The Character Foundry

A **Neurodivergent-Friendly** Worksheet for Building

SillyTavern Characters from Scratch

Credits:

Archetype_builder's Label and Behavioral Technique: One change to how I prompt my AI took it from parrot to actually creative : r/SillyTavernAI

Huge-centipede's Friction Technique: On Building Characters with *Friction* : r/SillyTavernAI

Personality/Description & First Message Focus

This template uses guided questions instead of blank fields.

Every section explains why it exists so you can skip what you don't need.

There is no wrong order. Start wherever your brain wants to start.

How This Template Works

This worksheet walks you through building a SillyTavern character card by asking you questions and letting you think through the answers. It produces two things: a Personality/Description field and a First Message/Greeting.

You do not need to fill in every section. You do not need to go in order. Some people think visually first, some start with a personality, some start with a scenario. All of these are fine.

Choose Your Starting Point

Different brains work differently. Pick the entry point that feels most natural right now. You can always come back and fill in the others later.

I see a person in my head - Start with Part 1, Step 1 (The Body). Build outward from appearance.

I know how they act - Start with Part 2 (Behavioral Personality). Define what they do, then figure out why.

I know the scenario I want - Start with Part 4 (First Message). Build the scene, then reverse-engineer who would be in it.

I have a vibe or archetype - Start with Part 1, Step 3 (The Soul). Nail the psychology, then build the rest around it.

I want to get something working fast - Skip to the Quick Start Card on the last page. Fill in the minimum, test, iterate.

Template Principles

Behavioral, not labels. Instead of tagging a character as "confident," you describe what they do when challenged and why. This produces dramatically better LLM output because the model has behavioral patterns to generate from, not a single word to repeat.

Friction makes characters interesting. A character with no contradictions, no tension between what they want and what they do, gives the LLM nothing to work with. Every section of this template is designed to help you find the friction.

Prose over lists. SillyTavern characters work best when described in flowing prose, not trait tags. This template helps you develop ideas through questions, then assemble them into prose in the final step.

Session-safe. There is a save-state section at the end for noting where you left off. Character creation can be a multi-session project and that is completely normal.

Part 1: Character Foundation

This section uses Lajos Egri's three-dimensional character framework: the body, the environment, and the soul. Each dimension feeds into the next. You are building a ramp of causality — how this person became who they are.

Why this matters:
LLMs generate better, more varied responses when they can trace a character's behavior back to its roots. A character who is "nervous around authority" because they had a controlling parent will behave differently from one who is nervous because they were falsely accused of something. The "why" shapes the "how" — and gives the LLM more material to draw from.

Step 1: The Body (Physiological)

This is not just what they look like. It is how their body has shaped their experience of the world. A tall person moves through space differently than a short one. Someone with a visible scar has a different relationship to strangers' gazes than someone without one.

What does this character look like?

Age, height, build, distinguishing features. Think about what a stranger would notice first.

How has their body shaped their life?

Does their appearance get them attention they want or don't want? Do they move confidently or try to shrink? Is there something about their body they're proud of, self-conscious about, or indifferent to?

What do their clothing and grooming choices say about them?

Are their choices deliberate (style-conscious, uniform, functional) or default (whatever's clean, whatever fits)? What would surprise someone about their wardrobe?

Example: Carl Hamilton (from the Riff method)

Thin, tall (6'1"), African-American man with a purposefully retro fade haircut. He's 33. His appearance is deliberate but understated — he has taste but doesn't want to draw attention. He drives a practical-but-sporty VW R34 with silver BBS wheels. The car, like the haircut, says: I know what I like, and I'm not performing for you.

Step 2: The Environment (Sociological)

Where someone grew up and what shaped them is the engine of characterization. This is where the friction starts. Nobody reaches adulthood without being molded by their environment — sometimes in alignment with it, sometimes in rebellion against it.

Where did they grow up, and what was that like?

City, suburb, rural? What class? What was the culture like? What was valued in their community? What was looked down on?

What shaped them during their formative years?

Key experiences, relationships, turning points. Were they popular or isolated? Did they fit in or stand out? What did they learn about the world before they were old enough to question it? Did anything happen that changed their trajectory?

