

# WESTFINDER GAMEWRITING GUIDE

## 2013

*What do you need in a game submission?*

- Purpose
- World Background
- PC Teams
- Flow
- Game Conventions
- Teaser
- Beyond the Submission

### **Purpose**

- What are you trying to accomplish with this game?
  - The goal of any game should be player empowerment, so how do you think your game would foster that?
    - Ex.: I want to encourage the exploration of concepts like ownership, free will, and prejudice. As my game involves recently abolished slavery, I hope to foster player empowerment by having significant power shifts in game that allow all parties to play around with these dynamics. The game is set in a futuristic society where some seemingly insignificant feature establishes prejudice (similar to Jane Elliot's 'A Class Divided' blue eyes, brown eyes social experiment), so projected status will play a big role in my game, and I hope to provide players with plenty of personal goals and larger group experiences that challenge their idea of freedom and power.
- We're trying to create memorable player experiences, so keep in mind that while a great story can provide you a solid foundation to work with, we are always aiming to have fun, and sometimes that means sacrificing your original 'story plan.'
  - Flow is not called plot for a reason! If you're trying to tell a story, go write a book and we'll happily support you. We're looking for games that encourage personal growth and exciting opportunities for *every* player to feel important.
- *Useful Questions*
  - What do I want players to take away from my game?
  - How important is the "end"?
  - If the course of the game is radically different from my expectations, how upset would that make me?
  - Do my goals for my story offer empowerment to every single player?

### **World Background**

- Where does the game take place?
  - World background exists on a very wide range of scales:  
Universe>Planet>Continent>Country>State>County>Town>Site of Action
    - All of these things may or may not be relevant to your world background.
- Additionally: What has happened directly leading up to game?
  - The events immediately leading up to your game often provide a lot of insight into the situation players will find themselves in at the beginning of the game. Basically, this portion of the world background goes beyond building up the location and people, and covers the recent events relevant to game.
    - What has caused your game to happen?
- The more useful and game-relevant information that you can fit into the world background, the better developed your world will be.
- *Useful Questions*
  - What does my world look like geographically?
  - Who inhabits it?
  - What is the sociopolitical history? How about religion?
  - How does my greater world background affect the immediate background of game?

### **PC Teams**

- Who are the groups in the game?
  - The number of PC groups will vary from game to game.
    - Maybe you have only two or three groups of PCs, set against one another. Maybe you have four or five smaller groups, with more complex motivations that tie them all together into one story.

- This section reveals a lot about the characters who will be present in game and the situations players will be in. Just as any story is about the characters, any game is about the players!
- *Useful Questions*
  - What brings my characters to where they are?
  - How do my groups relate to one another? Are they rivals? Partners? Begrudging cohabitants?
  - What kind of people are present in my world? How would they naturally gravitate into groupings?

## Flow

- What actually happens in the game?
  - Flow is one of the most difficult and varied aspects of gamewriting, but ultimately also one of the most important.
- You can never predict what decisions people are going to make. Ever hear, "no battle plan ever survives the first encounter with the enemy?" Well, no flow ever survives the first encounter with the PCs.
  - The challenge is to create a fun, engaging flow that can be loosely guided by SPCs but ultimately be developed by the players.
- All you really need to know is: Where do your PC teams begin game? What are specific events you would like to see happen during the course of the game? And, what are some potential outcomes?
- *Useful Questions*
  - What sorts of interactions might naturally occur between the groups I have established?
  - What motivations do my players have to continue the story in any given direction?
  - How much SPC guidance would be needed to keep the flow from flying off the rails?
    - Remember, minimal is usually better!

## Game Conventions

- What special rules does the game have?
  - This is the place where you write about any mechanics, or systems, that we will need to use in reality to represent abilities or objects or events of some kind in the fantasy world.
- Good mechanics are easy to remember, and help maintain immersion in the game world.
- Some common types of game conventions
  - Weapons
  - Magic
  - General
    - Timestop
    - Ghosts
- *Useful Questions*
  - Is there magic in this setting? If so, how am I going to simulate it in game?
  - What weapons are present in my setting? How do they work?
  - Can the dead interact with the living in my world? How will I show that?
  - Are there any specific things that *need* to happen in my game that require a tailored game convention?

## Teaser

- What would most entice a player to come play in your world?
  - The first thing players will see and can be almost anything—a short story, a myth, a poster, or even a short movie.
- *Useful Questions*
  - Does it reveal enough about your game to engage players without revealing the whole story?
  - Would you, objectively, feel compelled to come to the game after reading it?
    - Try asking some friends!
  - How long is it? Will your audience want to see it in its entirety?
    - Super long detailed teasers are not always the best plan of action!

## Beyond the Submission

- After your submission is accepted, there are plenty of other fun aspects of gamewriting to consider! If you're interested in learning more about what happens post acceptance, feel free to ask a staff member or seasoned gamewriter about some of the following topics:
  - Character Sheets
  - Costuming
  - Sets
  - Props
  - Re Casting

- Proper SPC Use