

The Classical Matrix Game 2002 1-1-04

Matrix Games are a fast and easy way to run games. They allow players to run very complicated stories in only two to four hours.

All that is needed to play is...

A Matrix Game Scenario Book

Character Cards (photo copy them on card stock from the book)

A Map

One six-sided die per player.

One player to act as referee.

Two to twenty other players to run characters.

You play by doing the following things...

Move you characters.

Negotiate with one another.

Argue about what happens next.

Roll dice to see if they happen.

Face conflict and trouble.

And have fun!

In other words, you make it up as you go!

Order of play

1. Move the Characters you control.
2. Negotiate with other players.
3. Make arguments about what you want to happen next.
4. The referee decides: 1. How strong arguments are, 2. Which arguments are in competition and 3. Which arguments cause conflict and trouble.
5. Players roll to see which arguments happen.
6. Additional arguments are made for conflicts and trouble as needed.

Brief History of Matrix Games

Matrix Games were invented by Chris Engle in Bloomington Indiana in 1988. Since then they have appeared at conventions in England and the United States. The basic rules of the game were completed in 1991. The first commercial product – Campaign in a Day – came out in 1992. In 1995 two more small press products came out – The Matrix Game 1995 and Scotland the Brave. In 1999 Hamster Press published Dark Portals – a fully commercial product sold to stores. In late 1999 and early 2000 Chris Engle published several new small press products. In 2001 Chris revamped the game into the professional booklet game that you now hold.

Matrix Games have a health existence on the internet where they have been regularly used to run games since 1999.

In addition to hobby games, Matrix Games have been used as planning games by the British Army, and social service agencies. They have been used in psychotherapy and in education to teach history and creative writing.

Characters

Games are all about stories. Each story includes a cast of characters and a beginning hook to get the game going. The players take it from there.

Each game book includes a cast of characters. Players can photo copy these on card stock to make cards. Players can add new characters as the game is being played.

Name: Bob

*Age: **Young** Wealth: **Well off** Political Power: **Respected***

Short Description of the character's personality.

**Oh, Bob is nice on the surface but his motto is “Greed is good.”
Blind ambition and hate drive him. He's not nice!**

*Dramatic question: **How will I take over?***

Status – Information about people

Matrix Games do not use numbers to keep track of change. Instead they use words. This may seem unworkable but it is not. Each new status adds something to the picture. It is amazing how much a tiny addition can change the whole meaning of the matrix.

Age

Child
Young
Middle Age
Old
Very Old
Ancient
Immortal

Wealth

Impoverished
Poor
Respectable
Well Off
Rich
Wealthy
Very Wealthy

Political Power

Wretched
Powerless
Weak
Respected
Important
Powerful
Very Powerful

Other Statuses

Wounds
Health
Skills
Stress
Reputation
Emotions
Relationships

Movement

Players start the game controlling one character. Each turn players may move all the characters they control. Characters can move anywhere they want to inside the area they are in OR they can move to an area next door.

Characters can go anywhere so no one has any privacy or security. Players only get privacy or security by building walls of “defense” around them.

Defense “Barriers” stop characters from entering. Characters may only enter if an argument allows them to. This may cause a conflict.

A defense barrier may sometimes be “hiding” or “wearing a disguise” so that people will not know where a character is. These barriers act just like guards – they block movement.

Who moves first?

Players all move at the same time. Once moved, they can move again, and again, and again, until the referee asks the players to start making their arguments. While moving players can talk and make deals. They can also do short role play sessions. What this does is make movement very flexible and easy (you literally can’t do it wrong) and it makes it less important – since no trap can be sprung by movement. Surrounded characters just move on. It takes arguments, that create barriers, to trap people.

Negotiation

Players can talk to one another while they move their characters. Referees should give players about five minutes to do this. During these negotiations, players can make deals, coordinate movement, make plans coordinate their arguments and do mini-role play sessions or combat games. The results of negotiations are not added to the matrix of information about the world. They only help the players coordinate their actions.