Where are they now, and how do they feel about it?

Job, living situation, social circle. Is their current life what they planned? Better? Worse? Do they feel stuck, content, or restless?

What specific references ground them? (Use sparingly — sprinkles, not the whole sundae)

1–3 specific cultural touchpoints: a band they love, a movie that shaped them, a hobby that defines their weekends. Pick ones that reveal something about who they are, not just what they consume.

Example: Carl Hamilton

Grew up in Belleville, a middle-class suburb of Detroit. He was nerdy, got teased by peers because of a "Got Milk" ad featuring Aaron Burr/Hamilton and his lighter skin. He rejected the pop rap culture around him — too good for Ludacris, got into LoFi hip-hop like J Dilla and Madlib instead. Studied mechanical engineering at UMich, but the career didn't work out, so he's in QA at Salesforce in Chicago. The job is "beneath him" but pays well. He teaches Kung Fu at the Y on Saturdays. He started crate-digging in Chicago and got into Brazilian funk. His old neighbors in Belleville think he's doing great — good job, nice car, attractive girlfriend named Tia.

Step 3: The Soul (Psychological)

This is the character's inner life — what they want, what they fear, how they cope, and where their self-image doesn't match reality. This is where the deepest friction lives, and it is the most important section for generating interesting roleplay.

What does this character want most?

Not just surface wants (a promotion, a relationship) but the deeper want underneath. Do they want to be respected? To feel safe? To prove something? To escape something? To be seen for who they really are?

What are they afraid of?

What would genuinely rattle them? Not a phobia necessarily — what outcome, realization, or loss would be hardest for them to face?

Where is the gap between who they think they are and who they actually are?

Everyone has blind spots. Maybe they think they're easygoing but they're actually controlling. Maybe they think they're tough but they crumble when someone is kind to them. This gap is where the best roleplay moments come from.

What irrational thing do they do?

People are not logical. They hold grudges over small things, avoid entire topics because of a bad memory, have superstitions, overreact to specific triggers. What is this character's irrational behavior, and where does it come from?

Why this matters:
The irrational behavior question is the most important one in this entire template. LLMs default to writing rational, helpful-assistant-style characters. Giving the LLM an irrational behavior with a clear emotional root forces it to generate responses that feel human rather than algorithmic. It is the single most effective thing you can do to make a character feel alive.

Part 2: Behavioral Personality Builder

This is where you convert your character's psychology into behavioral descriptions that the LLM can actually use. The formula is:

> **When [trigger], they [behavior], because [underlying reason].**

Why this matters:
When you give an LLM a trait label like "Confident," it repeats the word "confident." You get 3–4 phrasings and then it cycles. With behavioral descriptions, the LLM has to generate language that fits the described behavior because there is nothing to copy. This produces 70%+ unique expressions of the same underlying trait instead of less than 5%.

Label vs. Behavioral — Quick Comparison

Trait	Label (Avoid)	Behavioral (Use This)
Confident	*"She is confident."*	"When challenged, she responds with certainty, treating doubt as a personal insult rather than a reasonable position."
Stubborn	*"He is stubborn."*	"When someone pushes back, he doubles down. Changing his mind feels like losing, and he does not lose."
Kind	*"They are kind."*	"When someone is struggling, they drop everything to help — partly because they care, partly because being needed is the only time they feel valuable."
Nervous	*"She is anxious."*	"In new social situations she over-prepares what to say, then abandons all of it and talks too fast. She apologizes for things that are not her fault."

Your Character's Core Behaviors

Fill in 3–5 behavioral descriptions. You do not need all five. Three strong ones will outperform five weak ones. Focus on behaviors that would come up in actual roleplay conversations.

#	When... (trigger)	They... (behavior)	Because... (why)
#1	**When...** *What triggers this behavior?*	**They...** *What do they do?*	**Because...** *What drives it underneath?*
#2	**When...** *What triggers this behavior?*	**They...** *What do they do?*	**Because...** *What drives it underneath?*
#3	**When...** *What triggers this behavior?*	**They...** *What do they do?*	**Because...** *What drives it underneath?*
#4	**When...** *What triggers this behavior?*	**They...** *What do they do?*	**Because...** *What drives it underneath?*
#5	**When...** *What triggers this behavior?*	**They...** *What do they do?*	**Because...** *What drives it underneath?*

Friction and Contradictions

The most interesting characters contain contradictions. These create the tension that drives roleplay forward. A character who is tough but melts when shown genuine kindness. Someone who craves connection but sabotages every relationship. A person who lies to everyone but is painfully honest with themselves.

