

INTRODUCTION

There are two kinds of roleplayers, those that 'get' solo roleplay and those that haven't discovered it yet. I hope that this book will get you from the latter to the former.

If you are already a solo player, you can skip this bit and move on to the rules and oracles. If you don't know what a solo oracle is, this chapter is for you.

HOW TO SOLO PLAY SAVAGE WORLDS

When Savage Worlds is played traditionally, the Game Master [GM] sets up the opening scene, that starts your story, answers any questions to clarify your vision of the scene, resolves conflicts and plays all the NPCs that populate the world.

When you take the GM away, you need something to replace these functions.

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With a little prompting, you can generate that opening scene yourself. You may know the kind of game you want to have. The opening of solo games tends to be more like the opening paragraphs of novels, getting right into the action and drama. There is no need to gather the party together and get to know each other. You can leap right in and get going. Resolving conflicts and opposed actions are handled using the standard Savage Worlds rules.

Where the solo rules come in is with the answering questions. In answering questions, these rules provide some simple rules for generating 'improvisation' prompts. Different types of question need different types of answer, Testing if a door is locked is very different from wanting to know what the last entry in a murder victim's diary said.

Once you know how to answer questions, you can apply those rules in any situation.

Playing the NPCs is pure imagination. You combine everything you know, the situation, the answers you have generated and imagine the scene playing out. You imagine the actions and interactions that make up the scene.

So, that is how it works; what you need now are the rules for answering questions using the oracles.

CLOSED QUESTION ORACLE

The Closed Question Oracle will answer yes-no questions with a variety of positive and negative results.

When asking your question, you need to decide how likely the answer is going to be yes or no.

Asking if there are sentries outside a military commanders office, is very likely to be a yes. Asking if the door to the villains secret base has been left open is very unlikely.

You will roll a Wild Die, and a likelihood die for each question.

The likelihood changes the rolled die

LIKELIHOOD	DIE
Very unlikely	d4
Unlikely	d6
50/50 ¹	d8
Likely	d10
Very likely	d12

A result of 4 or greater is a Yes

A 2-3 is a No

A 1 is a No, and...

A maximum result on the die is a Yes, and...

And... RESULTS

Both yes and no answers can be appended with the and... modifier. If the question was a potential problem for the character, such as “Did the clerk set off the alarm?” the and... results can be treated very much like a Complication (see the Savage World core rules). If the answer has a positive impact on your story, such as “Is there a vehicle I can steal?” the answer should be exceptionally good. For example, “Yes, there’s Porsche at the curb with the door open, engine running and the owner is occupied arguing with a parking enforcement officer.”

Note: Oracle dice do not explode.

USING THE ORACLE

Here is some basic advice for using the Closed Question Oracle.

¹ Although statistically a 4 or greater on a d6 is the 50/50 chance, using the d8 is more in line with a GM that is actively encouraged to say Yes in preference to No.



- Where possible, go with your first instincts in interpreting answers.
- If you cannot think what an answer means in under 20 seconds, ignore it and assume the answer was a yes.
- Three Strikes. Try not to ask more than three consecutive questions. There is a risk of the game turning into a game of 20 questions, that is not what solo roleplay is about.
- Avoid asking world or game-breaking questions. Yes, you could ask if you find a million dollars at the end of your bed in the morning, but what is the point?
- Try and balance the story so far, the answer you rolled and the style of adventure you want when you interpret answers.
- Ask questions that will move your story forward, not ones that will block the adventure.
- The oracle is biased towards Yes, use that to add action to your adventures.
- Complications, yes and..., and no, and... results can be used to introduce plot twists or new story arcs.

OPEN QUESTION ORACLE

Open questions are handled using improvisation prompts. Each card in an Action Deck has an assigned meaning.

Once you have drawn a card from the deck, read its meaning and try and work that into your scene.

