

# *The GameMaster's Apprentice*

## **Adventure Guide: Sci-Fi**

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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 science fiction 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 motion-sensor tool for suspenseful scenes, and an example of using the tag symbols to generate aliens, mutants, or modified humans for your game world!

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 sci fi stories; you can add to the list or modify what you see here, as need be:

**To save the galaxy:** This Core covers games that cast the players as either true heroes or enforcers of a vast, probably evil empire. Ending wars, resolving conflicts, and defending life in the galaxy from incomprehensibly old forces of destruction are all in the cards. Moral ambiguity will depend on the exact nature of the characters' motivations and the 'threats' they face. When planning, keep in mind that the dangers will need to ramp up steadily in order to keep the pressure on.

**To seek out new worlds:** This Core can be about exploring in the literal sense, but can also cover learning knowledge, taming wild space, and similar situations; adventure, in the sense of engaging with the unknown. Moral ambiguity can easily be a feature or not; some sci-fi glosses over the problematic nature of colonialism, but other examples feature such issues as their central question. Your plans will need to involve plenty of initial unknowns and elements, features, and facts for the players to discover and question.

**To keep flying:** This Core is for games focused on survival, whether the scale is small or grand: cyberpunk grifters, hard-living freighter captains, and even whole civilizations on the run in massive space convoys, seeking new homes, might find their stories centered here. Classically, these stories are highly likely to force moral questions; work with the players to establish clear guidelines for how dark is too dark, or if the tone should keep to the lighter end, playing difficulties as adventures rather than moral dilemmas.

## 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 sci fi genre:

- How far will we go for the sake of duty?**
- What is humanity's place in the universe?**
- What will we do to survive?**
- What does it mean to be a person?**

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. When considering *How far will we go for the sake of duty?* your stories will have to always pose duty against something else, some other loyalty; to address *What is humanity's place in the universe?* they would have to include a galactic community or other important circumstance of the environment that challenges humanity's purpose. *What will we do to survive?* would lend itself to tales of dark, dangerous worlds that force characters into dire situations, and *What does it mean to be a person?* could cover a range of stories, from the development of artificial intelligence to interaction with truly alien beings who some people wish to exploit.

But whatever you do, **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 Dark Master* is a useable Doom, but so are *The Grey Goo* and *Fear of the Truth*.

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 Dark Master*, their Goal might be to *Take control of the Senate and create an Evil Empire*. A Doom like *The Grey Goo* might be 'trying' (despite its lack of sapience) to *Convert all living tissue on the planet to more nano-bots*, and something like *Fear of the Truth* might drive a society to do terrible things or ignore the realities of the world they live in, destroying knowledge in an effort to *Bring about an Age of Galactic Darkness*.

### **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 Dark Master* can *Take control of the Senate and create an Evil Empire*, he will have to *Recruit an apprentice* and then *Take command of the Republic Military*. On the other hand, *The Grey Goo* will have to *Escape containment in their origin lab* and *Reach critical mass for self-replication*, and the *Fear of the Truth* is going to *Instill fear in corrupt leaders* and use them to *Spread lies that cause citizens to ignore the learned and scholars*, before using them to *Eradicate knowledge and communication through the destruction of the InfoNet*.

### **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 Dark Master*), 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 Dark Master* might have his *Dark Apprentice, who believes he is doing the Right Thing*. *The Grey Goo* might be spread by *Overly-ambitious scientists who disregard safety procedures*, and also be opposed by *The Promethean Society, who work to eradicate AI and nanotech for human purity*. *The Fear of the Truth* would have *Corrupt Leaders* and *People proud of their ignorance* as proponents, and would encourage a general *Hatred of scholars and the educated* 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 *Dark Master* whose Goal is *Take control of the Senate and create an Evil Empire*, a Problem might be a *Synthetic Army* whose Goal is to *Take over the homeworld of the species who created them*.

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.

**Mercs:** Small robots, pack animals, corporate military, mercenary grunts, space 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.

**Mothership:** Prisons, underground caverns, ancient ruins, actual alien motherships, tiny pocket dimensions, temporal rifts; these Problems are actually places, which may pose a danger in many ways. They might disgorge dangerous aliens onto a world, or they could contain something that would be terrible and dangerous if it fell into the wrong hands.

**Evil One:** A dark leader with strange powers, an alien warlord, a massive burrowing worm, a master thief; 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 “galactic domination” is still a Problem that needs dealing with; conquering a single planet or driving out a legitimate leader is still bad.