Matrix Games are not role play games but they may use role playing to resolve certain events. Just like role play games can use Matrix Games to resolve some of their events.

Arguments make things happen

In Matrix Games players make things happen by saying what they think should happen next. This is an argument.

Arguments can be made about ANYTHING! Players get to make one argument a turn.

As the players make their arguments the referee decides how strong each argument is. This determines what needs to be rolled for it to happen.

Example

Players make arguments. They say them out loud.

Player One – I recruit Bob as a new character under my control.

Player Two – Bob does not want to join any groups. He is an independent!

Player Three – I get an extra move. My guys surround the bad guys. Forming a defense wall. They can't escape.

The referee decides how strong arguments are.

Player one – “Strong! Roll a 3,4,5,6 for it to happen.”

Player two – “Average! Roll a 4,5,6 for it to happen.”

Player three – “Weak! Roll a 5,6 for it to happen.”

The Players roll at the same time! Players roll 1d6 for their own argument.

Player one – 1 Failed

Player two – 4 Succeeded

Player three – 4 Failed

Some succeed, some fail.

Strength Table

Very Strong	2,3,4,5,6
Strong	3,4,5,6
Average	4,5,6
Weak	5,6
Very Weak	6
Stupid	7

Making things up as you go

In Matrix Games players literally do make the game up as they go along! The players, not the referee, are in charge of the game. The referee only decides how strong arguments are. The players decide what is in the world.

This takes a little getting use to. Since players can do anything – what should they do first? Well, first leave behind the idea that creativity is cheating! Players are free to make a vision about what they want to see happen and then go out and make it so.

Competing Arguments

After the players have made their arguments, the referee decides if any arguments are in competition. Arguments that can not both happen, battle it out in a dice rolling contest.

Referees often worry that they will do this wrong. That they will miss something and that impossible things will happen. FEAR NOT! The players will always point out errors. When they do – just hold a new dice rolling contest and settle the matter.

On the last page, Player One and Player Two made arguments that were in competition. Without knowing it, they also did a dice rolling contest.

Example

Players make arguments about what they want to happen.

Player One – I recruit Bob to be my man.

Player Two – My man, Tim, recruits Bob to be under my control.

Player Three – I fight a duel with Tim.

The referee decides which arguments are in competition.

“Player One’s argument is in competition with Player Two’s argument. Bob can not be controlled by two people at once. Player Two’s and Player Three’s arguments are also in competition. Player One and Player Three would not be in competition but because they are tangled up with Player Two the matter will be settled by a single dice rolling contest.”

Players roll for their own arguments just like before.

Lets say that the referee decided all these arguments are average. They happen on a 4,5,6 on one six-sided die.

Player One – 4 Still in
Player Two – 6 Still in
Player Three – 3 Failed

Players who fail their rolls drop out of future rounds of rolling.

Player One - 1 Failed

Player Two – 3 Failed

Player Three – No roll (due to failing last turn.)

What to do if all the arguments fail?

If all of the arguments roll out then a new dice rolling contest begins. One of the arguments WILL HAPPEN.

Player One – 2 Failed
Player Two – 2 Failed
Player Three – 6 Succeeded

Eventually one of the players will win.

Conflict

As the players make their arguments the referee decides which ones will cause a conflict.

Conflicts happen when an argument's action is too important to settle by a single die roll. Conflict causes a second round of arguments to find out what actually happens. It is possible that the characters who starts the fight can lose it!

Players make arguments. The referee decides if they cause a conflict.

“Sam attacks Bob.”

The referee decides who is involved in the conflict.

“Sam and Bob are involved.”

The referee decides who is in the strongest position and next strongest and next strongest etc.

“Bob is bigger. He is strongest.”

The referee asks the strongest player to make an argument about what happens in the conflict.

“Bob, make an argument about what happens.”

The referee decides how strong the argument is and the player rolls for it immediately. If it happens then the conflict is settled.

