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Modern Adventure Generator

By Gareth-Michael Skarka

Introduction

Here's a little scenario for you: it's a little bit before dinnertime, and you get a call from your playing group. They're all coming over, ready to play... tonight. Problem is, you've got nothing prepared -- the last time you played, your group completed their latest adventure, and for whatever reason, you haven't had the time to come up with anything else.

What are you going to do?

The following system is provided for Modern d20 Gamemasters to generate adventure ideas on the fly, giving enough of a core seed idea to proceed. Pepper the idea that you get with some GM characters (easily and quickly generated using RPGObjects' **Modern Character Generator**), and you're ready to go.

The tables provided in this issue of Modern Dispatch will give a Modern d20 GM the bare outline of an adventure. That outline will have to be tailored for your specific campaign. For example, a modern military campaign will have very specific needs, and differ greatly from a modern campaign where the player characters are police detectives.



About the Author

Gareth-Michael Skarka has been working in the adventure games industry since 1988. He is the designer of several role-playing games, including *Hong Kong Action Theatre!*, *UnderWorld* and *Skull & Bones*. His design imprint, **Adamant Entertainment**, ventured into ePubublishing in 2003, and produces support for *Skull & Bones*, the pulp d20 line *Thrilling Tales*, and more.

This variance will be especially noticeable when it comes to FX elements. There are some results on the tables which seemingly point to a fantasy, horror or science-fictional elements of an adventure. However, you should open your mind and let the results here lead you where it may---who's to say, for example, that the result of "Monster" might mean in a Vietnam-era campaign with no supernatural elements at all? Perhaps it refers to a character like Colonel Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now*, whose madness has led him to become very much a monster.

Learning from Screenwriting

The basic format for the random adventure seed is the dramatic core taken from screenwriting: all plots can be boiled down the following sentence:

"The main characters must [DO SOMETHING], but have to contend with [COMPLICATIONS] while being confronted by [OPPOSITION]."

This is the basic structure of any story, whether it is filmed, written or roleplayed. The variables change, providing a wide array of

possibilities. For the Modern Adventure Generator, however, we'll expand that basic structure even further, allowing for a wider variation. So, the basic dramatic structure of our Modern d20 adventures will read more like this:

"The main characters must [DO] [SOMETHING], at [LOCATION], but have to contend with [COMPLICATIONS] while being confronted by [OPPOSITION]."

The main difference between the standard format and the one presented above is that the location of the adventure has been added as a variable, and, more importantly, [DO SOMETHING] has been split into [DO] [SOMETHING].

Let's explain that a little bit further.

The "do something" is the focus of the adventure -- it's what drives the action. Making it a single category under this system will only result in 64 possibilities (by cross referencing two d8 rolls). However, after splitting the "do" (the verb) and the "something" (the subject) into two categories, that means that each have 64 possibilities, and can combine for a total of 4096 different results.

For example, take these: "Rescue the Scientist", "Find the Treasure," and "Defeat the Monster." Under this new system, these three foci can be split, giving you those same results, but also additional ones such as "Find the Scientist," "Rescue the Monster," etc.

This can, admittedly, lead to some odd results, such as "Defeat the Treasure"....but, as a GM, that phrase, which on its surface seems bizarre, begins to generate all sorts of ideas for me. What is the treasure? Why must it be defeated? How do you defeat a treasure, anyway? Before you know it, you've come up with an adventure detailing the character's struggle to overcome a malevolent magical ring with a life of its own.

