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Game Master Guide - Table of Contents

Want to see what happens when you throw a rag-tag group of dead teenagers together for a week of emotional chaos? You're in the right place. This guide is for potential Game-Masters-to-be who are interested in running a Week themselves, or for curious Players and Reapers who want to see what it's like behind the scenes.

What is a Game Master?

The Game Master is the crucial counterpart to Players and acts as the main driving force behind the entire roleplay. They direct Reapers, other Officers, and the Players (in-character) in accordance to the plot and missions they've written while interacting with Reapers and Players to let everyone's characters participate and shine. You are essentially the Dungeon Master for a Week, which is a high seat of honor!

As a Game Master, you are in full command of the story of a Game, and the Week is yours to experiment with. Your goal should be to create an enjoyable experience for all participants — Players, Reapers, and yourself — while adhering to the existing rules/canon. Just because you're in charge doesn't mean you shouldn't be having fun too.

In-universe, the Game Master has been given the blessing by the Composer and Conductor to run a Game as they see fit. Their role can range from being a full-blown antagonist, sympathetic anti-hero, rebellious power-hungry fighter, or a strict by-the-books Reaper; the choice is yours. Behind the scenes, you'll have the support of the Officer team, who can assist with facilitating the Game before and during the RP, providing input about pacing/mechanics, live Player/Reaper feedback, as well as helping to bring your story to life.

Creating a Game Master/Game

Themes and Overall Plot

You're the big bad! Or are you? Come up with a compelling character or plot that you can comfortably use to antagonize the Players. Themed weeks are also fine with inspirations from other franchises, and the finer mechanics of a week can be twisted, adjusted, and changed to fit your vision. Plot complexity will be impacted by the length of your Game, as well as what you would like to achieve or focus on, but should be resolved by the final day.

While new ideas and gimmicks are always welcome, ideas used in previous Games are okay to use as long as they have your own personal twist. Even if Games have similar themes, the cast of characters and other elements are often different enough to paint it as a distinctly different Game. If you would be interested in themes used in previous weeks, please feel free to ask in the official Discord.

The roleplay has seen themes inspired from all sources, from a chill, week-long beach tournament, to intensive 3-day weekend Games where each day was a struggle to survive against a rabid Game Master. The more intensive the plot, the more Players and Reapers alike can be immersed and involved with moving through your story!

Playing a Game Master

During the RP, Game Masters are the face of the Game as a whole and act as the final obstacle between Players and Reincarnating — although Players may not know that. Consider how your Game Master views Players — as means to an end, as pawns, or as poor, unfortunate souls? Game Masters are above normal Reapers in terms of power and authority, but they are still Reapers at the end of the day. Consider how you want the other Reapers to view your character— as their boss, their friend, or their enemy?

How you choose to introduce and play your Game Master is up to you. Proactive and active personalities are the typical hallmarks of a Game Master, but sometimes they may prefer to puppet from the shadows. Having an assertive personality makes it much easier to involve Players and stimulate both Reapers and Player characters alike to grow and change, and many roleplayers have expressed a preference for active and responsive Game Masters to roleplay with.

Although powerful, there is always room for character development. How did your character get to be Game Master? Why did they want to run a Game? What are their motivations or goals? Even if your Game focuses on Players/Reapers, that doesn't mean that your GM has nothing they want to achieve.

Mechanics/GM Gimmicks

The mechanics used for a Game depend on what theme the Game has, or what you would like to try. Some examples of Game mechanics include:

- Partners: Normal partner pacts? No partners? Multiple partners? Teams?
- Secret Reports locked behind RP — shops, quests, missions, bonuses, etc.
- Introducing Custom Items/Pins
- Randomized penalty at the start of a Day that affects Players' stats
- Missions always taking place at midnight
- A daily buddy Rank-Up system
- etc.

While a Game Master is primarily in charge of the plot of their Week, they can also dictate and change other mechanic-related rules of the Week beforehand. Do you want to let Reapers confront Players a day earlier? Do you want to let people wear 10 threads in a Game? A great reason to ask for these is working them to be relevant to your plot.

Make sure the proposed mechanic will not take away from your character's and Players' roleplay time. It's very easy to get bogged down by fancy mechanics and neglect to actually interact with other characters. Sometimes less is more!

