



General Rules Booklet

General Rules

Your character pack should include all of the following:

- An identity badge or badges
- Your character booklet. The most important information, your skills and objectives, the items you begin the game with, and a diagram showing the combat rules, are on the outer cover. Please try to carry this with you throughout the game. You can choose not to carry the middle section, particularly later in the game.
- Ability and item cards, with a ring to store them on. You can clip this to a belt or bag, if it helps.
- Game money (unless you start with none)
- A paperclip (more will be available on the main GM desk)
- Background sheets (number depends on your character)
- This general rulebook
- Specific rules for Pyrates

If you think that you are missing something, please see a GM immediately.

Freeforms

If you've not played a freeform before, read this section. If you have, you may want to skim read but it should be stuff you're familiar with.

Introduction

A freeform is an interactive roleplaying game in which all the players are characters with their own goals, abilities and even secrets. Everyone is a participant interacting with everyone else in creating the unfolding stories. It's like becoming a character in a book or film, but without any script to follow; you have a certain background and motivations in playing your character, but you also have free will as to how to act. Freeforms have rules, but they aim to be straightforward ones that can be dealt with by the players amongst themselves. Most interactions are between the characters, rather than between character and GM, although in some cases it will be useful to ask a GM for information or help. All the rules for this game are contained in this booklet, and you don't need to memorise them; simply refer to them when required. The rules are meant to help simulate the spirit of films, books and legends of Pyrates. If you have any questions about anything in your character pack or these rules, please ask a GM.

How to Play in a Freeform

Read your character background: Find out who you are, what your goals are, and who you know. Look at your ability cards and items. Familiarise yourself with the game rules and background.

Talk to everyone: The main way you can make things happen in the game is by striking up a conversation with another character in the game. Find out what they want and what they have to offer and try to find others whom you trust with whom you can collaborate. Remember that your character's skills can be useful to others, and theirs can be useful to you in reaching your goals.

Information is the most vital commodity in a freeform, so you'll need to give some in

order to get some in return. But look out for enemies who are trying to make you reveal things about yourself that you would prefer remained secret!

Rules

All the rules in this booklet and the specific Pyrate rulebook are instructions as to how to play the game, and everything in the rules is true, in other words, objective reality.

Character sheets

These describe your character's background, motivations, views, and items *from his or her own subjective point of view*. It is the truth as your character sees it, so while certain things may be facts – you live in Freetown – others may be merely opinions – your 'best friend' may really be not what he seems and be out to get you. During the game, you may find that you want to change your mind about people or change some of your goals. Your character is free to develop and grow according to your own sense of what your character might reasonably think or desire or do. Do not feel that you need to stick to a limited sense of what your character is. However please bear in mind that changing your goals may have a detrimental effect on someone else's game. Also you may find either at the start or as the game progresses that your goals are contradictory. Don't panic this is perfectly normal!

Quick Start Rules

Each character has a summary of who they are, where they start the game, and some suggested first moves. These are so that if you've arrived late, or if you're new to freeforms, you can start playing with a minimum of delay.

The first moves are suggestions only – if you want to do something else, go right ahead!

Overall Objectives

The overall objectives on your character sheet give you a general view of your character's outlook on the world, apart from specific plot-related goals, at the start of the game. We see this as defining the essential spirit of the character that gives his or her individual motivation. These objectives should give you a take on how to approach

playing your character. Events and relationships that develop over the weekend may change dramatically your character's worldview and aspirations. If this happens, you may decide to rethink your character's approach to life and alter his or her overall objectives.

Background sheets

Some of the historical material in this booklet and on separate handouts provides general knowledge about the world in which your character exists. This information may or may not be true, but is generally correct and can be relied upon as far as your character knows. We apologise to anyone with historical knowledge of the period for the frankly appalling liberties we have taken and the twisting of the truth that we have done to suit our own purposes.

Ability cards + Skills table

These represent the skills and knowledge that your character possesses. They offer an explanation of how they work and any limitations as to their use. They are not transferable. If an ability does not say that it is permanent, you will need to either tear it up if it is only for one use, or mark off each time that you have used it. To use an ability, show the card to all players that it affects. It is most fun if you roleplay your abilities as you use them, rather than just display the card. Showing the card then playing out the resulting scene can also work.