If the argument fails then the next strongest player makes an argument. If that fails, then the next strongest player argues. This goes on till someone succeeds in saying what happened.

If all the players involved in the conflict fail to make a successful argument then the strongest player gets to make a second argument.

The referee can decide that a successful conflict argument causes a new round of conflict. This conflict can be done immediately. In this way it is possible to fight out entire battles in short order.

The referee does not have to make any arguments cause a conflict round. If it will save time – the issue can be settled by the first roll alone. This is a good thing to do with small points that are not central to the story.

Common Conflicts

Combat

Recruiting new characters

Stealing things

Magic

Politics

Building things

Arresting people

Trial

Trouble

Players may argue to set up situations that will cause trouble for characters. The referee decides if an argument causes trouble as the players make them.

If people face their trouble it does not hurt them. But if they ignore it or fail to deal with it effectively, it sticks around as a status. Too many bad statuses like this and a referee will start ruling that character's arguments weaker and weaker.

When trouble comes. Players get an extra argument to deal with it.

Players make arguments. The referee decides if they cause trouble.

"The building exploded!"

The referee decides who is effected by the trouble and what happens if they fail to deal with it.

"Everyone in the building say how you escape alive! Fail and be wounded."

Each player affected gets to make one free argument about how they deal with the trouble.

"I dive out a window!"

The players who fail to make a successful argument get a bad status. They can get rid of this status by arguing how they get rid of it on the next turn.

"Darn! I'm wounded. Now I'll have to waste my next argument dealing with this."

The way people deal with trouble can cause more trouble. The referee can have players make more trouble arguments. Players can also save themselves by passing the trouble on to another player! This causes the other player to make a saving argument.

If the referee wants, trouble arguments can cause conflicts (see the conflict section).

Players can do more harm to one another by dishing out trouble than they can from conflict. So wise players always deals with their own problems first – then they go after the other guy!

Common Trouble

Wounds
Illness
Natural Disasters
Curses
Becoming Lost
Mechanical Breakdowns
Political Crisis's
Emotions
Scandal

Planning

Some actions are just too big to do in one argument. They may take many arguments to do right. Players do this by breaking down their action into small pieces and arguing for each one in turn.

Players can do arguments that actually do part of the task or they can make arguments that prepare the way for one big argument to succeed.

Many players find that planning and preparation are the keys to success in Matrix Games. Small simple arguments are generally stronger than big ones. But a series of successful little arguments can make big ones possible.

Example

A players argues...

I attack the BIG GUY and get the girl!

The referee rules...

VERY WEAK! Why should she like you?

The player rolls...

5 – Failed

Next time the player plans...

Okay. So I first meet the girl and talk.

The referee rules...

Strong! This is easy to do.

The player rolls...

3 – Succeeded

Next he makes another small step...

I train for a few weeks to prepare for the fight.

The referee rules...

Strong! You can certainly do this.

The player rolls...

4 – Succeeded

Now he makes his play...

Now I fight the BIG GUY and get the girl.

The referee rules...

Average. You now have a chance to make this work.

The player rolls...

4 – Succeeded

Possibilities not Probabilities

Matrix Game players quickly find that since they can do anything they want that they can't just look at the rules and figure the odds of every action working. Probability is less important than possibility. Why? Because with the right set of planning arguments any possible action can be made probable!

Matrix Game Refereeing Hint

As the referee, you are the host of the game. Your job is to give the players a good time. “Beating” them is not the goal. So help them succeed in their goals. Be nice in ruling on argument’s strength. Don’t require the players to do more than two or three actions to set up an argument. And don’t require every issue to be a conflict.

Common Planning Actions

Gain Skills
Build Relationships
Find Clues
Gain Good Statuses
Give Opponents Bad Statuses
Make Plans
Gather Supplies

Speeding up the game

As time runs short, the referee can quickly wrap up a game by speeding it up. Do this when you are running out of time.

