

SAVAGE UNOFFICIAL GAME HACK
WORLDS

ALL OCS WELCOME ☒
BRING DIGIMON INSTEAD ☒
HIGHLY OPINIONATED WRITING ☒

POKEYMANZ

TABLETOP RPG



ORIGINAL VERSION





Pokémon

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Savage Worlds

Pinnacle Entertainment Group

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If you do make your own branch, please change the version title and replace Ditto with your own mascot Pokémon! (And I guess the Special Thanks, too... unless you're game to thank my grandpa as well lol)

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The Fine Folks on RSU

The Pokeymanz Discord

DonJentleman

... And you, the reader!

Made with Affinity Publisher 2

Special Thanks

In Pokémon Blue, in the story, you beat your rival because he doesn't love his Pokémon the way you do. While there's a lesson about loving animals there, and it's certainly the one I took as a child, it is this, broader lesson that has put this book before you as the reader:

In Pokémon and in life, there is no such thing as a task accomplished alone.

In the making of *Pokeymanz*, I have been cheered, assisted, argued out of doing stupid things, given ideas wholecloth, typo-spotted, given whole character sheets, and have taken inspiration from tens - possibly hundreds - of people. The game has passed through many, many hands for testing, and played uncritically by many more in a way that allowed me to refine it. I will never be able to truly cover everyone who deserves it in the credits of this book, though I will try my damndest.

To say that I am the sole author of this work would be the height of pride, and a lie. To say that I am the sole author of anything I have done would be the same, though gamedev as an artform requires a special balance between the self and the help of others.

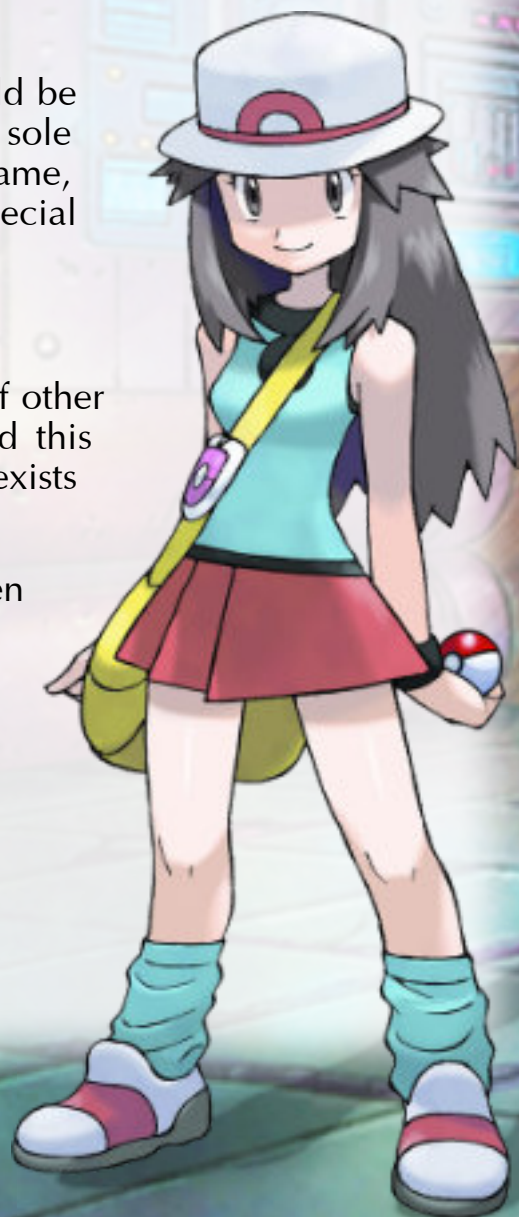
What I'm reaching around laboriously to say, is:

I would not have come this far without the help of other people. Thank you to everyone who has touched this project. I made it because I love Pokémon, but it exists in the form it does now because of you.

Oh, and thanks, grandpa. I wish you could have seen it, but the thing about you is I'm sure you saw it in me even if you didn't know what form it would take. You always made me feel like it was okay to be me. I miss you.

Thanks,

ChronicDelusionist





HELP! GAME'S IN TEN MINUTES!

My friend dragged me into this game and I promised to read the rules but I forgot!

Make a copy of the [Character Sheet](#) or print out the sheet at the back of this book.

Make a Trainer. Put in a name and a concept. Calling is the main thing your trainer wants to be or do. Something like "Catch 'em all" or "Gym Leader in Training" fits in here.

Attribute dice start at d4. You have 4 dice upgrades to spend at the start. Dice can't go higher than d8 in character creation, no matter what.

Make a Starter Pokémon. Find the Pokémon on Serebii or whatever and fill in its type and species. Pick a special ability it can get and fill the note in with a description of it. You can invoke this when things happen to make it take effect.

Pick four Moves that the Pokémon can learn by levelling up. Don't worry about level, it just has to be capable of learning it at some point through levelling up. Describe the Move in the notes based on what it says on the wiki or whatever.

Moves start off at d4-1 if it doesn't match one of your Pokémon's types, d4 if it matches one, and d6 if it matches one and your 'Mon only has one type. Allocate two extra die step boosts wherever you want, not exceeding d8. Give the Pokémon 4 in Toughness.

Play the game. Pick a trainer attribute. If you're in a battle and attack, the default trainer thing in battle is Tactics. If you can justify using something else, you can use that.

Roll the trainer skill die and the Pokémon Move die. If either of them is higher than 4, you succeed! 10 is a critical success! (In most cases; in battle, you have to meet Toughness.)

If you roll the max die number, roll it again and add it to the total.



Trainer Tips!

Don't feel bad if you were late to the party. This schlub was, too, and he ended up helping to launch a franchise.





TABLE OF CONTENTS

The road to becoming the World's Greatest Pokémon Trainer is not an easy one, and that's why we're going to play a tabletop game about a group of OCs doing it instead. Read on to find the full guide on how to play around in the wondrous world of Pokémon!

BASICS

FOREWORD.....	1
THE GOLDEN RULES	2
GLOSSARY OF TERMS.....	3

TRAINER'S MANUAL

POKÉMON TRAINER'S MANUAL	6	Trainer Attributes	13
THE BASICS.....	7	(Optional) Edges and Hindrances	14
Dice Steps.....	7	Trainer Edges	15
Basic Rolls	8	Trainer Hindrances	29
Trainer and Pokémon Dice ...	8	Creating Pokémon.....	43
Contested Rolls	9	Nicknames and Gender ...	43
Ekans Eyes	9	Special Abilities	44
Roll Modifiers.....	10	Pokémon Types	44
CHARACTER CREATION ..	11	Pokémon Moves	45
Creating a Trainer.....	12	Mastery (and Evolution) ..	48
Calling.....	12	Toughness	50
Attributes in Action	13	Character Creation Quick Reference.....	51



TRAINER'S MANUAL, CONTINUED

ADVANCEMENT52

Trainer Advancement53

Pokémon EXP54

Learning New Moves.....55

Evolution & “Re-speccing” .55

Retraining & Pokémon EXP .56

Disobedience57

Catching Stronger
Pokémon.....57

Spotlighting58

POKÉMON BATTLES59

The Basics of Battles ...60

Initiative61

Types of Actions.....62

Called Actions63

Priority & Beam Struggles .64

Wounds.....65

Move Effects65

Translating Move Effects .. 71

Arena Features.....72

Arena Hazards73

Type Matchups.....74

Status Effects.....75

Capture.....78

Battle Formats79

Wild Encounters79

Boss Pokémon80

Legendary Pokémon.....80

Trainer Battles.....81

Gym Battles81

Double Battles.....82

Non-Battle Encounters ...83

Sideline Commentary....84

Commentary Tokens85

Commentary Token Effects.85

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS86

Capture Chance87

The Capture Roll87

The Ethics of Capture89

New Edge: Capture
Specialist90

Pokémon Contests.....91

The Basics.....92

The Appeal Round & Setup. 93

Appeal Points.....94

Contest Rounds95

Causing Drama.....96

Stale Moves.....96



TRAINER'S MANUAL, CONTINUED

Contest Status Effects . . .	97	The Shaken Condition . .	115
Edge & Hindrance Changes	98	Pokémon Edges & Hindrances	116
Pokémon Eggs	99	Advancement	121
Acquiring Pokémon Eggs . .	99	The Move Sheet	122
Incubation	100	PC Pokémon Creation Quick Reference	125
Hatching Eggs	100	Raid Battles	126
Fossil Restoration	101	Building Raid Bosses . .	127
New Edge: Pokémon Breeder	102	Raid Initiative	127
Items	103	Raid Phases	128
Money	104	Final Notes on Raids . .	129
Encumbrance	104	Example Raid Encounter.	130
Types of Items	105	Shadow Pokémon	131
Camps & Secret Bases .	106	Capturing Shadow Pokémon	131
Edge & Hindrance Changes	107	Shadow Pokémon Stats.	132
New Edge: Happy Camper	108	Purifying Shadow Pokémon	133
Happy Camper Features.	109		
New Edge: Itemcrafter . .	110		
Momentum	111		
Pokémon as PCs	112		
Their own Pokémon	113		
Wild Skills	114		
Potential	114		
Mixed Games	115		



GAME MASTER'S GUIDE

GAME MASTER'S MANUAL 134

GAME MASTERING. . . . 135

General Advice 136

The Unwritten
Authority 137

“Yes, And” 137

Safety Tools 138

Session Zero 140

Quick GM Tools 141

The Pokémon Setting. . 142

SCENARIO DESIGN. . . . 143

Encounter Design. 144

General Tips 145

The Countdown. 146

Statting Encounters. . . 146

Encounter Types 147

Adding Twists 162

Tension 163

Game Structure. 164

Oneshots (& Episodes) . 165

Campaigns (& Journeys) 168

Downtime (& Filler
Episodes) 170

Pokémon Wishlists 171

NPC Design. 172

NPC Roles 173

Quirks & Sadnesses . . . 174

Team Gimmicks. 175

Putting it all Together . . 175

Designing for Difficulty 176

House Rules for Difficulty 177

Resource Management . 178

When to Heal? 179

Tuning Encounter
Difficulty. 180

Custom Edges &
Hindrances 181

IMPROV & OPEN

GAMES 182

The Art of Improv. 183

“Yes, And” (Revisited) . . 184

Story Structure on the
Fly 185

Tricks for Pacing 186

Player Choice Matters. . 187

Kill Your Darlings. 187

Thematic Questions &
Answers 188

The Invisible Rail Network 189



GAME MASTER'S GUIDE, CONTINUED

The GM Toolbox for Improv.	190
Tooling Encounters	191
Reactive NPCs	192
NPC Factions	193
Story Hooks & News ...	195
Active & Passive Hooks .	196
Hook Countdowns & Triggers.	197
Clocks.	198
(Optional) Faction Turns & Plans	200
Gameplay Loops	205
The Default Goal.	206
Game States.	206
The Purpose of Downtime	207
Maps	207
Prepping an Open Journey	209
Foundations.	210
The Prep Loop	211
Prep Loop Quick Reference	215
Footnote: Further Reading.	216

SAMPLE EPISODE.....	217
A Noble Cause	218
Reading Encounters...	219
Getting the Adventure Started	220
Encounter: Stop the Cave Pokémon!	221
The Branching Path	222
Encounter: Upstream Slowpokes!	223
Slowpoke Encounter Aftermath.....	224
Encounter: Downstream Poliwhirls!	225
Poliwhirl Encounter Aftermath.....	226
Climax Encounter: Face-Off!	227
Conclusion & Rewards ..	228
Timeline.	229
GM Tips	229

INDEX & CHARACTER SHEETS.....	230
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A Tabletop Roleplaying-Game About Pokémon

But like without needing to do taxes, hopefully.

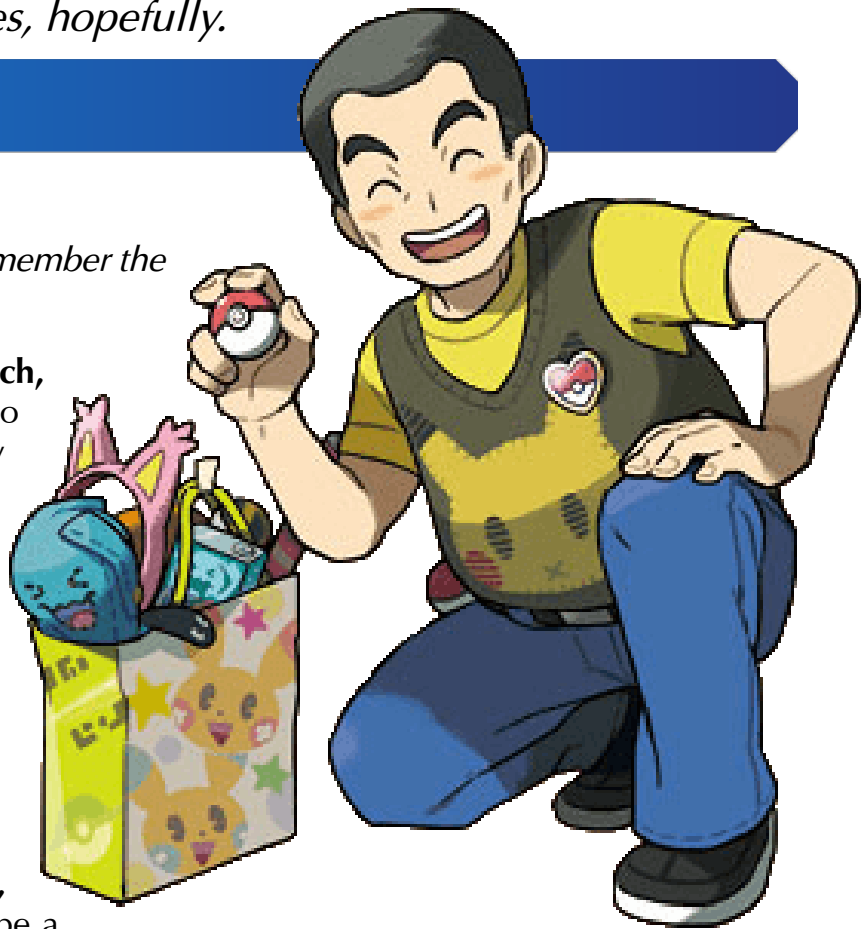
FOREWORD

Welcome to the world of *Pokeymanz*!

Are you a Girl? A Boy? Neither? *Do you remember the name of my grandson?*

This system is intended to be a **lower-crunch, higher narrative emphasis** alternative to many of the Pokémon RPGs currently bouncing around the internet space. I hope you enjoy this take, inspired mainly by the anime and the Pokémon Special manga, and taking many, many mechanics from games I like.

Many aspects of this game assume that the reader is already familiar with Pokémon and the Pokémon world, and has access to [Bulbapedia](#), [Serebii](#), or similar resources. **For the sake of brevity, this is intentional.** This is not intended to be a gateway into Pokémon, but an RPG for people who are already into Pokémon and want to play around in its world with loose, narrative rules and some wiggle room.



DISCLAIMER



You wouldn't download a Pokémon

This is a fan-made tabletop roleplaying game intended for free use. Nintendo and Game Freak own all rights to Pokémon and related media. I have no intent to make money off of this game, and discourage anyone from copying any Pokémon-related part of it for profit or resale.

The Savage Worlds system is owned by Pinnacle Entertainment Group. If you like the basic mechanics of this system, consider supporting them.



THE GOLDEN RULES

Pokeymanz has a few core principles that should be abided by in play, and will make things a more enjoyable experience for everyone. These Golden Rules are as follows:

1 Be Respectful to Others

In Pokémon, the good guys are people who help others, take action to empathize with them, and form positive relationships with people and Pokémon. The bad guys are people who take advantage of others, harm them, and disregard others' feelings. Likewise, out of character, **the table should be a space that prioritizes communication, empathy, and respect.**



Trainer Tips!

If you don't really care about the morality of the Pokémon world, rule one can handily be shortened to "Don't be a dick".

2 Drama Trumps Mechanics

The rules are there to facilitate creativity, not the other way around. If a player has a galaxy brain play that makes sense within the context of the narrative, or wants to use Moves, abilities, or items in novel ways, allow them to within reason. It's only wrong if it's taking away from the fun.