ACTION DECK SPADES

The suit of Spades relates to **Magical, Intuitive** and the **Strange**

Card	Meaning
Ace	Deceptive Magic
King	Intuitive Change
Queen	Strange Assistance
Jack	Abandon Faith
10	Intuitive Choice
9	Strange Failing
8	Planning Something Magical
7	Strange Creation
6	Instinctive Harming
5	Strange Movement
4	Magical Communicating
3	Intuitive Opposing
2	Strange Seeking



ACTION DECK HEARTS

The suit of Hearts relates to the **Personal, Social** and the **Emotional**

Card	Meaning
Ace	Deceptive Person
King	Emotional Change
Queen	Personal Assistance
Jack	Social Abandonment
10	Social Choice
9	Personal Failing
8	Personal Planning
7	Create Emotion
6	Emotional Harm
5	Social Movement
4	Personal Communication
3	Opposing Social
2	Personal Seeking

ACTION DECK DIAMONDS

The suit of Diamonds relates to the **Mental, Plotting** and **Technical**

Card	Meaning
Ace	Deceptive Plot
King	Technical Change
Queen	Mental Assistance
Jack	Abandon Technique
10	Mental Choice
9	Technical Failing
8	Technical Planning
7	Create a Plot
6	Mental Harm
5	Plot Movement
4	Technical Communication
3	Plot Opposition
2	Mental Seeking

ACTION DECK CLUBS

The suit of Clubs relates to the **Physical, Strong** and **Constructed**

Card	Meaning
Ace	Strong Person
King	Physical Change
Queen	Strong Assistance
Jack	Abandon Construction
10	Physical Choice
9	Failing Strength
8	Personal Construction
7	Physical Creation
6	Building Harm
5	Physical Movement
4	Communicate Strength
3	Construct Opposition
2	Seek Physical

JOKERS

These rules do not have specific meanings for Jokers. I recommend that when you draw a joker, you shuffle the pack and then draw the top two cards. Now try and combine the meanings of both cards into your open question and answer.

USING THE DECKS

Open questions are those that cannot be answered yes or no. You can use them for a person's inner thoughts or motivations, diary entries, the contents of a bank safety deposit box or a treasure chest.

I will take those example questions and show how two different cards could be used to answer them. The cards I draw from the deck are the Ace of Clubs and Eight of Hearts.

The Ace of Clubs reads: Strong Person

As an NPC's inner thoughts or motivations, Strong Person is quite easy to interpret. It instantly gives me a way to play this NPC.

Diary Entry? This is also easy to imagine as an entry. The subject could either be admiring someone's personal quality or maybe chastising oneself for lack of personal strength.

Safety Deposit Box? What does a strong person have in their bank deposit box? My first instinct was the deeds to their property and a gold bar. I think the

independence of owning a property outright could apply, and the gold is heavy, and that was related to strength.

The Eight of Hearts reads: Personal Planning

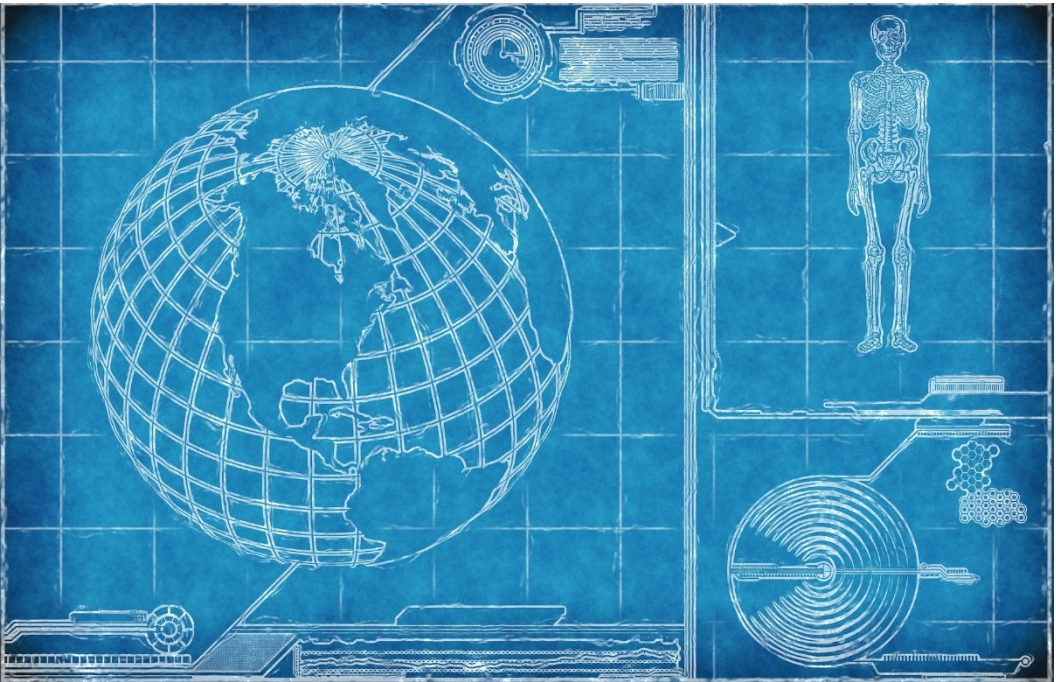
As an NPC's, inner thoughts or motivations, Personal Planning as an inner motivation suggested to me that this person has some personal objective that has nothing to do with what my character wants or needs. A nasty NPC could have their interests at heart, a nice NPC could be a quest giver or need a task done?

