



Posting and Commenting Etiquette & Moderator Policy

A li'l bit of logistics about commenting and replying

The nesting is built to organize conversations. The intended effect is for every comment to be its own, easily-identifiable interaction.

- A comment gets its own title, but replies to it do not.
- All replies are submitted by clicking “Reply” to the original comment, and are nested at the same level among one another.
- Therefore, if you’re replying to a specific reply, please say so.

I can move comments and replies around. If you submitted one into the wrong place, contact me and I’ll fix it.

You can’t edit or delete anything you submit. If you made some mistake, go ahead and post again to say so and fix it – this turns out to be very readable and has a surprisingly positive social effect. If you absolutely cannot bear to see the error, notify me through the Contact form and I’ll fix it.

Posting format

When you create your own post in Actual Play, you get a fair amount of options, maybe too many. Please be attentive to simplicity and readability.

Images are currently permitted, although I’m reluctant to let it continue. Help me stay permissive by doing these:

- Limit the number of images so they enhance what you’re saying rather than becoming a spectacle of their own.
- Use the image formatting capabilities (right-click on them in the post body) to keep them small – full-screen imaging is really unhelpful.

Names and usernames

Using a recognizably personal name is recommended; it has a real and positive effect on the way people talk to one another. However, this does not mean anything further than your voluntary preferred extent, and certainly does not mean your full name. There are lots of good reasons to manage your usernames and general on-line presence. If you prefer a fictional username or long-established webhandle, that’s fine too.

Some half-and-half options I’ve seen in the past include altered spelling, a pen-name for surname, and a fun internet-style username while using one’s personal name in the body text.

Moderation

This isn't a public site. It's mine, built to permit and facilitate discussion. Those discussions, and how they're done, is what people are paying for, and I moderate to maintain that. Here's how I do it, so you know.

- I read everything.
- I might edit it solely for format – fixing a picture or link for you, for example.
- I'll shift a comment or reply to the proper level of nesting if necessary.
- If I see what I consider a problem with content (see the next section), I'll say so in a reply, making clear that this is moderation rather than an ordinary reply.
 - It will typically include some way forward and is not phrased to shame you.

How to respond to moderation:

- In the case of minor editing or repositioning as I described above, carry on without comment. Your contribution wasn't an infraction and my fix isn't a punishment.
- In the case of my moderating your content, please consider what I said carefully.
 - Defensiveness is your enemy. Do not strike back as if I had struck you.
 - Carry on with no need for apology to me or other formalities.
 - If you really don't like what I'm saying, or feel that I'm being unfair or missing something, please use the Contact form. Consider it a sympathetic hearing for which I will review myself carefully, given that you are doing the same.

You're free to clarify if you think I'm missing something, but past that point, my judgment is final.

Your content

I recommend composing your posts outside of the site, and pasting them in when they're ready. That doesn't mean they must be long or involved. It does mean you'll be sure you want to say them.

By far the most common starting problem is not posting actual play. I consider this a learning curve issue and will moderate to help you get along it. It's pretty easy and shouldn't be stressful.

Some side-effects or troublesome aspects of that curve include:

- Unnecessary, elaborate self-introduction
- Anxiety over being a newcomer or concern with some designated label within the hobby
 - Seriously: the last thing on Earth I care about is "story games," "trad," "OSR," or any other such thing
- Excessive focus on hobby status, like whether you've published anything or whatever

None of these are a very big deal, but I'll call attention to them in a mild way. They're easily amended through the ongoing comments and replies.

The good news is that any reflection about the experiences you had in play is welcome. Even if you're not too sure about your direction or conclusion in posting, as long as you've followed the basic guide to posting (using my Best Practices advice or not), it'll work fine.

My main concerns as moderator are courtesy and intellectual honesty.

Discourtesy toward persons is not permitted. Be as profane or whatever as you like as a matter of style, but don't direct any such thing toward anyone. This means toward what they say, who they are, how they act, what "impression" you may have formed, or anything else.

- Defying moderation on this score is instant grounds for more severe structural action. Keep in mind that there are no refunds.
- Doing such things while remaining falsely polite is a high art on the internet. I am attuned to it and will treat passive-aggression, if anything, more directly than the active kind.
 - A good example: Using a person's name as a repeated "beat" throughout your sentences and paragraphs - this is worse than passive-aggressive, it's passive-hostile - do not do it.
 - There are others which I reserve the right to call out as they may appear.

It's pretty easy to spot when someone fails to think through what they say. They repeat clichés or hobby catch-phrases, they get vague or generalize carelessly, they hedge pointlessly, or similar things. Any of us can fall into that sometimes, so please be prepared for friendly re-direction.

Things get a little trickier when genuine disagreements are involved.

The first responsibility lies with the person who's presenting critique or disagreement.

- Set yourself a high bar for the interest and value of what you're saying – that you're making the conversation better, not worse.
- Make it clear whether you're *demonstrating a different view of your own* or *disagreeing with the accuracy of the view you're commenting on*.

If and when someone disagrees with you, even to the point of criticizing your reasoning, review what you actually wrote.

- If it's mistaken, or needs revision, own up to it.
- If the disagreement seems productive, take the conversation in the right direction.
- If you're not sure what they mean or how it relates, say so, nicely enough so they try again.
- If they're taking it in a bad direction, then notify me using the Contact button and let me handle it.

Everyone: Instead of thinking of another person as a threat, consider that he or she is taking some risk in participating at all, and that they are paying attention to you – and deserve consideration for that. Even if they're confused, it's an opportunity to find clarity a post or two away.

- Think about the topic, not what the other person may intend or represent to you.
- Do not "correct them back" in a retaliatory way. There is nothing at stake.
- If you flatly think you're right and they're wrong, make sure *your* position is clearly stated and let readers take it from there.

Sadly, intellectual dishonesty is a widespread problem and in some hands, even a skill. You'll do best to moderate yourself, starting with avoiding certain phrases and their associated habits of thought.

Among them are:

- "To be honest" – at best a placeholder, at worst an indicator that anything but is about to arrive
- "Only" or "just" – think about what your sentence would be like without them – usually it will entail taking a more genuine responsibility for what you mean.
- "It's interesting that you say ..." – this is usually code for calling someone stupid, prejudiced, or something else insulting.
- "You need to understand" or "You don't understand" – do not presume to speak for others' understanding.

That's it! Contact me for any questions. This document is a work in progress, so I greatly appreciate your feedback.