Some characters can teach skills. They have an ability enabling them to do this. If you are taught a skill or improve an existing one, you should see the Skills GM to have your character sheet updated.

Item cards

These represent the things that your character possesses and are transferable. Items can be given away, stolen, traded or lost. Any item card that you carry with you is assumed to be with you. You may choose to leave it in your ship, or bury it somewhere, but you may not leave it in your real hotel room. Any item left out in the open may be picked up by another player.

Item cards provide a description and *may* give an explanation of how the item works.

Some items are 'gone' once used (such as a dose of medicine), whereas others are not (such as a telescope).

Props

We have tried to add to the flavour and enjoyment of the game by using props, some of which have items card associated with them, to represent certain items. This is so that you can see a bulky item that would be hard to conceal being moved around in real space for instance. The card and the prop must be kept together; however, if they do become separated, the card is considered to be the real item, and the two must be reunited as soon as possible. All game items will have an item card. GMs may issue new item cards which will be printed with the words *Item Card* and they will initial each card to confirm it was issued by them. Players may not create or alter item cards themselves. Any other props that you are carrying are not considered items. If you end the game with a prop, please hand it back to us at the end. We want them all back! Thank you to everyone who has made or lent us props.



Real world money can buy chocolate or drinks for the GMs, but it can not be used in the game at all. In particular gambling for real money in a public place is illegal.

Game time

The weekend is divided into different game periods: Friday night, Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, Saturday night, Sunday morning. These periods will affect various abilities, activities and events during the game.

Character death

Characters can be killed from the very beginning of the game. The GMs have a number of replacement characters, which they will allocate as seems fitting in the interests of the game.

Anyone wearing a name badge is in play

If you need to take time out from the game, remove your badge and leave it with one of the GMs. Other players should not approach a player without a badge, and they can check with a GM to find out if the character they are seeking is currently in the game.

Please note that removing your badge is not a way to avoid a confrontation which you can't otherwise escape; it is intended to enable you to do real-world activities like eat dinner or pay your hotel bill, not to escape the consequences of your game actions.

Any game information you inadvertently overhear when you are not actively playing should be ignored and treated as if your character did not know anything about it. You may not interact with other characters if you don't have a name badge on. If you are just popping to the bar or the toilet then you can cover your badge with your hand for a couple of minutes.

Please react to people according to the name and gender shown on their badge.

Leaving the game early

Sometimes real life intervenes and a player may need to leave the game early. In this case please make sure a GM is aware and hand back your name badge and character pack. However if your character attempts to leave the game before Sunday just to avoid someone the GMs reserve the right to shipwreck your boat on the rocks, or have you eaten by sea monsters. You have been warned!

Game behaviour

We encourage you to roleplay your interactions with other players, but remember that the game takes place in a public hotel where there are other guests not taking part. Please do not do anything that would alarm or inconvenience another

guest, or that they might misinterpret as dangerous. For example:

- Do not shout (for help, about fire, etc.)
- Do not run
- Do not brandish weapons outside the game area, not even blow up plastic swords and cardboard cut out guns.



The Paperclip Rule or *what to do if your game gets 'stuck'*

If you find yourself stuck in the game, unsure what to do, or have run out of ideas or goals to pursue, you have several options;

Talk to a GM and see if he or she can give you a rumour that might spark off something new, or give you a short bit part character. If you take a bit part though, any legend points awarded will not be transferred to your main character.

Talk to an Old Tar: These are all experienced roleplayers who have played in a weekend freeform and stayed in the hotel before. The general term for these players, to fit the Pirate theme, is "Old Tars" but they will not all be old pirate characters in the game. We'll be introducing them to you in the game briefing, and they'll be identifiable. If you can't find the bar, or you don't know where the toilets are, or **you're not having fun** or you can't think what to do next, or the person you're looking for appears to have vanished off the face of the earth, and there's no GM around or there's a queue, then grab an Old Tar and they will do their best to help.

