

A (Meta) Piece of the RED: Start Gaming

UNOFFICIAL Guide For Use With TTRPGS like Cyberpunk RED

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A Piece of The RED Series

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Introduction

Hey there, it's your boy N. Jolly again with some advice on getting into games, applying for them, and the GMs who are setting them up. Wanted to do this after seeing a few applications that just made me unhappy to have out in the world, so we'll go over some stuff that'll help make sure players are putting their best foot forward and GMs are providing as much information as possible. This is mostly targeted at online games, but will generally work for offline games as well.

Game Advertisements

A lot of times, GMs will start off by putting out an advert for their games on a discord server, roll20, start playing, or elsewhere. If you're posting in a place that doesn't have a template, you're going to want to make sure that you're giving all relevant information so that players know what to expect. The best way to get the players you want is to be sure they're in sync with what you're presenting. Below, I'll give a sample game advert so that you know what to include.

ED

to Nine Months

n, 2024

kly, 7pm EST to 10pm EST

nd Roll20

Additional Notes

d, choombas? Watch the latest BD from Storm Zero? What about any interesting food? Yeah, tell your favorite fixer Axel Good, because I've got a big job for you. Just got a contact from a friend who works with suits, and they say there's some g to blow a big enough whistle to actually dent those fuckers. Maybe you're asking why I'm contacting you and not my h hitters are dead. But you're my real ace in the hole, the secret badasses that no one in Night City knows about! And it's B

probably willing to work cheap, right?...of course not. Job pays 5,000eb if he's alive, and half if he's zeroed. Boss says even a ton. But he'll be alive because you're awesome, you're the preem team! Job starts in an hour because I kind of already have the fun, right? Details are on your agent, got a car outside if you need one, so get moving!"

that hit your agent less than a minute ago, and the start of your grand adventure in Night City.

entire following doc if you're thinking of joining, cut off point for sign ups will be 1 week before session 0. DM me if you're in sunny New Westbrook bright and early to claim your bounty!

This is roughly the advert I did for the game I'm running now, including plenty of information to make sure that people know what it's about, give a general in-character vibe for the campaign, and any other info. Other suggestions on what to include would be things like **Setting**, **Module**, **Allowed/Banned Supplements**, **Content Warnings/Triggers**, **House Rules**, and any other ideas you can consider. You don't need to do an in character advert, as giving a rundown on the style of game also works, but it's all about making sure that you're advertising to the kinds of players who you want to draw in. Give as much detail as you can on the important stuff like duration and such, as well as any house rules you may also be including to make sure you're setting up your players to be able to play the kinds of characters that will fit with your game.

Player Applications

So you want to play, right? Of course you do, you're reading this. And we want you to play, but part of that process is putting yourself out there. It's about being a good player, and the kind who GMs want to have in their games. A lot of games looking for players will have threads that are asking for interested parties to talk about themselves, and this is what this first part is about along with general advice for being a better player. Yeah sure, I tend to put in applications that I helped write the content they're using, but not everyone has that ace in the hole. So as a GM, I'd like to share some little tips about how GMs look at these snapshots of players before even getting into the game. We're going to split these into **GREEN** flags and **RED** flags.

GREEN Flags

Show Enthusiasm: GMs love players who seem like they want to engage in the world and enjoy themselves. If someone's using a unique setting, asking questions about it shows that you're invested early and allows GMs to explain things so that it doesn't have to come up later.

Open Communication: Showing that you are willing to discuss things with the GM early is a great sign, it helps avoid problems down the line.

Taking Notes: This is a big one; if you're a note taker, TELL US! I love anyone who's willing to invest enough so that they can help me along in case something is forgotten, and makes sure everyone can keep track of the game. Note takers get priority.

Reading Everything the GM Provides: A lot of times, GMs will have house rules as well as other information for their campaign, and reading over it to avoid questions later is so nice. And if you think it's too much to read over? It probably means this isn't a game for you.