3 Game Logic Covers the Gaps

Or anime or manga logic, as the case may be. If there's an area where the rules are unclear or ambiguous, as is intentional in some places, **look to the established Pokémon media for inspiration on what calls to make.**

4 Screw the Rules

If you don't like the rules, rewrite them! This RPG was written because the existing Pokémon TTRPGs on the internet space didn't do it for me. **If your group doesn't like how something is, houserule it without fear.** Except Golden Rule One, for obvious reasons.





GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Attribute

One of a trainer's basic abilities, measured in dice steps.

Battle

An encounter involving a physical altercation, usually between Pokémon.

Battle Action

The main action a trainer and their Pokémon take on their turn, usually to use a Move.

Beam Struggle

An escalation that occurs when two Moves are pitted against each other during battle.

Called Action

An action that is called at the Top of the Round and triggers when a certain condition, decided when called, is met.

Calling

A trainer's overarching goal, which they work towards over the course of their Journey.

Critical Hit

The outcome of a roll that is so successful that it has some additional impact on the scene. Occurs when the Hit threshold is beaten by 6+.

Dice Steps

The progression of sided dice, from d4 all the way up to d12.

Edge

An extra knack that a trainer can have that grants a special bonus.

Encounter

A challenge that the PCs must overcome in one way or another in order to continue their journey.

Episode

One complete short story arc. May take place in one session or be stretched out over a couple, but generally has a central big problem that needs to be overcome.

Escalation

An opposed roll with high stakes.

GM

Game Master. Constructs and runs the overarching narrative, plays NPCs, and controls everything the Player Characters react to.

Hindrance

Something about a character, major or minor, that causes them frequent inconvenience or puts them in the line of fire.

Hit

The successful outcome of a roll where the attempted action succeeds.



"WHO'S THAT POKÉMON?" "IT'S PIKACHU!" "It's Clefairy!" "NOOOOOOOOOOOOAAAARHGHHGH"



GLOSSARY OF TERMS, CONTINUED

Initiative

The order of who acts when in battle or during time sensitive encounters.

Journey

A connected set of Episodes or one long story arc where a fairly stable cast of characters undergoes a set of challenges and grows as trainers.

Mastery

A spendable token that represents a major step in a Pokémon's training, like evolution, or a major bonding moment.

Move

One of a Pokémon's usable, active abilities.

Movement Action

A narrative repositioning action taken each turn.

NPC

Non-Player Character. Any character in the story not under the control of a player.

Party

The collective group consisting of the PCs.

Party (of Pokémon)

The Pokémon that one trainer keeps on their person, up to six.

PC

Abbreviation of Player Character; the characters under control of the Players.

Player

A player of the game, who roleplays as a Player Character trainer and their Pokémon.

Pokémon EXP

Points, used to buy up a Pokémon's abilities.

Safety Tools

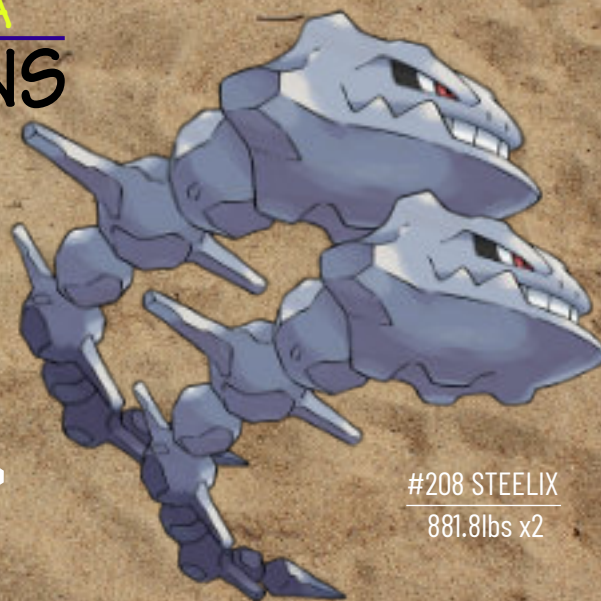
Agreed-upon techniques to keep people at the table from feeling uncomfortable in a way they didn't sign up for.

ENCYCLOPEDIA POKéMONICA

WEIGHTY DECISIONS

Of all of the largest Pokémon, the winner by sheer mass is Mudsdales, who weighs a whopping two tons - more than two Steelix, who are literally giant snakes made of steel. Pokémon Professors around the world continue to weigh in on how this could be physically possible.

#750 MUDSDALE
2028.2lbs



#208 STEELIX
881.8lbs x2



GLOSSARY OF TERMS, CONTINUED

Scene

A basic block of time where connected events happen “onscreen”. All encounters are scenes, but not all scenes are encounters.

Session

One sit-down gathering of the players and GM to play the game.

Session Zero

A discussion that occurs previous to a game of any length where characters are made or conceived, boundaries are discussed, and expectations for the game’s tone and content are communicated.

Special Ability

An individual Pokémon’s unique passive ability, determined by species.

Starter

A trainer’s first Pokémon.

Stat

A slang term for any mechanical aspect of a trainer or Pokémon, ie. their Attributes or Moves and the associated dice values. Also sometimes used as a verb.

Status Effect

A narrative and/or mechanical effect acting upon a Pokémon, usually but not exclusively in battle.

Toughness

A number that represents a Pokémon or trainer’s defense. It has to be met to Wound them.

Trainer Advancement

A trainer’s statistical growth over time.

Trait

A personality trait belonging to a character which can be interacted with in a social encounter.

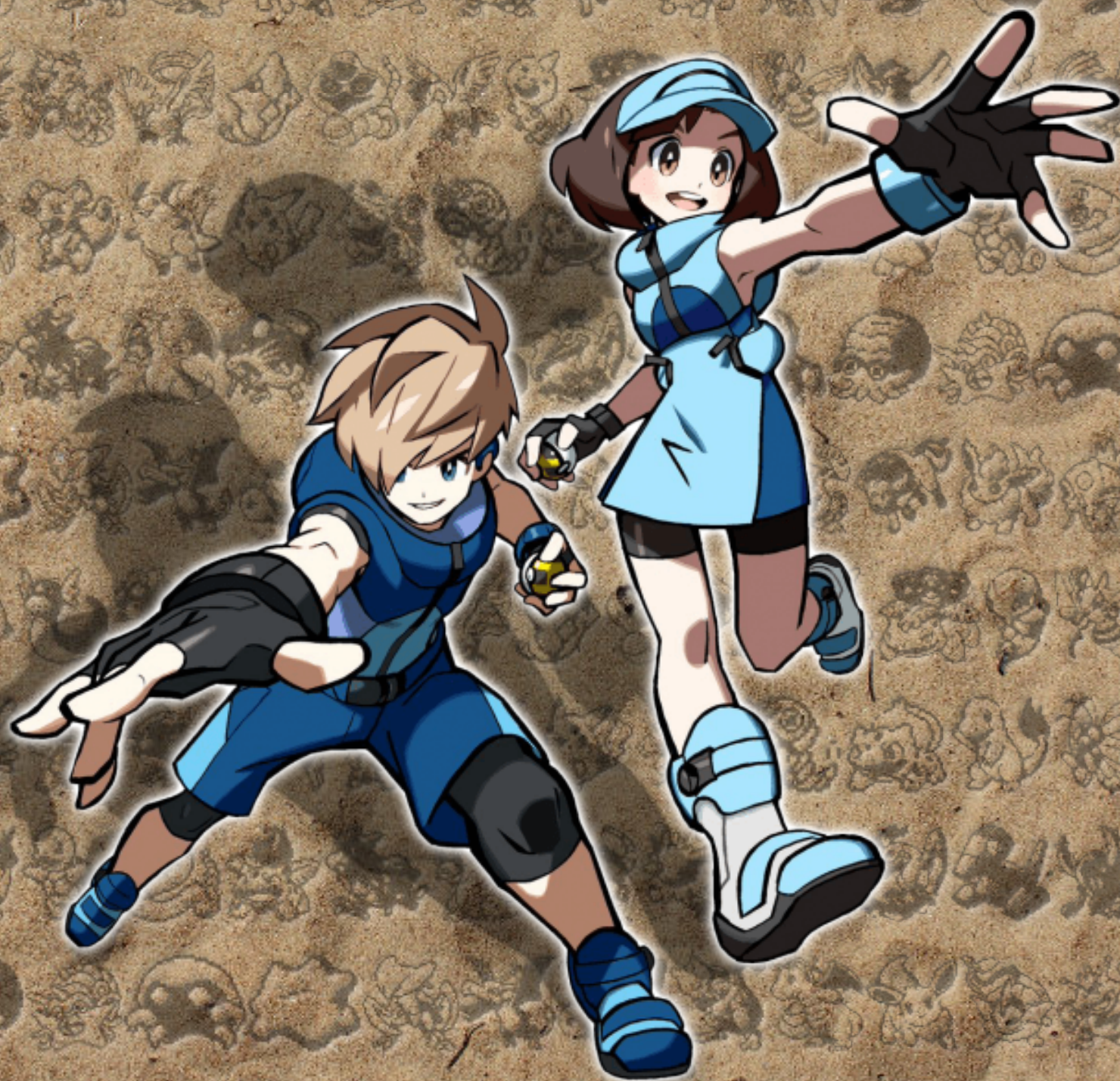
Wounds

A tracker of how much damage a Pokémon or trainer can take before they faint or white out.



“KIND OF FEEL LIKE EVERYONE BESIDES ONIX HERE IS KIND OF SUPERFLUOUS GUYS”

POKÉMON TRAINER'S MANUAL





The Bare-Bones Basics

Here's everything you need to get started.

THE BASICS

The default rules for *Pokeymanz* assume that there are players who are playing Player Character (PC) trainers, as well as a Game Master (GM) who is running the story, playing Non Playable Characters (NPCs), and



making calls like a referee. These rules can also be used for

giving some structure

to looser roleplay, but it's always a good idea to have a neutral referee for Pokémon battles.



Pokeymanz supports one to four (1-4) players to one GM, with three being the ideal number of players before things become cumbersome.

DICE STEPS

Dice in *Pokeymanz* are recorded by **Dice Steps**, going from dice with less sides to dice with more sides.

The steps are, in summary:



They are notated as "d" for "die" and then the number of sides on the die in question. A standard six-sided die, then, is called a "d6". If you would then add or subtract from the value after rolling, it is notated as "dX+Y" or "dX-Y".



This isn't even my final form



Using Dice, Rolling Nice

Sometimes gambling can be fun! This message brought to you by the Celadon Tourism board.



Trainer Tips!

To succeed, I recommend simply rolling high numbers, and not rolling low numbers.

BASIC ROLLS

Roll a die. If the result is 4 or above, it's a **Hit**, and the action succeeds. If the result is 10 or above, it's a **Critical Hit**, and the action succeeds and has a bombastic narrative effect.



If a die rolls its maximum value, it **explodes**, rolling again and adding the new rolled value to the die's total rolled value. A die can explode multiple times.

Explosions are determined by the face value of the die and resolved before any modifiers, meaning that unless a trainer or Pokémon has a status or other effect specifically forbidding explosions, any die can explode.



TRAINER AND POKÉMON DICE



People and Pokémon working together are the cornerstone of success! In **any situation** where a Pokémon and trainer are working together, such as using a Move in battle, **they both roll their relevant die, taking the higher as the result.** (Sometimes a Pokémon won't have a relevant Move to add; that's okay. They can lend moral support or otherwise assist to add a d6!)

Generally speaking, unless stated otherwise, if there is a "+X" or "-X" on a die, it applies to all dice involved in a given roll.



CONTESTED ROLLS



Contested rolls work the same way as regular rolls, but instead of needing to roll 4, two or more **opposed characters roll against one another and the highest value is the winner.**

If the winner of a contested roll wins by 6 or more, or against a static number like Toughness by 6 or more, it is considered a Critical Hit.

If the rolled values tie, the opposing forces enter an **Escalation** - all parties are given the chance to back down and take a reduced loss (or, if both back down, no ground is gained by either). If all parties Escalate, however, the situation becomes more dramatic, **another contested roll is made, overriding the first set of results, AND** the victory is treated as a Critical Hit.

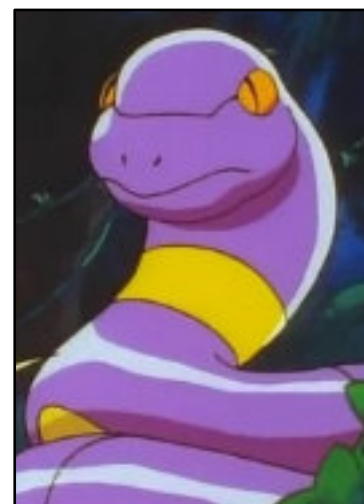
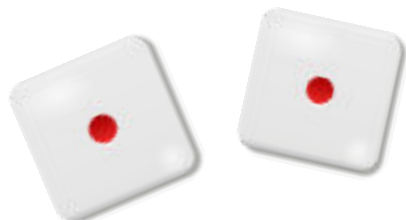
As long as the winner of any contested roll did not win by 6 or more, **one of the participants can spend a Mastery to force an Escalation** (their opponent can still choose to back down as normal). If this results in a chain of Escalations, treat the results as appropriately explosive.



This guy asks you if you want to Escalate wyd

EKANS EYES

If the dice roll **all ones**, or Ekans Eyes, the roll is a **Critical Miss**. The action fails, while also adding a complication to the situation. This could be a new hazard, the temporary inability to use a Move, or simply a narrative twist. GMs should use Critical Misses to add complications and make things more interesting, not simply to punish players for bad luck. **Ekans Eyes cannot be rerolled**, with Mastery or otherwise.



mfw I look for an Ekans picture to put in this section and I discover that you should never image search Ekans



ROLL MODIFIERS

Aiding Another

A player can **forgo their action** in order to grant someone else's roll a bonus - they must declare how they're helping, and **roll one die**, either a trainer or Pokémon die as relevant. The die is then **added to the main actor's roll** as though it was an extra trainer die.



Circumstantial Penalties and Bonuses

If a particular task is difficult, a check may be given a -1. Checks at a fiendish disadvantage may take -2 or even more. The same applies in reverse for easier checks, but a **truly trivial task should not require a roll**. In general, whether the GM calls for

a roll or not should depend on if the action moves the plot forward or helps the narrative in some flavourful way (for instance, it may be appropriate in a lighthearted game to roll for something entirely for comic relief).



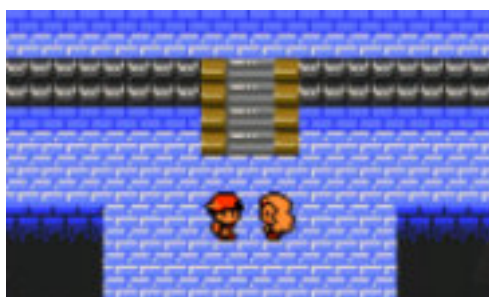
CHARACTER CREATION

It's time to let your creativity shine, and make whatever comes to mind. Whether you're making your self-insert from when you were eleven who kissed Ash a bunch or you want to be the very best, or more likely both, this is your one-stop-shop to making characters in Pokeymanz.



Getting Started

The digital character sheet can be found [here](#) - make a copy of it, or print one from the back of this book. You can always check the Character Creation Quick Reference if you need a summary or refresher. There's a [quick play guide](#), too, in case your friend dragged you into this and you forgot to read the rulebook until now.



Strong POKÉMON.

Weak POKÉMON.

That is only the
selfish perception
of people.

Truly skilled
trainers should
try to win with
their favorites.

Karen summing up the design ethos of this game





Pokémon Training For Slowpokes

Late to its own page.
Unbelievable.



CREATING A TRAINER

Trainers are (generally) human beings in the Pokémon world that have, for one reason or another, taken one or more Pokémon as partners and work alongside them towards a common goal.

Good trainers respect and love their Pokémon, treating them as partners. Bad trainers treat their Pokémon poorly and use them more like tools than living creatures. Depending on the tone of the game, player character trainers will generally skew towards the former, but it is important to note

that many a character arc has involved a bad trainer learning the error of their ways and becoming someone that respects their Pokémon as equals.

And if you want to play the game wrong, you can just have everyone treat their Pokémon horribly with no remorse. You are free to do that if you would like to be awful.

First, make up a **concept** for a trainer and **give them a name**, and maybe a short **"first impression"** type description of them! The sky's the limit!