Find a friend and get them to involve you in their plots. We know that it can be hard to step out of character and force someone else to do the same so you can explain the problem, but most of your fellow players will not mind and will be happy to help you get your game back on track!

Put a paperclip on your name badge. The paperclip means "I'm at a loose end - please involve me". It's a message to other players, because it's the players above all who can make or break the game for each other.

When you meet someone with a paperclip on their badge, try hard to involve them and be prepared to stretch your character to do so. Maybe the ship's parrot isn't the ideal helper for your leg amputation, but give it a go.

And whenever two paperclips happen to meet you can both be adventurous. You've got nothing to lose.

If you're not enjoying the game for any reason, please talk to a GM or an Old Tar and tell them so. They will try their best to help you. The most important thing you should be doing during the weekend is having fun. If that's not the case please let someone know, rather than suffering in silence or hiding away in the bar or your hotel room.



In the event of an emergency

Within the game characters may experience maiming, death, poisoning, or other dreadful things. Some players are exceptionally good at acting these events out. Even if a player appears to be dying in front of you, prior to calling an ambulance please take two seconds to make a reality check with them. If you are the player and someone asks you if this is real then please answer promptly, or you may find yourself being pumped full of life saving drugs unnecessarily. If you are going to die horribly and dramatically could you make sure you are inside one of the function rooms rather than in the corridors where normal hotel guests may see you and react accordingly.

Every player has a responsibility to help make the game fun for everybody. Treat others with the respect with which you would like to be treated.

Touching

Please do not touch anyone else except with their express permission, whether in a situation of romance or combat. Remember that other people's sensitivities should be taken into account with regard to topics such as racism, death, abuse, rape, etc. It should go without saying that all real world laws still apply, so theft of personal property, actual abductions and assault are all illegal.

The spirit of the game

Our purpose in writing and running this game is to create the most fun for the most people while creating an atmosphere that feels right for the genre. When the GMs need to arbitrate on any game rulings, they will aim to keep true to the spirit of the game. This will mean that they will consider what would be most fun for the players, and what would be most in keeping with the genre. They will encourage actions that allow players to do exciting things in the game, so long as they are consistent with the reality of the setting.

Any time you think you need a GM, you are entitled to ask for one to assist you.

If you are involved in a complicated combat, being kidnapped, interrogated, or killed, or for any other reason feel that events are moving too quickly or that you do not understand your options, call a GM. They will ensure that you are treated fairly.

Cheating

Players may lie to each others in roleplaying their characters, but they must play the game itself fairly. Any player not crossing off abilities used or tearing up one-use abilities is cheating. Hiding item cards on one's person or in your hotel room is cheating. (You can't really stuff a treasure chest into your back pocket, now can you?)

The GMs' rulings are final

Although some of the GMs may be involved in running a specialised area of the game, each of the GMs is equally responsible for the game overall. If you ask any GM for information or a ruling, you must accept his or her response. Do not try to go to another

GM to get a decision that suits your character better. The GMs do talk to each other on a regular basis, and will be communicating with hand held radios. We will find out, and then we will exact our retribution. GMs rulings are final, even if they contradict the rules.

Exclusion from the game

If you are found to be breaking the rules, the GMs may penalise you by taking away an ability or item card, asking you to take a timeout in the bar, or another suitable sanction. The GMs reserve the right to exclude any player from the game who, in their view, has seriously breached the rules of the game by cheating, endangering others, or behaving inappropriately, which may include excessive intake of alcohol. No refunds will be given.

Game Locations

Generally, if you are standing next to someone in the game, you are really next to that person and can overhear their conversation, talk to them, or attempt to arrest them. However, certain game locations represent larger space (for example Freetown), so people who are physically close to each other in the room may actually be miles apart. Make sure that you are aware if the person you think is next to you really is in the same location or whether they are somewhere else.

We have 6 functions rooms, and aside from Shelly, which is the big downstairs room and will represent Freetown, other locations will be more flexible than usual. We will make this clearer on the game timetable.

The other rooms are:

Grove, Welbeck Rufford Newstead
Thoresby

Weapons



Don't bring any weapons of any description to the game, no peace bonding, no latex, no replicas, no toys. Thanks for your cooperation.