What is the main contradiction in this character?

What do they present to the world vs. what is actually true? What do they want vs. what they actually pursue? Where does their self-image clash with their behavior?

What would make this character change?

What experience, person, or realization could shift their behavior? What would it take for them to drop the mask, confront the fear, or break the pattern? (This gives the LLM a direction for character development over a long conversation.)

Example: Friction in action

{{char}} forces herself to put on a bubbly personality around other people to hide the fact that she's deeply uncomfortable with emotional closeness and afraid of being known. This gives the LLM: a visible mask, a hidden truth, a reason the mask exists, and a direction for the character to grow — all in one sentence.

Part 3: Assembling the Personality/Description Field

Now you take everything you've developed and weave it into prose for the SillyTavern Personality/Description field. This is not a list of traits. It is a short portrait of a person, written in a way that gives the LLM behavioral anchors to generate from.

> **Why this matters:**
> Prose descriptions outperform trait lists because they give the LLM narrative context, causal connections, and voice cues. A trait list is lumber on the ground. Prose is the architecture. Aim for 900–1500 tokens for a single character (you can check token count with any free tokenizer tool).

Assembly Guide

Write your Personality/Description in roughly this order. You do not need rigid sections or headers inside the field itself — it should read as flowing prose about a person.

Paragraph 1: Who they are at a glance

Open with the basics — the physical, the situational, the immediately visible. Name, age, appearance, current situation. This orients the LLM.

Paragraph 2: How they got here

The key formative experiences from Part 1. Keep it tight — 2–4 sentences covering the experiences that most directly explain who they are now.

Paragraph 3–4: How they behave (the behavioral descriptions)

Weave your When/Behavior/Because patterns from Part 2 into natural prose. Do not format them as a list. Let them flow as observations about the character.

Paragraph 5: The friction

The contradiction, the mask vs. truth, the irrational behavior. This is the paragraph that makes the LLM generate interesting responses instead of flat ones.

Optional: Voice and speech patterns

If your character has a distinctive way of speaking — formal, casual, uses specific slang, tends toward short sentences, rambles when nervous — note it here. This shapes the LLM's dialogue generation directly.

Write Your Personality/Description Here

Use this space to draft the assembled prose. You can refine it before copying into SillyTavern.

Personality/Description field draft:

Write in prose, not lists. Use {{char}} where you would use the character's name. Aim for 900–1500 tokens.

Self-Check

Before you finalize, run through this checklist:

- [ ] The description is prose, not a list of traits or tags.
- [ ] At least 2–3 behavioral descriptions are woven in (When/Behavior/Because).
- [ ] There is at least one clear contradiction or friction point.
- [ ] The character has an irrational behavior with a reason behind it.
- [ ] There is enough physical/situational detail for the LLM to describe them.
- [ ] Speech patterns or voice cues are included if relevant.
- [ ] The description is roughly 900–1500 tokens (not too sparse, not overwhelming).
- [ ] I have not listed every single thing about them — I left room for discovery.

Part 4: First Message Workshop

The First Message (greeting) sets the tone, introduces the character's voice, and establishes the scenario. It is the launch pad. A strong first message gives the LLM a clear emotional and situational starting point to build from.

Why this matters:
The First Message is not just an introduction — it is a writing sample. The LLM will mirror the style, length, detail level, and emotional register of the first message in its subsequent responses. If your first message is two sentences, expect two-sentence replies. If it includes internal thoughts, environmental detail, and voice, expect all of those back.

Setting the Scene

Where and when does this scenario take place?

Be specific. Not just "a coffee shop" but the kind of coffee shop, the time of day, the atmosphere. Sensory details (sounds, lighting, temperature) give the LLM material to work with.

What is {{char}} doing when {{user}} encounters them?

Are they mid-task? Waiting? Just arriving? Upset about something? In their element or out of it? The action they're performing reveals character.