**Virus:** A dark curse, a genetically-engineered 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.

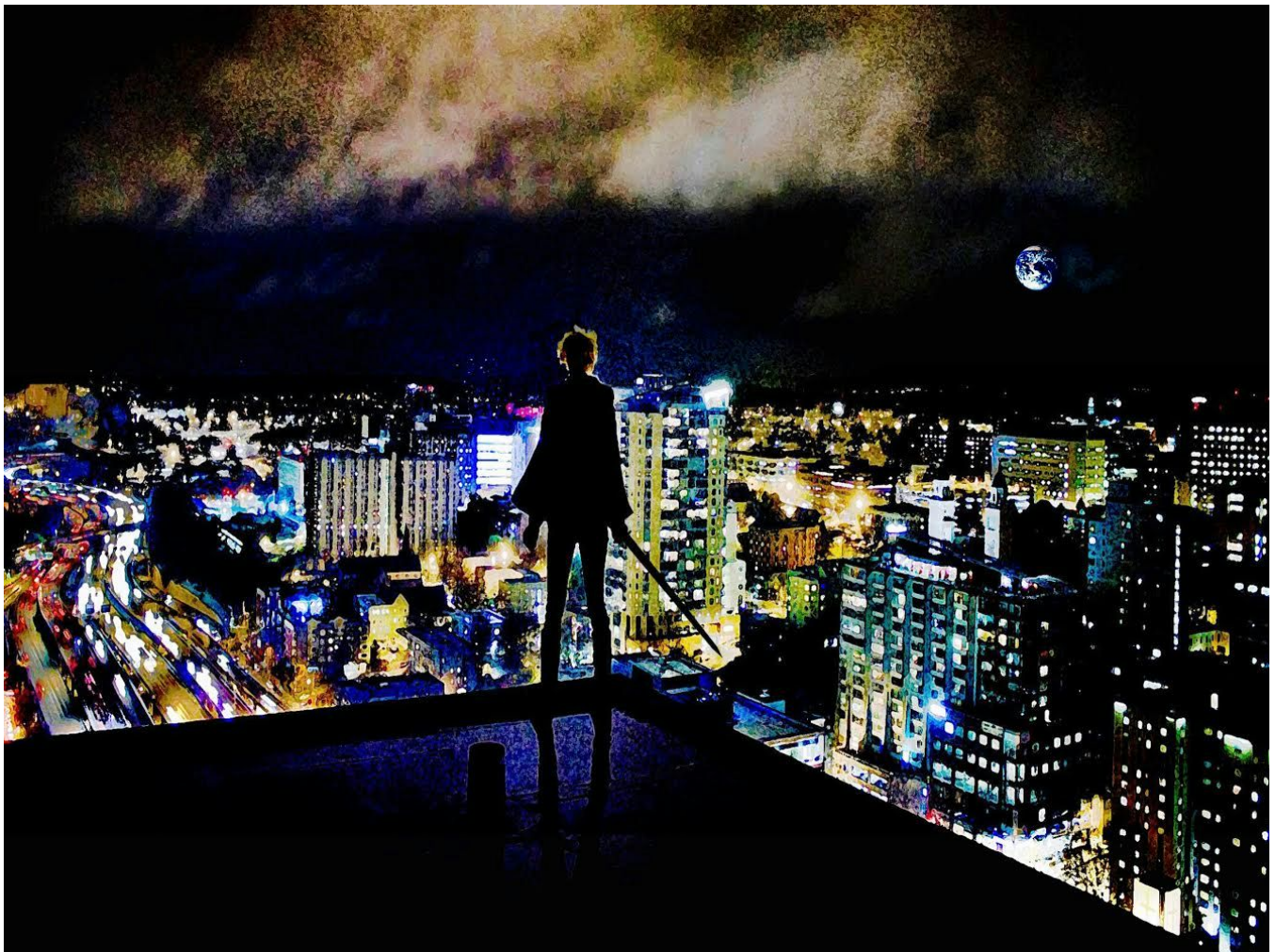
Do any of the characters (player or not) have a particular fate they either seek or avoid? Are there any links between characters that might be worth exploring? What is at stake if the Problems or the Doom manage to achieve their Goals--or even just a step of their Plan? Who stands to suffer?

