

Player Agenda

- **Portray a Compelling Character**
- **Challenge Your Character with Adventure**
- **Play to Find Out What Happens**
- **Be a Fan of the Game**

Like the GM, players too have their own agenda and principles. Your agenda makes up the things you aim to do at all times while playing a game of Dungeon World. Everything you say and do at the table that pertains to the game (and away from the table too) exists to accomplish these goals and no others. Things that aren't on this list aren't your goals. You're not trying to beat the GM or other players, or "win" in some mechanical sense by grinding your way to the biggest numbers. You're not here to play out a pre-ordained character path or story, no matter how cool you think that plan may be. Perhaps most importantly, you're not here to simply watch stuff happen or be entertained by one-sided story. You take a powerful role in the unfolding narrative.

Your first agenda is to **portray a compelling character**. While the story may often seem to be about all the stuff happening around your character, it's the characters themselves that are the stars. The stuff that happens around them and to them is there to highlight these characters, and push them into greater depths. So begin with and continue to bring forth a character that's up to that role.

This doesn't mean that you have to make a character that *everyone else* is overwhelmingly fascinated with, but you better find it interesting! And if you are drawn to the character, usually they'll find themselves being drawn in as well. It's your job to make a character who is interesting not only for what they can accomplish, but also for who they are. Play a character who can grow, who is intriguing and worth following through the game—a character whose death will be lamented as well as meaningful.

Challenging your character with adventure means working with your GM to live out a story that is both engaging and dynamic, and that means they need a reason to adventure. Just having an interesting character is worthless if there's never struggle or adversity for that character to engage in. Pursue things that are meaningful and challenging, looking for opportunities to accomplish significant feats both in areas of strength and weakness. Push your character out of their comfort zone, and roll with the GM when they brings those opportunities. Embrace the journey, and make it a colorful one.

This is how you **play to find out what happens**. You're sharing in the fun of finding out how this story will play out and what that will mean for your character as well. You can have goals and objectives, in fact it's necessary to play a compelling character, but realize that part of the adventure is built upon the reality that you aren't always in control, so hold those plans loosely as a player. Not only will the GM be bringing in twists and turns, but so will the other players. It's fun to see how things will play out for you all, rather than forcing a prescribed result.

Finally, the experience is best if you invest in it by **being a fan...** a fan not only of your character but a fan of the world, the story, and the other players (including the GM). It sounds circular to encourage one to enjoy something in order to get the best out of the experience, but the ridiculousness doesn't diminish its significance. Suspend your disbelief and get into a mindset that embraces the setting. Let Dungeon World do what it does best instead of trying to force it into something else. Invest yourself in pursuing what the game has to offer and what the GM is trying to present, while doing your part in adding richness to everyone else's experience as well.

Player Principles

- **Play Your Character With Honesty**
- **Do It By Doing It**
- **Be Awesome And Flawed**
- **Engage With The World**
- **Build Your Part Of The World**
- **Embrace The Contradictions**
- **Share The Spotlight**

These principles are guides to help you fulfill your agenda. When you have the spotlight and your character acts in the world, consider your choices in light of these principles.

Play Your Character With Honesty

This comes out of a recognition that you (the *player*) and your *character* are not the same. By playing this character you are taking on a persona not your own with its own motivations, philosophies, and vices. There is a large degree of intentionality required in portraying this persona with integrity, and becomes more so the further these motivators are from your own. So be deliberate in pursuing them.

Separate player knowledge and discussion from character knowledge and discussion. There will be things that you (as the player) know and think that the character you play wouldn't know or think of, and must guide the character according to only the information they have available. This also means that the character's motivations and philosophies should be the guide for future actions, rather than your own. Consider the character's personality, stats, history, and perspective to inspire you, and follows those cues with integrity.

Do It By Doing It

Remember that even when you're using specific moves, you're telling a story and describing actions. In order to roll a move, your character has to actually do something which triggers that move. The moves themselves are only meant to give mechanics to something that is happening in the fiction, so tell us all what you're actually doing. The best advice for fulfilling this is to always be asking yourself: "How?" Keeping that in mind will actively push you from naming a mechanic to describing specific actions. Your actions should always begin and end with the fiction. To do it, do it.

Example:

*"I attack the owlbear (**How?**) ...by charging it and swinging my axe (**How?**) ...chopping low at his legs in order to stay clear of the claws and beak."*

*"I parley with the guard (**How?**) ...by bribing him (**How?**) ...approaching him casually and sliding a gold coin into his palm, whispering 'You didn't see a thing.'"*

The corollary is that if your character does something in the fiction that would trigger a move, you have to make that move, even if it's risky. Your character wants to do the thing in the fiction, so you need to make the move in the rules.

Be Awesome And Flawed

You should be always be doing stuff, taking action, rolling dice and throwing yourself into what's happening in game. Whether you're being awesome or being flawed, you should be *something*. To be inactive is to effectually cease existing in the story. Every major character in a good story should have a goal, something that matters to them so much that they're willing to leave home and take up a life of adventure to achieve. Your character should be no different. The most interesting characters are those who are specific about what they want, but also have a few quirks or follicles.

When you get the chance to do something awesome, don't hold back. Be brave. Make it big, and take the risks necessary to create those moments. But get equally excited about opportunities to be imperfect, and jump into them with the same participation. Don't shy away from difficulty, setbacks, or even failure. (After all, failure often leads to XP.) What makes your character compelling is the balance of both of these. So let both sides of your character shine in the spotlight!