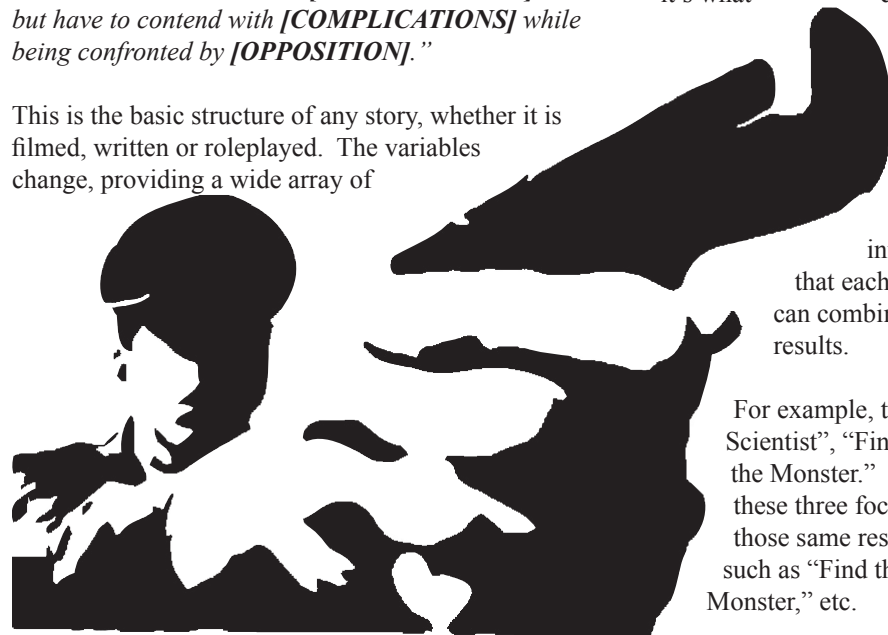
Sounds familiar, doesn't it....

How to Use the Generator

This type of system is not intended to replace planning on the part of a Modern D20 Gamemaster, but rather as a springboard for the development of the Gamemaster's own ideas. Give it a try -- I think you'll be pleasantly surprised at the results. To use the Modern Adventure Generator, the Gamemaster rolls two eight-sided dice, and cross-referencing the results on each of 5 category tables: Do, Something, Location, Complications and Opposition.

As stated before, Do provides you with the verb, Something provides you with the subject. Together, they form the focus of the adventure. Location gives you where the adventure takes place, Complications are those things that arise during the adventure to hinder the player-character's progress, and Opposition is the force or individual that is actively going against the PC's efforts.

Each category has 64 possibilities, so this system allows for 1,073,741,824 different combinations... more than enough to give any Modern d20 Gamemaster something to work with.



Do

	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>1</i>	Fight	Defeat	Rescue	Protect	Retrieve	Hunt	Look for	Battle
<i>2</i>	Aid	Talk with	Find	Attack	Assist	Defend	Take	Join
<i>3</i>	Arm	Sell	Buy	Combat	Guard	Save	Watch	Create
<i>4</i>	Escort	Chase	Oppose	Meet	Ally	Resist	Kill	Revive
<i>5</i>	Entreat	Journey with	Rally against	Check	Investigate	Support	Destroy	Change
<i>6</i>	Move	Track	Amuse	Enchant	Dispel	Injure	Drop	Comfort
<i>7</i>	Conceal	Look at	Reveal	Race	Quarrel with	Observe	Trade with	Tag
<i>8</i>	Strike	Snatch	Beset	Shield	Contend with	Confuse	Manipulate	Harass

Something

	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>1</i>	Ruler	Princess	Treasure	Worker	Monster	Creature	Country	Soldiers
<i>2</i>	Scientist	People	Citizens	Freak	Energy	Train	Police	Assassins
<i>3</i>	Outcast	Organization	Enemy	Object	Relic	Package	Invention	City
<i>4</i>	Animal	Gang	Secret	Item	Leader	Artifact	Vehicle	Criminal
<i>5</i>	Company	Wanderer	Researcher	Woman	Man	Child	Insect	Alien
<i>6</i>	Stranger	Terrorist	Driver	Technician	Rebel	Government	Fighter	Military
<i>7</i>	Love Interest	Thug	Thief	Politician	Celebrity	Spy	Team	Building
<i>8</i>	Prophet	Aircraft	Friend	Wealth	Book	Technology	Nature	Contraband