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

<b>GMA Framework Sheet</b>	
Core: To keep (our little colony the PCs help settle on a new planet) flying	
<i>Big Question:</i> what will we do to survive?	
<b>Doom:</b> MegaCorp	Plan: 1) Disrupt colony's supply deliveries; 2) Starve colony into submission; 3) Buy colony
Goal: Take over the planet for stripmining	
	Cast: Mark Ciabarry, CEO of MegaCorp
<b>Problem 1:</b> Red Corps (Mercs)	Plan: 1) Protect the colony at first; 2) Encourage impressed youth to join merc company on bad contracts.
Goal: Recruit all the able-bodied colonists	
	Cast: Gowri Mac, leader of Red Corps; Damodar, kid who joins
<b>Problem 2:</b> Believers, Inc. (virus)	Plan: 1) Preach in town square; 2) Respond to setbacks as if they are proof of need for conversion; 3) Demand tribute from followers
Goal: Convert all townsfolk; take their money	
	Cast: Tane, High Priest & CEO of Believers, Inc.
<b>Problem 3:</b> Temple (Mothership)	Plan: 1) Cause crops to fail due to nanotech in soil; 2) AI summons colonists and conveys 'revelation' to them; 3) New sacrificial hosts demanded monthly.
Goal: Force colonists to offer sacrifices willingly	
	Cast: Mayor James Daley, uncertain what to do about this.
<i>Little Questions:</i> will the townsfolk band together to solve their problems, or will the malcontents have to be exiled/imprisoned/killed? will Malwon, the brainwashed 'priest,' be freed from his compulsion and returned to his family?	

# Blank Framework Sheet

<b>GMA Framework Sheet</b>	
Core:	
<i>Big Question:</i>	
<b>Doom:</b>	Plan:
Goal:	Cast:
<b>Problem 1:</b>	Plan:
Goal:	Cast:
<b>Problem 2:</b>	Plan:
Goal:	Cast:
<b>Problem 3:</b>	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, you should decide for yourself if your game is going to lean heavily to space opera, hard sci-fi, bright stars, or dark futures (in any combination); after that, if you wind up with an option that doesn't feel like it fits your concept, choose 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/guild/technomages]), then pick or randomize from that sub-list.)

Roll	Questgiver
1	A tremendously powerful [political/religious/corporate/scientific] leader
2	The high council of [a secret society/technomages/a religion/a guild]
3	The [noble/criminal/alien creature/AI] that once did you a favor
4	The society's [elders/governor/secretive leader]
5	The [employer/captain/master/leader/owner] you serve or served
6	A [family member/friend/old flame/explorer/scientist]
7	An apprentice [technomage/priest/scholar/warrior/hacker] in over their head
8	A [shadowy figure/old wanderer/note on a napkin] at the cantina
9	A previously unknown [alien species/AI/artificial creature]
10	A major [corporation's/government's/religion's] military commander

## The Task

Here we have a more interesting table. The first column is aimed at more fantastical, fantasy-esque sci-fi games; the second is targeted to harder science fiction (or, at least, sci-fi that goes for the trappings of hard science); and the last is meant to be appropriate for gritty and dark stories. 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.



<b>Roll</b>	<b>Space Fantasy</b>	<b>“Hard” Science</b>	<b>Grim and Gritty</b>
1	find and bring back [an artifact/ancient knowledge/a cure]	escape from a [temporal/spatial/dimensional] rift	claim the bounty on a [criminal/rebel/creature]
2	seek the aid of a powerful [being/people/location]	make peace between [strange alien cultures/ancient enemies/warring factions]	heal a sick or wounded [evil being/dangerous alien/unknown lifeform] to gain their trust or knowledge
3	heal a sick or wounded [friend/family member/alien]	prove [a crewman/a helpful bystander] innocent of wrongdoing	investigate a [murder/theft/disappearance]
4	seek out a [being/place] of legend	travel on a mission of [diplomacy/military aid]	travel on a mission of [espionage/suppression/assassination]
5	destroy a [super weapon/dangerous relic/dark artifact]	escort a [diplomat/scientist/archaeologist/scholar] to an important location	find [food and shelter/basic medicine/a place of safety] for many people
6	craft a powerful [weapon/defense/piece of gear]	[gather/locate] a group of allies and earn their loyalty	identify a traitorous [enemy agent/former friend/person of power]
7	overthrow [a dark master/an evil empire/an occupying force]	bring aid or evacuation to people endangered by a [foe/disease/disaster] but who don't want help	conduct business in a dangerous [wasteland/hostile environment/wretched hive of scum and villainy]
8	restore hope and good to a [lost/fallen/corrupted] individual	repair someone's [engine/computer/ life support/beacon]	bring [contraband/medicine/supplies/tech] to someone who needs them
9	stop the rise of [an ancient evil/a new dark army/a mindless destructive force]	patrol a [demilitarized zone/border/dangerous region]	destroy or circumvent a [dangerous beast/environmental danger] to escape a planet
10	find a retired [scholar/adventurer/leader] who knows important secrets	explore a [nebula/planet/star system/massive structure in space]	escape a prison or foe in order to [prove your innocence/save a friend]