The referee decides what problems the game has left. The referee then asks the players to make arguments about what happens with each point. They argue one point at a time.

The player’s arguments are automatically in competition so each point is settled by a big dramatic dice rolling contest! In short order even a very complicated game can be wrapped up. There is no need to leave a game unfinished!

Stories – The way to play Matrix Games

You may have noticed that while Matrix Games allow players to do anything they want, they do not tell players what to do! This can be a little daunting to new players. The rest of the rules are really just suggestions on different things players might want to try out in games.

Matrix Games are best used to tell stories. What players often don’t know is that different kinds of story require different actions. Writers call this “plot”. If too many things happen that fail to make the plot move, then no story is told. The following pages describe what is needed for – Murder Mysteries, Spy Intrigues, Quests and Plots,

Mysterious Encounters, Revenge, “You are there...”, Military Campaigns, and Politics.

Not all the plot outlines are needed for each game. They are included because Matrix Games can go in any direction the players want so you never know what will be needed!

Murder Mystery

Murder Mystery games start with a crime. The players and the referee know what the crime is but not who did it. The purpose of the game is to find the murderer.

How can you do a mystery game where even the referee doesn't know who did the crime? Easy! The players make up the clues of the crime in their arguments. So you get to say what your characters find!

When the players think they have enough clues to know who did it, they can argue to arrest the suspect. This causes a conflict about whether the suspect gets away. Once captured, players can argue to take the suspect to court. A conflict to find out if the person is guilty or innocent.

Finding Clues

In real life the clues to crimes are right in front of us, waiting to be found. In Matrix Games the players make up the clues they want to find. If the player's argument succeeds, the clue is found. What this allows players to do is find clues to convict whoever they want! You, the player, decide what kind of story you want to tell. So decide who did it at the beginning of the game and set about proving it!

How to solve a Mystery

To prove a case in court, players must find clues that show the suspect had the...

MEANS – Physically could have done it.

MOTIVE – Had a reason to do it.

OPPORTUNITY – Was at the location when it happened.

At first the clues could fit anyone. But with time they point to fewer and fewer people till only one character is left. The murderer!

Arrest

When the players think they know who did it they can argue to arrest the suspect. This causes a conflict to see if the man is caught. If the suspect gets away then he may go into hiding so don't put off arresting till it's too late! It helps if the police follow people so they know where to find them.

Trial

Once a suspect is under arrest an other argument can bring them to trial. One player presents the evidence against the defendant. Another player presents evidence that attacks the prosecution's case. The remaining players are the jury. They decide how strong the argument "The defendant is guilty" is. The prosecutor then rolls to see if the defendant is convicted.

Man Hunts

If a suspect goes into hiding he is surrounded by one or more layers of defense. The players can find the fugitive by arguing to do a man hunt. This causes a conflict. Do one conflict argument per layer of defense. If the police can cross them all then they find their man.

False Leads

If the players are zeroing in on your character then you may want to defend him. One way to do this is to make up clues that point the finger at other characters. Your character may still be arrested but these false leads can then be used as evidence for the defense!

Spy Intrigues

Spy games begin when a secret agents enters a country to steal government secrets. Some of the players play the spies, others play the spy catchers.

Both the spies and the spy catchers recruit agents to do their dirty work. Each argument to recruit a character causes a conflict. Will that person be loyal to you?

Once the spies are in place they can try to steal a nations secrets. To successfully steal a secret the spy must get by the defenses guarding it. An argument starts the attempt. The spy must win a conflict argument for each layer of defense crossed. The easiest way in is to get one of your agents on the inside. That way he just walks right through the defenses!

Recruiting Agents

Spies never do their own dirty work. Instead they hire local people as agents. Players control their agents like they control their character. If a player wants to be real sneaky, he can have his agents recruit other agents (so they don't know who they are really working for!) This keeps the spy safe. But beware! Other players can argue to recruit your agents away from you. So protect your control by also building up relationships with your agents.