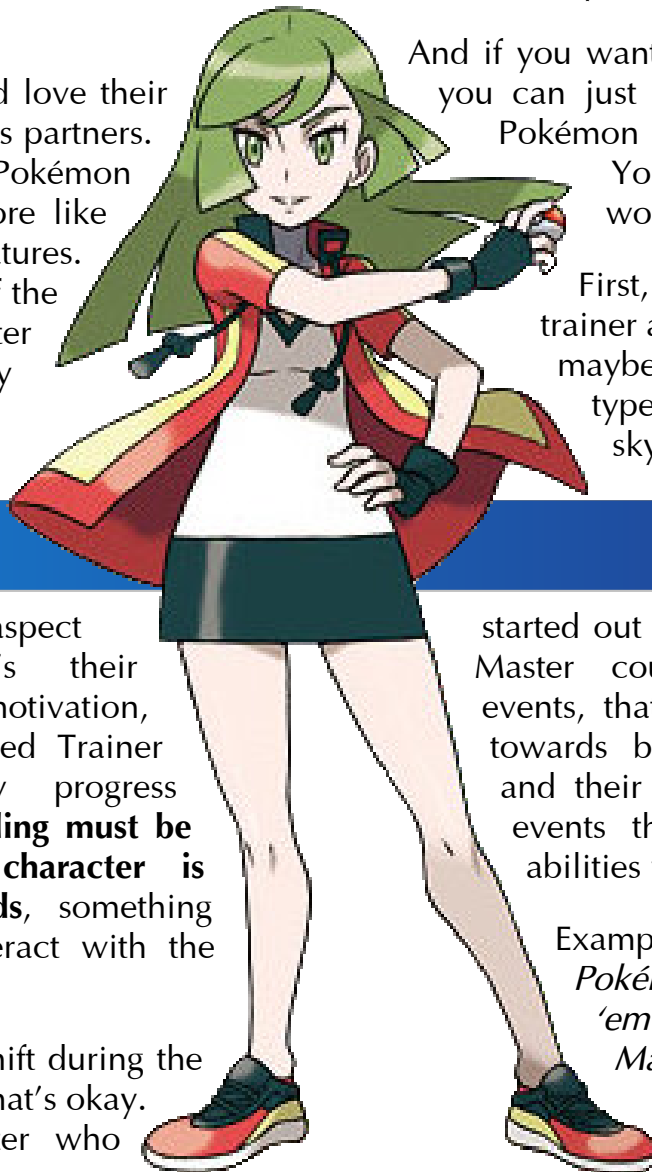
CALLING

Calling is an important aspect of your trainer. It's their overarching goal and motivation, and they will be awarded Trainer Advancement as they progress towards this goal. **A Calling must be something that your character is actively working towards**, something that drives them to interact with the game and the plot.

A trainer's Calling may shift during the course of the game, and that's okay. For example, a character who

started out wanting to be a Pokémon Master could decide, after story events, that they would rather work towards being Pokémon Professor, and their Calling and the kinds of events that would advance their abilities would shift accordingly.

Examples: *League Champion*, *Pokémon Researcher*, *Catch 'em All*, *Defeat Team Villain*, *Master Coordinator*, *Find the Legendary Pokémon*





TRAINER ATTRIBUTES

Trainers have four Attributes - **Heart**, **Fitness**, **Research**, and **Tactics**.

When creating a trainer, all of these attributes start at a **d4**. A trainer gets **four die step upgrades** to spend during character creation. Attributes may not exceed d8 at creation.

Trainers roll the appropriate attribute for their approach to a situation alongside their Pokémon. A battling trainer might use tactics to direct a Pokémon's use of a Move to affect the terrain, for example. **In some situations, multiple attributes could be applicable;** pick what works best for the situation and trainer.

Heart



Bond with others, make friends, read others, and empathize.

Fitness



Use physical skill, stamina, and possibly martial prowess.

Research



Know Pokémon facts, use your general smarts, and use gadgets.

Tactics



Direct Pokémon effectively in battle. Think on your feet and react.

Each attribute represents a different set of abilities and approaches to any given situation.



Toughness

Trainers are rather frail compared to Pokémon. Only the most swole individuals can take a head-on attack from a Pokémon and come out unscathed. **A trainer's Toughness value is their Fitness die type halved.** So, for example, a trainer with d6 Fitness will have 3 Toughness. They also have three Wound boxes. We'll get to what these are a little later!

ATTRIBUTES IN ACTION

"Wait, so, I should never dump Tactics because it's the battle stat?" Not necessarily. **What trainer attribute is used depends on how the trainer is working with their Pokémon.** Tactics is an easy fallback, but a trainer could argue rolling Heart to sing alongside their Jigglypuff, or roll Research to find a weak point for a vital strike. **GMs should be a little broad in what they allow -** just ask players to justify it if it's not obvious!

To help give a sense of what works, here are some **examples of actions that generally fall under each attribute:**

- **Heart:** Sensing and understanding emotions, social skills, intimidation, syncing up with Pokémon anime-style
- **Fitness:** Athleticism, endurance, hand-to-hand combat, physically assisting Pokémon, speed, grit
- **Research:** Looking things up, general knowledge, applying known facts, technology, perceiving surroundings
- **Tactics:** Split-second decisions, directing a team, applying trained skills, battlefield awareness



OPTIONAL: EDGES & HINDRANCES

This step is **optional**.

Edges are specialized knacks that make a trainer really stand apart from their peers in some way. Edges typically grant boons to a certain playstyle or open up new options and approaches.

Hindrances are aspects of a trainer that cause minor or major inconvenience or trouble for them during their journey.

While most trainers don't achieve Edges until they are more experienced, to encourage trainers to take Hindrances, doing so at character creation can give them a leg up.

You may take **Hindrances** from the Hindrances Section at character creation for points. **Major Hindrances** grant **two points** each. **Minor Hindrances** grant **one point** each.

For each two points, you may:

A) **Raise an Attribute** by one die step (You may only select this option once), or

B) Take an **Edge**.

The limit of points that can be gained this way is four points total; unused points are discarded.



Trainer Tips!

The "standard array" of Hindrances is one Major and two Minor Hindrances. This way, each player will have something significant that can readily be hooked, while still having everyday foibles that are easy to keep track of.



My Hindrance: I got to the part of Gen IV where they let you go underground and I honestly couldn't tell you if there is more game after that



Maximum Edge

Make your trainer stand out from the pack. Become the Edge Lord.

TRAINER EDGES



Trainer Tips!

Edges are optional perks that a trainer can gain upon Trainer Advancement or during character creation. They can give a trainer a more rounded and unique set of abilities and allow them to stand out from their peers.

If you want to give your trainer a "trainer class", this is the place. Go nuts.

Edges are sorted into a few categories.

Battle Edges, which give specific bonuses in Pokémon battles and combat-related encounters. **Utility Edges**, which relate to using items and skills. And, lastly, **Social Edges**, which give trainers a leg up in knowing and relating to people and Pokémon. **Edges can't be taken more than once, unless they say so in the text.**

Some Edges, like Move Tutor, could be very useful in a longer journey-style game, but much less useful in a short-form game or oneshot. **These Edges will be marked with an hourglass symbol** to give a heads-up to players.

Sanctity of Edges

You can't lose Advancements!



Edges may have a **requirement** listed in the text. If you fail to meet that requirement, **you may lose access to that Edge temporarily**. If this lack of ability to meet the requirement becomes permanent, **you lose the Edge and must choose another to replace it** or take a die step upgrade to one of your trainer attributes instead.





BATTLE EDGES



Double Battler

The trainer is skilled at coordinating multiple Pokémon at once, creating potent combo Moves; if multiple allied Pokémon are out and at least one of them is under the direction of a trainer with this Edge, they can create a devastating combination of Move effects.

The leading Pokémon spends a Mastery for their Battle Action. They add a narrative or secondary effect from the assisting Pokémon's Move to the action, similar to how you would pick an extra effect for a non-damaging Critical Hit. This effect succeeds even if the roll fails (and if it was purely augmentative, like just adding AoE to the main Move, pick a different benefit). The roll itself also adds the follower's Move die, as though assisted.

Once per encounter (this does not stack for multiple trainers with this Edge), more than two Pokémon can join in on a combination Move; if another allied Pokémon spends one of their Mastery and justifies it, they can add their own Move and die to the combo just like the first follower. As many allies may pitch in as there are allies with Mastery available.

Looks like a friendly game of tag!



Uh, are you sure about that





BATTLE EDGES, CONTINUED



I Choose You

The trainer has a close personal bond with one of their Pokémon, who has exceptional strength compared to other Pokémon.

This Pokémon has two more Move slots than a regular Pokémon, which are filled during creation or after taking this Edge as per regular Pokémon creation. It can also buy up to four Masteries instead of two, reflecting a uniquely unbreakable bond with its trainer.

Requirement: Pokémon as focal as this one tend to be more interesting. For one reason or another, the cherished Pokémon has a Hindrance of their own. It can be Major or Minor, but it must make sense with the Pokémon in question (ie. A Pokémon cannot be Unskilled, as it's not a trainer!).

A powerful Pikachu might be dogged by a set of Rival comic relief criminals, or a Psyduck could be overly afflicted with its species' signature headaches, a Minor Disability.

Also, trainers with the Partnerless Hindrance cannot take this Edge.

Regional Variants

Some Pokémon take wildly different forms in different regions as they evolve in divergent directions. They may even be entirely different types!

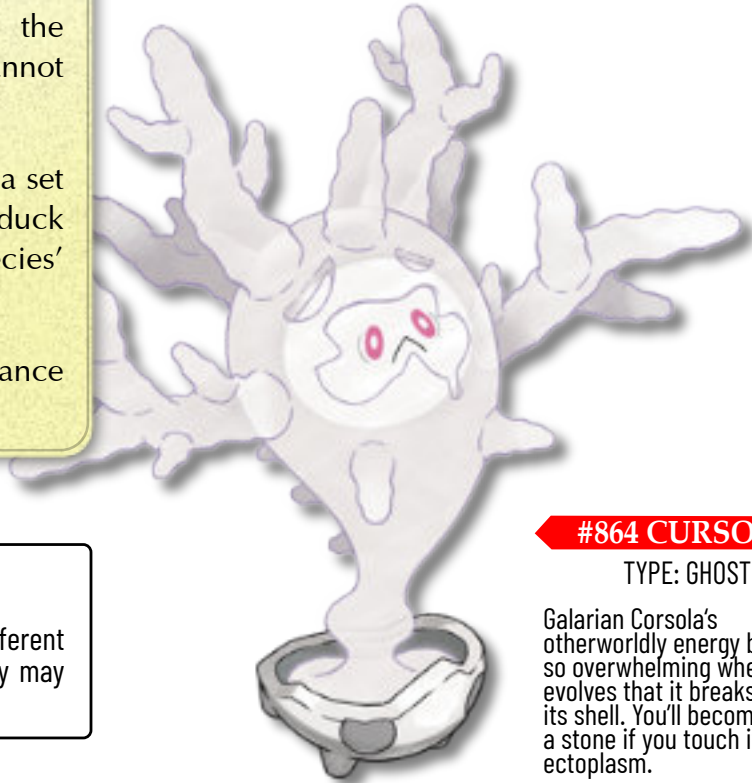
#222 CORSOLA

TYPE: GHOST

Galarian Corsola adapted to this ghostly form after a sudden wave of climate change a long time ago wiped out its native coral reefs. It drains life force through its branches. Don't kick stray stones in Galar - they might curse you!



The forbidden softball



#864 CURSOLA

TYPE: GHOST

Galarian Corsola's otherworldly energy becomes so overwhelming when it evolves that it breaks out of its shell. You'll become stiff as a stone if you touch its ectoplasm.



BATTLE EDGES, CONTINUED



Martial Artist

The trainer is trained in martial arts, either in the use of traditional hand-to-hand, weaponry, or in more esoteric or ki-based arts. They gain +2 to their Toughness.

In addition, they have trained their bodies to become attuned to a certain Type of combat. They may choose any Pokémon Type, or two-type combination; instead of being typeless, they now count as the chosen Type(s) for weaknesses and resistances. Their Fitness-based attacks now count as a Move of that Type, or either Type, with no inherent effects.

Note: This does not mean that a Pokémon can't assist a trainer's attack with their Moves; many creative effects could be achieved by combining strengths and Types this way.

With Supernatural Power or Professional, if the trainer's Type(s) align in some common sense way with their special Attribute, the trainer may use that die instead of Fitness. If one of those Edges is acquired after this Edge, the trainer has the option to switch the typing(s) this Edge grants when it is taken.

Martial Artists with the Move Tutor Edge may personally make use of some of their Recalled Moves. These Moves must match one of the trainer's Types. Also, they must mark up to four of their Recalled Moves to become Trained, or usable by the trainer. To change Trained Moves, they must spend a downtime.



Master of the Styles

The trainer gets in close, flinging themselves into danger right alongside their Pokémon to execute special maneuvers called "Styles".

On their turn, without using an action, the trainer steps into battle alongside a chosen Pokémon, bolstering it. They must choose a Style to take effect until they disengage with a Movement Action. They may choose to start the battle readied up in a Style.

Of course, walking into a Pokémon battle is incredibly risky; if their Pokémon takes a Wound or status, the trainer must disengage with a Movement Action or take the effect themselves. Clever use of status conditions or hazards might also negate the effects of Styles.

When the trainer takes this Edge, they master two distinct Styles; examples of Styles to choose from are on the following page.

Custom Styles to replace one or more of these options can be discussed with the GM; a Style should give an extra tactical option instead of a straight numerical bonus, and shouldn't outright break the game. This Edge may be taken multiple times, adding up to two more Styles in the trainer's repertoire per the taking.

Master of the Styles is somewhat advanced and may not be fun for beginners - which means it might not be suitable for all games. Discuss it with your GM!



EXAMPLE STYLES

Strong Style



Standing next to their Pokémon, the trainer can direct their movements to deliver crushing blows where they are most needed.

The duo can initiate Beam Struggles without spending Mastery, and they can spend a Mastery to intercept and Beam Struggle anyone springing a Called Action or Priority Move on an ally.

Agile Style



By getting in close with the opponent, the trainer is able to issue quick commands that outmaneuver them in a flash.

The duo can spend a Movement Action to give their Moves Priority.

Yomi Style



By studying the opponents' movements from close up, the trainer can read subtle cues that point towards hidden plans.

The trainer is able to freely read any Called Actions made in battle - including their allies', if applicable.

Shaper Style



Placing themselves in the field, the trainer gains an acute knowledge of the terrain; They and their Pokémon are able to manipulate it with ease.

The duo can spend a Movement Action after a successful Move to add, remove, or manipulate Arena Features.



Go! Merchandisable
Plushies Style!



BATTLE EDGES, CONTINUED



Sharp Commentator

The trainer often explains what is going on in their friend's battles for the audience at home, cheering them on. When using the [Sideline Commentary rules](#), this trainer gets an extra commentary token to use during the encounter.

In addition, during group battles they are participating in, a Sharp Commentator can gain one Commentary Token as though they were a regular character on the sidelines; however, unlike a regular commentator, they cannot spend tokens freely. They must give up their Movement Action that turn to do so. They also cannot spend it on themselves; it must be spent to help an ally. Battling commentators don't regain tokens when an ally's Pokémon becomes incapacitated.

This Edge may be taken multiple times, each time after the first granting one more commentary token.



Trump Card

The trainer has a Mega Stone, Z-Crystal, the ability to dynamax, or other original "Super-Move" up their sleeve, and can sync up with their Pokémon briefly to perform incredible feats.

Once per episode, the trainer can spend a point of Mastery with one of their Pokémon to unleash a Move with unrivalled power. For this one roll, both dice are d12s. It is automatically considered a Hit, and has an additional narrative effect appropriate to the flavour of the Trump Card. It can still roll a Critical Hit for another effect on top of that. It cannot be interrupted with Called Actions.

This Edge may be taken more than once to reflect different types of Trump Cards, but may still only be used once per episode.

Requirement: The appropriate requirements must be met for the Trump Card's specific nature, determined when the Edge is taken. For instance, Pokémon can only use Z-Moves if there's an appropriate source of power nearby, and the trainer can only Mega Evolve a Pokémon in its final evolutionary form.





DESIGNING TRUMP CARDS

Trump Card is intentionally vague and open-ended for two reasons. The first is to **future-proof the Edge**, allowing future regional gimmicks to be incorporated into *Pokeymanz* without having to make new Edges for them.