Setting Expectations: This includes adding triggers, but is mostly intended for letting GMs know the type of game you want to play in. Light and funny, rough and grim, or somewhere in between. This lets GMs know if you're a good fit right away, and makes our jobs a lot easier.

You are a Former/Current GM: As a GM, I like giving my fellow GMs a chance to play. Plus other GMs tend to be a lot more understanding when a GM has to bend the rules or alter things, well aware of the struggles. We all like giving a former GM the chance to FINALLY be a player.

Showing Flexibility: Players who are willing to work with me are going to get into my games, and if you come in with that kind of attitude, you're showing that you're an asset at the table.

Being Familiar with The Game and World: I tend to like people who know what they're getting into, showing familiarity with the property. Like for a Cyberpunk RED game, let me know if you've played the game and watched the anime, if you played 2020, it helps me know that you have a baseline and don't need to repeat things.

Accepting when a Game Isn't For You: It sucks, not every game is going to work for you, and that's fine. Learning to bow out when this is the case can be helpful not only for you, but because if a GM does eventually run a game that would work for you, they can remember you and ask you to join when that time comes.

RED Flags

Too Much Backstory: A lot of GMs will have a certain amount of backstory they want in order to help actualize the characters (this may be none), and providing more than enough isn't a good thing. Often, GMs want enough so they know major character beats, and providing too much drowns out the interesting parts of your character and gives them less room to grow.

Taking Things Too Seriously: It is a game at the end of the day, and I have rarely met a GM who was interested in people who are looking for a large amount of drama and everything being very high stakes. Just try and match the mood and you should be good.

Coming in with a hard pre-established character: This isn't to say that you shouldn't have an idea of what you want to play, this is saying that if you're coming in with a character, that character needs to be flexible to fit the GM's game. A lot of people come in with pre-established OCs that have no room for growth or change, and including them in a game becomes unattractive to prospective GMs.

Vague Availability: People who do not give hard times that they can play are often not worth the effort, as it shows they are not being respectful of your time and the times of other players.

Making Demands: I've seen this one all the time and for some silly stuff too, some players are coming in with demands of the GM, and that's going to get me to skip over talking to you almost instantly.

Coming In With No Ideas: Some people don't have any idea what they want to do in a game, no backstory, and it can be very hard to engage these individuals. People like this often get frustrated because they aren't being engaged, and it just makes a bad situation for everyone involved.

Bragging About How Long You've Played: Not a full red flag, but these are statements I gloss over myself. I rarely care if you're a "15 year TTRPG veteran", and "longtime player" doesn't tell me anything about you. Too much fluff like that and I just zone out.

Too Stringent with Lore/Rules: Knowing the setting, the game, the rules, it's all great! Treating it as immutable will lead to disappointment. Try asking the GM if there'll be any large lore shifts, and accept that in game, sometimes GMs will have their own ideas or just forget lore details. We're all human after all.

Being Emotionally Needy: It's important to remember that people are applying to games as strangers, and if someone feels like they are doing it to find others to emotionally support them, they may not be good for your game or even just your life as a whole. You don't owe anyone that kind of emotional labor, and they may end up too invested in a group, causing any removal of them to be exceptionally difficult.

GM Interviews

Yes, I get it is more work for you, but GMs? Doing an interview of your players beforehand will save you SO MUCH HEADACHE! It's a chance for you to get a feel for a player, to understand how they communicate, and at the worst of times, for you to get a feel for if they make you uncomfortable. Even without any questions prepared, you can get a handle on people who you may be spending months with on a weekly basis, and that already is worth it. Don't feel the need to interview everyone who applies; that guy who said he wants to play Johnny Silverhand TWO can probably be skipped.

I make the very strong suggestion to use voice and/or video chat for these interviews, even if it's a text based game. Nuance can get lost in text, and you can get a lot better of a feel for someone and who they are. But before all that, you'll want to have some questions prepared for people so that you can learn what you want about your possible players. These aren't the end all/be all of the questions you can ask, but just good questions to ask to get an idea of what a person is like. Not all red flags are created equal, so some might matter more to you more than others.