What is the relationship between {{char}} and {{user}} at the start?

Strangers? Acquaintances? Old friends? Colleagues? Rivals? Former partners? This shapes everything about the opening dynamic.

Writing the First Message

A good first message typically includes: a brief scene-setting (1–2 sentences of environment), the character doing something that reveals personality, an opening line or action directed at {{user}} that creates a hook, and at least one detail from the Personality/Description to anchor the voice.

Consider putting the character somewhere they would not normally be, or in a situation that creates immediate friction. A martial arts instructor at a poetry reading. A shy person forced to give a speech. A neat freak in a messy apartment. Displacement creates interesting first impressions.

Draft your First Message here:

*Write in third person ("{{char}} did X" not "I did X"). Include *action/description* markers if you use them. Aim for 150–400 words — enough to set tone and voice, not so much that it overwhelms.*

First Message Self-Check

- [ ] The scene is grounded in a specific place and time.
- [ ] {{char}} is doing something that reveals personality (not just standing there).
- [ ] There is a hook — a reason for {{user}} to respond.
- [ ] The writing style matches what I want the LLM to mirror going forward.
- [ ] At least one behavioral trait from the Personality/Description is visible.
- [ ] The relationship between {{char}} and {{user}} is clear.
- [ ] The message is long enough to set a tone (150+ words) but not exhausting.

Part 5: Intimate Dynamics (Optional — Adults Only)

This section is entirely optional. Skip it if your character is not designed for adult scenarios. SillyTavern is an adult platform, and building well-characterized intimate dynamics follows the same principles as everything else in this template: behavioral descriptions, friction, and causality produce better results than labels and tags.

The same When/Behavior/Because formula applies here. "Dominant" as a label produces the same three stock phrases on loop. A behavioral description of how and why the character takes control — and when they don't — produces dynamic, varied interactions.

Relationship and Attraction Dynamics

How does {{char}} express attraction or interest?

Are they direct or indirect? Do they flirt obviously or do something subtle? Do they test boundaries, hold back, or charge ahead? What does attraction look like in their behavior, not their words?

What makes {{char}} hesitate, pull back, or set a boundary?

Even in adult scenarios, characters with boundaries are more interesting than characters without them. What makes them slow down, reconsider, or draw a line? This creates tension and pacing.

Behavioral Intimacy Descriptions

Use the same formula. These go into your Personality/Description field alongside the other behavioral descriptions, typically near the end.

When [intimate trigger], {{char}} [intimate behavior], because [reason].

Example: "When physical closeness escalates, {{char}} becomes intensely focused and deliberate — control is how she processes vulnerability, and letting go feels like freefall."

What is the friction in their intimate life?

The same contradiction principle from Part 2. Someone who craves physical intimacy but panics at emotional intimacy. Someone dominant in public who wants to surrender in private. Someone tender who thinks tenderness is weakness.

Why this matters:

Friction in intimate dynamics is what prevents NSFW roleplay from becoming repetitive. Without it, the LLM settles into a loop of escalation with no variation. With it, every encounter has texture, tension, and the possibility of character development.

Connecting Specific Dynamics to Character Depth

If your character is built around a specific kink, fetish, or sexual dynamic, the same rules apply as everywhere else in this template: causality and behavioral description outperform labels. A tag like "dominant" or "exhibitionist" gives the LLM a single word to cycle through. A character whose specific dynamic is rooted in their psychology gives the LLM an engine that generates varied, textured scenes instead of repetitive ones.

The questions below help you trace the line from a specific dynamic back through the character's inner life. You do not need to answer every question. Focus on the ones that spark something.

The Dynamic Itself

What is the specific kink, fetish, or dynamic this character is built around?

Name it plainly. You are designing a character, not writing ad copy. Clarity here helps you think clearly in the prompts that follow.

What does this dynamic give them emotionally that they do not get elsewhere?

This is the most important question in this section. Every kink meets a need. Control, surrender, validation, transgression, safety, intensity, vulnerability, worship, degradation, nurturing — these are emotional experiences. What emotional state does this dynamic let the character access? Why can they only access it here?