Diary Entry? This is also easy; the diary gives details of that person's plans for their entire day. This could be vital if the story involves trying to reconstruct a murder victim's movements or head off the villain's plans.

Safety Deposit Box? This, to me immediately suggested blueprints or physical plans.

Hopefully, you can see how the same card can mean very different things each time it is drawn. The genre of your game will have a big impact, communications in medieval settings could involve horses and riders, in sci-fi, it is as likely to be personal communicators. In modern settings that could be emails and phones... and then there is magic and psionics.

Many of the same tips hold for the action deck as they do for the closed questions. Don't agonise over a meaning, if it isn't obvious then think of something that is, and go with that. Try and balance the story so far, the answer you rolled and the style of adventure you want when you interpret answers. You can use unexpected answers to drive plot twists and new story arcs. Don't be afraid of this!



NPC REACTIONS

Savage Worlds has a standard 2d6 reactions table for NPCs. This table ranges from **Hostile** to **Helpful**.

In addition, you can ask a closed question, one that fits the immediate situation. For example, your character has just rescued a hostage. You would expect the hostage to be relieved or thankful. You can follow that up with a closed question of are they thankful for being rescued with a likely [1d10] roll. If that came up as a 1, that could suggest a whole raft of possible reasons. What if the ‘hostage’ was an undercover agent and you just blew their operation? What if the captive and the criminal swapped places just before you entered and you just took out the ‘victim’, and you have just released the kidnapper?

The closed question, at this point, is a useful way of adding an extra layer of complexity or richness to your game. It can throw up situations you were not expecting.

BENNIES

Bennies are an important part of Savage Worlds. These rules do not change the way that you use bennies for your character.

What needs to change is when foes use their bennies. These, of course, are never going to be to your benefit, they may try and avoid defeat or gain an advantage against you.

You will start every solo game session with three bennies, as normal. Every time you use a Bennie it passes to one of your enemies or foes. The GM starts with the regular two bennies per wild card plus one for your character. This is in addition to the bad guys getting your used Bennies.

Foes will always use their Bennies to re-roll their first, non-critical, failed roll. If a foe has Bennies available and there is a use that will be fun, or immediately obvious, then do it!

These rules are just a bare minimum to keep Bennies moving in the game session.

CREATIVE COMBAT

Solo play thrives on random events that push you to be more creative. One of the built-in features of Savage Worlds is Creative Combat. If you succeed a test in combat with a raise, find and roll on the Creative Combat table (2d6) and incorporate the results into your scene.

Creative combat was supposed to make combat more ‘pulpy’ but one aspect of solo play is that you are a lone hero, with no one else to support you, if you are not using allies, fights can be tough. The Creative Combat option can give you a slight boost when acting alone.

DUMB LUCK

Being able to spend a Bennie even after a critical failure will give your Wild Card another advantage. I would suggest that you only do this if you are alone, no allies in your party. This also only applies to you, your hero.