Location

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	City	Rural Setting	Small town	Frontier	Jungle	At Sea	In Orbit	Under Water
2	Ghetto	Skyscraper	Docks	Foreign Country	Resort	Desert	Mountains	Forest
3	River	Lake	Tundra	Enemy Stronghold	Subway	Airport	Port	Government Installation
4	Military Base	Entertainment District	Hidden Location	Secret Location	Plains	Distant Land	Business District	Corporate Headquarters
5	Hideout	Casino	Landmark	Farm	Residence	Remote Location	Research Facility	Island
6	Beach	Studio	Underground	Slums	Market	Nightclub	Mansion	Highway
7	Library	Shopping Center	Garage	Religious Location	Sporting Event	Bar	Restaurant	Warehouse
8	North/South Pole	Swamp	Canyon	Border	War Zone	Lab	Criminal Location	Prison

Complications

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Mistaken Identity	Disaster	Crime	Legal Trouble	Misdirection	Lack of Info	Government influence	Unexplained
2	Travel	Squabbling	Lost equipment	Abduction	Barriers	Weather	Monster	Trickery
3	Animals	Riots	Duplicity	Fear	Theft	Mystery	Survival	Strange occurrence
4	Police	Power Struggle	Politics	Transport problem	Physical feat	Mental feat	Drugs	Security
5	Gangs	Getting Lost	Insanity	Side-tracked	Trap	Vendetta	Ambush	Enemies
6	Interference	Attention	Bizarre circumstance	Equipment failure	Military influence	War	Diplomacy	Money
7	Love Interest	Random attack	Red Herring	None	The Unknown	Distraction	Recurring NPC	Differing PC motivations
8	Bureaucracy	Rivalry	Lack of trust	Desperation	Betrayal	Incompetence	Allies	Bystanders

Opposition

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Scientist	Soldier	Gang Member	Priest	Pilot	Businessman	Country	Ruler
2	Monster	Enemy	Former Ally	Criminals	Company	Terrorists	Assassin	Madman
3	Friend	Government official	Mobster	Rebel	Organization	Creature	Unknown	War
4	Disaster	Stranger	Police	Military	Veteran	None	Corporation	Outlaw
5	Spy	Recurring Villain	Cult	Woman	Man	Roll Twice	Lawyer	Diplomat
6	Killer	Agency	Driver	Technician	Tycoon	Traitor	Conspiracy	Occultist
7	Femme Fatale	Thief	Team	Doctor	Celebrity	Shadowy Figure	Mystery	Themselves
8	Disease	Cartel	Friend	Mastermind	Smuggler	Technology	Nature	Prisoner

Example

I break out my trusty d8s, and give a few rolls on the tables above. I will give an example of how it might be used in three different campaigns: A military campaign featuring anti-terrorist commandos, An arcana campaign featuring modern-day sorcerers in a world-wide secret society, and a campaign where the PCs are police detectives in a large American city.

My result: (4-8, 7-3, 2-7, 1-5, 3-1)

“The main characters must revive a thief, in the mountains, while having to contend with misdirection and being opposed by a friend.”

Military Campaign: a common thief has information regarding the whereabouts of an infamous terrorist leader. The problem is that he’s very ill...near death

in a shack in the mountains of Afghanistan. The unit has to revive him and get the information, but they’re being fed incorrect intelligence by an allied country who have their own motives.

Arcana Campaign: The PCs have discovered that centuries ago, a thief stole a magical artifact from the Vatican, and fled to the Italian Alps. While investigating the artifact, the thief triggered a curse that placed him (and the artifact) in a state of suspended animation, trapped within a wall of crystal. The sorcerers must journey to the Alps, find the thief and release him from the curse, so that they can claim the artifact for themselves. Along the way, however, they discover that they have not been told the truth about the true purpose of the artifact... because a fellow member of their order wants to

secure the power for himself.

Police Campaign: The detectives are investigating a conspiracy, possibly involving crooked cops. One witness, a common thief, is shot by a cop and is wounded. The characters are placed with the thief in a safe-house (a ski cabin in the mountains), waiting for him to revive and reveal what he knows. Unfortunately, the crooked cops are former friends of the PCs, and have set up the entire situation to frame the characters and get themselves off the hook.

You see? With a little bit of thought, the same result can be applicable for a wide variety of campaign styles.

So -- grab your dice and start rolling!

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