The second is to **allow the flexibility to include new, off-the wall, and unique gimmicks** - original regional mechanics and Trump Cards personalized to the trainer and Pokémon, like whatever the hell Ash-Greninja has going on.

When designing a Trump Card, think about how the game's mechanics or your idea **translate to an advantage** in *Pokeymanz*. This will be what you want to make the Edge's **"additional narrative effect"**. This may require **taking stock of what does and doesn't directly translate**.

As an example, since Mega Evolution's big benefit in the game is mainly better base stats, a thing that doesn't apply in *Pokeymanz*, one might choose to have Mega Evolution's narrative effect to be the Pokémon's type changing and their **gaining an additional ability instead of swapping abilities**.

Z-Moves might create unstoppable field effects, **Dynamaxing** might make the Pokémon able to do things on a scale that would usually be unthinkable, **Terastallization** might give persistent bonuses to Moves of a certain type for the rest of the encounter, a custom super-Move might only be useable as a finisher but always do extra damage...

These are not hard and fast rulings, but hopefully helpful examples to give a jumping-off point for your own cool Trump Cards!



A bling Trump Card? The implications for the Contest meta are enormous



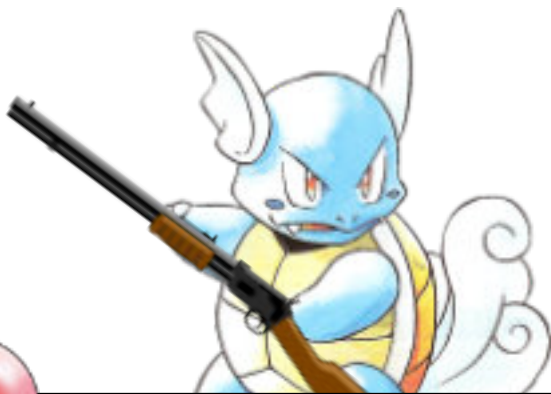
UTILITY EDGES



Always Prepared

Whether because of wealth, ingenuity, or simple experience with packing, **this trainer always seems to have the right item on hand to make the situation easier.** If the party needs an escape rope, they have five. If the party needs a refreshing drink, it turns out that they hit up the vending machine in the last town. Did it start raining? Looks like they'll have to turn their frying pan... into a drying pan!

If the player can think of a way that an item common to the Pokémon world would help in a given situation, once per encounter, this trainer can give a non-battle roll a +2. Generally speaking, the trainer can also easily procure functional lodgings, and gains a +2 bonus to hunt down uncommon items in any circumstance where they are available to find.



Trainer Tips!

In sillier games, the reasonable limits of some Edges are... flexible.



Move Tutor



A Move Tutor has a sharp eye for the various techniques that Pokémon can learn, and **the ability to train Pokémon to learn techniques that they may never have found on their own.**

Once a session, a Move Tutor can study a Move as a Pokémon - any Pokémon, friend or foe - uses it, and "Recall" its effects. Once Recalled, the trainer can teach it to another Pokémon as per the Learning New Moves rules, provided they have time to train with it. The Move Tutor can accurately Recall up to four total Moves, or six if their Research (or if they're a Martial Artist, Fitness or their alternative battling attribute) is a d8 or more. Also, once a downtime, they can Recall a Move from a recently encountered Pokémon.

Move Tutors, unlike TMs, are flexible. A Pokémon needs to be capable of learning a Move in some way in order to be tutored - you can't teach a Squirtle Flamethrower no matter how hard you try. However, a Move Tutor might be able to Recall Flamethrower and work with the Pokémon's natural abilities to produce a similar effect. In the above case, the Move Tutor might be able to teach the Squirtle Scald, instead.

Is the Move Gun Normal- or Steel-type asking for a friend





UTILITY EDGES, CONTINUED



Pokémon Coordinator

The Trainer is seriously devoted to Pokémon Contests, and also knows the importance of **spurring on their friends**. Their Pokémon? Groomed, well-fed. Their vibes? Impeccable.

Coordinators know the value of morale. They can, once per session per teammate, use a Movement Action to restore a spent Mastery to one of a teammates' Pokémon by inspiring them. This must be roleplayed, and can even be used outside of Competitions.

As well, due to their excellent preparation skills, during competition encounters, a Pokémon Coordinator's team automatically wins any ties. They also have an uncanny ability to size up their competition; once per non-social encounter, they can discern one personality trait or socially relevant Hindrance from a character in the scene. Moves or rolls that "target" this Trait in some way count as Super Effective just as in a social encounter - though using this ability cruelly for a leg up may cause consequences.



Pokémon Researcher

The trainer has an academic level of background knowledge, able to remember facts about subjects they've studied in the **past with amazing breadth and depth**. Once per encounter, the trainer can choose a subject: a Pokémon, a person, a place, a legend, or an object.

If the subject is canon to Pokémon material, allow the player to pull up its wiki page. They may know anything about the subject from said page that would be common or published knowledge in the game's setting. An example of something that would NOT be common knowledge is Mewtwo's location in Cerulean Cave during the events of Pokémon Blue - but the trainer may be aware of rumors that Team Rocket facilitated the cloning of a legendary Pokémon.

If the subject is original to the game, treat it as though the trainer had rolled a Critical Hit on a Research (or other relevant attribute) roll and give them any information that would likewise be common or published knowledge.

If the player has a relevant Professional skill, they may be privy to more or different information than a layman.



Trainer Tips!

Sometimes you just want to play a jerk. Exploiting others' traits (especially disability-related traits) in a mean way for an advantage could be a sensitive topic, though - practice Rule #1 and check in with your group's boundaries!



UTILITY EDGES, CONTINUED



Professional

The trainer gains a fifth special attribute relating to a job or skill that is independent of being a Pokémon trainer; this attribute allows the trainer to roll for more specialized actions outside of the scope of most trainers. It begins at a d4, and the trainer gets an extra die step to spend on their attributes when they take this Edge. They may also reshuffle their existing attributes when this Edge is taken.

Some examples are: Sailor (Skilled in the operation of seafaring vessels and navigation), Doctor (Skilled at healing people and/or Pokémon), Inventor (Can put together crazy inventions on the fly), etcetera.

Requirement: Professional cannot be taken together with the Supernatural Power Edge.



Supernatural Power

The trainer gains a fifth special attribute relating to the special powers that humans can gain by training with certain types of Pokémon, starting at a d4. The trainer gets an extra die step to spend on their attributes when they take this Edge. They may also reshuffle their existing attributes when this Edge is taken.

The power so gained can be many things, but some canon examples would be Medium (the ability to commune with the dead and Ghost-type Pokémon), ESP (Psychic powers similar to those that Psychic-types use), and Aura (The ability to sense and manipulate the auras of living beings like the Pokémon Lucario).

Requirement: Supernatural Power cannot be taken together with the Professional Edge.



ENCYCLOPEDIA POKÉMONICA ULTRA BEASTS

Ultra Beasts are terrifyingly powerful alien Pokémon-like entities from another dimension. They first appeared over the skies of the Alola region. There's a whole taskforce devoted to investigating them and figuring out how to counter them - one which tragically claimed the lives of several people and established the Ultra Beasts as a serious threat. That is, until the retcon in USUM. They're cool now, guys!



UTILITY EDGES, CONTINUED



Type Specialist

The trainer specializes in working with a particular type of Pokémon. Choose a type. When a Pokémon under their direction uses a Move of that type, the roll gets an extra die step to both the Trainer Attribute and Move dice. A d12 becomes a d12+1. If the trainer has the Wrong Demographic Hindrance, an absent stat becomes a d4. Trump Card rolls involving the appropriate type become d20s.

This Edge may be taken up to twice, but each version of the Edge must represent a different type specialty.

Requirement: In order to retain this Edge, at least half of the trainer's active roster, rounded up, must be Pokémon of the chosen type. Common sense exceptions may be granted by the GM for edge cases; i.e. Pokémon who will later become that type when they evolve, temporary forms, Mega Evolution...

Weaknesses

Never stop playing your favourites! Pokeymanz is designed to avoid Tier Lists as much as possible. However, sometimes your favourites just have a bad type matchup or a hard counter. So, at times like these, never forget the wisdom of Ash Ketchum:

Aim for the horn!





SOCIAL EDGES



Connected

The trainer has a specific knowledgeable contact or simply manages to hear the tea from everyone they meet. As long as they have contact with some form of civilization, the player can ask the GM one of the following questions four times per session, or six if the trainer has a Heart of d8 or above.

- *What does my contact know about this situation, person, or entity that I don't?*
- *What is the relationship between two characters in this scene?*
- *Who here is in a position to meaningfully help me?*
- *What kind of knowledge would be immediately useful to have in this situation?*

The GM must answer truthfully, or if the contact(s) would not know because it is a truly well-kept secret, let the player pick another question.



Rival writing peaked here and never
recove- why do I hear boss music



Fan Club

For one reason or another, the trainer has a small but dedicated group of admirers that follows them around and cheers them on. The admirers could take any number of forms; supportive but overbearing relatives, a supportive best friend, schoolmates, fans of the trainer's career, or simply a squad of battle-loving cheerleaders. Decide the nature of the Fan Club when you take this Edge.

Provided it's reasonable for them to be there, the Fan Club acts an audience for the trainer's escapades. While their Fan Club is cheering them on, the trainer gets to ask the GM to use a commentary token in their favour as per the [Sideline Commentary rules](#) once per encounter. They may request a specific effect, but it is ultimately up to the GM what benefit is granted. The Fan Club may also be amenable to doing the trainer they admire big favours. Once per episode, the Fan Club can give the party meaningful aid (like, say, a ride in a convertible) immediately if they're able.

Requirement: If the trainer treats their fans in a way they don't care for, repeatedly puts them in danger, or fails to live up to the hype, fans may lose their motivation to follow them and leave. A little sibling may get tired of being called an annoyance, for example, or someone who looks to the trainer as a hero or role model might be disappointed if they act with poor sportsmanship.



SOCIAL EDGES, CONTINUED



Legend Seeker

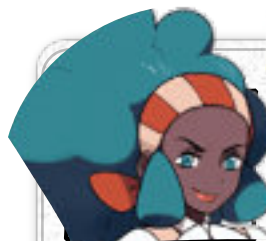


The trainer, for one reason or another, is a magnet for mysterious Pokémon phenomena. Legendary Pokémon and oddities often cross paths with them, and while they have no more control over them than a regular trainer, they are likely to be regarded as a curiosity or plaything by the mythical Pokémon they encounter. Rarely, a Legendary Pokémon may even choose to tag along with them or follow them on their journey to observe!

The reasons for this attention could vary widely. The trainer could be marked by fate, have befriended a Legendary as a small child unknowingly, have a natural affinity to a certain Legendary Pokémon's powers, be the descendant of a notable figure... and so on.

Optionally, choose a "patron" Legendary for the trainer with the GM. Once per episode, the trainer's player may ask for a Legendary intervention. The patron, OR a Legendary or powerful being most appropriate to the story, will become involved in the current encounter. The GM has final say on whether this is possible or appropriate, but "yes, and" should be the guiding principle here. The presence of any Legendary Pokémon is bound to be bombastic and complicate any given situation, even if they are helpful.

This Edge is not suitable for all journeys and should be discussed with and be approved by the GM beforehand.



Organizational Ties

The trainer is in the employ of, affiliated with, or possibly leads, a major institution within their region. They have a working relationship with the leadership of said organization, and connections and trust with other members. The trainer can use each of the following effects once per episode:

- *Call upon the group for help (retroactively if need be) and receive meaningful aid immediately with no strings attached.*
- *Contact their organization and be given a plot-relevant side objective to complete in the area. Completing this objective may net them a reward, dependent on the nature of the group and the GM. (Examples: An evolutionary stone; a big favour to call in later; critical intel)*
- *Throw around influence to get something accomplished, access to something off-limits, and/or be seen as an authority by those amenable to their organization.*

This Edge can be taken multiple times, each representing another organization.

Requirement: The character is required to act in accordance with the rules and esteem of their position(s). In the case of public-facing organizations like the League, they may also face the brunt of negative public opinion. Word of a dire violation getting back to those in charge may result in suspension or expulsion from the trainer's organization.



SOCIAL EDGES, CONTINUED



Pokémon Ranger

The trainer has a natural way with wild Pokémon. Once per encounter, they may temporarily persuade Pokémon to come along and assist them. These Pokémon will conveniently be around and separate from any hostile Pokémon the party may already be facing. The GM decides what Pokémon are nearby when the Edge is invoked (See the GM tools section for generators).

These Pokémon are not lowered to Starter level as though captured, use their stats as encountered, and are controlled by the GM as helpful NPCs. Trainers are still limited to six Pokémon with them at a time, including temporary Pokémon.

Pokémon following a trainer with this Edge roll with the Ranger's Heart attribute, and leave by the end of the episode unless Befriended.

Who You Gonna Call?

Gym Leaders aren't the only ones called upon in times of peril.

Pokémon Rangers, the organization, are a group of trainers that travel into danger with their partner Pokémon in order to manage natural disasters and keep the balance between human settlements and the many varied natural habitats that Pokémon call home.

In recent years, they've developed Capture Stylers, a device that resembles a top and is able to quickly convey a Ranger's feelings to a wild Pokémon. In this way, they can call on the Pokémon in an area for help when an emergency exceeds the abilities of the Rangers themselves.



Feeling Hindered

The closest you can get to a low% run in Pokeymanz.

TRAINER HINDRANCES

Everyone has weaknesses, and not just Grass-types. If Edges are an advantage that a trainer has that sets them out from the pack, **Hindrances are the things that make life harder for them**; foibles, flaws, and factors outside of their control that shape their circumstances.

There are **two types** of Hindrances: **Minor** and **Major**. At character creation, a trainer may take two Minor Hindrances or one Major Hindrance to gain an extra Edge or one more die step for their base stats.

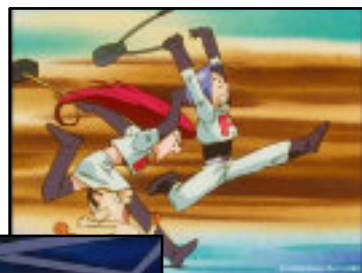
Minor Hindrances cause **inconvenience** to the character, mostly. They hold them back, but are usually situational or the consequences are not severe. **Major Hindrances, on the other hand, are major hurdles** that will impact a trainer often. It is discouraged for players to take Hindrances and plan around them to gain the most possible bang for their buck;



Flawed characters rule. There's a reason we remember these guys!

Hindrances are there to make trainers more interesting as characters and give them struggles to play off of. The GM should use them as plot hooks whenever possible, too.

Aim to lose as spectacularly as these three. Not in this game, just in general.





AN IMPORTANT NOTE



"Actually, Ash, they follow me around because I put accurate content warnings on my sessions."

Some Hindrances deal with subject matter that can be divisive or might tread on sensitivities - Lillie's situation in *Pokémon Sun & Moon*, for instance, would be represented by the Wanted Hindrance, and might hit too close to home with some groups. **It's good to double check with the group during character creation** (Or Session Zero, if your group has one) **to make sure that any given concept is appropriate for the group** and tone of the game. Remember Golden Rule One!

OVERCOMING HINDRANCES

Some, not all, **Hindrances can be grown out of, mitigated, or overcome** over the course of a journey. If the GM and players feel that it is appropriate, a trainer can use one trainer advancement to "buy off" a Minor Hindrance, or reduce a Major Hindrance to its Minor variation. A Major Hindrance can be bought off similarly, but it takes two advancements, so a player would have to save an unused trainer advancement for the purchase.

It is advised that careful consideration is given to this process; many Hindrances represent character arcs' worth of growth or action to overcome, such as plot-related Hindrances (like Wanted) or deeply-held beliefs (like Partnerless).

Disability, in particular, is one that requires thought - many disabled people in the real world struggle with or resent the question of whether they would want or accept a "cure", and what people assume that means versus what they actually want. Many also struggle with the prominence of "inspiration porn",



glorifying disabled characters pushing themselves beyond their limits to succeed, or the attached assumption that people are only worth what they can produce or contribute. Don't hesitate to tackle the topic, but try to be respectful and thoughtful. Assistive technology is widely accepted, though; a good example of Disability (Major) turning into Disability (Minor) is a fully blind character gaining aura sight and using it to compensate for their lack of mundane sight.





