

## What do I mean by a hack?

A new game which changes or adapts elements of an existing game or system.

Note: I'm going to be using the term game to refer to a game line (like Changeling or Blades in the Dark) and System to refer to the underlying mechanics (like World of Darkness, FitD, Blades in the Dark)

## Kinds of Hacks

- Rules Tweaks (Star Trek Express, NBA Express)
- Reskins (Hutt Cartel (originally), Swoop Gangs)
- Adaptation of Existing Game/Setting to a New System
- New Game

## Big Picture Advice

- Know Why
- Fail Fast
- Approaches to Writing

## Analysis

- Why do you want to do this? What are you gaining—and simple entertainment or the joy of creation is enough of a reason. But you want to be clear for yourself.
- What are the elements of play you're looking for?
  - If an existing game, what is cool about it? When you play or think about it, what elements do you focus on? As vitally: what elements do you ignore or have less interest in?
  - If it is something new, what is it you imagine players will actually be doing in play?
- How much work is this going to involve: know ahead of time be practical
- Looking at existing attempts: why aren't they doing what you want
- Is it a cool setting, can you go systemless? Tables and setting generation.

## Fail Fast

- What is your pitch?
- The best way to start is just to start. I have two places I approach from: characters (playbooks, archetypes, skills) or resolution (core mechanics, combat, basic moves)
- One of the best places to start is with the character keeper.
- Figure out what's the minimum you need to get playing. Usually basic resolution, characters, conflict, healing. Other elements: full character creation, equipment, experience, GM advice, etc. can come later.

- Set yourself a deadline. Posting on the Calendar is a good impetus to push your work.
- Outline and use multiple tabs: when you get stuck, move to another section
- If your project is large, break things down into multiple documents—makes work easier.
- Keep a control copy—note where you have to make changes
- Don't go to layout too early
- Write it and run it.
- Iterate or scrap (but even in the case of the latter, save for use elsewhere)
- Failure Case Study: 7<sup>th</sup> Sea
- Reasonable Success Case Study: STA, Changeling PbtA
- Shock of the new: challenge of new mechanics and systems. Work involved.
- Design for table play: yes, teaching is good, but consider what happens when it gets to the table.
- ALPHABETICAL ORDER AND PARALLELISM
- Thinking about online play

## **Adapting Existing Things**

- Reading Existing Systems
  - Kinds of success and the feel
  - Playstyle
  - Grittiness
  - Resolution effect vs. choices vs. steps
  - Example: PbtA and miss cases
- Understanding the strengths of a system
- Breaking down the elements
  - Forged in the Dark
  - PbtA
  - Mutant
  - 2d20
  - A bunch I don't know
- Open Gaming Licenses
- Creative Commons
- Community Content Creation (and the dangers of it)
- Mechanics vs. Materials--- trademarks/content (not a lawyer)
- The real danger of adaptations: you get stuck.

## **Feedback and Playtesting**

- Establishing Intent
- Do you just want to play?
- Watching for places where someone doesn't understand, you've left something out, or you don't run exactly from what you've written
- Actual Feedback
- Publishing, printing, options, Kickstarting, DT Cards. etc

## Pitches & Ideas Discussion: Case Studies

- Fading Suns: why? What do we want? Legacy vs. PbtA
- Battletech & Band of Blades
- Brindlewood Bay/How Riverdale
- Hearts of Wulin: Samurai, Pokemon, others
- Filing the details off of Changeling the Lost PbtA

<https://twitter.com/Armandah17/status/1558129523559899136?s=20&t=kkZDGrXuMnKgKzsSq6iTbw>

<https://www.gauntlet-rpg.com/blog/age-of-ravens-double-visions>

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