

The GameMaster's Apprentice

Adventure Guide: Steampunk

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Special Thanks

This project was backed on Kickstarter by more than 360 supporters. Without their help, The GameMaster's Apprentice would never have been more than a pet project in my own home games.

Thanks so much!

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INTRODUCTION

What is an Adventure Guide?

An Adventure Guide is a collection of tips for designing and/or running a role playing game, in a given genre, and using The GameMaster's Apprentice deck of cards. These guides should be helpful whether you are using the base, genre-neutral deck or any of the genre-specific decks, and (up to a point) can even be used without the deck of cards, though that defeats the true purpose of the guide: to provide enough inspiration and enough examples that, once you've exhausted the possibilities presented here, you'll have an easy time creating your own story seeds using just the cards.

How to use this guide

After this introduction, you'll find a section dedicated to advice on constructing an open-ended story framework. That framework can serve as structure you fill in, giving you a more complete adventure, or you can use it to help run a more free-flowing story. While this is 100% useable without the cards, this style of adventure prep is also ideal for games where the cards will be used heavily (either as GM support, or as the GM itself), as it provides options to use the cards to choose from, and suggests characters and dangers the cards might be referencing in their random events or story seeds.

Next, the guide goes over advice on generating quest seeds. This consists primarily of tables that work both by themselves and with the deck, and which are aimed at the conventions of the steampunk genre.

Wrapping it up after that are two sections meant to help tweak the use of the deck to generate sci fi-appropriate characters and random events, and then an example of creating very genre-specific tools for your game: a scandal generator, all ready to help you set tongues wagging in alehouses and tea-rooms across the city!

These tools can be used independently or in concert, during prep or during play; I recommend reviewing them all briefly before you start, and then you can decide how you will get the most benefit out of them!

ADVENTURE FRAMEWORKS

The guidelines here are essentially a set of advice on preparing the framework of an adventure, quickly and efficiently. It might seem overly simplistic, but we're targeting a framework instead of a full adventure because it provides you as a GM with two essential ingredients. First, it ensures you have enough information to always answer the quintessential question, "What happens next?" Second, it gives you the freedom to let the story evolve naturally.

One of the biggest problems with a traditional pre-printed adventure is its limited scope of choices and possible outcomes; that's a large part of what inspired *The GameMaster's Apprentice* in the first place. However, even though I love using random content to enhance my games, I do like to be able to keep things consistent--and planning ahead in broad strokes can make that much easier, and makes the stories that result feel more real and engaging.

These frameworks are partially inspired by my work on *Missions for the Demon Hunters: A Comedy of Terrors Role Playing Game*, which was in turn inspired by many other games, some based on the Fate and Apocalypse World systems. If you think the frameworks here work well for your games, you might want to check out those books for more ideas!

Framework Creation Summary

So, to make an adventure framework, follow these steps--a more detailed explanation of each will follow this brief checklist:

- Choose a Core
- Ask a Big Question which the game will revolve around (optional)
- Choose a Doom
 - Describe the Doom's Goal
 - Outline the Doom's Plan to achieve this goal, in 2-3 stages
 - Create the Cast for the Doom, describing 1-3 characters or features
- Create 3 other Problems
 - Choose a different Type for each Problem (recommended)
 - Give each a Goal
 - Outline the Plan each has, in 2-3 stages
 - Create a Cast for each Problem, including 1-3 characters or features
- Ask 1-3 Little Questions that provide interesting hooks (optional)

Choose a Core

A Core is a central principle of the genre; naturally, a given game will be likely to touch on more than one genre convention, but selecting a single Core when planning out a framework is meant to help you focus on choosing other elements that will work well together. The theory here is that stating your target up front will make it easier to achieve. If you find the Cores to be too broad for your tastes, select the most relevant and refine it; reword it or replace it with a more specific version.

Here are three Cores that cover a significant majority of steampunk stories; you can add to the list or modify what you see here, as need be:

To (re)invent the past: This Core covers games that revel in themes and ideals of the steampunk genre, while reliving the traditional trappings of the 19th century. These often include real-world events, places, and people that have been punk'd-up; many classic examples of steampunk literature and media romanticize even the highly problematic colonialism of the British. If your primary interests involve seeing how airships, steam-powered mecha, and *Miracles of Science!* would have changed British conquest of the planet, then this is probably your Core of choice.

To find the 'coming thing:' Steampunk can easily encompass many of the themes of other forms of science fiction, and this Core is about invention, exploration, and understanding the implications of technology. Whether your game is neo-Victorian or set in a completely alternate world, time, or culture, your focus is on the 'steam' angle of things.

To overthrow the Master: Games revolving around this Core are what put the 'punk' in 'steampunk.' Many of the ideals of the genre are in direct conflict with those of historical Victorian England, which were highly classist, racist, sexist, and Euro-centrist. Here we find the focus on individual freedoms, the overthrow of the oppressor, and social and political change. Whether it follows the tea-drinking exploits of a political leader or the uprising of a worker's revolution, these games are about the themes at the core of steampunk literature.