GAINING HINDRANCES

Characters may end up gaining Hindrances, too; a player can choose to change around their Hindrances if circumstances permit, **as long as the “score” remains even.** For instance, if the law catches up to a Wanted character who was on the run as a criminal, they may choose to change Wanted to Bad Rep (Major) as word of their deeds comes out into the open after they cut a deal to help the police hunt down their ex-comrades in the evil Team. Or, they could take Bad Rep (Minor) and another Minor Hindrance to replace it.

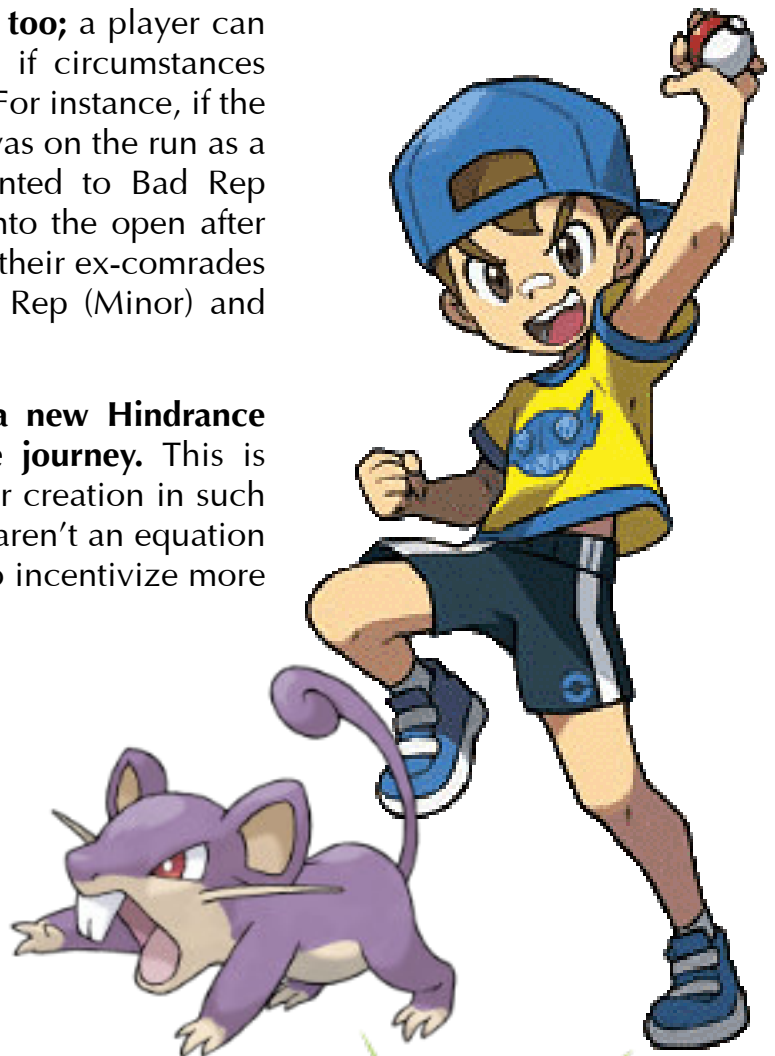
Optionally, **a player may choose to take a new Hindrance because of events that happen during the journey.** This is allowed, but Hindrances taken past character creation in such a way **don’t confer any benefit.** Hindrances aren’t an equation of put in flaw get out power - they’re there to incentivize more well-rounded characters at creation.



Trainer Tips!

Remember, no one is perfect...

Except them.





MINOR HINDRANCES

Minor Hindrance: **Always Broke**

Not everyone is good at holding onto their Pokédollars. **The character is just bad at managing money in one way or another** - either they tend to spend it as soon as they get it, they're sending a big chunk of change back home to their family, they're paying off some kind of debt, or more commonly, they're a preteen or teen out on their own for the first time and money disappears in a radius around them.

The character is able to cover the essentials like food and lodging along their journey, but in any circumstance where they need a few extra coins, they find their wallet empty, having spent their cash somehow offscreen. Friends may find themselves just short to cover them, even those who are Always Prepared.

Minor Hindrance: **Bad Rep**

The character has a bad reputation with a specific group that causes them trouble. Whether they're known as a ne'er-do-well or otherwise, their renown tends to chase them in a bad way. The character takes -2 to social rolls with this group that involve trust or cooperation, and may be excluded from certain social situations with the group unless friends intervene to vouch for them.

Minor Hindrance: **Code of Conduct**

The character has principles that they will adhere to even in inconvenient or dangerous situations. This could be a personal code, such as a character who refuses to tell a lie because of a bad experience, or a social code imprinted upon them by their upbringing, like a Dragon Tamers' vows to their elders. Most people have a personal sense of right and wrong, but this trainer's devotion to their code causes them frequent issues as they rub up against more practically-minded teammates or get themselves mixed up in trouble out of principle.

A Minor Code of Conduct is one to two rules the character must abide by, chosen when they take this Hindrance. Breaking one of these rules causes the trainer emotional distress; trainers with a Minor Code of Conduct who willingly violate their code lose the ability to tap into Mastery for their next full episode as their inner turmoil interrupts their focus in working with their Pokémon.





MINOR HINDRANCES, CONTINUED

Minor Hindrance: Disability

The character is significantly disabled in some way, but has tools to cope.

In comparison to our world, the world of Pokémon shows kindness to those who are different; a combination of a high technology level and intelligent Pokémon companions with varied abilities mean that assistive technology is readily available for most. A disability that is a “Minor” Hindrance is a disability that is at least mostly compensated for with assistance from technology or Pokémon. Losing access to these supports means that the trainer will face a steep disadvantage until they’ve been re-established.

Examples of Minor disabilities include: Poor eyesight that requires glasses, lost limbs with prosthetic replacements, executive dysfunction that is managed with a clever assistant Pokémon, deafness or blindness that are mitigated by supernatural powers, etc.

Minor Hindrance: Frail

The trainer is either naturally small-statured, has a glass jaw, or is simply a lover and not a fighter. **They take -1 to their Toughness.** Can’t be taken more than once. Because of this, the trainer’s max Toughness is lowered by 1.

Minor Hindrance: Gullible

The character easily falls for most lies and ruses. They might fall for scams and buy shady merchandise. If someone appears in front of them with a paper thin disguise, they’ll be shocked when the wigs and overcoats come off to reveal members of an evil Team. They’ll be flabbergasted when that one friend of the Professor who always talked about washing away the world’s flaws and imperfections pulls out a superweapon. The trainer takes penalties to rolls to uncover falsehoods of all kinds.

Wow if it isn’t my good friend
Lysandre whom I trust

I will spare you because
you are smokin’

Huh?

Nothing





MINOR HINDRANCES, CONTINUED

Minor Hindrance:

Hypercompetitive

If a trainer locks eyes with you, you have to battle them. Well, it's not that extreme, but **the trainer has immense trouble turning down any kind of challenge**, especially one related to their Calling. They might even have to make a roll to resist or be dragged away by their companions from a particularly dangerous or unwise challenge.

Minor Hindrance:

NPC-faced

The character has a large extended family in which every member looks almost exactly the same. There may even be a family tradition of having the same first name, and it's common that they may have similar professions. The trainer is easily and constantly mistaken for their relatives, which is a source of annoyance at best and trouble at worst.

Minor Hindrance:

Mean

The character is overconfident to an insufferable degree, cold and standoffish, or maybe just ill-tempered. **They tend to act poorly towards others, at least superficially**, facing Heart penalties in situations where their behaviour is considered inappropriate. Mean characters can have people they are kinder to, usually those close to them (ideally the party), but they act boorish frequently enough for it to cause problems.

Minor Hindrance:

Petty

The character holds a grudge like nobody's business. This trainer will remember being wronged and actively seek little revenges against those who have dealt them a perceived injustice - whether this be seeking a rematch whenever possible, finding a way to make the target of their ire suffer the same indignity they did, or taking opportunities to be catty or petty at the person's expense.

Sorry, couldn't think of a Pokémon character that fit all of these criteria so here's Seto Kaiba





MINOR HINDRANCES, CONTINUED

Minor Hindrance: Phobia

The trainer has a deeply-rooted fear of a specific thing or situation. While a trainer's phobia is present, their rolls take a -2 penalty as they must fight being shaken in order to focus on the task at hand.

With a Minor Phobia, the Phobia is something that will appear relatively infrequently. Storms, heights, slime - all things that are not so rare as to never come up, but that would not pose a constant threat.



Minor Hindrance: Quirky

The trainer has a pronounced trait that they will not leave behind almost no matter the situation. This could be a gimmick, a habit, or an activity they associate themselves with - to a detriment, sometimes.

This quirk is normally a harmless part of the character's schtick, but occasionally may make the situation awkward, ruin a first impression, or cause significant inconvenience. A golfer might insist on lugging their clubs everywhere (even a cave), a wrestler might spout catchphrases or after-school special messages, or an aspiring Romeo or Juliet may become smitten with a new paramour every Episode.



Lillie discovers DeviantArt



MINOR HINDRANCES, CONTINUED

Minor Hindrance: Reckless

The trainer has little heed for personal safety, often charging into fraught situations without thinking about - or perhaps ignoring - the risks involved. Maybe they're heroic, and can't stand to sit by while injustice occurs, maybe they're overconfident to a fault, or maybe they're just a little dense. Or maybe they're all three, like Ash Ketchum.

A Reckless trainer is likely to drag their team - both their human companions and their Pokémon - into trouble frequently, and get in over their heads time and time again.

Minor Hindrance: Rival

The character has a rival who appears at inconvenient times. While many trainers have rivalries that spur them on to greater skill and purpose, this trainer's rival is mostly an annoyance, popping up and demanding a battle right after a gruelling stretch of caves has worn out the trainer's team, or requiring a rescue after getting in the way of an evil Team.

This Hindrance can also represent other comedically annoying and persistent "relationships", such as an overly invested group of incompetent criminals that want something incredibly specific, but truly dangerous pursuers or genuine harassment (A line which should be discussed with the other players and GM) should be represented by the Wanted Hindrance.



If you combined these two characters into one they would constantly invite you out on friend dates but the date activity would be fighting crime while on top of an active volcano. I will not be accepting constructive criticism



MINOR HINDRANCES, CONTINUED

Minor Hindrance: Zero

Not every Rattata is in the top percentage of all Rattatas. In fact, **a chosen Pokémon on the trainer's team is objectively in the bottom percent of its kind.** Its nature is suboptimal, its EVs are trash, and/or its other features aren't what the trainer wanted from a member of their team. But it loves them. And it will work hard for them anyway.

The Pokémon cannot be removed from the trainer's party. Obligation, affection for the Pokémon, the Pokémon refuses to leave the trainer... the exact narrative reason is up to the player. Pick two disadvantages on top of this:

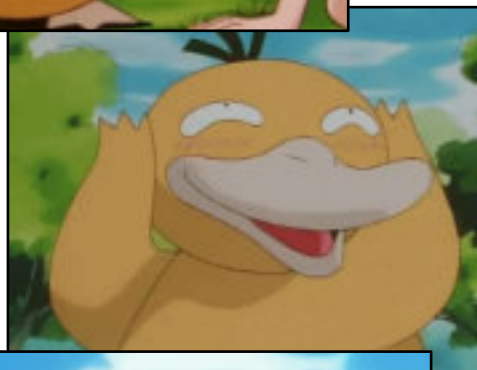
- *The Pokémon has -2 Toughness. Pokémon EXP is spent before applying this penalty (ie. going from 2-3 is the same cost as going from 4-5)*
- *The Pokémon can only use three Moves at any time rather than four.*
- *The Pokémon is treated as Disobedient. This must manifest at least once (and up to twice) an episode, with the onus on the player to trigger it.*
- *The Pokémon has applicable Hindrance(s) - two points' worth.*
- *Another suitable custom disadvantage as worked out between you and the GM - for example, powerful explosive psychic headaches!*

Requirements: This Hindrance cannot be applied to I Choose You! Pokémon.



Do

it



for

him





MAJOR HINDRANCES

Major Hindrance: Bad Rep

This character's reputation is horrible and widespread. They could have been part of a major scandal, caused widespread damage somehow, or be a current or former well-known member of an evil Team. The character takes -2 to social rolls that involve trust or cooperation with anyone who is aware of and cares about their reputation, and may be excluded from certain social situations with others outside the party unless friends intervene to vouch for them.

Most characters in the setting will be at least passingly familiar with this trainer's Bad Rep.



Gold and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Rep

Major Hindrance: Code of Conduct

The character has a code of conduct that they will adhere to even in inconvenient or dangerous situations. This could be a personal code, such as a character who refuses to tell a lie because of a bad experience, or a social code imprinted upon them by their upbringing, like a Dragon Tamers' vows to their elders.

Most people have a personal sense of right and wrong, but this trainer's devotion to their code causes them frequent issues as they rub up against more practically-minded teammates or get themselves mixed up in trouble out of principle.

A Major Code of Conduct is a short list of three to four principles the character must abide by, chosen when they take this Hindrance. Breaking these rules causes the trainer emotional distress, or at worst, judgement from others who share their ideals. A trainer with a Major Code of Conduct who willingly violates their code loses the ability to tap into Mastery during their next full episode as their inner turmoil interrupts their ability to focus on working with their Pokémon.



Trainer Tips!

You can have both the Major and Minor versions of a Hindrance on your sheet, or in some cases - Like Bad Rep (Minor) - multiples of the same Hindrance, but only if they represent different sources of setback.



MAJOR HINDRANCES, CONTINUED

Major Hindrance: Disability

The trainer has a disability that impairs them in a way that cannot be fully compensated for by assistive technology. Their disability significantly hampers their chosen way of life, and overall quality of life, because of their limitations.

Because of the nature of the game, the disability will never prohibit a PC from directing their Pokémon by default, though complications may arise if circumstances prevent their usual workarounds, such as a deaf character communicating commands through sign having line of sight interrupted.

Examples of Major disabilities include: Full blindness, mutism (full or selective depending on the context), deafness, impaired mobility, etcetera. These examples aren't exhaustive, nor are they hard and fast.

I Don't Want to Offend...

Remember: If someone put it down as a Hindrance, they're agreeing to have it affect play. Disability's a freeform Hindrance, though, so to encourage working together between the GM and player, GMs should ask rather than tell:

"Your character's impaired mobility would probably come into play here, right?" followed by some back and forth is VASTLY better than "You fall down the hill and take 1 Wound." Players, for their part, should be committed to making sure they are actually Hindered, as well.

Major Hindrance: Partnerless



The character views Pokémon as tools, or just can't fully open their heart to them for some reason. They may be the most competent trainer in the world, they may know their type matchups flawlessly, they may understand movelists and statistics, but they can never reach a Pokémon's full potential training them without a real emotional connection.

Mastery recharges once per story arc instead of once per session for this trainer's Pokémon; Partnerless trainers have difficulty connecting with their Pokémon for those critical moments where their bond allows them to pull through. In addition, they can never evolve a Pokémon whose evolution requirements involve a positive connection with the trainer.

Major Hindrance: Phobia

The trainer has a deeply-rooted fear of a specific thing or situation. While a trainer's phobia is present, their rolls take a -2 penalty as they must fight being shaken in order to focus on the task at hand.

A Major Phobia is something that will occur frequently enough as a Pokémon trainer to present a serious issue. Open spaces, Bug-Type Pokémon, bodies of water in a region that has many, or even Pokémon themselves as the most extreme case.



MAJOR HINDRANCES, CONTINUED

Major Hindrance: Unlucky

For one reason or another, the trainer is **extremely unlucky**. Maybe they touched the tail of a Ninetales and were cursed, or have earned the ire of some legendary Pokémon, or maybe they're simply a statistical outlier.

Up to twice a session, when the character has made any roll that doesn't result in Ekans Eyes, the GM can add the effect of an Ekans Eyes on top of the results. Ideally, give the GM some tokens to keep track of this.

The roll resolves normally before the bad luck is added. For example, if a character rolls a Hit and the GM activates Unlucky, they might succeed at escaping a locked room, but open the door to find six grunts in the middle of a heated poker match.

Major Hindrance: Unskilled

The trainer's Pokémon do not respect their skill as a trainer, and thus frequently **act out or ignore commands**. The GM may treat any of this trainer's Pokémon as Disobedient (See "Disobedience" in Advancement) up to three times per session; the trainer can spend a Mastery to negate the effect and act as normal, drawing from the bond they have with their Pokémon to convince them to work alongside them even though they feel unruly.

