# The Ultimate Session 0 Checklist

A session zero is a meeting before you officially begin your campaign, where you discuss everyone's expectations for the game. It is how you learn what your players want so you can tailor the experience to them, and keep them invested over time. This checklist is a framework for the framework you will build during your session zero. You should check out this video walkthrough and review the list beforehand, then discuss each section with your group, and revisit this checklist to make adjustments as your campaign evolves.

Team Building

Starting with yourself or a volunteer, go around the group and have everyone answer the following questions. Use the space below to record everyone's names and make notes about their responses. Trust me, this will be fun to read in the future!

- ❏ What's one thing you love about RPGs? This could be a favorite moment from a previous campaign, why they're excited to play (strategy, story, social interaction), or anything else.
- ❏ Are you most excited by combat, exploration and puzzles, or roleplay?
- ❏ As a player, what's one strength you bring to the group? If someone can't think of their own strengths, let others share a strength they see in that player!
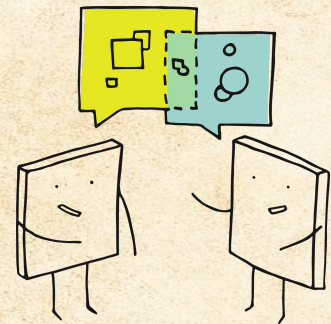
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Scheduling

- ❏ Discuss how long the group can reasonably commit to playing: _____ weeks, months, years.
- ❏ Decide how often the group wants to play: _____ /week, month.
- ❏ Decide how long a typical session should last: _____ hours.
- ❏ Decide where to play: _____ or (back-up) _____.
- ❏ Decide what day and time to play: _____, _____ AM, PM.
- ❏ Decide how long to wait if someone is late: _____ minutes.

- ❑ Discuss: A session will be canceled or rescheduled if...
    - ❑ the DM is absent.
    - ❑ _____ players are absent.
    - ❑
- ❑ Discuss: If a player is absent, then their character...
    - ❑ will be played by the DM.
    - ❑ will be played by another player.
    - ❑ is with the party, but inactive.
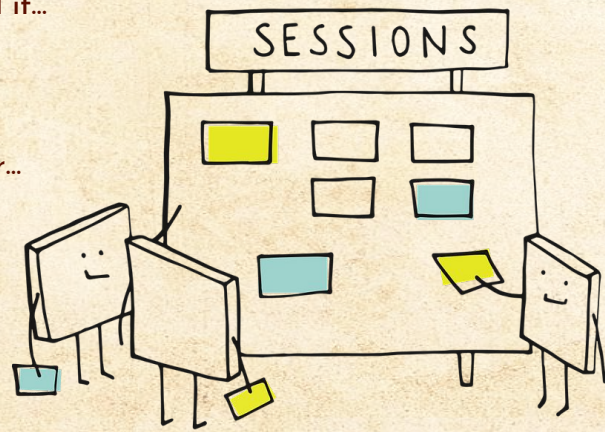   - ❑ is not with the party.
   - ❑

Table Expectations

- ❑ Decide if food is acceptable during gameplay: yes, no.
- ❑ Decide if alcohol is acceptable during gameplay: yes, no.
- ❑ Decide if smartphones are acceptable during gameplay: yes, no.
    - ● Note: Smartphones are a great tool for looking things up!
- ❑ Decide how much time should be allotted to review a ruling: _____ seconds, minutes.
- ❑ Discuss how much player knowledge overlaps with character knowledge.
- ❑ Decide on a preferred depth of roleplay: *Stranger Things*, *Critical Role*.
- ❑ Decide on a general tone: dramatic, comedic.
- ❑ Remind your players that all characters get time in the spotlight if they want it!
- ❑ Discuss how much narrative control the players have.
- ❑ Discuss: Take backs, or retconning, will be permitted when...
    - ❑ the DM misrepresents a scene or creature.
    - ❑ a player describes their character's actions as an obvious joke.
    - ❑ before the player rolls.
    - ❑
- ❑ Discuss: Player-vs-player action is acceptable...
    - ❑ during social interactions
    - ❑ during combat
    - ❑ never
    - ❑
- ❑ Discuss any RPG pet peeves that have not yet been addressed, and if the subject matter becomes serious, go immediately to the next point.
- ❑ Discuss the "rating" of your typical game: G, PG, PG-13, R, X.
    - ● Note: Do not underestimate the importance of this point for keeping a group together! Request that your players privately share anything they do not want to occur in the game, and determine another signal if they would not be comfortable saying "please stop" during the game.
- ❑ Discuss the consequences for breaking these rules.
    - ● Note: Consequences are required to keep players from abusing your group's agreements and spoiling the game for your more dedicated players. A simple disapproving look will work for some players, but others will need to be spoken with privately, and they may just not be a good fit for your game group.

Campaign Framework
- ❑ Decide on the campaign's setting: _____.
- ❑ Decide the accessibility of magic: low, medium, high.
- ❑ Decide the levels of technology: low, medium, high.
- ❑ Discuss the primary environments: forest, grassland, desert, arctic, ocean, underground, lakes and rivers, urban, sky, outer space, other.
- ❑ Discuss the main themes: adventure, post-apocalyptic, political intrigue, mystery, horror, other.
- ❑ Discuss the major threats: elemental forces, undeath, devils and demons, elder gods, nature, social upheaval, faeries, aliens, other.
- ❑ Decide the nature of the adventure: linear, non-linear.
- ❑ Decide the typical mode of play: minis and tokens, theater of mind.
- ❑ Decide at what level the characters will start the adventure: _____.
- ❑ Discuss how the characters will be connected to each other, NPCs, and the setting.

House Rules
- ❑ Character statistics: point buy, standard array, rolling, other.
  - ● Note: Be sure to explain the actual method you prefer when rolling, etc.
- ❑ Leveling up: experience points, milestones, gold, other.
- ❑ Increasing hit points: as written, take maximum, other.
- ❑ Alignment: determines actions, determined by actions, not used, other.
- ❑ Racial bonuses: as written, not used, other.
- ❑ Race/class restrictions: n/a, list.
- ❑ Backgrounds: pre-generated, custom, not used, other.
- ❑ Encumbrance: carry capacity, inventory, not used, other.
- ❑ Critical success: double dice, not used, other.
- ❑ Critical failure: fumble, not used, other.
- ❑ Inspiration: DM-rewarded, not used, other.
- ❑ Number of skill check attempts, group skill checks, other.
- ❑ Initiative: highest roll plus Dexterity, around the table, other.
- ❑ Starting gold: class-based, other.
- ❑ Resting, health regeneration, other.
- ❑ Death, resurrection: as written, other.
- ❑ Homebrew character features
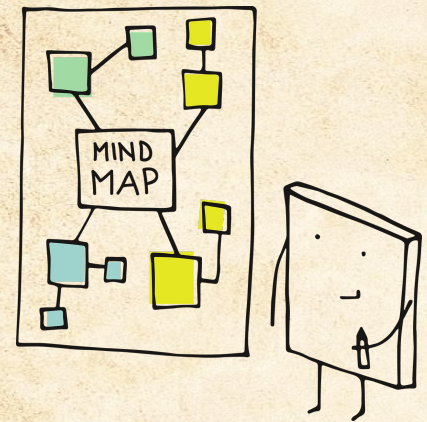
What's Next?
You can play a short quest at the end of your session 0 or maintain that excitement for the first full session of your campaign! And remember these decisions are not set in stone. You should check-in with your players on a regular basis to ask for honest feedback about what they like and do not like about the campaign. This intentional improvement should keep your group together for the long-haul!

Credits

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