Secret Agents

Players can recruit secret agents by making secret arguments. They can then make their secret agents do things by other secret arguments. Players do not openly control these characters so other players may recruit them as agents. YES! You can get an agent inside their spy ring. When players want to take open control of a spy they reveal that the person works for them. This causes an immediate conflict to see who the agent is loyal to. Beware! A spy may be a double-double agent!

Secret Arguments

Players can make secret arguments by writing the argument down and showing it to the referee. When the player says the argument out loud he says something like "Someone does something secretly. The others will not know what is going on. But they can find out if they make an argument to learn the secret!"

Protecting Secrets

The spy catchers have two jobs. Catch the spies and protect the secrets. They protect secrets by making arguments to surround them with layers of defense. To get to them the spies must get by the guards.

Catching Spies

This is not as easy as it looks. Until the spy has done something illegal they can't be arrested. Once they have done something the police still need to make up the clues that show that. Eventually, with lots of work spies can be arrested and put on trial for treason. The players hold a trial to see if they convict the spy.

Scandal

Some spies are not after secrets. They want to disrupt government. They do this by finding out what embarrassing/illegal things Politicians have done. They can then blackmail the fellow into spying for them or let the scandal leak. When this happens it causes trouble for the politician. If he fails to deal with it he is kicked out of office!

Quests and Plots

Quest and Plot games start with the players deciding they want to do some great task. The task is not easy. They must overcome many challenges on the way. This requires planning and preparation. Then when the time is right they can make it happen.

The players and referee know what the goal is and how many "challenges" they must face but not what the challenges are. The players find out what they are by making them up! Then they plan how to overcome them.

Challenges

A typical quest or plot requires players to overcome two or three challenges. A challenge is a problem that stands in the way of reaching their goal. Players make up what the challenges are in their arguments. To complete the quest or spring the trap of a plot, the player must "cross" the barrier of the challenge. This causes a conflict for each challenge. Players can cross them slowly (one a turn) or try to do them all in one turn.

Planning

The key to successfully carrying out a plot or a quest is planning and preparation. Once the challenges have been identified, the players can make arguments for the things they do to get ready to meet the challenge. What planning does is increase the likelihood that the referee will decide that a well prepared player's position is stronger than another player's. This means the prepared player argues first to see what happens.

Meeting Challenges – A Conflict

Whenever the players want, they can argue to set out on the quest or set a plot in motion. When they do they must win a conflict argument for each challenge to successfully pass it. If they set out before knowing what the challenges are they are very likely to fail! So first define what the challenges are. Players who are not prepared will also likely fail so make preparation arguments! Players may try to meet one challenge a turn (with time to do more preparations in between) or meet them all in one turn (one challenge after another). Either way, it causes a conflict over whether the challenge beats the player.

Stopping Quests – Spoiling Plots

Some players may choose to be on the other side from the questers or plotters. In this case they want to stop the others from reaching their goal. They do this by attacking the characters directly (very crass – poor show, what!) or by attacking the other players plans. Ruin their plans and they will fail to meet the challenge. Players can also make plans of their own to strengthen the position of the Challenges. Lastly, players can make up trouble for players to face who fail to meet a challenge. Sort of a “Win or else” deal.

Secret Plans

Players may want to make their plans in secret. They do this by making secret arguments. This is done by writing the argument down to show to the referee while saying out loud “Someone does something secretly.” Other players will have to use arguments to learn the secret.

Other things one can seek

Quests are often magical plots and true crime stories but there are other goals that are gamed the same way.

Romance
Building
Research
Exploration

Mysterious Encounters

Whenever players encounter something they can not easily understand a Mysterious Encounter game can begin. The purpose of the game is to find out what is going on and if it is a plot – to stop it!

At the start of the game the players and referee know what the first clue is but not what is going on. The players make up the mystery by making up clues in their arguments. Slowly a picture of what is really going on emerges.