Ask a Big Question (Optional)

This isn't a required step, but something I bring into my games because I firmly believe that a game can be as much a piece of literature as a novel or a play--and one of the things that defines 'literature' for me is the exploration of a grand question.

When it comes to a novel, the answers (or possible answers) to these questions are often discussed as 'themes' of the text, but those are actually secondary; the important part, honestly, is the question itself. While the best example I've ever seen of a game asking a big question is the classic computer-based RPG from Bioware, *Planescape: Torment*, I've also seen the tactic work well in games I and others have GMed.

If you want to give it a shot, after you've selected a Core, consider these examples of Big Questions that fit easily into the steampunk genre:

How badly can technology damage our society?

How far can technology elevate us beyond our origins?

Who deserves to rule?

What is the price of innovation?

There is a nearly infinite variety of questions that could be asked here; think through your favorite books, movies, TV shows, and games if you need more inspiration!

Once you have a question, what do you do? Keep it in the back of your mind when planning and making decisions for your NPCs. Games considering *How badly can technology damage our society?* have a clear bent in mind, but must include many opportunities to see the ills of different technologies; *How far can technology elevate us beyond our origins?* won't necessarily result in happy, uplifting stories, either, but must include appropriate opportunities. Games that ask *Who deserves to rule?* naturally require opportunities to wield or interact with the wielders of power, and wondering *What is the price of innovation?* will surely direct the action to include both inventions and inventors of dubious nature.

But whatever you do, even when asking questions that imply tone or potential responses, **you must NOT answer the question** yourself! Let the players explore possible answers as the story unfolds. The best games will develop their answers naturally, if at all, and will still leave you thinking at the end.

Choose a Doom

A Doom is the thing that looms on the horizon. It doesn't have to be the primary focus of the story as it starts, but it squats in the darkness just beyond the firelight and *waits*. This is something that will change the world for the worse unless the characters act.

The biggest challenge in picking an appropriate Doom is realizing that it doesn't have to be physical, concrete foe. Yes, *The Mad Engineer* is a useable Doom, but so are *Sootlung Disease* and *Fear of Social Change*.

Really, any major threat that could vastly change the world if left unchecked could be a good choice for the framework's Doom. If you're not sure about an idea, think through these questions:

Can the *characters* (as opposed to the players) potentially see the Doom coming, given warning or reason to be suspicious?

Once identified, could the Doom possibly be stopped by the characters?

Will the Doom change something significant about the world if it isn't stopped?

If the answers to all three are *Yes*, then you probably have an acceptable Doom.

While designing your Doom, keep in mind the Core (and possibly Big Question) you already selected. Whatever it is, the Doom should fit in with a game focused on those elements.

If you can't come up with something that feels worthy of the title, take a look at the Problems section below; the suggested categories of Problems could all apply to Dooms, and might inspire you to pick a Doom you wouldn't otherwise have thought of.

Once you have a Doom, it's time to fill out some details about them.

Describe the Doom's Goal

The Goal of a Doom is their endgame; here, you should specify at least one target they have, one thing that will drastically change the world if they can achieve it. Why do this? Because if you know what it wants, you'll always know how it would adapt to deal with a changing situation.

Write a sentence that describes what will happen if the players choose to let the Doom act unchecked. If your Doom is *The Mad Engineer*, their Goal might be to *Unleash a robot army upon the world*. A Doom like *Sootlung Disease* might be 'trying' (despite its lack of sapience) to *Cripple all major industry*, and something like *Fear of Social Change* might drive people to ignore the realities of the world they live in, crystallizing their society into a caste system by *Making it illegal to move beyond one's birth-station*.

Outline the Doom's Plan

With the Doom's Goal already known, create two or three intermediary steps for it to achieve on the road to that Goal. These things will have to happen (or be replaced by other things mid-game, since plans do sometimes change) before the Goal is reached. They serve a dual purpose: they act as a countdown mechanism to let the characters know that the Doom is threatening to harm the world (because bad things are happening, not because they have access to the checklist or know what the Goal is), and they make it easy to provide a new challenge or scene if you don't know what else to do.

Write a sentence for each step of the Plan, describing both **what** the Doom is going to accomplish, and **how** it will do so. Before *The Mad Engineer* can *Unleash a robot army upon the world*, he will have to *Steal and copy the Ancient Power Supply*, and then *Build and test a prototype robot*. On the other hand, *Sootlung Disease* will have to *Spread to a food-canning factory* and *Infect upper and lower class people even if they've never worked with engines*, and the *Fear of Social Change* is going to ensure that *Those unable to cope with change harass the vulnerable* and use them to *Convince the easily-led to believe change is bad*, before using them to *Codify into law their backwards and unscientific world views*.