## 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 were promised [true power/land and title/amazing technology].
2	your [fate/birthright/family/life] hangs in the balance.
3	you are compelled to by a [compulsion/debt/oath/duty].
4	a [lover/friend/mentor/dependent] of yours could die otherwise.
5	you were promised [access/a favor/fame/cold hard cash].
6	you must, to prevent [the deaths of innocents/major destruction/being fired].
7	you must, as this is [a personal trial/a singular opportunity/your only hope].
8	you need the [personal healing/self-confidence/secret knowledge] it will bring.
9	you are the only ones who can [complete this task/know about it/survive the challenge].
10	you must, to prevent [war/plague/the destruction of the galaxy].



## Premise Tag Symbols

These can be used in the creation of any sci-fi 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.

<b>Tower</b>	A mighty fortress; this bastion could be either good or evil, new or old, spacefaring or planetside. This is likely a destination or way-station on the quest.	<b>Moon</b>	Recent events leave loyalties confused and uncertain. Who is 'good' and who is 'evil' may be in question, and the party should be suspicious of traitors, betrayal, replacements, body snatchers, clones, mind control...
<b>Crown</b>	Some form of nobility or power-broker is involved deeply. 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).	<b>Sword</b>	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, ideological, or corporate instead.
<b>Heart</b>	Family, friendship, or romance are at stake; if they were already involved, then the situation becomes more extreme, or the relationship is threatened.	<b>Shield</b>	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.
<b>Skull</b>	Fatal consequences are likely; death may already have struck. Someone could be dying, or have recently been killed, or could be sentenced to death.	<b>Target</b>	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.
<b>Sun</b>	A recent discovery (scientific, archaeological, technological, etc) has revealed something extremely important; this discovery must be acted upon quickly.	<b>Wand</b>	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 sci-fi 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 real life, but I make no claims to a specific level of accuracy for any human society, and your setting may balance jobs differently).

Roll	Professions
1	Leader (political, religious, CEO, nobility)
2	Celebrity (ultra-rich, star, athlete, artist)
3	Vehicle owner/operator (captain, pilot, driver)
4	White-collar (doctor, scientist, accountant, lawyer)
5	Blue-collar (mechanic, engineer, electrician, programmer, designer)
6	Explorer (hiker, photographer, researcher, ‘urban explorer’)
7	Armed Forces (soldier, marine, mercenary)
8	Criminal (thief, con artist, hacker, assassin, saboteur)
9	Specialist (psychic, sniper, technomage)
10	Master (dark forces, light forces, ancient cult, supertech)

## 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!

<b>Tower</b>	The NPC is taciturn and generally unwilling to talk to anyone without significant motivation.	<b>Moon</b>	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.
<b>Crown</b>	Regardless of current circumstances, the NPC has a powerful family, bloodline, or corporation backing them.	<b>Sword</b>	The NPC is a more capable fighter than might otherwise be apparent. Their talents might lie in technology, special powers, or simple deception and skill.
<b>Heart</b>	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.	<b>Shield</b>	The NPC is highly protective of their friends and loved ones, and is extremely dedicated; they would willingly sacrifice themselves for their duty.
<b>Skull</b>	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.	<b>Target</b>	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.
<b>Sun</b>	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. They will ALWAYS push the red button.	<b>Wand</b>	The NPC has special abilities; perhaps they can command unusual forces, read minds, use alien powers, or simply have access to tech that few others do.

## 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	Find/Mentor: The crazy old man from the hills, someone from the local guild, or another mentor of some kind becomes available to the party.
2	Poison/Belief: Either someone's faith is damaged by events, or a poisonous belief (rumors of betrayal, etc) begins to spread.
3	Confuse/Beast: A wild (alien?) animal is unsure what to do about the characters, and this could lead to a new pet or a big fight.
4	Merge/Technology: Alien technology implants itself in someone! What does it do?
5	Cleanse/Affliction: A disease or condition (perhaps thought incurable) is miraculously fixed. But will there be consequences as yet unseen?
6	Reveal/Ship: Decloaking off the port bow--or otherwise suddenly detected nearby--is a ship! Friend? Foe?
7	Replace/Goal: The goal of the current quest suddenly changes completely! The target is killed; the questgiver is fired and replaced; something like that.
8	Deny/Weapon: At the beginning of a fight, one or more characters lose their weapons!
9	Begin/Crime: Either someone attempts to rob the party, or they are offered a job that is more or less obviously criminal.
10	Delay/Stockpile: Vital supplies are late in arrival! How will the crew last until they make it?