Win or lose, make your actions stylish. The only way your character's unique identity is displayed is when you push it to the front. Moods, passions, fears and personality have to be shown in the story, otherwise they don't exist in it. So don't just do something, do it with style—*your style*. Whatever it is you want to embody with your character, whatever makes them unique and interesting, should be apparent in everything you do or noteworthy when absent. You will take some of the same actions as everyone else, but no one does them quite like you do.

Engage the World

The scope of Dungeon World goes far beyond just combat and becomes stale if reduced to such. Even if your character is singularly focused, there's still lots of ways for them to interact with the wider world through that one facet. Think of how your character reacts to every different NPC. Explore and pursue the things that interest your character, and consider the greater scope of what it means to be driven by that. Intentionally spend time connecting your character to the other PCs and exploring how you interact with them. Don't be afraid to step outside the box either. You might find out something new about your character--or even yourself.

Example: Suppose your character is all about fighting, plain and simple. You could still:

- *Seek out masters of your style*
- *Describe the extent that you go through to care for your weapons and body*
- *Do fun things like sign up for underground sparring tournaments.*
- *Treat NPCs according to your assessment of their martial prowess or physical threat level*
- *Treat certain monstrous opponents with honor because of shared ideals*
- *React adversely to the other PCs whenever they back down or don't take care of their equipment*
- *Buy one of the PCs a drink when you get back to town because they did something impressive during the last battle*

Cast Hooks, Fill As You Play

Hooks are details you add that draw people's attention and evoke further questions. They can be things for you to latch onto later, or things for any of the other PCs or even the GM to take hold of and run with. These are often in the extra descriptions like: a quirky thing your character does, an odd embellishment to something your character possesses, or a name you throw around. These are interesting because they point to something bigger—a history, a lesson learned, a prejudice, etc. In this way, you not only build your character, but you help build relationships between characters that can be a lot of fun.

It's fine if you throw out these hooks without knowing what's behind them yourself. That way it's able to adapt to whatever may come up and others can also build on it before it is fully fleshed out. These can even be intentional blanks left in your background to leverage or define later when it's needed. When you need a contact in a new town, this might be a good time to define that brother you keep talking about, or how that insignia on your cloak matches the banners flying from the keep. Maybe there's a skill relative to the current situation that could have been part of your upbringing, if you've left room to fill that in. Claim it now!

Build Your Part Of The World

Dungeon World is designed to be collaborative, so take hold of your little section of the world and help define it into something that really interests *you*. Whenever the GM asks you questions about the setting or past, these are huge opportunities to bring the things that interest you to life in the fiction! Take advantage of them by taking the reins in that moment. You not only have permission to do so, but are expected to.

Likewise, you can be intentional in creating these opportunities yourself, without waiting for specific questions to come from the GM. Think of the things that define your character, the things that make them stand out from the other PCs, and consider yourself the resident expert on them. Speak up about your race and culture, your geographical roots, your areas of expertise and hobbies, etc. Use the opportunities when those topics come up in play to help carve out parts of the world that really intrigue you. As other people make their contributions, build on what they say. Perhaps you'll have to roll to Spout Lore, but often GMs relish this sort of creative fodder and inspiration. Don't worry, the GM still runs the world and you still run your character, but that character knows stuff. So speak up and take charge of some of that!

Some of the best things you can build are details you add that draw people's attention and evoke further questions. They can be things for you to latch onto later, or things for any of the other PCs or even the GM to take hold of and run with.

Examples:

If you're a Dwarf, speak up often about Dwarves and contribute to building that part of the world through your character's experience. After all, you are one, so you would know!
If you're the Wizard, take charge in explaining how the winds of magic work in this setting, or explaining the nuances of the ritual that trapped the sprite in your new wand.
If you come from a noble family, throw out tidbits about etiquette and latest fashions whenever you step into dignified society or regal events.

Embrace the Contradictions

Because this is a collaborative story, there will be directions it takes that don't perfectly mesh with the niche or direction you've carved out for your character. Don't be disruptive because "that's what your character would do." Grab hold of these seeming contradictions and work them into the richness of your character. Maybe you'll have to do something that seems out-of-character for your PC, but do it anyway; and along the way you can work into your character a reason why. This will add new dimensions to your character. There are no universals.

Look for ways to add your own contradictions as well, unforced. Your will have a more rich and compelling character for it.

Examples:

Your paladin wouldn't usually go on a mission to break into the church. Why is she doing it anyway?
Your Elf despises Dwarves. So why have you decided to travel with three of them?
You're prideful and never accept help even when necessary. But why do you let Elondria tend to your wounds after battles?

Share The Spotlight

You're one of the main characters, but not the only one. So when the focus of the conversation is naturally shining on someone else, let them be the focus and push your own character in a way that further highlights the current "star". The intention is that they'll do the same when you get the spotlight back for a bit.

This also should lead you to focus on ways that you can be deliberately passing the spotlight, or supporting the other players in the way they play their characters. If there are things that really define one of the other PCs, give that character lots of opportunities to do that. Be impressed by their prowess in that area and turn to them when that's needed. Even if the characters don't get along, the players need to; and even as an adversary you can be highlighting the other characters while being true to the conflict between your PCs.

Throwing a spotlight like this should also be done with the world the GM is creating with you. The stuff that they bring into the world are there for you to utilize, to bring out their full potential. Light up that world and the fantastic places or characters in it, especially the parts that really interest you. The more you highlight something, the more significant it will naturally become.

Note that just because the spotlight is off of doesn't mean you can tune out. You can still contribute to the conversation by paying attention, asking questions, and offering suggestions. In this way, you can build further on the actions of the other characters. Even just the act of listening attentively to other people can have a profound impact. When you make other players look good, they'll return the favor.

The Player Agenda and Principles are based upon material written by Kevin Tompos.

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