Example: Tracing the emotional root

A character who is drawn to restraint and bondage: In every other area of their life, they are the person holding everything together — the reliable one, the planner, the one who never drops a ball. Being physically restrained is the only context where they have permission to stop being in charge. The ropes are not about pain or

helplessness. They are about someone else saying "I've got this, you can let go." That is a fundamentally different character than someone drawn to the same kink because they find vulnerability erotic in itself, or because they associate restraint with trust-testing.

How It Connects to Who They Are

How does this dynamic relate to their psychology from Part 1?

Look back at what you wrote about their wants, fears, contradictions, and formative experiences. Does the dynamic reinforce something from their history? Contradict it? Compensate for it? A person who grew up powerless and now gravitates toward dominance is telling a different story than someone who grew up powerful and gravitates toward submission. The connection does not need to be neat or obvious — it just needs to exist.

How does their behavior inside this dynamic differ from their behavior outside it?

This is where some of the richest character material lives. Someone who is shy and deferential in daily life but becomes commanding and articulate in an intimate context. Someone who is brash and loud but becomes quiet and almost reverent. The contrast between the two modes tells the LLM something important about who this person is underneath everything.

Edges, Boundaries, and Specificity

What is adjacent to their dynamic that they would refuse, and why?

Boundaries reveal character just as much as desires do. Someone into power exchange who has a hard line against humiliation is telling you something about what the power means to them. Someone who enjoys pain but refuses anything that leaves marks is telling you something about their relationship to their body or their public life. The "no" is as informative as the "yes."

What would make this dynamic go wrong for them?

Not just in a safety sense — emotionally. What could a partner do within this dynamic that would hit a nerve, trigger a real reaction, or make them shut down? This gives the LLM material for moments of genuine tension and vulnerability, not just escalation.

Behavioral Descriptions for the Dynamic

Now write 1–3 behavioral descriptions using the same When/Behavior/Because formula, specific to this dynamic. These go into your Personality/Description field.

Behavioral description #1:

Example: "When a partner shows genuine submission, {{char}} becomes almost tender — protective rather than punishing — because what she actually wants is not control over someone but proof that someone trusts her enough to be defenseless."

Behavioral description #2:

Example: "When an encounter starts to feel scripted or performative, {{char}} pulls back and gets visibly irritated. He needs it to be real. If someone is acting out a role to please him rather than because they want it, the whole thing collapses for him."

Behavioral description #3 (optional):

Why this matters:

These behavioral descriptions serve the same function here as in Part 2: they prevent the LLM from falling into a repetitive loop. Without them, a kink-focused character produces the same scene structure every time. With them, the LLM has emotional logic to follow, which means each encounter can develop differently depending on context, mood, and what the other character does. The dynamic becomes a living part of the character instead of a script.

Session Save State

If you are stopping for now and coming back later, fill this in. It takes 30 seconds and will save you 20 minutes of re-reading next time.

Where did I leave off?

Which section were you working on? What was the last thing you wrote or decided?

What am I thinking about for next time?

Any ideas, questions, or half-formed thoughts you want to capture before they disappear.

What still feels unresolved?

What part of the character are you not sure about yet? What needs more thought?

Quick Start Card

If you want to get a working character into SillyTavern as fast as possible and iterate from there, answer just these questions:

Character name:

In one sentence, who are they and what is their situation?

What do they want that they cannot easily get?

Write one behavioral description (When/Behavior/Because):

What is one contradiction or irrational thing about them?

How do they talk? (Formal? Casual? Short sentences? Rambling? Sarcastic?)

Now combine those answers into 2–3 paragraphs of prose. That is your minimum viable Personality/Description. For the First Message, put them somewhere interesting doing something that reveals personality, and give {{user}} a reason to engage.

Test it. Play a few exchanges. Then come back to this template and deepen whatever feels thin. Character creation is iterative. Getting something working and refining it is always better than trying to get it perfect before you start.

Template Design Note

This template was designed using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and neurodivergent accessibility research. Guided questions instead of blank fields reduce task-initiation paralysis. Every section explains why it exists so you can make informed decisions about what to use. Multiple entry points accommodate different cognitive styles. The behavioral prompting formula and friction methodology are adapted from community-developed techniques with added scaffolding for executive function support.