Tabletop Role-Playing Games Badge

Have you ever wanted to be a brave knight in shining armor? How about an Elf princess or a Halfling burglar? Do you enjoy creating stories with your friends? Role-playing games (or RPGs) offer a unique way to weave fantastic tales and explore make-believe worlds without leaving the comfort of your kitchen table or living room!

Steps

1. Learn about role-playing games
2. Create a character
3. Play a role-playing game with others

Purpose

When I've earned this badge, I'll know about role-playing games—and how to play them.

Tips Before Takeoff

To begin this badge, you'll need a few things:

- A set of rules. Do you want to play a fantasy game in a world with elves and wizards? Or do you prefer to explore the universe as an intrepid starship captain? Many role-playing games can be found online for free (see the Free Role-Playing Rules section, below).
- A set of polyhedral dice. Most game stores carry a wide variety of dice. There are also a number of apps for electronic devices that you can use to roll virtual dice.
- Pencils and paper. You can print out your own character sheets, or record your characters on lined notebook paper.
- Miniatures. Some games use miniatures to represent characters and monsters, similar to playing pieces on a game board. Instead of figures, you can even use paper cut-outs, tokens, pennies, or dolls. Miniatures aren't required, but they can be useful in the right situations.
- Some friends. Role-playing games require at least two players—the game master (or GM) and one or more players. The GM creates the world and story, while the players assume the roles of characters who explore the world, go on adventures, and perform heroic deeds.
- Your imagination! It's important to note that everything that happens in a role-playing game takes place in your imagination, as well as the imaginations of your friends.

Step 1: Learn About Role-Playing Games

Learn what role-playing games are, how they are played, and what kinds of rules you prefer.

Choices—Do One:

Talk to someone who plays role-playing games. Do you know anyone who plays role-playing games? If so, speak to them and ask questions. Find out what kinds of games they enjoy and learn why they enjoy them. If they own any RPG rulebooks, ask them if you can read them. If you don't know anyone who

plays, try going to local game store and speaking to an employee. Browse the RPGs on the shelves and see which ones capture your interest.

OR

Attend a game convention with an adult and experience role-playing games first-hand. Game conventions are a great place to meet other players and get hands-on experience with playing all sorts of games. Local conventions are usually held at hotels or on college campuses, but some of the largest— like GenCon in Indianapolis, Indiana—take place in convention centers. Retailers and game publishers often set up booths to sell their games, and this can be a wonderful chance to meet the people who create role-playing games.

OR

Do some research on the internet and learn about different kinds of role-playing games. The internet has made it much easier to meet other role-playing game players and learn about their hobby. You can browse publisher web sites to learn about their products, send them an email to ask questions, and even download some role-playing games for free!

What Are Role-Playing Games?

A role-playing game is a method of interactive storytelling for two or more players. While one player takes on the role of the game master or narrator, who describes the world, the rest of the players assume the roles of individual characters in a make-believe setting. Like other kinds of games, RPGs have rules that help the GM and players determine whether a character's actions succeed or fail, often in conjunction with polyhedral dice.

The first role-playing game sold in stores was *Dungeons & Dragons* (or D&D), which is set in a medieval fantasy world much like J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. It was created in 1974 by Dave Arneson and E. Gary Gygax and published by TSR. *Dungeons & Dragons* quickly captured the imaginations of players around the world, and is still played today. Soon, other game publishers were creating their own rules and settings for players to experience.

Every role-playing game uses a system of rules to define characters and help tell their stories. Characters are often defined by their ability scores—numbers that show how strong, fast, or smart they are. Using their ability scores as a guide, players create histories and personalities for their characters, and then act out (or role-play) what their characters say and do during the games they play.

Most RPGs use dice to add a random element to the game. Dice are rolled to see if a character's actions succeed or fail. Polyhedral dice come in many shapes, including 4-sided, 6-sided, 8-sided, 10-sided, 12-sided, and 20-sided types. The many types of dice are abbreviated by place a "d" (for "die") in front of the number of sides they have. For example, a twenty-sided die is referred to as a "d20." An additional number can be added before the "d" to show how many dice should be rolled. For example, "2d6" shows that two six-sided dice should be rolled and added together.