This Hindrance cannot force the use of a Trump Card, Double Battler, or any other Edge or effect that would force the trainer to spend Mastery to activate.

Major Hindrance: Wanted

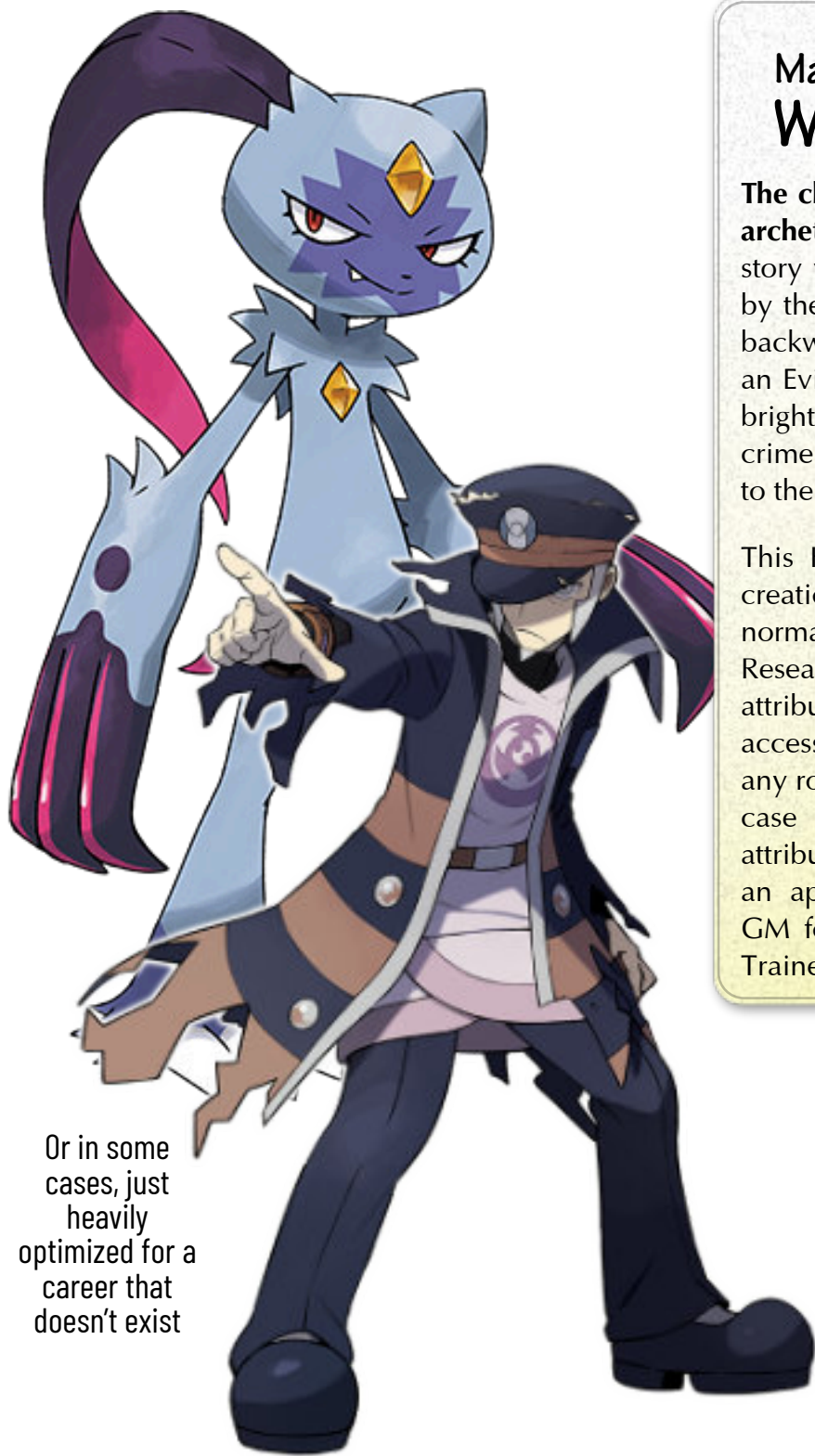
The character has been through the wringer, and **elements of their past are still actively after them**. They may be subject to an ongoing plot by an evil Team, be a current or ex-villain of some sort on the run from the law, or escaped a terrible home situation. They could even simply be important for some reason they don't yet understand. The trainer can expect the plot to come for them swiftly and harshly, and they may have to make significant efforts to avoid whatever their enemies have in mind for them.



"Wait, so you want to take six Major Hindrances each with no benefit at all, and I quote, 'because it's funny?'
Yeah okay sure"



MAJOR HINDRANCES, CONTINUED



Major Hindrance: Wrong Demographic

The character is in the wrong genre for their archetype. Cursed to be a hapless adult in a story where the world can only be protected by the power of ten year olds who can walk backwards up a mountain while flipping off an Evil Team to catch God, or alternatively a bright-eyed and naive kid in a hardboiled crime drama, this trainer is incompetent next to their more marketable peers.

This Hindrance must be taken at character creation. The trainer does not start with the normal four attributes of Heart, Fitness, Research, and Tactics. They must pick one attribute to discard entirely. Trainers who lack access to this attribute automatically fully fail any rolls that make use of that attribute. In the case of an Edge requiring use of the lost attribute, such as Connected with Heart, pick an appropriate substitute attribute with the GM for any roll or calculation related to it. Trainers lacking Fitness start at 1 Toughness.

Or in some cases, just heavily optimized for a career that doesn't exist





MAJOR HINDRANCES, CONTINUED

Major Hindrance: Zero

A Pokémon on the trainer's team is effectively dead weight. But they love their trainer and try their best for them... and they're not going anywhere.

Otherwise the same as the Minor version of the Edge, the Pokémon chooses three disadvantages from the following list:

- *The Pokémon has -2 Toughness. Pokémon EXP is spent before applying this penalty (ie. going from 2-3 is the same cost as going from 4-5)*
- *The Pokémon can only use three Moves at any time rather than four.*
- *The Pokémon is treated as Disobedient. This must manifest at least once (and up to twice) an episode, with the onus on the player to trigger it.*
- *The Pokémon has applicable Hindrance(s) - two points' worth. You can take this twice, but at least one must be a Major Hindrance.*
- *The Pokémon takes up two slots on the trainer's team for some reason. This counts for two disadvantages.*
- *Another suitable custom disadvantage as worked out between you and the GM - for example, powerful explosive psychic headaches!*

Requirements: This Hindrance cannot be applied to I Choose You! Pokémon.

A Major W for Ls

Zero's customizable downsides may take many forms and even take up multiple disadvantages' worth - consider a Pokémon whose every Move counts as [That One Move](#) (pg. 120).



Remember him?

Want a bucket for those tears?





Pokéballs All in a Row



Nah, it's cool man, you pick first

CREATING POKÉMON



Pokémon are the creatures that a Pokémon trainer works with to achieve all sorts of things, and their bonds are central to the world of Pokémon.

A trainer can capture a great number of Pokémon, but **they cannot have more than six in their party** at a time as per league rules. Extra Pokémon are stored in the Pokémon storage system and taken care of by the Pokémon Professor Association for Ethical Research, and can be switched out at any site with a Box Storage System interface.

At creation, however, **Trainers begin with just one Pokémon - [any one of their choice](#)**, usually but not exclusively an unevolved starting stage Pokémon. Fakemons, regional variants, and all sorts of other creative choices are also available, with GM approval. This Pokémon is known as the Starter, and will, under most circumstances, be a trainer's most steadfast partner as their journey unfolds.

Players take control of playing the Pokémon in their roster, in all but exceptional cases.

To begin, record your starting Pokémon's species on your sheet.

NICKNAMES AND GENDER

Some trainers choose to refer to their Pokémon by their species, but **many trainers give their Pokémon unique nicknames**. If your trainer chooses to give their Pokémon a nickname, record it on their sheet.

Pokémon gender is more or less cosmetic in *Pokeymanz*, but it could be an important part of a player's conception of a Pokémon's identity and is therefore on the sheet. You can record their sex or their gender as you please - no one should police your gender nonconforming Meowstic.



SPECIAL ABILITIES

Each Pokémon gets a Special Ability based either on their ingame Pokédex Entry or the [game's listed Special Abilities](#).

This can vary by Pokémon, but the effect should be something like "Changes forms with the weather to grant a die-step bonus to the associated Move", "Is immune to Ground-type attacks", or something else relatively unique to that species' biology.

Special Abilities are **passive** - they're just something a Pokémon Can Do, and while they might modify a roll's difficulty in some situations, **they shouldn't require a roll themselves to make use of**. They should be a little freeform in their utility.

Some Pokémon have multiple special abilities available to choose from, as well as information listed in their Pokédex entries that don't translate to a formal "Special Ability" in the games. It is perfectly viable to have, for example, one Espeon that has Magic Bounce (an ingame ability), and another with Weather Sense (An ability mentioned in its Pokédex entry).

Record the name of the chosen Special Ability and note the general description of it on your sheet.



You have two sides. One has Sand Rush. The other has Vital Spirit.
You have depression

POKéMON TYPES



Not all Legendaries are Pokémon

Each Pokémon has one or two [Types](#), which affects their Moves, strengths and weaknesses. **Go ahead and record their typing on the sheet**, using official-adjacent sources or, in the case of a Fakemon, whatever you want I'm not your mom.





POKéMON MOVES

A Pokémon works a little differently than a trainer. Instead of a line of Attributes, they have a set of Moves.

The ingame power of these Moves doesn't actually matter, but how they're described does, because **Moves are very freeform!** Like in certain manga and anime, they can be used creatively to produce effects other than straight damage. Example: The Move Ember could be tossed down onto the ground to limit the mobility of the enemy Pokémon. Players should feel free to try things and be open with how Moves are used, and **GMs should be open to letting them do creative things.**

Because of this, **it's crucial to mark down in the Move's description not just how the Move works mechanically, but how it's presented from a narrative standpoint.** A good Move description will include **both the Move's mechanical function** (either its ingame one or a tentative interpretation based on the Move Effects section) **and a description of how the Move functions in-universe.** The first part can be as simple as "hits the opponent" or as complex as "hits the opponent with varying secondary effects based on the time of day and what they had for lunch on Thursday".

See the diagram below for an example of this in action.

Anatomy of a Move: Bubble Beam

The Move's name, usually descriptive

Bubble Beam

The Move's type, one of the official ones or otherwise

WATER

A spray of bubbles is forcefully ejected at the target. This may also lower its Speed stat.

A description of how the Move works; the Pokémon shoots bubbles!

A mechanical effect that the Move has - it hits people and sometimes reduces Speed.

Popplio using Bubble Beam creatively to trap an opponent in a snot bubble. Gross!





ASSIGNING MOVES

Now that we know how Moves work, we can get into **statting them for play**.

Pick from a Pokémon's natural moveset (from any and all games in the series, though a GM might choose to restrict it) **to fill out their four slots**. This can be any Move they naturally learn by levelling up - don't worry about level restrictions, though make sure not to give an unevolved Pokémon a Move they wouldn't learn before evolving!

Each Move has a starting effectiveness. **If the Move is the same as one of the Pokémon's two types**, it starts at **d4**. If the **Pokémon only has one type**, that goes up to a **d6**! However, Pokémon have a more difficult time mastering Moves outside of their typing, and thus **Moves that are covered by neither of their types start at a d4-1**. An upgrade brings that up to a d4.

Once you've finished choosing Moves for your starter, **Choose two Moves to upgrade by one die type**. You may also upgrade one Move twice, but **Moves may not exceed d8 at creation** (or before Pokémon EXP -

but worry about that later, in [Advancement!](#))

This goes for a trainer's Starter Pokémon, but **all captured Pokémon are stattd this way** as well, including the two free die step upgrades (See [Capturing Pokémon](#), pg. 78).

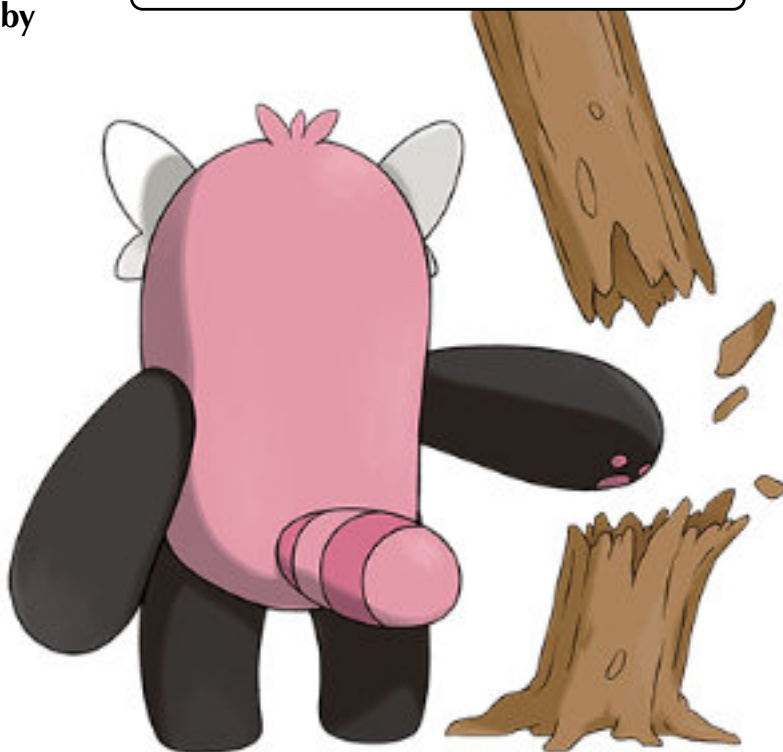
Before finalizing a Pokémon's Moves, **check out Custom Moves** on the next page if your GM allows it to see if your Pokémon could benefit from making use of those rules.

After that, **move on to Mastery!**



Trainer Tips!

Try to pick a set of Moves with a variety of effects! The only way to really pidgeyhole a Pokémon is by giving them four variations of "hit it with a body part really hard".





CUSTOM MOVES



"Oh boy I can't wait to learn String
Sho- wait, WHAT?"

If a player isn't intimately familiar with a Pokémon's moveset, doesn't feel like trudging through secondary sources like Bulbapedia to scour a Pokémon's details, or is simply creating a Fakemon with its own Moves, that's okay. **To make a custom Move in Pokeymanz, simply:**

1. **Think of what a Pokémon should be able to do.** A Pokémon based on a ferret, for example, might be good at digging tunnels!
2. **Decide what the Move does and write down one or two sentences describing it.** For a digging Move for this ferret-adjacent Pokémon, for example, one could write: "The Pokémon digs under the ground and pops back up to strike the opponent".
3. **Decide what type it would logically be.** In this case, it's pretty clearly a ground-type Move.
4. **Name the Move.** A digging Move like this could only be named one thing... *Burrow!*



Could you imagine that? Just not giving a burrowing Pokémon Dig?



No longer must you abide being
able to Fly on a Pidgey but not a
giant winged bug.

Note that if your group wants to use a system with an extra type, like some fangames have created, you can easily just change an existing Move's type or create new Moves for that type with this process.

Additionally, sometimes, Pokémon have... baffling choices in their canon learned movesets. In cases like Dunsparce, where the Pokémon should logically have access to a Move like Dig but doesn't, **allow common sense to guide what Moves Pokémon are allowed to take.** In general, though, leave TM Moves and those sorts of tutor-only Moves off-limits to give the player something to work towards in play.

With GM approval, Custom Moves can also be used to give Pokémon unique, one-off abilities; for example, a Meowth sacrificing the Move Pay Day to be able to talk like a human.



MASTERY (AND EVOLUTION)

Pokémon also have one other stat: **Mastery Level**. Record a **Mastery Level** (as a box to be checked and unchecked) **on your starter's sheet**.

Mastery Levels represent the results of **big milestones in a Pokémon's growth or training**. This includes (but is not limited to) **evolution** - the details of which we'll get to on the next page, and even further into later [in Advancement](#) (pg. 55).

Normally, Pokémon can have **up to a maximum of two** Mastery Levels, each representing a **spendable Mastery token** that **refreshes at the beginning of each session**. From now on, you might see the phrases "spend a Mastery" or "use Mastery" in this book - **that means to spend one of these Mastery tokens**. It does not mean to lower your Pokémon's Mastery Level - **once your Pokémon has a Mastery Level**, barring some extreme story event that both the GM and player agree on, **nothing should be able to remove it**.

