

Table-Top Role-playing Games skills

Tools to Plan how we spend our time in playing the game

[GMing Technique List](#)

Assumption

1. We can categorize and enumerate the skills in playing and running TRPGs.
 - a. **Mechanics.** These are the rules and options, and when and how to use them
 - b. **Optimization.** Knowing the best solution and option in each mechanic (given the situations constraints). This includes best practices involving the mechanics.
 - c. **Skills and Techniques.** Knowledge and abilities to create a particular effect, the ability to have more output over time, the ability to make optimal decisions in a given situation, knowledge or mental map or model of a process to create the desired outcome.
2. We have a finite capacity in the things we can spend time learning and mastering.

Thesis

1. That we can plan which options give the most utility (“bang”) per unit of time/effort.

Actionable

I want the thesis of this post to be actionable. That if you agree with the premises then you may want to know what you’re getting into.

Identify. The first thing to do is Identify the skills and mechanics you need to know. I’ve made a sample template of these topics and how

they're organized. Some game systems don't really organize in this way but I tried to be as systematic as possible in categorizing them.

a.

Examples of Game Systems

GURPS Basic Set

1. No. of entries based on the Table of Contents ~700 (sub mechanics and exceptions will add to this total; this includes Running and Playing games)
2. Advantages: 224 entries
3. Disadvantages: 212 entries
4. Enhancements/Limitations: 84 (46 and 38)
5. Skills: 282 skills

DnD 3.5 SRD

Not counting epic, psi, divine, and how to play or GM.

1. Basics Mechanics: 30
2. Combat Rules: 139
3. Character Mechanics: 241
 - a. Races: 7
 - b. Classes and rules regarding class features: 40
 - c. Skills 36
 - d. Feats 120
 - e. Conditions: 38
4. Spells: 615 spells (less if we don't count the same spells but modified).
5. World Mechanics ~386
6. Monsters and all related rules: ~560

DnD 5.0

All the items in the srd list to about 1250 items

Components of Playing TRPGS

Playing TRPGs (Players)

1. Roleplaying
 - b. Group Storytelling
 - c. Getting into Character
 - d. Interacting with NPCs
 - e. World Building
2. Gaming
 - a. Game Mechanics
 - b. Character (and Development) mechanics
 - c. Setting Mechanics

More detailed Breakdown

Roleplaying

This would all elements and knowledge in making an engaging, immersive, and reasonable story and character. As well as performing all the activities and making all the decisions that immerse the player in the world.

Gaming

Referring to Gaming, this is the Games or Gaming mindset aspect of TRPGs. When I deal with just the Game aspect of TRPGs i realize that it's a lot of mental models in the form of rules and mechanics. Along with them is the ability to process and frame challenges, problem solving ability to work in the input of the players, the dice, the game system, into a fun and engaging interactive experience.

1. **System mechanics.** This refers to the rules and tools that the TRPG gives the player or GM to run the game. These tools help create the mood and atmosphere, frames the challenges and problems, and helps resolve risk and uncertainty in a manner that reinforces the immersion and authenticity.

- i. **Resolution Mechanics.** How uncertainty in an outcome is resolved.
 - ii. Different situations and different mechanics.
- b. **Character Mechanics.** How characters affect the world
 - i. **Character options.** Actions and Options characters can take. It includes conditions or modes the character can take.
 - ii. **Abilities.**
 - 1. Physical
 - 2. Mental
 - iii. **Skills.** Learned and practiced abilities, competencies, proficiencies etc... of the character.
 - iv. **Character Conditions**
 - 1. Physical Conditions. mechanics governing the character's physical condition. They typically cover, damage and wounds or Injury, Sickness, Fatigue, Encumbrance, crippling or maiming, etc...
 - 2. Mental Disposition or Conditions.
 - v. **Character Development.** Mechanics characters is created and change over time.
 - vi. **Character Economics.** Rules about character equipment, assets, incomes, etc... The mechanics governing the character's material goods, and place in the economy and game world.
- c. **Environment Mechanics.** Mechanics of the world interacting with the player characters.
 - i. Environmental Conditions
 - 1. Weather
 - 2. Terrain
 - a. Urban
 - b. Wilderness
- d. **Logistics**
 - i. **Movement.** Movement, travel, its costs, its tools or equipment, modes of travel or movement

(climbing, swimming, jumping), and impact on the character. Typically the easiest mechanics to find and use to test the logistics tolerance of the game system.

- ii. **Sourcing or Supplies.** Mechanics on how stuff is made, found, looted, sold and bought
 - 1. **Transactions and Trade.** A more detailed look into economics of stuff. Its not just Mechanics for buying and selling, but if the system can track ongoing transactional relationships or economic relationships.
- iii. **Supplies/Feeding/Support.** Upkeep mechanics for food, water, income, sponsorship, support, etc... typically its made up of hiring tables, food and lodging costs,
 - 1. **Operations.** These are more detailed upkeep mechanics. If the game system can model operations of an entity, a group, a business, an organization, a community or state.

e. **Combat Mechanics.** How violence is resolved.