Once the mystery is solved the players must decide what they want to do. Do they want to help the plot succeed or try to stop it?

The Hook

All Mysterious Encounters games start with a hook. Some weird, unexplainable event that must be investigated. This event is the top of an iceberg. As the players find clues they will find out what is really going on. Neither the players or referee know the truth before the game begins. They make it up as they go along! It is helpful for each player to imagine what he thinks is going on right from the start. Then make arguments that make that happen.

Finding Clues

Players make up clues in their arguments. Clues need to answer the following questions.

WHO did it?

WHAT happened?

WHERE did it happen?

HAS it happened yet?

WILL it happen again?

WHY did it happen?

HOW did it happen?

Solving the Mystery

Once the players have found enough clues that they think they know what is going on they can prove their “theory” by making an argument that says “This is what is going on!” The referee decides the argument’s strength based on how much evidence the player has to support his claim. If the argument succeeds then that theory is what is actually going on. The next step is to decide what to do about it!

Some players may think there is more to the mystery than what is proven. If they want to they can keep on finding clues to see if there is a deeper mystery going on. If they find enough clues they can try to prove their own theory.

Should I stop they plot or help it to succeed?

Often time the player’s investigation will uncover a plot. Some evil scheme to do something. The mysterious event that started the whole thing was one of the preparations the bad guys made. The player’s investigation shows the challenges the bad guys must meet to make the plot happen and what they have done to prepare for success. The players can work to destroy the plot (mess up their plans, make them fail to meet a challenge) or they may decide the plot is right and work to make it succeed! So players who start off with the same idea about what is going on may turn out to be enemies at the end of the game!

The plot is set in motion when a player makes an argument for it to happen. This causes a series of conflicts. The bad guys must succeed in meeting each challenge their plot faces. If they succeed then the plot works and the bad guys win. If the good guys can foil the plot then they win.

Revenge

Revenge games are about social climbing and tearing people down in the pecking order.

The players play characters who are in competition with one another to be “King of the Mountain.” Or if one can’t be king...to get even with those above you!

Pecking Order

All characters are formed into a pyramid shaped pecking order. The most powerful, rich, popular are on top. They get all the breaks! So naturally everyone wants to be one of them!

Social Climbing

Players can argue to change where they are in the pecking order but whenever one character goes up another character comes down. So if 4 goes to 3 then 3 drops to 4! This is why social climbing arguments cause conflict. If the person on the top is toppled due to dying or being ruined by scandal then everyone below them moves up one spot and they drop to the bottom. Social climbing is a blood sport. Prepare to make enemies!

Maintaining your position

Most people are not social climbers. They just don't want to drop from where they are. To maintain position one should 1. Stay strong, 2. Weaken your opponents, 3. Form alliances/relationships with other people in the pyramid, 4 Successfully solve trouble when it comes up, 5. Don't die and 6. Look good.

Getting Even

If a character hurts your character in a bid to move up, a character can try to get even. Players can do this in a variety of ways.

1. Undercut the character's plans.
2. Give the character bad statuses to weaken him.
3. Create scandal/trouble about the character.
4. Attack his allies.
5. Take his position in the pecking order.
6. Don't die and of course
7. Look good!

Remember! You want to hurt the other guy and move yourself up.

Revenge

Revenge is not about social climbing or getting even. It is about trying to destroy someone who has hurt you. Even if it means destroying yourself in the process! Revenge seekers may do the same things that people getting even do but they do not care if they move up in the pecking order. The point is to pull the other guy down by any means. Not to move up while pulling them down.

Revenge is a self defeating strategy.

Relationships

Players can form alliances with other characters (and thus control them) or they can just form relationships with them. A relationship does not allow a player to tell the other character what to do. It just increases the likelihood that a character will work with you. Characters can even have relationships with enemy characters. So when the other guy has you down he may show mercy because he is dating your sister!