There will be a number of props available for you to have photographs taken in costume on Friday, and then we'll be putting them away somewhere safe.

If that seems unclear in any way please ask.

Hotel

The hotel staff are there to look after you. They work extremely hard on our behalf over the weekend and will go out of their way to help you enjoy your stay in the hotel. Please treat them with courtesy and respect in return. If you experience any problems then please find a GM or an Old Tar and they will do their best to help. Please remember that there are other guests in the hotel and they may come into the part of the hotel where the game is taking place to use the toilets for example.

Check in time

From 1400

Check out

By noon. The hotel will have extra reception staff on for Sunday morning, and they will arrange to print your bill. You can then settle it using cash or credit card, which can be a different card to that which you secured your room with. Please try to stagger your check out time, and don't all queue up at noon.

The game and debrief doesn't finish until 1400 on Sunday so you will probably want to get changed to go home. (You may not, please don't let us discourage you from going home in your stripy trousers and velvet coats on the train!) You may use your hotel room to get changed after lunch providing you leave it tidy for the Sunday morning session with everything packed up to go. The chambermaids need to go in and change the bedding and clean. Please don't mess the rooms up after they have cleaned or the hotel will reserve the right to charge you.



Bar

The bar will allow you to put drinks onto your hotel bill or to pay with cash during the day. If you are sharing a room with someone the hotel will itemise your bill according to the slips you have signed for. After 2300 the night porter will also serve drinks, which must be charged to your hotel room. They normally don't care how late we go to bed.

Food

Breakfast will be served from 0800-1000.
(0645-0930 on weekdays)
Lunch on Saturday from 1130-1500
Dinner from 1800-2000

BAR SNACKS can be ordered by taking a printed menu from the GMs table and ticking off what you would like, where you expect to be, then add your room number and printing and signing your name. There will be a raffle ticket stapled to the top of the menu. Please detach one half and keep that. Put the sheet with the remaining half in the box on the bar. If you would prefer to pay with filthy lucre please see the bar staff, and hand your form to them. The serving staff will come to the room you have told them you are expecting to be in and start shouting your number out.

Saturday night there will be an entirely optional set dinner in the hotel restaurant, which you need to confirm your order for by 1500 on Saturday. Take a DINNER menu from the GM table, tick off your choices fill in the bottom and put it into the box on the bar again.

NOW the difficult bit, remember what you asked for until dinner!

When it's time sit down with whoever you want. When the serving staff bring food out they will tell you what they are serving, please shout up when they offer what you ordered.

If you want to go somewhere outside into the real world for dinner that's absolutely fine. There's an ASDA a few minutes walk away and Retford town centre is about 10 minutes walk.

Sunday lunch is a buffet, which is included in your game fee, and it will be served before the debrief.

Allergies, dietary restrictions etc.

The hotel always has vegetarian food on offer, and they will also be catering for the vegans who are coming. Soya milk will be available. Any other dietary restrictions please let us know in advance.

Non Hotel Food

The hotel are remarkably tolerant of us eating chocolate, and limited snacks in their space, but please exercise restraint and common sense. They do however take a dim view of people bringing their own alcohol.

Water

There should always be water and glasses available in the hotel, if not please tell a GM/Old Tar.

Smoking

The game area is non smoking, even if you set fire to your beard. Smoking is permitted in the bar, which is not part of the game space. Please restrict smoking to the tables and not at the actual bar, for the sake of the bar staff and other players.

Timetable

Friday Evening (Session 1, 7pm – 12pm)

7pm Briefing and introduction.

8pm Game start proper- GMs available

12pm Official session end- GMs not available; upstairs rooms closed

Saturday Morning (Session 2, 9am -1pm)

No GMs available during lunch

Saturday Afternoon (Session 3, 2pm – 6pm)

Dinner: 6pm-8pm (no GMs and no game)

Saturday Evening (Session 4, 8pm – 11pm)

11pm Official session end- GMs not available; upstairs rooms closed

Sunday Morning (Session 5, 10am – 1pm)

Noon Check out time

1pm Official game end- sum-up and wind-down.

1pm-2pm Lunch and debrief