- i. **Combat Options.** Attack, Defense, Maneuver
- ii. **Combat Conditions.** Rules regarding surprise and ambush, stances, formations, cover, concealment, styles, stunning,
- iii. Damage
- iv. Equipment. The sets of mechanics and conditions governing equipment.
- v. Other Combat Mediums ex. Warfare
 - 1. Warfare is another set of Combat Mechanics abstracts combat of large numbers. It speeds up and models larger scaled battles.

f. **Social Mechanics.**

- i. **Communication.** These are mechanics about characters having and using language, culture, mediums of communication, and non verbal cues.

Its typical language lists and what the languages are used for and who uses them.

- ii. **Influence.** These are mechanics to make other characters change their minds
 - iii. **Disposition.** These are more detailed social mechanics that work out the inclinations, trade-offs, and resistances of particular mindsets.
 - iv. **Relationships.** These are more specific dispositions among characters or groups.
 - v. **Status/Credit.** These are mechanics around social standing and influence. The differences and trade offs of options of different status or heirarchies of status.
It also factors credit both in the transactional economic value and
2. **Problem Solving.** This is the skill of approaching problems and working at them for a solution or finding the better course of action amongst so many other options and possibilities.

Game Running

These are the skills typical of a GM running a game.

1. Preparation

- a. Planning and Organization
 - i. Arc/Acts
 - ii. Scenes

2. Group Performance/Storytelling.

- a. **Group Feedback.** The ability to read, react and improvise off the feedback of other players, the situation, and off the GM.
 - i. **Improvisation.** A group of techniques to play off the situation and reactions of the other players and GM. The skill allows the player or GM to pursue a Fun/Interesting/Dramatic-Optimal course of actions and complications based off the situation and feedback of the other players or GM.
- b. **Impersonations**

- i. Voices.
- ii. Accents.
- iii. Mannerisms.
- iv. Speech patterns.

3. Storytelling

- a. **Players Feedback.** Being able to read and assess the feedback of the players.
- b. **Hooks.** Setting up the story circumstance that aligns the motives of the characters.
- c. **Characterization.** Making believable characters. Unlike performance, this is how the character fits in the story, instead of how the GM performs it.
- d. **Pacing.** How to execute and mastery of Proper pacing. How to pick up from any point of the pace, and transition to the next stage of pacing.
 - i. Tension
 - ii. Conflict
 - iii. Release
 - iv. Closure
- e. **Improvising/Preparing the 6Ws.** Bringing up the Who, What, Where, When, Why, What-happened (How).
- f. **Preparing/Improvising the 5Ys.** Being able to answer a chain of 5 Whys.

4. Setting. The game setting

- a. Peoples.
- b. Places.
- c. Conflicts.
- d. Hooks.

5. World Building. The ability to create a believable and immersive setting. Where actions have consequences, the world has a character,

- a. See Extra Credits: [Understanding the Fantasy](#)
- b. Making its History relevant
- c. Making the Character's actions relevant
- d. Complicating the story in a way that models an engaging perspective

Measure

Measure is about assigning a priority and being determin or know the level or condition of a particular skill, technique, or understanding.

Prioritizing.

Below is my measure of Skill and Understanding. Feel free to use other standards, build your own,

1. (1) *Familiar, Initiate, unskilled*
 1. Being able to identify know the name of the issue, dilemma, problem, challenge.
 2. Being able to describe it enough to search or relate it to others.
2. (2) *Knowing, amateur, novice, apprentice.*
 1. The ability to communicate and describe it to another person.
 2. Finding and identifying other examples
 3. Finding the root cause or the many contributing factors.
 4. Knowledge enough to be dangerous.
3. (3) *Understanding, Proficient, Journeyman*
 1. Has a thesis of how to execute, solve the problem, or perform the technique.
 - i. Able to Implement reliability.
 - ii. Able to bridge theory to practical application.
 2. Has acted and experimented on the thesis.
 3. Has Identified the KPIs and can measure progress,
 4. Can demonstrate or relate the problem and challenges.
 5. Grasps many of the risks, uncertainties, within the disciplines.
4. (4) *Mastery or Mastered*
 1. Can perform feats to display understanding reliably
 2. Has a body of KPIs and progress in its improving.
 3. Has many attempts of understand, and can recont the many steps each level of progress was achieved.
 4. Has identified many aspects worth considering in the acheiving high mastery.
5. (5) *High Mastery*
 1. A significant reliability in performing the feat

1. Built in the skill into other techniques.