Military Campaigns

Military Campaign games start when war is declared. The players take on the roles of military commanders. They build armies and defenses, move troops and fight battles.

Campaigns can be set on the land, sea or air. They can even be set in outer space. It does not matter. The basics remain the same. Players move forces and fight battles.

Military campaigns continue until 1. One side gives up. 2. One side has no forces left or 3. One side has occupied all the other side's areas.

Raising Armies

Players start the game commanding relatively small armies. They can build new units by making arguments – one argument per unit. Players can also replace destroyed units – one argument for as many as you want to try to get.

Moving Armies

Armies naturally move one area a turn and can place themselves anywhere in the area they want to be. So in movement players will be doing a game of move-counter move. Watch your flanks! Players can argue to get an extra move so people can move farther than you think.

Building Defenses

Since armies can move anywhere, no place is safe! Players make their world a little more secure by building “lines of defense”. Defenses form a barrier to movement so the other side can't just slip through. Castles, city walls, guarded rivers/mountain passes, and even trench lines all the way across the country are examples of defenses. Players build them with their arguments. A

construction argument causes a conflict to see if the job gets done this turn. Obviously the more time spent the better the chance of success. To cross a defense barrier an attacker must fight a battle.

Battles

Armies in the same area can fight one another. They do so when an argument calls for a fight. This causes a conflict to see what the outcome of the battle is. The players say what happens to the losing side in their argument. The loser then gets to make a trouble argument to salvage the situation. Players can attack defenses. To get at the enemy, one must first win a conflict argument for each layer of defense. If defenses are very deep this can be tricky. Maybe a siege would be a better bet.

Sieges

When an enemy is dug in too deep to root out in an assault it is time to lay siege. Players make arguments about the plans they make to get through the defenses, how they train to improve their own abilities and about the problems that breakout in the enemy camp. The last arguments force the enemy to make trouble arguments or get bad statuses.

Propaganda

Players can make arguments about psychological warfare. These arguments are aimed at 1. Increasing their own sides morale or 2. Damaging the other sides morale. Propaganda never won a war by itself but it can be used to set up possibilities that otherwise would not exist. For instance, causes a peace movement to rise in the other country!

Politics

Political games are about gaining power and solving problems the way you think they should be solved.

Players take on the roles of leaders of political parties. During the game they will recruit allies, gain offices, solve problems and push their own agenda.

Politics is about how we get along with one another, day to day. Sometimes it is dramatic. Sometimes boring but it is always changing! If you are on top you can not afford to ignore it or you may find yourself facing a revolution!

Political Offices

Governments are made up of political offices. Each office has the responsibility to solve certain public problems. If the problem gets solved then the player can take credit but if not then the officer gets the blame! Players gain offices by arguing to get them. This causes a conflict.

Political Power

People, political parties and even social classes have political power. Some have more than others. Players can argue to increase their political power or form alliances with other characters. Power helps put a character in the stronger position in political conflicts.

Political Trouble

Often nations are beset by trouble (famine, plague, corruption, unemployment, etc.) If the trouble is not dealt with then it hangs around as a negative status that drags the nation down. Office holders get one free argument to solve trouble when it comes up. But they don't have to! They can use the argument for their own selfish goals. But this means that someone will have to use one of their regular arguments to deal with it later. Players can make up trouble to throw at office holders to get them out of office!

Political Conflicts

Whenever a player argues to gain an office, vote on anything, try to force a political decision to be made or make an alliance with another character (recruit him) it causes a conflict. The player in the strongest political position argues first about the outcome of a fight. So it is a good idea to make planning arguments to strengthen your side politically before starting a battle.

Sneaky Tricks

Politics is a blood sport. If you can't beat someone straight up then attack them underhanded. Make arguments to ruin their plans. Dig up scandal to cause them personal trouble. If they fail to deal with it it can cause them to lose their office. Try to take away their offices and if possible put them on trial!