### 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.

<b>Tower</b>	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.	<b>Moon</b>	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 or detective characters may have more to do after this.
<b>Crown</b>	The encounter is much more significant than it appears at first; rewards and consequences are more severe. The implications could be world- or galaxy-spanning. Political or intrigue-interested characters will have their work cut out for them.	<b>Sword</b>	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. Combat characters may earn themselves a new enemy here.
<b>Heart</b>	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, even if just because of a passing resemblance. Social characters will be highly engaged.	<b>Shield</b>	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.
<b>Skull</b>	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, and the allocation of their forces and team-mates could make the difference between a suicide mission and a success.	<b>Target</b>	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.
<b>Sun</b>	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; perhaps it indicates or leads to future research for science-oriented characters.	<b>Wand</b>	The encounter introduces or includes unusual creatures, technology, or powers of alien or other unusual origin; they may be helpful or harmful. Specialists in these things may be useful here.

## Motion Sensor And Scanner

When dealing with the exploration of hostile environments or a recon mission that might turn up a surprise, a fairly classic ‘random’ event is the detection of something unknown on a radar, sensors, or motion detector.

To simulate this in a game being run wholly or partially by the GMA deck, rather than simply relying on the advice in the core instructions for the triggering of random events, use the scatter die as well. Normal random events can still occur, but this additional tactic can provide a focus on detection, identification, and avoidance.

This is suggested for any situation where a sudden “blip” might appear, but where you have some other objective and don’t simply want to ask the Yes/No question, “Do our scanners detect something?” over and over again. When drawing for any Yes/No answer, sensory snippet, or die roll, also look at the scatter die field. An arrow or the dash indicate that nothing unusual is detected; the starburst means you have incoming!

At that point, of course, the motion detected might just be the ship’s cat, and not the rubbery, drooling monster that spawned from a crewmate’s corpse.

How you decide what happens next will be highly dependent on the exact nature of your game and the situation; I suggest drawing a second card specifically for the scatter die, and using it to indicate the direction of the blip. If you draw the dash, you can’t tell, or it vanished; if you draw the starburst again, it’s right on top of you!

If you already know that the blip is either definitely or probably a particular target, you can simply ask a Yes/No question of the Likely Odds generator; if you need more information, you can tackle that in a number of ways. A random event verb/adjective/noun set, or a card of sensory snippets, might give you some indication.

I prefer to draw for the Likely Odds on the most likely candidate I can think of, and then fall back on the other options if the cards say No. If they come up with an emphatic *No!*, that’s when the jump-scare turns out to be just the ship’s cat, or what you thought was the missing ship you were looking for is actually the pirate craft that brought it down!

## Almost Human

What makes this alien, robot, or human-offshoot unique? Draw a set of tag symbols to find out!

<b>Tower</b>	They are highly logical and organized, individually and as a species. They are likely to be scientifically or militarily oriented, as cultures go, and are likely to eschew emotional attachment (though that might be more of a trend than an actual rule).	<b>Moon</b>	They are socially regressive compared to the humans (or other player baseline species), in at least one major way. They may or may not be “evil,” but their culture is highly differentiated by this.
<b>Crown</b>	They are extremely materialistic. Whether their focus is on money, goods, art, or even the organs of other species, they want, take, steal, buy, or collect <i>things</i> .	<b>Sword</b>	They are highly dangerous, but--and this is important--not necessarily aggressive. They may have training, technology, in-born genetic abilities, or some other advantage, but they are generally stronger/deadlier than most others.
<b>Heart</b>	These beings are highly social or empathic, and form strong family bonds or intense ties of friendship. They may or may not be open with outsiders, but they are certainly going to take care of their own, at least.	<b>Shield</b>	They are physically imposing and/or hard to hurt. That doesn’t necessarily mean they are especially dangerous, but they ARE hard to kill. This could mean high rates of regeneration, self-repair, redundant organs, or almost anything defense.
<b>Skull</b>	This species or culture is dying, doomed, obsolete, or otherwise in a bad way. Perhaps their birth rate is low, or their home planet was destroyed, or they are extremely isolationist, but whatever it is, they are suffering.	<b>Target</b>	They are highly aggressive. This could manifest in physical violence, vicious capitalism, mental domination, religious expansionism, or in other ways. They may or may not be particularly dangerous as a result.
<b>Sun</b>	They are socially progressive compared to the humans (or other player baseline species), in at least one major way. They may or may not be “good,” but their culture is highly differentiated by this.	<b>Wand</b>	They have an ingrained, widespread mystical tradition. This could be religious, philosophical, or even linked to special abilities (psychic powers, telekinesis, body control, etc).