let their victory be cinematic. A new band of heroes rises to save the town!

YOUR VERY OWN FAQ

Help with the nuts and bolts of building your game.

WHO IS THIS DOCUMENT FOR?

This description of a one-shot adventure is intended for experienced DMs who want to introduce new players to an RPG. It teaches DMs a useful technique for getting players to invest in the game world.

WHAT SYSTEM SHOULD I USE?

Any system that puts characters in conflict with the world will work. The default suggested by “village” is a medieval fantasy, but you could as easily build a space station, or an Oregon coastal town. The techniques can even be used in freeform roleplay with simple combat as outlined below.

WHEN DO PLAYERS CREATE CHARACTERS?

This is a question with more than one answer, and it depends on your players and how much preparation you want to do.

Option 1: If you want to teach about stats and skills and take them through character creation, you can either do that before the game begins, or pause your game after phase one and do it after they’ve played a bit.

Option 2: If you want to skip that process, you can pregenerate characters for the system you’ve decided to use, based on the preferences you glean from chatting with your players before the game begins.

Option 3: Who needs character sheets? Play with the simplified method laid out below, and keep it casual. This could be the equivalent of starting at level zero, to put it in standard RPG terms.

HOW DO I RUN SKILL CHALLENGES?

During phase two, your players might use their skills for social rolls, to build things or hide, or something else. Encourage it! If you don’t have proper character sheets and stats, let them roll anyway. Rather than setting a target number, or getting bogged down with modifiers, just see if they get a high or low number and resolve the results on a sliding scale of success and failure. This gets new players used to the idea of having outcomes decided by chance, and working the effects of a dice roll into a narrative. If somebody gives you great RP, let them roll twice and take the higher one. If someone tries to do something really hard, make them roll twice and take the lower one. Don’t allow rolls on impossible things. Make very high rolls and very low rolls both interesting.

HOW DO I RUN COMBAT?

You could use the rules of a system you choose, but here’s a very scaled down way to run combat with kids or new players. You can use any dice you have on hand.

When it’s the player’s turn, they roll a die. If they land in the “high half” (eleven or higher on a d20) then they succeed. If they land in the low half, they fail. If they succeed, roll another die to see how effective they were. That’s it! We use a d20 for the first roll and 2d6 for the second roll.

This roughly translate to a “to hit” roll and a “damage” roll, but it works for anything else they might want to do in combat. Cast a spell, climb a wall, throw a spear, just roll for success and then roll for impact. Enemies use the same mechanic and everything is instantly balanced.

*Onward Heroes Gaming is Lydia Netzer and Joshilyn Jackson.
We are gamers who write novels, and novelists who play RPGs.*

*Your Very Own Village is a system that we have used in the
classroom for children as young as five, and at the gaming table
for teens and adults who are new to RPGs.*

Let us know how it goes! We would love to hear your story.