District/District Map

Where is your Game Master from? Where are they hosting the Game? If you plan on using a new canon District as the location of the next Game, you'll have to claim the District. See the District Guide for more details. Shibuya is always welcome to use for Game Masters who wish not to create a new District, but still want to deviate from the typical set up of Shibuya's Partnerships.

Maps serve as a visual guide for how Players can traverse the District during the Game, as well as other useful information such as Wall locations. Active Districts will generally have maps already drafted on their Wiki page with the sub-areas outlined and connected with roads. Notable markers for places of interest like a little house where Shops are located, or stars for important plot landmarks will be helpful. Above all, **make sure your map is easy to read,** as Players, Reapers, and Officers will be looking at it for a majority of the Week.

(Shop locations are not available until after Shopkeeper applications in a Game, so don't worry about them until after those applications close.)

Missions

Missions make up the bread and butter of a Game; they give Players a goal to achieve, get Reapers in on the action, and move your story along. If your Game has a theme, your missions should be themed to match accordingly, as well as supplement your Week's plot or provide a transition towards plot development. Mission elements can include walls, battles, riddles, puzzles of your own design, Noise traps, or other interactive elements. Any combination of the aforementioned elements can be tweaked to your needs —

you could, for example, put walls *everywhere* to make a city-wide scavenger hunt for a day. Be sure to offer different challenges throughout the week to keep each day unique and engaging.

Typical Games have 1 mission per day with a 1 to 4 hour time limit, depending on how complicated they are. The best active times tend to be between 1 PM – 8pm EST to catch the maximum amount of Players online to partake in your missions. It's best practice to announce when you're releasing Missions the day before so Players know when they should be online. Be flexible, you may need to adjust the complexity based on if Players are struggling or if there aren't enough Officers/Reapers around to help host.

The best times of activity are between 1 PM – 8pm EST to catch the maximum amount of Players online to partake in your missions. **A day's Mission and plot must be wrapped up by 10pm EST** in order to give folks time to be human and wind down on roleplaying before bed, as quite a number of roleplayers are students or have work.

Entry Fees
Entry Fees are a powerful motivator for Players, and add a thematic element or through line to your game. Feel free to adjust entry fees to match your overall theme/plot. Typically, entry fees are taken right before the start of Day 1, but this can be adjusted depending on the nature of the Game/District. Players may or may not know what their entry fee is, and coming to terms with their loss or divulging the information with others can be a chance for character development.

Breaking Canon
Not to be done lightly.

Game Master plots that break Global Canon or involve characters that violate Roleplay Rules will require revisions before approval. For example, if a proposal asked for an army of Angels to put down Taboo Noise, a revision request may have a District's Reapers descending upon normal Noise that have pursued Players instead. However if the Composer judges the plot and planning to be exceptionally compelling and interesting enough to justify the breakage for one Game, it may be approved.

Duties of a Game Master

Revision of GM Plan

After you're confirmed as the Game Master by an Officer, you'll be invited to the God Pad, the secret Officers-only chat. There, you may select more Officers from the pool of applicants (if there's space), and receive feedback from existing Officers for how to run your Game. You'll get feedback on pacing of your plot, GM gimmicks, and adjustments on running your missions in an actual roleplayable space. It's highly suggested to take these opinions into account as fellow roleplayers who have experienced negative and positive aspects of previous Games when considering adjustments!

Approving Character Applications

Once Player and Reaper applications open, you must look over each Player's Entry Fee to make sure it aligns with what you've chosen for the Week. If you believe the fee is impactful to the Player's personality and thematic with your plot, their character is good to go.

Reapers will follow a similar process, however Officers will suggest to prioritize those with a wider availability rather than first-come, first-served.

A standard Shibuya Game is suggested to have a 1.5 Support:1 Harrier:2 Player + 4 extra Players ratio population for a Week, with a Player cap of 14 starting on Day 1 and a cap of 8 for non-Erasure canon Weeks. The cap is for a comfortable roleplaying environment with ample time for everyone to roleplay, and without putting stress on IC-tracking Officers as well as preventing lengthy Game Master battles.

(Optional) Approving Shops

If you have a stat-related mechanic specific to your plot, you may also have input on what they stock and their own shop friendship gimmicks. Otherwise the Numbers/Stats Officers will primarily handle these applications.