Working together as a team, players participate in a narrative story created by the game master. The game master tells the players what their characters see, hear, and feel. He also plays the roles of any other non-player characters (or NPCs) the players might encounter, including animals, fantastic beasts, or people who live in the game world. Some games can last for months or even years, with the players' characters becoming more experienced over time.

Free Role-Playing Game Rules

While most role-playing games can be bought in stores, some are available for free download online.

- The latest edition of the Dungeons & Dragons basic rules are available for free from Wizards of the Coast. You can download them here.
- GURPS (Generic Universal Role-Playing System) is published by Steve Jackson Games. The basic rules, known as GURPS Lite, can be downloaded for free here.
- Basic Role-Playing (or BRP) is published by Chaosium. You can download the basic rules, as well as many supporting PDF files, here.

Step 2: Create a Character

To play in a role-playing game, you need a character. Your character is the role you will play in the game. Let your imagination be your guide!

Choices—Do One:

Use a set of RPG rules to create a character. Once you've decided on which RPG system you want to learn, try creating a character for yourself. Use the rules as a guide when creating your character. If you know someone who plays RPGs, you can ask them for help, advice, or inspiration. Creating a character usually involves choosing a fantasy race, like Elf or Dwarf, as well as a character class, such as Fighter or Wizard. It also involves assigning ability scores, which determine how well your character can perform certain tasks.

OR

Create a personality and history for your character. Outside of your character's abilities, the most important aspect of your character is who he or she is (you can play a character of any gender you like!). Decide what sort of personality your character has. Is she outgoing? What does she do for fun? What's her favorite color? Even small details can help to make your character more interesting and realistic. Once you've decided on what kind of person she is, write a story about your character that shows where she comes from, what her family is like, or how she became an adventuring hero.

OR

Draw a picture of the character you would like to play. A detailed drawing of your character can go a long way to explaining who she is and what she does. What kinds of clothes does she wear? Does she prefer to wear armor to protect herself from her enemies? What color are her hair and eyes? If she's a wizard, does she carry a staff like Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings*, or a wand like Hermione Grainger in

the Harry Potter books? Be as detailed with your drawing as you like. If you prefer to paint your character or sculpt her from clay, you can do that, too!

Step 3: Play a Role-Playing Game with Others

To play a role-playing game, you need at least two players, but a group of five or six players is ideal. Finding players is as easy as asking your family, friends, or troop to play with you.

Choices—Do One:

Find a game master and play in his or her game. If you know someone who plays role-playing games, ask them to show you how to play by running a game for you. See if any of your friends or sister Girl Scouts wants to play, too. Playing an RPG is the best way to learn the rules and experience just how much fun it is to create a shared story with other people.

OR

Act out a free-form story with your friends. Gather your friends or sister Girl Scouts together and play-act a story. Pretend you are adventurers exploring a haunted castle, fighting a fire-breathing dragon, or rescuing a prince from an evil sorceress. Make sure everyone contributes to the story, and talk to one another as if you are really your characters. Be as descriptive as you can, and help one another to achieve your goals. Though you aren't using any rules to define the story, you're still role-playing!

OR

Observe a role-playing game as it is being played. If you know someone who plays role-playing games, see if they'll let you watch one of their game sessions. If you don't know anyone who plays RPGs, you can try your local game store. Many game stores set aside space and tables so customers can play games in the store, and they often schedule games that anyone can come to play or observe. Pay the game store a visit and find out when these games are going to take place, then show up and ask if you can watch the players. They may even ask you to play with them!

Add the Badge to Your Journeys

For step 3, attempt to apply principles from the Girl Scout Law to your character's actions in the game. For example, pick one line from the Girl Scout Law, and have your character attempt to fulfill it in the game you play.

Now that I've earned this badge, I can give service by:

- Teaching others how to play role-playing games so they can share in the fun
- Creating a gaming club at school or through a local library so you can meet other players
- Being a game master and learning to create and run my own role-playing game adventures