Create the Cast for the Doom

The Cast is exactly what it sounds like: one to three NPCs who either represent or are involved with the Doom in some way. They could be the Doom itself (*The Mad Engineer*), or a henchman, victim, bystander, witness, catalyst, the questgiver for the characters.... anyone involved. Of course, more characters will likely be involved later, but this way you'll have something to draw on.

Also, keep in mind that the ‘cast’ for a Doom might include more than sapient characters; critical locations or events might also serve as sources of knowledge or interaction.

At this stage, description is more important than mechanics; write a sentence for each character, naming them and pinning down a few important facts. If you feel like adding stats, go for it. *The Mad Engineer* might have his *Trusting Apprentice, who believes he is doing the Right Thing*. The *Sootlung Disease* might be spread by *Overworked laborers who take shifts in multiple factories*, and also be opposed by *The Royal Medical College, who work to prevent all ills*. The *Fear of Social Change* would have *Ignorant and easily convinced bystanders* and *People justifying hatred through pseudo-science* as proponents, and would encourage a general *Belief in the false persecution of the powerful* amongst the populace, as a feature any NPC might have.

Create Three Other Problems

Since the Doom is the big, long-range issue, Problems are the shorter-term... problems. Most settings worthy of adventure will have more than one thing going on at a time, and these Problems will serve as the driving force behind most of the early game, before the Doom starts ramping up its Plan.

Problems can be many things, just as the Doods can; the key difference is scale. Problems are still bad, and they still have Goals that they want to achieve via their own Plans, but those Goals won't shatter the world as you know it (or, at least, not all of it). If the Doom could be a *Mad Engineer* whose Goal is *Unleash a robot army upon the world*, a Problem might be a *Rampaging Robot* whose Goal is to *Turn all organic matter into canned goods and pack them for shipment*.

To encourage the creation of three extremely different Problems, I advise that you make each Problem of a different Type. Below are some examples, but you can always add to this list if you want.

Rabble: Small robots, pack animals, company guards, mercenary grunts, steam-zombies; they generally present little danger individually, but become a more serious issue in large groups or when ignored and left to enact their schemes. Their Goals usually revolve around destruction motivated by their own survival and/or profit margins.

Unexplored Lands: Prisons, underground caverns, ancient ruins, previously undiscovered landscapes, tiny pocket dimensions, temporal rifts; these Problems are actually places, which may pose a danger in many ways. They might disgorge monsters into the countryside, or they could contain something that would be terrible and dangerous if it fell into the wrong hands.

Mad Scientist: A dark leader with strange powers, a powerful warlord, a monstrous leviathan, a cunning political leader; just because they aren't actually the Doom, that doesn't mean they are going to sit on the sidelines. A big baddie with a Goal that is less serious than "world domination" is still a Problem that needs dealing with, especially if their schemes could have greater long-range implications.

Plague: A viral plague, rampant distrust, murmurs of rebellion; sometimes a Problem is diffuse or abstract in the extreme. These may not be capable of intentional planning, but they still have a Goal, usually one that involves spreading their darkness and causing further chaos.

Give each Problem a Goal

Once you've selected three different Problems with three different Types, give each of them a distinct Goal. Just like the Doom's Goal, the Problems' Goals are their grand plans. Write a sentence for each that explains what will happen if the characters choose not to get involved.

If you want to be extra tricky, the Goals of the Problems could be used as steps in the Doom's Plan (possibly meaning you have to go back and edit that), tying them all together into a coherent(-ish) whole.

Outline a Plan for each Problem

Harken back to the Plan you made for the Doom and repeat the process here. What are the steps involved in the Problem reaching its Goal? Think up two to three steps per Problem, and write a sentence for each step.

Create a Cast for each Problem

Next, create one to three important characters or features (locations, major events, strange effects, etc) for each Problem. While it's entirely possible that some characters might be involved in more than one Problem (a mercenary warlord who also passes on a plague to towns he raids), try come up with at least one unique individual per Problem; remember that these are just inspiration, and you will probably add to these lists during play.

Ask 1-3 Little Questions (Optional)

As you wrap up, hopefully you've created a number of possible starting points. Once you know who the characters are and where they begin the game, it should be fairly easy to decide which Problem presents itself first.

But if you have a real, living setting, there is going to be more going on in the world than the various disasters that strike.