Moderating Duties

All Officers (including the Game Master) are expected to be aware of the roleplay rules and enforce them in the chat. This includes stopping or reporting any bullying, exclusion, mentioned trigger warnings, and unpleasant behavior from the community. Due to the intense involvement of a Game Master character, in these situations, it's best to report it in God Pad and allow PR / IC duty Officers to handle it until you've wrapped up your mission / roleplaying.

Game Master Gimmicks/Mechanics

While primarily your responsibility to moderate, you may enlist available IC Officers to assist running them throughout the Week. Ask for help, because juggling roleplaying and moderation of your own plot AND Game gimmicks is quite a lot!

Running A Game

Pacing: Pre-Game/Pre-Week
Pre-Game lasts the three real time weeks before the Game while Pre-Week is the 7 days right before Day 1. This period is for character setup for GM, Players and Reapers and is a perfect time to get the mindset of your character and build your setting. Even if your GM isn't a 'sunshine-and-rainbows' kind of person, please interact and build connections with Players/Reapers. Pre-week can also be used to introduce new GM mechanics to allow for people to get used to them.

Pacing: Game Week
This outline follows the "story mountain" used in designing story plots. This is a rough skeleton of a full Week, feel free to adjust depending how long you want your Pre-Week to be or if you want a Game Week that spans longer than 7 real-time days.

> **Days 1–2 Opening:** Set up for your district/plot. Introduce new mechanics for the Week.
> **Day 3 Build-Up:** Players discover that Reapers are not as friendly as some of them may purport and that Erasure is a real threat to their chances of reincarnation. Favored day for Plot Erasures or First Erasures.
> **Day 4 More Build-Up:** Rising action/climax/start of first climax for GM plot.
> **Days 5–6 Sub-Climax/Plot twist:** Intense character building for Players revolving around their Entry Fees, reasons for coming back to life, and relationships they have built throughout the Game. Reapers (or even the GM) may face moral dilemmas about their motivations and alignment since Harriers will begin hunting for their Erasures directly on Day 6.
> **Day 7 Climax and Resolution:** GM fight; closure and resolution for the week.
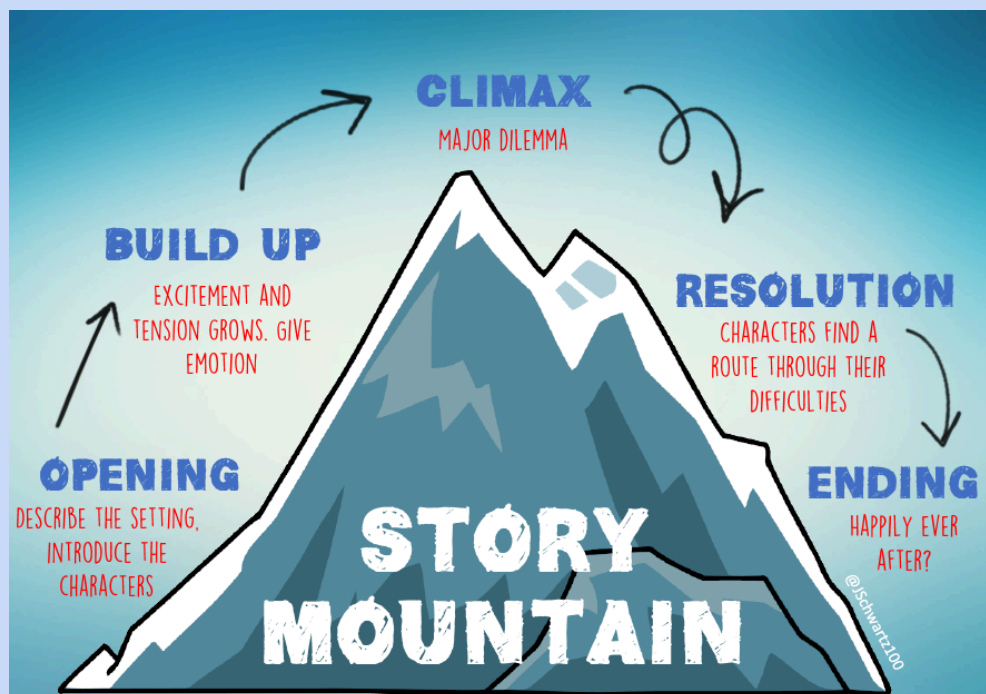
Post-Week

The week immediately following the winner's ceremony is for reincarnated Players to say goodbye to each other, to Reapers, and to Players who have chosen the path of Reaperdom. If your Game Master happens to still be alive and experienced a change of heart, these 7 days are the time for your character to pass on any parting words for the winners.