This is another way in which you can even the odds a little in favour of your solo Wild Card

MORE SKILL POINTS

Regardless of your genre or setting solo characters should start with 15 skill points rather than the regulation 12. Those extra three points will help you round out your character, making them a bit more independent. This is useful when you do not have a team to fall back on.



SOLO PLAY ADVICE

Your hero is going to start as a novice. There is no reason why not to employ an accelerated progression and move your character up in power a little faster than you would in a regular game.

Those first few sessions will give you a chance to get a feel for your character and to evolve them in a way that fits how you are playing them but is more interactive than just starting at a higher power level from the outset.

TIME AND FLASHBACKS

In a solo game, you can do some more interesting things with time. You could start at a higher power level, play the final confrontation with an arch enemy, playing it no holds barred and play it straight just to see who wins.

Now you can go back to the beginning and see how you got there!

Were you using a holy sword? How did you get it? That is an adventure right from the start.

Were you mixing tech and magic? How did you learn that?

In this sort of game, a player death should be treated as defeat and capture. You are not plot armoured, and the game should still be a challenge. I have run quests to find that holy sword only to lose it when defeated in the next adventure, but I knew I had it during the final battle, so another adventure was needed to regain the lost sword.

You need to construct a story arc that is going to satisfy all the conditions you set for that first scene, the show-stopping final battle.

Flashbacks

Plots and adventures will be created as you play; there is little or no prep in solo play. Occasionally, you will hit a point where you think “my character would have known that.” If this happens, you can address it in two ways. The first is to say that you have that piece of knowledge and just move on.

Sometimes if you knew something before you set out, you would have done something differently, for this second group you can play a flashback. If you knew there were security guards at the docks, what would you have done? Bribe them to turn a blind eye? Fine, jump back in time and play out the social interaction, try and bribe a security guy, buy him a few drinks and offer him the bribe. If it works out, then you can proceed knowing that you have a man on the inside or that a section of fence will not be patrolled that night.

If the social interaction does badly, then it is all the more important not to trip any alarms as at least one guard could be a little suspicious!

What if...

You can play a scene twice. Identify a point where a question or choice resulted in a significant change in your story. Now jump back to that point and take the

other choice and role play forward from that point. What you have now is an alternative universe version of the same game.

I enjoy doing this when a character I had fun playing reaches a natural conclusion. Maybe they died in the final confrontation, or maybe they won and lived happily ever after.



JOURNALING

I find it extremely useful to keep a journal of my solo adventures. A journal is halfway between your player notes if you were playing in a game and the GM's notes if you were running a campaign.

Some solo players will imagine a scene, ask a few questions, draw a few cards and then write out an entire scene long-form, like a chapter of a book. You can even use these solo rules to write in that fashion.

My journal is more akin to a list of bullet points. I note down questions, rolls and answers, cards drawn and interpretations, but all in the briefest forms.

I also recommend a set of highlighters and using them to pick out possible sidequests, NPCs, and important events.

Reading your journal back to yourself before you start a session will help you get into character and remind you of what could be happening behind the scenes of your adventure, the villain's big scheme or dastardly plan.

When an open question card throws up a surprising answer, you can try and relate it back to previous answers. Using this backward referencing to create plots or story arcs that may be going in 'off-camera.' by this I mean if, for example, you have encountered two assassins, wouldn't it be logical to assume that someone is out to get you? Now you have made that assumption should you draw a card and it said [3Spades] Intuitive Opposing, you could interpret that in the context of someone who wants you dead. To me, that suggests someone guessed or felt that you were working against them. Could this plot be a case of mistaken identity? It is in this way that you can start with no campaign spanning plot or story arc, but build one almost out of nothing. As you refresh your memory with your journal, ask yourself "Why did that happen?"

This is where the highlighters come into their own. I use them to mark and connect events in my journal.

Earlier I talked about What if...? situations. You can use your journal for spotting these important junctions in your story. That is why I prefer to have the questions, rolls, answers and interpretations clearly listed.

No one need ever see your journal. I think they are personal documents, mine would be incomprehensible to anyone else, but if you create something that could be read, there are plenty of places to share solo actual plays or games.