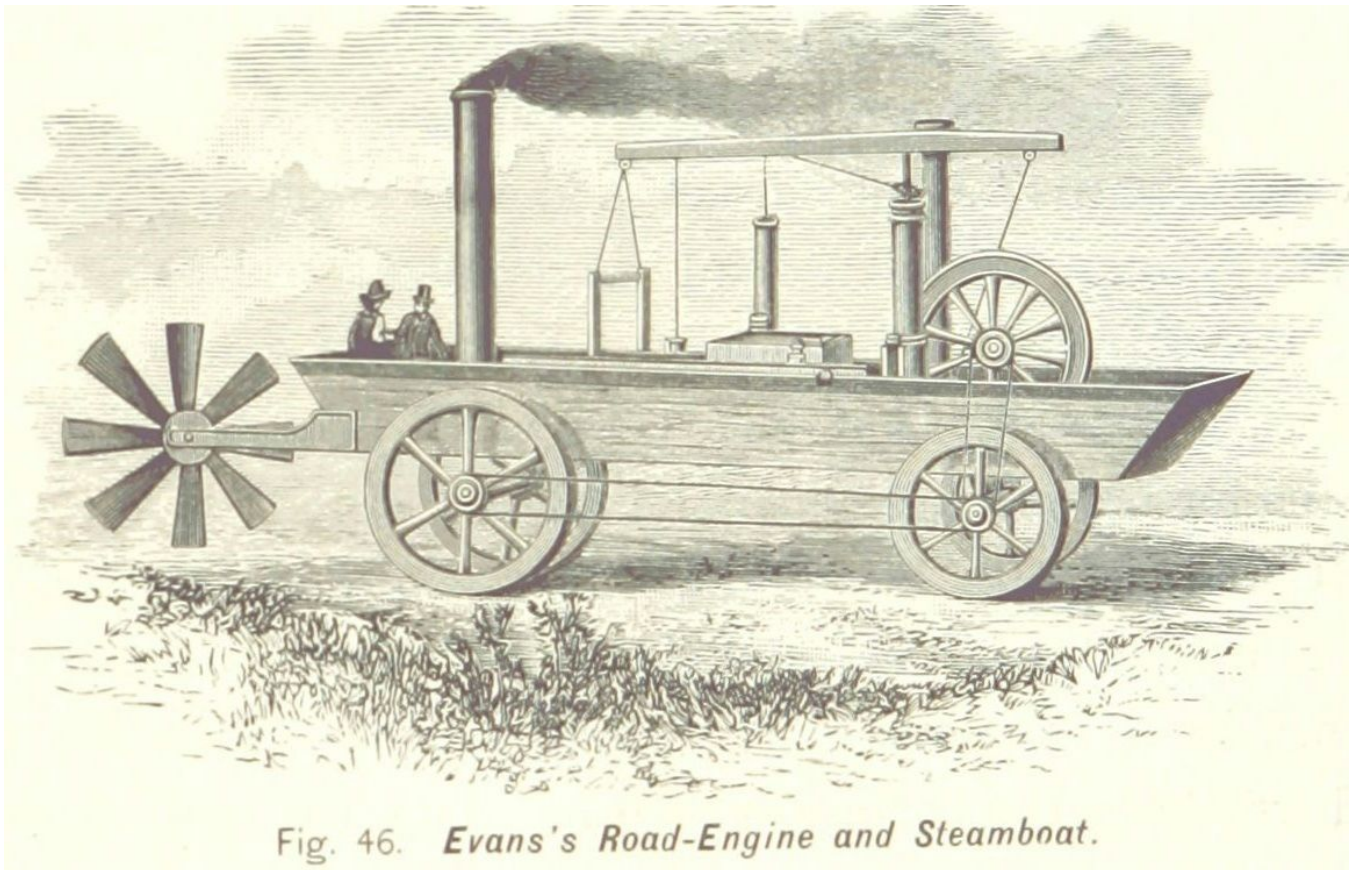
Do any of the characters (player or not) have a particular fate they either seek or avoid? Are there any links between characters that might be worth exploring? What is at stake if the Problems or the Doom manage to achieve their Goals--or even just a step of their Plan? Who stands to suffer?

Ask some specific questions about situations, characters, or events; questions that can't be answered until play progresses. These are entirely optional, but force you to consider who or what stands to be lost or changed, depending on the outcomes of the story. Of course, the questions might be voided or necessarily altered before they are answered, but that's fine--these are just to keep you thinking, and to ensure that you have material to draw on if at any point you can't think of what the next scene should be.

The Point: Scene Creation

Your newly-created framework is a reference sheet for where the story *might* go, without interfering with its natural evolution; it lets you play without either railroading the players down a certain path or letting the game grind to a halt for lack of content. The notes you take for the framework are to make sure you always have a way to generate a new scene.

Introducing one of the Problems? That can be a scene. Advancing the Plan of a Problem or the Doom? Scene. One of the Cast needs to be given some screen time? Another scene. If a Problem achieves their Goal, that's one or more scenes right there, and if the Doom reaches its Goal you've probably got one or more whole *sessions* just dealing with that. And, for things with a smaller scope, the Little Questions can be dealt with, or the Big Question danced around.