Hosting Missions

Presumably, your mission outline has been completed within your Game Master application and tweaked in the Pre-Game period. You or a helping Reaper Organizer (typically an OOC Officer) will explain the Mission to Reapers in the #Reap-Heap channel one hour before you release it in the God's Channel. Reapers should be aware of mission details (whatever you would like to share) before Players to allow them time to split up walls and think of ideas, typically given to them during the debrief.

The best times of activity are between 1 PM – 8pm EST to catch the maximum amount of Players online to partake in your missions. **A day's Mission and plot must be wrapped up by 10pm EST** in order to give folks time to be human and wind down on roleplaying before bed, as quite a number of roleplayers are students or have work. **It's best to give a heads up OOCly a day ahead when you're releasing Missions** so Players know when they should be online.

Officer and Reapers muns are an integral part of helping run any Game. Reaper characters are the first line of resistance that Players meet, and they run walls and battles to help advance Player growth. Utilizing Reapers effectively allows you more free time to interact with Players as the Game Master, and make your plot come alive. Give Reapers the freedom to play how they want to play, and encourage them to create wall missions that reflect their personalities. Keep in mind that Reapers have their own individual motivations and will be impacted by your plot as well.

Shops

Shops are usually closed during missions if they're blocked off by Walls, hence the map markers being important references as mentioned in Game maps. Shops that are doubly-run by Player and Reaper characters will be closed so those characters can focus on the plot and mission.

Feel free to utilize shops in your missions, sidequests, or plot development. You can lock quest-related items behind purchases or including willing Shopkeepers in day-to-day Missions. While not typically overseen by the Game Master, shops are important elements to the Game as a whole and act as central gathering points.

Erasure

Erasures are a real consequence from the everlasting clash between Players and Reapers in the Underground. The will to continue to exist from both sides are contested in the Reaper's Game, and not everyone makes it through to the end. While the concept of permanent character death is daunting, they

are a crucial turning point for many characters in coming to terms that they must surmount their entry fee, and other obstacles in their way, often realizing a Game cannot be won completely alone.

In the beginning, Players in-character will be unaware of the dangers of Erasure — as they progress through the Game, the threat will loom more and more prominently. Erasure, unless pre-determined for plot, should happen no earlier than Day 3. Erasure typically happens during combat, either in a regular Reaper fight or during the GM fight. If a Player is in a dicey situation earlier than anticipated, you can intervene in a way that does not overstep into Godmodding territory.

The IC repercussions of Erasure are a Big Deal — allow some time for Players and Reapers to mourn the loss.

Ideal number of Players remaining end of Day):
- Day 1 = All
- Day 2 = 14 (actual number)
- Day 3 = 12-14
- Day 4 = 12 (actual number)
- Day 5 = 8-10
- Day 6 = 6-8
- Day 7 = 0-6

If you choose not to have Erasure in your GM plot, Player applications will be capped at 8. This is to ensure that Officers and Reapers can adequately give each Player the chance to shine without overshadowing or ignoring others, as well as making the final GM battle more manageable, fair, and compelling.

When Things Go Haywire

No Game will ever go exactly as planned, and it will benefit you to be able to adapt and change when necessary. When planning your Week, it helps to have some contingency plans if Players don't do things as you expect. And sometimes, things that happen on the fly can be just as good as what you had planned out.

Some problems can be fixed with clarification by the GM (e.g. through God's Channel or an IC conversation/message) or through direct conversation with the relevant characters. Officers and Reapers are a great resource for helping to corral Players towards the original goal, and can help to keep an eye out for things when you're not around. However, they may not know what to look out for, so be sure to communicate your contingency plans to them if necessary. Asking for feedback or advice OoC is also an option, if you are struggling to come up with a solution. Be flexible in adjusting the complexity on the go based on if they're struggling or if there aren't enough Officers/Reapers around to help host.