Sample Questions

What is your experience with TTRPGs?

Sample **GREEN** flag answers

"I've never played before, looking to learn!"

"I've played X system for a while, few years of Y system which is pretty niche, looking at Z system..."

Sample **RED** flag answers

"I'm a veteran of TTRPGs, probably played longer than you've been alive."

"Oh, I've played X, you probably haven't heard of it."

The first two engage with the question without being needlessly arrogant about it. Length of play isn't important, and you don't need to play a lot of systems, but you should at least be able to answer without being smug.

What is your playstyle?

Sample **GREEN** flag answers

"I like story based games with lots of roleplay and a bit of puzzles, not into combat."

"I'm a pretty simple person, love meatgrinder games with lots of violence to them."

Sample **RED** flag answers

"I don't know, I'll play whatever you run."

"I'll only play in games that are very roleplay heavy with romance and danger."

We have two different normal people up top, and neither of those playstyles are bad. They've made it known what they want, and it's up to the GM if that's the kind of game they're running. The latter don't answer the question or make demands, a trait that'll likely extend into the game proper.

Do you have any triggers?

Sample **GREEN** flag answers

"Yeah, I'd like to avoid X and Y if we could. If not, this isn't the game for me."

"No triggers, thanks for asking."

Sample **RED** flag answers

"Yeah, no X or Y. I won't play if those are involved."

"Lol no, who actually has triggers?"

Again, the first two inform, while the latter is a demand. Generally, you'll want any triggers you have laid out in your campaign advertisement, and this is to make sure that any other triggers aren't involved. The latter is dismissive and rude, so just don't play with people like that.

Any questions you have for me?

Sample **GREEN** flag answers

"No, thanks for your time though."

"Yeah, so in your game/system, how do you run X?"

Sample **RED** flag answers

"No."

"So we're going to be including X, right? It's really important to my character."

It's nice to be thanked, and really, players having questions is nice for a GM to clarify things. A flat no or another demand is a good way of gauging how they'll treat you when the game starts.

Literally any question at any point

Sample **GREEN** flag answer

"Don't be a freaky little weirdo."

Sample **RED** flag answer

"Be a freaky little weirdo."

Trust your gut on people who make you feel uncomfortable, that feeling will only get worse.

Where to Find a Game

You want to know where the games are, good start. Depending on your game of choice, it'll likely have a discord and/or forum where people meet up in order to organize games. Look for a 'looking for game' or 'looking for player' channel or thread, but you probably won't have much luck if you just shout out 'I'm a person looking for a game'. Typically, you'll want to see if there are games posted that are looking for players, or discuss things in channels designed for people to talk to each other about game planning. Other good places to look involve the [Looking For Group subreddit](#), [Roll20](#), or [Start Playing](#). Some of these locations may have games which require you to pay to play. If you have a game to run (paid or otherwise), these are also great places to post it!

Sample **GREEN** flag answers

"Thank you for this information, I will consider paid games!"

"I do not have the money to spend on a paid game, but thank you for informing me!"

Sample **RED** flag answers

"Why should I have to pay for a game?"

"I don't want to pay for a game."

If you have an issue with that, don't do it. No one wants to have this discussion again, and nothing you have to say on the topic is unique.

For those looking to play in paid online cyberpunk games, both [Diamond Dust](#) and [Emmerron](#) come highly recommended by me, the best judge of character!

In addition to normal types of games, there are also game types called West Marches or Living Communities. These are different types of games which include a variety of GMs and players who organize to play games in a shared community, often having their own unique rules. Plenty of these advertise on the places listed above, and can be a great way for otherwise busy individuals to get the chance to game. No matter what you're looking for, there are ways to get into gaming, and I hope you'll get the chance to roll your dice!

Conclusion

The goal here is to make sure players can get into games and start practicing the habits that'll make them better players and that GMs will be able to pick the players that will keep both sides off of [/rpghorrorstories](#). Thanks for reading and hope this helped!