Example of a Complete Framework

| GMA Framework Sheet | |
|---|---|
| Core: To overthrow the Master | |
| <i>Big Question:</i> who deserves to rule? | |
| Doom: Lord Bright | Plan: 1) Build an unstoppable robot army. 2) Force leaders of large countries to surrender. 3) wipe out resistance with local/robotic troops. Cast: Lord Bright, Future Emperor of the world. |
| Goal: Cement a dynasty by conquering all nations. | |
| Problem 1: The Royal Necrological Society (Rabble) | Plan: 1) Collect bodies through legal and illegal means. 2) Demonstrate efficiency of steam-zombies while hiding their rotting flesh behind pretty masks. 3) Profit! Cast: Markus Ancibal, Master Necrologician. Tad, graverobber. |
| Goal: Replace paid workers with steam-powered zombies | |
| Problem 2: The Sunken City (Unexplored Land) | Plan: 1) Entice explorers to overzealously delve into its depths. 2) Become destabilized by conflict or digging. 3) Sink into the ground, collapsing on the explorers. Cast: Lost Beasts, strange underground guardian-monsters. |
| Goal: Sink completely, hiding its secrets forever. | |
| Problem 3: High Justice Maribel Twee | Plan: 1) Discredit her political opponents with the help of spies. 2) Use saboteurs to demonstrate the 'danger' of factories. 3) Rally support for a public ban. Cast: Maribel Twee, evil politician; Lord Taniger, her political enemy. |
| Goal: Ban the use of steam technology in the city. | |
| <i>Little Questions:</i> will the explorers discover anything interesting in the Sunken City? Does the Master Necrologician really believe he is doing the right thing? Will Lord Taniger be arrested, or just discredited? | |

Blank Framework Sheet

| | |
|----------------------------|-------|
| GMA Framework Sheet | |
| Core: | |
| <i>Big Question:</i> | |
| Doom: | Plan: |
| Goal: | Cast: |
| Problem 1: | Plan: |
| Goal: | Cast: |
| Problem 2: | Plan: |
| Goal: | Cast: |
| Problem 3: | Plan: |
| Goal: | Cast: |
| <i>Little Questions:</i> | |

ADVENTURE PREMISES

The premise of a story is the back cover of the module, the elevator pitch for the game, or the message you send a friend to try and hook them into making a character. It doesn't tell you everything about the entire story, but it gives you a place to start.

Following these tips, you'll be creating fill-in-the-blank style adventure premises that will hopefully inspire further ideas. Before you begin, consider the range of games you're most interested in, especially regarding the tone and style of your steampunk. If roll on a table and get results that can't be reconciled with that vision, roll again!

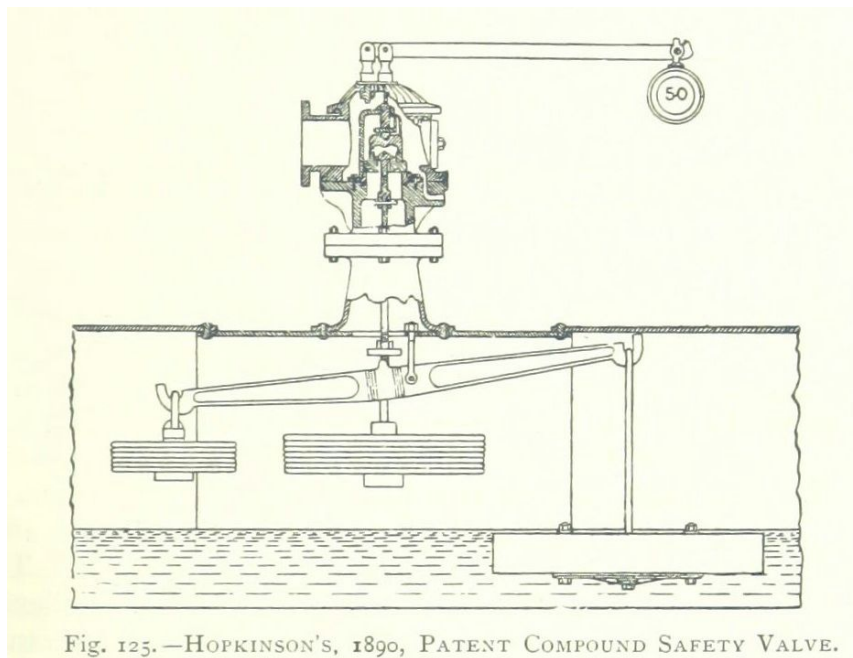
To use these randomizer lists the way I do, follow these steps.

Fill in the Blanks

Start with this sentence, treating the underlined portions as blanks to fill in:

The Questgiver asks you to complete this task because reasons.

If any parts of that sentence are already decided for you (or by you), fill them in first, and then skip the associated steps below; if you know the Questgiver is going to be the character's boss, there isn't a reason to randomize it. Also, before you start rolling, review these tables and replace the options you don't like with ones that fit your style.