Should you have to do damage control, try to keep it IC; OOC direction, although easier, detracts from the immersion as a whole and may leave a bad taste in some people's mouths. Game Masters must still comply with the 'No Godmodding' rule (See: Roleplay Rules), but are granted a certain degree of plot armour up until the final GM battle. However, unless you are given consent by other RPers, in no way should the GM be

able to directly control Player's/Reaper's actions, and a Game Master's powers/abilities must align with their role as a Reaper.

Last but not least, if you find yourself spending more than 4 hours straight in any TRG capacity and burning out, please take a break! Pass the baton on to God Pad for at least half an hour and decompress. Giving your brain a moment to be normal will lend clarity to your decision-making and honestly keeping healthy boundaries between your health and time to the enjoyment of the roleplay.

GM Applications

When Game dates are set, GM applications in a Google Form will typically be open for 10-14 days. At the point of application, it is recommended to have a general idea about what big plot points you'd like to have, mechanics you would like to use/introduce, potential missions, and an outline of your week. While it doesn't need to be wholly fleshed out, the more details you provide, the more likely Officers evaluating the application will choose your proposal. Any extras (bonus bosses, secret reports, sidequests, etc.) are not necessary, but are a nice touch.

While previous Game Master/Dungeon master experience is not necessary, the most valuable things you can bring to the table are fun ideas, an open mind, and being active in the roleplay. Focusing on engagement and being available to interact with Players and Reapers will benefit everyone at the end of the day. Being familiar with existing TRG mechanics will help as well, as you will know the general flow of what a Game is like. Please keep in mind that this guide is also not exhaustive, so please feel free to reach out to the Officer team with any questions. Thank you for reading this far!

If your application is not chosen, please feel free to hold onto it for the next Game. An Officer will be in touch with you, and feel free to ask them questions about your application. More likely than not, they will love working with you to host your Game in the future, and even help adapt it into a Weekend to have it happen sooner than later.

Application Outline
District Description: If using a new canon District, you'll have to claim the District. See the District Guide for more details.
Plot Overview: Explain what your plot for the Week will be.
Game Layout: Entry Fees, new mechanics or changes to existing mechanics, bonus bosses, etc.
Week/Weekend Timeline: A day-by-day timeline (See Game Pacing for a layout). Include missions/plot development.
Here is an example Application to what a Game Master planning doc looks like.

Skipping the Line
Those who have a **solidified Game Master plan** and **want to reserve a set of dates in the future** can skip the usual GM application. This is for prospective Game Masters who have planned to set aside a certain time period to run their Week and wish to guarantee their position.

1. Pre-set GM submissions go directly to the Composer.
2. Pre-set GM submissions will not be granted after a date poll has been completed, and your requested date is not the winning date.
3. Submissions **must be a minimum of 6 weeks ahead of your date claim**, but 2 months is preferred.
4. The submitted proposal must satisfy the same criteria as usual applications, but within a condensed committee of just the Composer and Conductor. Current Officers may be asked to give feedback if they do not come to a consensus.
5. The Composer will ask clarifying questions about mechanics, plot, and revisions, and try to give a definite answer within 7 days.
6. If your early submission is not accepted, you may revise and resubmit anytime, or wait for the official Game Master applications to open as usual.

Additional Resources

Please note that these resources are by no means necessary to read, nor should they deter you if ideas overlap. They are just here for additional reference or to provide guidance if needed. More resources will be added as they are found!

List:
- A Crap Guide to D&D: Dungeon Master [Youtube]
- Looking for other external links/reads on how to GM/DM any tabletop style rpg to get a better mindset for the role.

Below are some previous TRG GMs. If you'd like some advice, insight, or potential resources from past Weeks, please feel free to reach out to them!

- Doge - Long-time Officer/Pokemon AU
  - Wrote the example GM doc
- Tori - Haunted Weekend/Code Lyoko Weekend/Manhattan Weekend
- Echo - Week 12/AAW/Ueno Weekend
- Xan - Week 15
- Jackal - Week 17
- Mary - Seoul Weekend (1 & 2)
- Eckles - Week 9 and 18