Riots and Revolution

If you are on the bottom of the political pyramid and see no way out then maybe it is time to try violence. Riots and revolution directly challenge the authority of government offices. If the officer can not keep the peace then the revolutionaries can set up a new government and overthrow the tyrants!

Political Agendas

Leaders all have a list of things they want to do. They also have ideologies that tell them how they think things should be done. Once in office, players can try to make their agendas happen. If the actions work to solve problems then the player gets credit but his opponents will blame him for all unsolved problems

You are there...

You are there games allow the players to go anywhere in time and space and be part of great events. Not as the leaders, but instead as they guy standing next to the last row. You can be part of it and see if you have what it takes to survive!

In “You are there” games, players face one piece of trouble after another. They use their regular arguments to prepare for what is next and get a free argument to deal with the next problem. So unlike in other Matrix Games, where the players control the world, You are there players react to the world.

Prepare for trouble!

Each turn of a Matrix Game, the players make one argument to make unexpected things happen. In “You are there” games player’s unexpected arguments are about what happens to their individual character. The goal is to help their character survive rather than change the world. So ask yourself, “What does he need to do next?”

Surviving Trouble

Each turn of a “You are there” game, players face a new piece of trouble. Each players gets one free argument to deal with it. If the player fails to deal with it then he gets a negative status (that is determined by the trouble). This may send the player down a very different train of events. Successfully dealing with trouble may mean the difference between living and dying.

The Scenario Time Line

Many “You are there” games come with a detailed time line of what is going on. The players may be given a choice about who they want to be and where they are located. The time line tells the players what trouble they face each turn and what great events they witness from afar. The time line branches off at certain points so that players may find themselves wounded in a field hospital, carrying a message to the rear or somewhere else far away from where the action is.

Living with the results of your own survival arguments

Players may try anything to survive trouble. Sometimes the ways they survive may cause them more trouble than the problem they faced. The referee listens to what people say and remembers! So if you shoot the guide on the first turn. He is not present on the later turns – when you may really need him!

Strong Referees

Matrix Game referees are normally weak. They do not control the game. But in “You are there” games it is okay for the referee to make up the trouble for the next turn as the game is being played. This allows the referee to customize the game to what the players are doing.

Solo Matrix Games

“You are there” Matrix Games work well as solo games. The player follows the time line of trouble and makes arguments to deal with it. The player also acts as his own referee. This is a good way to try out argument making and learning how to be a referee.

Campaign Games

Matrix Games are made to be stand alone games but players can link them together into multi-session campaign games. When they do this, the events of one session carry over to the next game. Over time, players can create entire histories or even epics.

When games last for multiple sessions then the players will want to know what their characters do in between games. This is easy to include. Before each game session give the players three arguments to do the following things.

1. Make an argument about your character's social life. Build contacts. Do social climbing.
2. Make an argument about how your character grew. New skills, new knowledge?
3. Make an argument about something that happened in the world that has nothing to do with the action of the game. (This makes games come to life. No longer are the players the center of the Universe.)

Referees frequently find that giving players inter-game arguments greatly increases player commitment to the game. Players have a stake in the world and a new purpose in all that they do.

On Line Matrix Games

Matrix Games are uniquely suited for play on the internet. On Line role play games are slow and require MANY hour of labor from a game master. On Line war games and most fantasy games are just about moving and shooting – no real interaction on a deeper level. While civilization simulation games never allow players to tell a story. Matrix Games avoid all these pit falls.

Players gather in a chat room or on an email list to learn about up coming games. The referee sends out game write ups to the players and then asks them to email their arguments to him. The referee decides how strong arguments are and rolls to see which happen. He then sends an email of the results to all the players.

One turn a week works very well. Players send in their arguments by a set day. The referee resolves turns on that day and asks players who need to make conflict and trouble arguments to submit them three days later. So they can be resolved four days before the next turn is due.

Credits

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The Classical Matrix Game is only one way to run a Matrix Game. Chris Engle encourages everyone to develop alternative ways to run games using arguments.