Using a Pokémon's Mastery grants one reroll on any roll if the Pokémon in question is active. It may be called after the results of a failed roll are described, within reason, as long as the player is willing to describe how the Pokémon's willpower or bond with its trainer turns the situation around. **You always keep the higher roll when using Mastery**. Some Edges may also require the use of Mastery to activate their effects!



Humans and Pokémon come together to be soooooo fucking rad





MASTERY (AND EVOLUTION), CONTINUED

A **Pokémon** may evolve upon purchasing a **Mastery Level** corresponding to one evolutionary stage above its current stage, **as long as any other evolutionary requirements are met**. For instance, a Charmeleon, who only requires a level-up ingame to become Charizard, can evolve into a Charizard as soon as it has two Mastery Levels. A Vaporeon may require the use of a Water Stone and for the Eevee it is used on to have at least one Mastery Level.

If the Pokémon chooses not to evolve then and there, **it will always have the choice to evolve whenever it spends a Mastery** from then on as long as its evolutionary requirements are met. In essence, once a Pokémon reaches the required Mastery Level to evolve, they have “earned” that right.

Some Pokémon may come into a trainer’s team fully evolved or partly evolved - in this case, their newly-bought Mastery Levels simply reflect a close bond of some sort with their trainer that can be drawn upon in dire straits. **In fact, a Pokémon never needs to evolve at all, even if they have full Mastery Levels! Their loyalty to their trainer makes them just as strong as a fully evolved Pokémon.**

Mastery Levels can be purchased in the middle of a session as long as you have the EXP available to do so. If a player chooses to do this, their Pokémon may then immediately use it as above - Pokémon evolving in mid-battle or solidifying their bond with their trainer in a fraught situation is a series staple.

An Equalizer

Mastery is a compromise to allow people to be able to play with their favourites without being at a severe disadvantage. Unevolved Pokémon with high mastery like Ash’s Pikachu can still hold their own against Pokémon who used their Mastery Levels to evolve. This is a deliberate equalizer.

Remember, kids. One of my design mantras for this game is “If I can’t make Ash, my system is trash.”





Level-up +
... Makeover?

Milotic’s Clause (How do I evolve X?)

Game Freak sits down every game to come up with at least one evolution line to break the spirits and minds of children, so many of the more esoteric evolution methods are left up to the GM’s approval. Mandate that the player needs to do a handstand to evolve Inkay. Ignore it entirely and move on with your lives. It’s up to the table.



TOUGHNESS

Pokémon begin with **4 Toughness**. As [will be covered in more detail later](#) (pg. 65), they also have **three Wound boxes** to be checked and unchecked during play.

A Pokémon's **Toughness** is a **measure of their cumulative defenses**; the literal toughness of their hide, their ability to dodge attacks, and/or to block to protect their sensitive vital areas. This is intentionally left wide to accommodate a lot of different shapes and sizes of Pokémon.

The basics are: **Attackers will have to meet the Pokémon's Toughness score** with an attack roll **to inflict Wounds**. Wound boxes are the equivalent of HP in the games; when they are all checked off, the Pokémon faints.



#213 SHUCKLE

TYPE: BUG/ROCK

The prize for sturdiest Pokémon goes to the humble Shuckle; in the games, it boasts 230 base defense and the Ability Sturdy, which allows it to survive a hit that would cause it to faint from full HP with one hit point.

#208 STEELIX

TYPE: STEEL/GROUND

The prize for sturdiest Pokémon does NOT go to a giant snake made out of literal metal, who has a base defense of 200. Sorry, Steelix. They done you dirty.



Pictured: the trophy they hand you when you learn to yell "DODGE IT!"



CHARACTER CREATION QUICK REFERENCE

1. Make a copy of the [Character Sheet](#), or print one out from the back of this book.
2. Create a Trainer and give them a **name** and a **general concept**.
3. From this concept, give the trainer a **Calling**.
4. Give your trainer **Attributes**, with **four die type upgrades** and a maximum level of d8.
5. *(Optional)* Pick **Hindrances**, in exchange for **Edges** or an **extra Attribute die step**.
6. Record your trainer's **Toughness** (half their Fitness die).
7. Choose your starting Pokémon's **species**.
8. *(Optional)* Give your starter a **nickname and gender**.
9. Record your starter's **Type(s)**.
10. Choose your starter's **Moves** from their natural learned movelist.
11. Assign **starting dice values** to the chosen Moves (d4 for Moves that match types, d6 for Moves that match a monotype, and d4-1 for Moves that do not match their Type).
12. Apply **two die step upgrades** to the Moves as desired.
13. Record **one Mastery Level** on the starting Pokémon's sheet.
14. Assign the starter Pokémon a **Toughness of 4**.

CREATING EXPERIENCED TRAINERS



Whether it's because you'd like to start the game with a set of more experienced trainers, or simply because your group wants to be able to have a full roster for a oneshot, **it may at times be inappropriate or too limiting to start play with character creation level trainers.**

If desired, create a character with the above rules, add as many Pokémon to each trainer's roster as the GM sees fit for the premise, and then skip over to Advancement to add as much EXP as the GM assigns to their sheet.



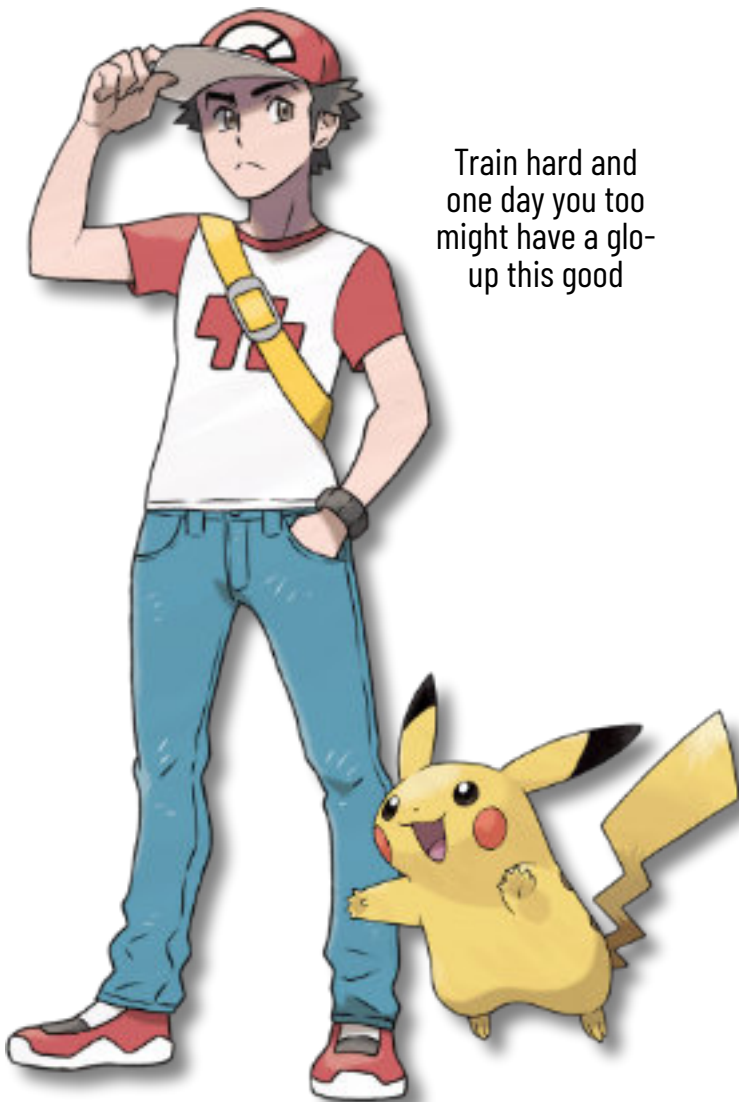
ADVANCEMENT

"Yeah. Getting hauls of XP, magic items, and gold, and thus making your character more powerful, or developed. Character Development."

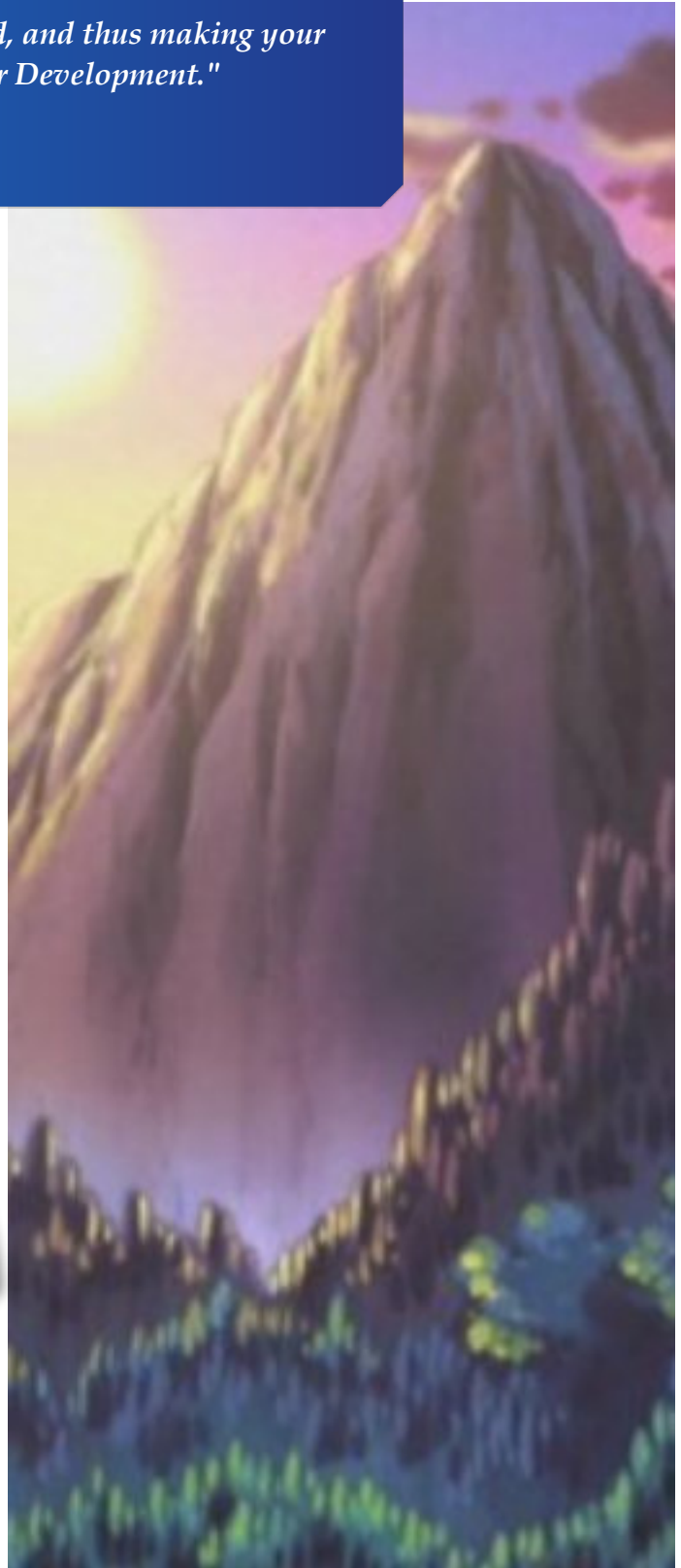
- Sir Poley, Harry Potter and the Natural 20

Growing Together

There are two types of character advancement in *Pokeymanz*: one is **Trainer Advancement**, and the other is **Pokémon EXP**.



Train hard and
one day you too
might have a glo-
up this good





TRAINER ADVANCEMENT



Trainer Advancement is gained through engaging with a trainer's **Calling**, and can be used to **buy up Trainer Attributes or Edges**.

Give Trainers an **Attribute die step upgrade or a new Edge** (Or overcome a Hindrance) for major story accomplishments related to their Calling. For example:

- Getting a Gym badge
- Winning a major Pokémon Contest
- Striking a major blow to a criminal organization they've been hunting
- Making a step towards finding that legendary Pokémon
- Unravelling part of a larger mystery

A GM is the final arbiter as to whether a given accomplishment is worthy of Trainer Advancement, but GMs are encouraged to communicate with players and check in with how they feel about their characters' arcs. In general, the GM should aim to have **at least one event that furthers the Calling of each PC trainer in each new major plot arc**.

An alternative way to divvy out Trainer Advancement is for the GM to simply be careful to make sure everyone gets spotlight and give out advancement to everyone at the end of each story arc. As a loose guideline, try to have a story arc per major town or city. This approach will be more consistent and require less effort for bookkeeping, but probably feel less personal. **Do what works for your group!**

Trainer Tips!

Use Trainer Advancement to git gud at the things that your trainer wants to focus on doing, or shore up frequent stumbling blocks.

If you choose to use the alternative rule above, to give Callings some relevance, consider **modifying them mechanically**. When a trainer fulfills some aspect of their Calling, give the player a **"Plot Device" token** similar to but more powerful than a Sideline Commentary token **that can be used anytime to change some major detail about the scene or call in a friendly NPC to help out in a pinch**. They may hold on to any number of these tokens that they earn for the duration of the journey.



POKéMON EXP

Pokémon EXP is a shorthand for **the amount of experience a Pokémon has working with its trainer**. Pokémon with more EXP have more powerful Moves, can defend themselves better, or may be evolved or otherwise feel the effects of high Mastery.

As GM, during every session, **keep track of the number of encounters the PCs have faced alongside their Pokémon**. Especially indepth encounters like Gym battles or climactic showdowns may count for two or even three.

At the end of the session, the GM **counts up the tally and awards everyone's trainer that many Pokémon EXP**. Alternatively, for faster growth, GMs can take the average of the trainers' team size and award that many EXP per session. **EXP is pooled by the trainer and later spent on their Pokémon**.

Trainers **can use their Pokémon EXP to buy up their Pokémon's abilities** as follows (Keep track of where you've spent what!):

- **Buy up Moves** by one die step (d4-d8): **1 EXP**
- **Buy up Moves** by one die step (d10-d12): **2 EXP**
- **Buy up Toughness** by 1, Max 8: **2 EXP + 1 more EXP each time it's increased** (5 is 2 EXP, 6 is 3 EXP, and so on)
- **Buy up Mastery**, even mid-session: **2 EXP**

Alternatively, GMs may choose to give out EXP based more on individual participation. **This will result in uneven scaling of Pokémon, which will impact the game balance significantly**. Be warned that many groups will find this unsatisfying.



U wot m8

#815 CINDERACE

TYPE: FIRE



#813 SCORBUNNY

TYPE: FIRE



#814 RABOOT

TYPE: FIRE



Advancement



LEARNING NEW MOVES

Pokémon in *Pokeymanz* start with a full pool of Moves, but what about TMs? What about training and tutoring to learn new techniques?

Any trainer can train a Pokémon to learn a new Move from the set of Moves it naturally learns. Trainers that obtain TMs can use them, and Pokémon can be trained or tutored by a Move tutor to master new techniques, but **their Pokémon will have to forget a Move in order to be able to use the new one.** Generally, you want to have some kind of in-story justification for this, such as a training retreat during a period of relative downtime.

Pray you don't mix
up your TM with
your copy of Putt-
Putt Travels
Through Time



Any EXP or free dice steps invested into the old Move are refunded, and may be banked (if EXP), re-spent on the new Move, or used on another of the Pokémon's Moves. Remember to take the Pokémon's type affinity for Moves into account and count free dice steps before EXP when calculating how much you've spent!

If you'd like to **change a Move to a Move that is functionally the same Move** but more powerful (eg. Icy Wind to Blizzard), **just change the name of the Move** on the sheet.

As a note, for simplicity and because there are different optional rules to handle breeding in *Pokeymanz*, **treat all Moves a Pokémon can learn in the games outside of their level-up set** (including Egg Moves, learnable TMs, TRs, Tutor Moves, etc. from any game they're in) **as learnable by TM or Tutor in Pokeymanz.**

EVOLUTION AND "RE-SPECCING"

To hold B or not to hold B... that is the question.