The Questgiver

Who is sending you on this quest? For a more down-to-earth game, use the Difficulty Selector to randomize; for a game more likely to involve the strange and powerful, just use a d10. (Note! If there are several ideas listed in square brackets ([secret society/engineer's guild/religion/company]), then pick or randomize from that sub-list.)

| Roll | Questgiver |
|------|--|
| 1 | A tremendously powerful [politician/priest/engineer/scientist/royal] |
| 2 | The council or board of a [secret society/engineer's guild/religion/company] |
| 3 | The [noble/criminal/gentlefolk adventurer/doctor] that once did you a favor |
| 4 | A city's [elders/governor/secretive leader] |
| 5 | The [employer/captain/master/leader/mentor] you serve or served |
| 6 | A [family member/friend/old flame/explorer/inventor] |
| 7 | An apprentice [engineer/priest/scholar/researcher] in over their head |
| 8 | A [shadowy figure/old wanderer/note on a napkin] at the [bar/tearoom] |
| 9 | A disgraced, "mad" [noble/priest/engineer/scientist/doctor/explorer] |
| 10 | A representative from a [long lost/newly discovered] land |

The Task

Here we have a more interesting table. The first column is aimed at dangerous and thrilling adventures; the second might include danger, but the goals are oriented towards learning, discovery, and invention; and the third column covers social quests. These tables have no particular weight towards the middle, since they are already broken down into three segments; just use a normal d10 after you've picked your preferred column.

| Roll | Adventure! | Discover! | Mingle! |
|-------------|--|--|--|
| 1 | escape from a [shipwreck/ island/fortress] | seek out a [person/creature /place] of legend | travel on a mission of [diplomacy/military aid] |
| 2 | claim the bounty on a [criminal/animal/monster] | find and bring back [an artifact/ancient knowledge/a cure] | prove a [colleague/helpful bystander/friend] innocent of wrongdoing |
| 3 | bring [contraband/medicine /supplies/technology] to someone who needs them | find a retired [scholar/ adventurer/inventor] who knows important secrets | escort a [diplomat/scientist /archaeologist/scholar] to an important location |
| 4 | destroy or circumvent a [dangerous beast/ environmental danger] to escape a wilderness | explore a [crashed ship/island/lost city/dangerous wilderness] | travel on a mission of [espionage/suppression/ assassination] |
| 5 | overthrow [a colonial authority/a shipping empire/an occupying force] | craft an amazing [weapon/ defense/power supply] | identify a traitorous [enemy agent/former friend/person of power] |
| 6 | stop the rise of [an ancient evil/a mechanical army/a natural disaster] | find the answer to a seemingly impossible [riddle/question/problem] | discover the truth behind a politician's interest in a [place/person/technology] |
| 7 | find and help the survivors of a [shipwreck/lost expedition] | help an inventor complete his [monster/machine] | find a way to infiltrate a [party/social club/gathering] |
| 8 | cross battle-lines to deliver a vital message to [your/your enemy's] military commander | decode a cryptic map that leads to [treasure/ knowledge/an important place] | build a reputation with [nobles/adventurers/ inventors] |
| 9 | help a "monster" escape [it's creator/hunters/ officials] | map an area of [jungle/ desert/sky/water] | discredit a famous [noble/ politician/explorer/inventor] |
| 10 | smuggle [goods/medicine/ a person] past authorities | find a missing person who [vanished/was kidnapped/ was press-ganged] | [foment/suppress] desires for rebellion and uprising |

Reasons

Why must you complete this task? What drives you? Unless some reason has already presented itself (and it might well have, either because you knew it ahead of time or because the task you picked suggests one to you), roll on this table to find out. Like the Questgiver table, this one is weighted to have more 'reasonable' motivations grouped in the middle, so use the Difficulty Selector if that appeals to you.

| Roll | Reasons |
|------|---|
| 1 | you need the [personal healing/self-confidence/experience] it will bring. |
| 2 | you are compelled to by a [compulsion/debt/oath/duty]. |
| 3 | a [lover/friend/mentor/dependent] of yours could die otherwise. |
| 4 | you were promised [a favor/fame/money]. |
| 5 | your [fate/birthright/family/life] hangs in the balance. |
| 6 | you were promised [incredible secrets/land and title/amazing technology]. |
| 7 | you must, to prevent [war/plague/the fall of the empire/the rise of the empire]. |
| 8 | you must, to prevent [the deaths of innocents/major destruction/losing respect]. |
| 9 | you must, as this is [a personal trial/a singular opportunity/your only hope]. |
| 10 | you are the only ones who can [complete this task/know about it/survive the challenge]. |

Premise Tag Symbols

These can be used in the creation of any steampunk adventure, using the premise system or not; consider this an example of how to create a tag symbol table for your own games.

After filling in the blanks in the premise, draw one card and look at the three tag symbols that result; if at all possible, find a way to apply their meanings to your game. Only redraw if you can't fit two of the three into your concept; if just one seems to be an outlier, just ignore that one.

| | | | |
|--------------|---|---------------|---|
| Tower | An impressive fortress, a sprawling palace, a ruined temple--some kind of massive structure is involved. It is likely either remote or heavily guarded (or both). | Moon | Recent events leave loyalties confused and uncertain, perhaps by revealing the flaws in nobility and other leaders. Who is 'good' and who is 'evil' may be in question; suspicion abounds, and betrayal may follow. |
| Crown | The rich and famous are involved. They may be joining the party, or may be the subject of the quest (a poisoned ruler to cure, the money-man wants to come along to see the job is done right, etc). | Sword | Open conflict begins; if it already had, it escalates or moves into a new arena. This implies a military conflict, but it could be social, religious, or mercantile instead. |
| Heart | Family, friendship, or romance are at stake; if they were already involved, then the situation becomes more extreme, or the relationship is threatened. This can be very significant if it involves characters of different social classes! | Shield | The characters must protect someone or something vulnerable--either constantly, or it becomes part of their overall goal. A rescue might be involved, or playing bodyguard. |
| Skull | Fatal consequences are likely; death may already have struck. Someone could be dying, or have recently been killed, or could be sentenced to death. Seeking or earning a pardon may be critical! | Target | A new, secondary goal is introduced; completing it will help with the primary quest, but failing to do so will NOT stop the characters from reaching their objective. |
| Sun | A recent discovery (scientific, archaeological, technological, geographical, etc) has revealed something extremely important; this discovery must be acted upon quickly. A land rush? | Wand | Powerful technology, ability, or authority is granted to the characters, though it is temporary or limited in nature--the boon is probably necessary to complete their quest (which means the quest is that much harder). |

CHARACTERS

You can already randomize characters with the deck, but to tweak them for a steampunk game, here are two suggestions.

Professions

Before you draw for any other components of the character, consider giving them a random profession appropriate to the current setting--that may give you some ideas to start with, and will help cut down on the problem where 90% of people encountered on the street are either a pickpocket or a fat merchant.

This table is weighted with more statistically common professions towards the middle, so draw for the Difficulty Selector instead of rolling a d10 if you want the randomization to be more “realistic” (scare-quotes because the percentages are weighted in the direction of a steampunk ‘real life,’ but I make no claims to a specific level of accuracy for any society, and your setting may balance jobs differently).

| Roll | Professions |
|------|---|
| 1 | Leader (political, religious, company, nobility) |
| 2 | Celebrity (adventurer, performer, scientist, artist) |
| 3 | Ship owner/operator (captain, pilot, engineer) |
| 4 | Mad (doctor, scientist, alchemist, chemist) |
| 5 | Tradesman (mechanic, engineer, electrician, designer) |
| 6 | Outdoorsman (hunter, explorer, archaeologist) |
| 7 | Armed Forces (soldier, bounty hunter, mercenary) |
| 8 | Criminal (thief, con artist, assassin, saboteur) |
| 9 | Specialist (spiritualist, beast tamer, big game hunter) |
| 10 | Punk (rebel, cultist, grafted with technology) |

Character Tag Symbols

As with anything else, you can modify characters by drawing one card and applying the Tag Symbols; here is an example table to get you started. When you draw, try to fit at least two of the results into your NPC!

| | | | |
|--------------|---|---------------|---|
| Tower | The NPC is taciturn and generally unwilling to talk to anyone without significant motivation. | Moon | The NPC is hiding a secret, either or big or small, that has at least a little bearing on the story. Characters are likely to spot this, but may not be able to divine the secret. |
| Crown | Regardless of current circumstances, the NPC has a powerful family or bloodline. | Sword | The NPC is a more capable fighter than might otherwise be apparent. Their talents might lie in <i>Science!</i> , special powers, or simple deception and skill. |
| Heart | Either the NPC is a potential (or former) romantic interest for a character, or the NPC is linked to the story through romantic or family ties. | Shield | The NPC is highly protective of their friends and loved ones, and is extremely dedicated; they would willingly sacrifice themselves for their duty. |
| Skull | The NPC is sick--not necessarily with fatal consequences, but that depends on the circumstances. The disease, its spread, or its interaction with other problems may prove serious. | Target | The NPC has an agenda that they want the character's help to fulfill--though the characters may not be aware of it at first, and it may or may not align with their own goals in the end. |
| Sun | The NPC is naturally curious or adventurous, and would be easily persuaded to join the party, and may likewise be hard to dissuade from trying. | Wand | The NPC is especially charming and witty, whether or not they are actually nice, kind, or otherwise friendly. |

ENCOUNTERS

Here are two tools to help keep things moving if you need a quick random encounter. They can be used separately or together.

Premade Combos

If you draw for a random event, but get a combination of Noun + Verb you don't think makes any sense (or if you just want to start your game with some pre-made suggestions available), roll on this table!

Because it only provides a Noun and Verb, you can also then draw an Adjective to further modify the encounter, extending the table below from 10 results to 1200.

| Roll | Verb, Noun, and Suggestions |
|------|--|
| 1 | Uncover/Skill: A PC or NPC demonstrates a skill that is unexpected or even out-of-character for them! Is it helpful, baleful, or merely a hobby? |
| 2 | Communicate/SCIENCE!: Something formerly unexplained, mysterious, or seemingly supernatural becomes explained by a new understanding of amazing science! |
| 3 | Delay/Foreigner: If the party is in a foreign land, they become held up or delayed because of difficulties related to travel or prejudice; otherwise, they witness an innocent traveler experiencing the same problems, but in their land. |
| 4 | Explore/Food: With all their usual food supplies exhausted, the party is forced to resort to eating things they can hunt, gather, or scrounge. |
| 5 | Destabilize/Murder: The party either witnesses or interrupts a murder! |
| 6 | Entertain/Ship: A band of NPCs, or the party themselves, are hired or pressed into service as entertainers for an entire ship, crew, group, or similar. |
| 7 | Seal/Resource: Something vital becomes locked away. It might be physically sealed in a vault, or it might be something like knowledge withheld until a condition is met. |
| 8 | Judge/Leader: The party's leader, whether an NPC or a PC, falls down on the job. Are they worthy of retaining their position? |
| 9 | Trespass/Estate: Oops! The party has wandered onto an estate, grounds, or other area where they are not welcome. Why not? Does the owner hunt... the most dangerous game? |
| 10 | Bestow/Vehicle: The party find, buy, are granted, or are loaned a vehicle or ship of some kind! This could be exciting and important (their own airship!), or merely a convenience (use of their employer's stables). |

Encounter Tag Symbols

This sample tag symbol table is geared towards modifying events and encounters. These can be used with any encounter (random or not) with suggestions appropriate for the genre. Try to find applications for at least two of the results.

| | | | |
|--------------|---|---------------|--|
| Tower | The encounter introduces a new or unexpected obstacle in the path of the player's main quest. This could be environmental, adversarial, or accidental. Explorers and problem solvers will be front and center here. | Moon | The encounter provides information that contradicts something previously known or discovered. Whether this revelation can be trusted, or is simply a red herring, is unclear. Investigative PCs may have more to do after this. |
| Crown | The encounter is much more significant than it appears at first; rewards and consequences are more severe. Political or intrigue-interested characters will have their work cut out for them. | Sword | The encounter includes a direct confrontation of some kind--physical, social, mental, or otherwise. If it already did, the difficulty of that confrontation (or the difficulty of avoiding it) increase. Fighters may earn themselves a new enemy here. |
| Heart | The encounter is personal for one or more characters; something related to their family, their love, or their past is involved or brought to light. Social characters will be highly engaged. | Shield | The encounter gives the characters a chance to rest and recover, or any immediate danger (physical or not) is partially mitigated by circumstances or a third party. Doctors, care-givers, psychologists, and similar characters will be called upon. |
| Skull | Death is a potential consequence of the encounter; if it already was, then part of the challenge may be that someone is mortally wounded, and that must be dealt with. Leaders will have to make tough choices. | Target | The encounter is a critical moment for a character, either a PC or an NPC; it may have been arranged or sought out intentionally, in order to further an agenda. Something about it helps them fulfill a goal. At least one character has a personal 'sub-quest' advanced. |
| Sun | The encounter seems certain to yield clues or information the characters would value, but it may take digging or puzzle-solving to sort them out; engineers and scientists, get to work! | Wand | The encounter introduces or includes unusual creatures, technology, or secrets; they may be helpful or harmful. Specialists in these things may be useful here. |

SCANDAL!

What, exactly, happened at the last Winter Ball, and how did it manage to ignite a feud between the two most important families in the city?

This table provides a set of ideas for scandals and gossip to pass around during tea. Draw a card, look at the Tag Symbols, and see what dirt you can stir up!

| | | | |
|--------------|---|---------------|---|
| Tower | The scandal involves someone with an ancient and important family, who are likely going to be extremely upset about it! | Moon | Something was hushed up, and while it is clear that SOMETHING happened, and someone particular was involved, the exact nature of events has successfully been concealed. Of course, numerous rumors have sprung up... |
| Crown | A person of noble or royal background, or at least political significance, is implicated, possibly making it dangerous to even know about the scandal. | Sword | Violence is involved. A nobleman has become viciously abusive and someone was hurt or killed, or a person who should have known better got into a fight they should have stayed out of. |
| Heart | A torrid affair, illicit romance, or similar bad behavior make for a rumor that spreads like wildfire. | Shield | The military is involved, and they desperately want to protect themselves and their own, so they close ranks and attempt to cover up the incident, which of course never goes well. |
| Skull | Hints of weakness surround a person, house, or organization. Perhaps a leader is dead or dying, or it appears that internal pressures may cause a group to disintegrate. All the talk can't be helping matters, either... | Target | A major event, plan, or goal is leaked to the public, causing alarm or outrage at what the nobility, the companies, or the guilds are doing. |
| Sun | Secrets are brought to light! The scandal is about previously hidden information being revealed to the public, perhaps literally making headlines. | Wand | Rumor has it that someone is involved in something not just socially unacceptable, but... impossible. Unthinkable. Science or the supernatural must be involved... |