A lot of Pokémon learn new Moves or go (wildly) different directions upon evolving. As the Mastery section states, a Pokémon can evolve upon gaining an appropriate level of Mastery, or at any time they spend Mastery from that time onwards. **Evolving gives the Pokémon an instant "Re-spec";** the trainer is allowed to shuffle around Moves, spent EXP, free dice steps, and Special Abilities on the spot when a Pokémon evolves, **essentially re-doing its entire build from the ground up using the rules from the section above.**

It's recommended that a player planning to evolve their Pokémon **have some idea what they want the evolved Pokémon's stats to look like.** If they don't think to, though, or the idea to evolve comes on in the heat of the moment, **GMs are encouraged to let players throw out Moves from the evolved form without formally writing it down at reasonable dice steps,** and then let the player solidify the actual stats later under the excuse of "a burst of evolutionary power". **Fun comes first!**



UH OH
THAT'S NOT
PUTT PUTT



RETRAINING AND POKÉMON EXP



You can't retrain all your Pokémon's Moves in a single evening! How can you tell them team snowman making is cancelled?

Loosey-goosey guidelines for learning new Moves suggest that you can move Moves in and out at your leisure, but where does that leave the EXP that might be lost in the shuffle? **How many Moves can you retrain at once?**

Well, first of all, it's worth reiterating that **Pokémon EXP is a pool** that the trainer has access to. Think of it as **a measure of their ability at bonding with and training the Pokémon they work with**, with invested EXP representing work and familiarity with a Pokémon. It's not unusual to put a TM on a Pokémon and have them lose dice steps or to invest less EXP in them in total after a training session where they shuffle around a lot of Moves. There are plenty of reasons a Pokémon might dip in total EXP invested.

But what is the limit? **You can't just siphon EXP out of a Pokémon as convenient, right?** That's weird and incongruous.

Well, it depends on the tone of the game and what the player and GM decide upon, but **it's suggested that with the exception of Spotlighting** (we'll get to that soon!), that you **never take EXP out of a 'mon just for the sake of recouping EXP**. Consider training a Pokémon with a new Move with less EXP to be representative of an adjustment period on the team's part while learning a new strategy.

Finally, it's not unthinkable to retrain a Pokémon's Moves completely for an upcoming challenge, but it's suggested that **unless the trainer is taking an especially long and permissive downtime period, that retraining be kept to one Move swap-out per training session**. TMs, if they're available, obviously bypass this time requirement.



DISOBEDIENCE

Most of the time, trainers and Pokémon live and work together in harmony. Other times, for one reason or another, Pokémon decide that they aren't moving from this chair, no sir, not getting out of this chair.

In other words, **sometimes Pokémon are Disobedient**. There are a lot of reasons this can happen - the trainer is Unskilled, the Pokémon is unusually strong when caught and the GM wishes to balance that out, or many other potential sources of disconnect between trainer and Pokémon.

The end result is that the Pokémon doesn't always listen to its trainer. Depending on the source of the Disobedience, whenever it's triggered, **the GM takes over the Pokémon and causes it to act in a way that causes direct inconvenience or trouble to the party.**



Usually this will be because the Pokémon is simply being stubborn, but particularly ill-natured Pokémon might act more overtly spiteful in their rebellion.

As a guideline, GMs are encouraged to always **use Disobedience to make the situation more complicated to navigate, but not impossible.** Aim for fun hijinks or drama, not antagonism!

CATCHING STRONGER POKÉMON

As a Journey wears on, and trainers become stronger, **it may become harder and harder to use newly-captured Pokémon**, as the amount of Pokémon EXP needed to catch up with the main team grows. What can be done for this?



Ok dude I'm not the one about to get trounced by a Dunsparce

A suggested way to overcome this is to, when a long-running game has reached a "lategame" level, to **allow trainers to capture Pokémon that are statted above the basic level, but have said Pokémon act Disobediently** as outlined above until they put in the Pokémon EXP to "catch up" with their increased stats.

Another way to manage this would be to simply **have each new caught Pokémon be given a baseline boost** based on how many badges or setting-equivalent medals of accomplishment a trainer has.

Whatever method is chosen for your game, **make sure everyone in the group is alright with the chosen path** before implementing it!



SPOTLIGHTING



Sometimes, players will be in a Journey lategame and have, say, fifty Tauros boxed since that incident in the Safari Zone that they've been neglecting to put EXP into. In a case like this, the player might ask the GM for one of these Pokémon to get a **Spotlight Episode**; if the GM approves, **this Pokémon is temporarily bumped up match the average EXP of the rest of their party** in order to get a day in the limelight as the trainer pulls them out for a **challenge or story only they could be suited for**.

Spotlighting can only be done once per Pokémon. Once per story arc, after a spotlight episode, though, if the trainer and GM feel it's appropriate, they may quietly respect the rest of their team and adjust EXP values to take the spotlighted Pokémon up to as much as their temporary EXP level was during the spotlight episode. In this way, a **previously boxed or forgotten Pokémon might be rotated onto the trainer's main team** after a memorable re-emergence!

Coollest problem in the world: too many Pokémon to love



POKéMON BATTLES

The main event. Pokémon love battling, and humans love battling with them. In this chapter, you'll find rules to simulate battles, Pokémon Contests, and all sorts of odds and ends to make Pokémon-related conflicts fun and strategic. Go and try to be the very best, like no one ever was!

Fast and Furious

Combat in *Pokeymanz* should be:

- **Fast.** Battles shouldn't have to be a session-long slog.
- **Action-packed.** Every action in combat should have some kind of consequence, and it should be easy to make choices and strategies that matter to the battle.
- **Creative.** Thinking outside the box and coming up with novel ways to turn the tide should be rewarded.



Trainer Tips!

Pokeymanz is designed for Journeys first, but if you use it to battle your friends in a bout of PVP, remember that the system is designed to allow a lot of flexibility over balance, and have a sense of sportsmanship about it!

Winning, losing... The most important part of a Pokémon battle is to have fun alongside your Pokémon, and with the people who share the game table with you.

Always remember Golden Rule One!





THE BASICS OF BATTLES



A VS Seeker is a Key Item designed to find people who want to battle in an area. So basically Tinder for Pokémon trainers.

Not all problems can be solved by fighting, but **Pokémon battles** are unmistakably what fans love the most about the gameplay of the Pokémon series. Except contest-lovers. And Secret Base builders. And people who liked the Underground minigame. And people who liked Pokémon Amie. And Pokémon Go players. And Pokémon Channel players. And the people who played the minigames in Pokémon Stadium. But screw those guys, right?

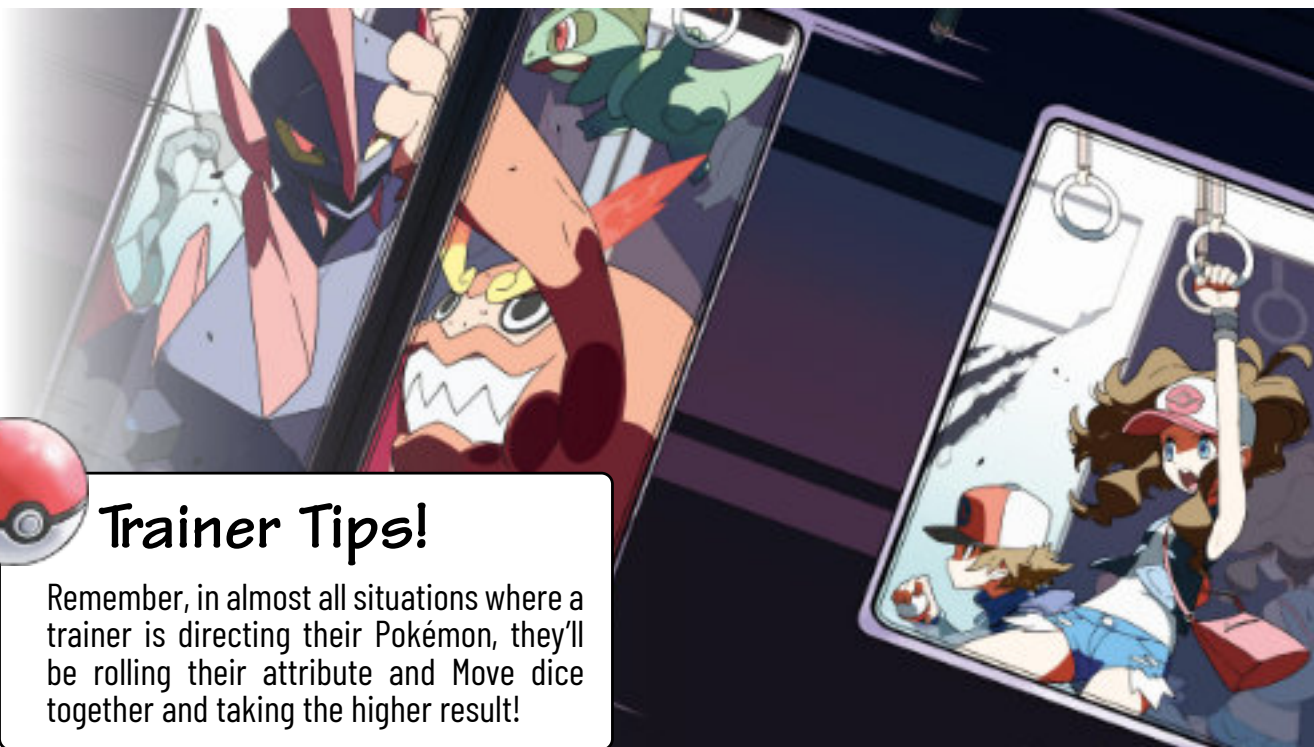
Let's go into Pokémon Battles and the nitty-gritty of pitting 'mons against each other in the staple conflict resolution of the Pokémon universe.

A note: While central to many other games, range in *Pokeymanz* is theatre of the mind. **Pokémon should be within each others' reach for Moves by default**, and cases of range affecting the flow of combat should be called on a case by case basis. Things that could be taken into account include Moves like Fly or Dig, or arena Features or Hazards. It may still help to have some kind of visualization of the field, and so game mat programs like [Owlbear Rodeo](#) and [Roll20](#) could still be helpful.



Trainer Tips!

Remember, in almost all situations where a trainer is directing their Pokémon, they'll be rolling their attribute and Move dice together and taking the higher result!





INITIATIVE



When battle starts, roll initiative. Initiative is rolled with a trainer's Tactics (just the trainer die). Wild Pokémon roll a d6. The GM should mark "Top of the Round" above everyone. On a tie, whoever most recently ate jelly donuts goes last.

At the Top of the Round, which should be declared every round, trainers call whether they are, resolved in this order: **switching out** their Pokémon, placing a **Called Action** or not, or simply **taking their turn normally**. If

the trainer doesn't say anything, they take their turn normally. **Turns proceed from there in initiative order.**

Generally, the flow of combat is very simple: Each trainer and Pokémon combo take turns taking actions. **One Battle Action may be taken on their turn, as well as one Movement Action, in no particular order.**

A trainer can always choose to **hold** their action to go later in the initiative in a round if they want to do something cool with a teammate or something. **Know when to throw out the initiative** - If the entire squad wants to work together on one big complicated Rube Goldberg action encounter-ender, **let them futz the order if it's needed for Rule of Cool.**



Real footage of players on their way to break the GM's prepared notes over their knees



TYPES OF ACTIONS

As noted above, each round, each trainer and Pokémon combo get **one Battle Action and one Movement Action**.

A **Battle Action** is generally used to roll an attack with a Move or otherwise use a Move. It can also be used by the trainer instead of the battling Pokémon in some situations; switching Pokémon is a Battle Action, for instance, unless throwing out the next Pokémon in line after a Pokémon faints.

Some example **Battle Actions** are:

- Using one of a Pokémon's Moves
- Making an active Trainer Attribute roll, such as piloting a giant robot
- Switching out on the Pokémon's turn
- Using an Item, if the Item Rules are used

Movement Actions are fluid and narrative; they could be something like burrowing underground, taking to the skies, moving a little further away, etcetera. A trainer should use movement to set up for the larger actions or interact in minor ways with the terrain.



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Some example **Movement Actions** are:

- Using Arena Features to alter the effect of a damaging Move to inflict some kind of related major status instead
- Using a Move or Ability to navigate the terrain (Passively, no roll required); as an example, a Flying Type going up high with Fly, or a Water Type using Aqua Jet to jet around underwater, Using Magnet Rise to hover over a gap. This can move a Pokémon out of reach or close a gap.
- Using the terrain to give your next Move a small advantage or another effect; for example, using Strength to lob a rock at a Pokémon that has flown out of reach, making the Move effectively Rock Type, or giving the Pokémon the high ground Anakin to give a sharpshooting Move a +1 bonus
- Switching out at the Top of the Round
- Escaping the effects of a Hazard

Some things may not require the expenditure of an action at all, and may happen automatically on a trigger, specifically be allowed to cut in at any time, or simply not be that important to keep track of.

Some examples of these “free actions” are:

- Spectators using their Commentary Tokens
- Talking or making anime speeches
- Activating the effect of Held Items, if the Item Rules are used
- Certain special actions granted by Edges



PRIORITY AND BEAM STRUGGLES

Moves like Quick Attack **whose defining feature is “Priority”** can be used to “cut in” whenever the trainer wants to, interrupting similarly to a Called Action. **Called Actions trump Priority Moves**, however. Note that while some Moves have priority in the games, in *Pokeymanz*, only Moves like Quick Attack **whose whole point is going first** are considered Priority Moves in this way, though various circumstances or Moves could grant other Moves Priority.

If they use one of these to go before someone else, they can choose to use the Move in question **before the entity they’re cutting in front of** (using their turn that round), **or** they can directly **counter their attack with a Beam Struggle**.

To start a Beam Struggle, the player must either have successfully pulled off a Called Action or have other means to interrupt the initiative order, including but not limited to priority Moves. They must then **spend a Mastery**. The two Moves then become locked in a competition of strength and skill, **forcing an Escalation** (pg. 9) where the winner’s Move triumphs. **A Beam Struggle takes up both parties’ Battle Actions**.

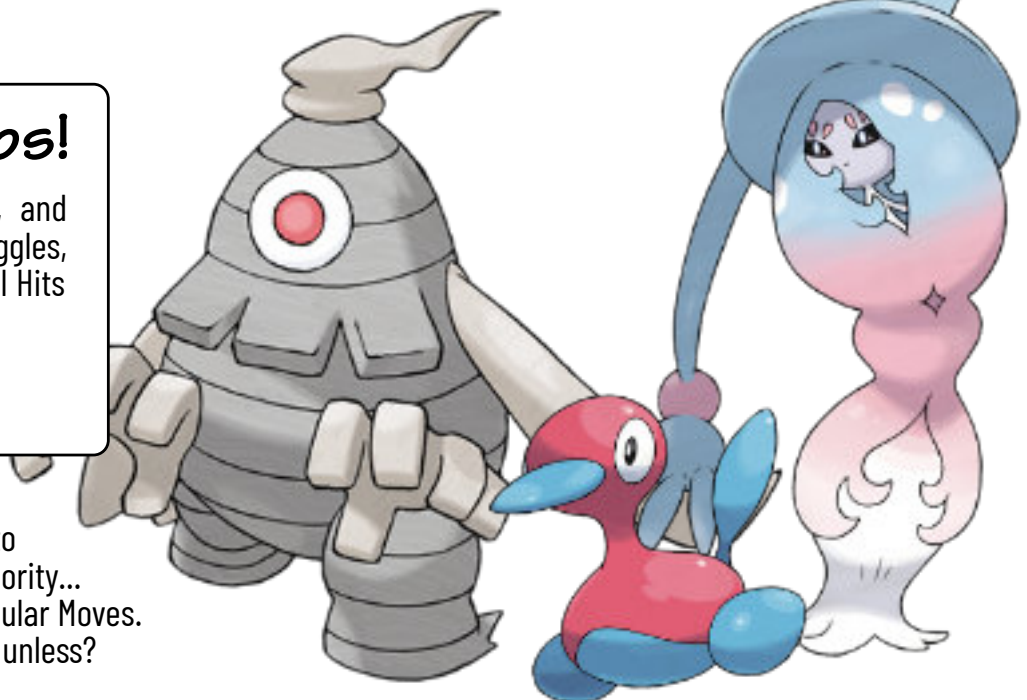


Trainer Tips!

Remember: Escalations, and by extension Beam Struggles, are automatically Critical Hits for the winner.

Watch your back!

What if I... used Trick Room to make all non Priority Moves Priority... and make all Priority Moves regular Moves.
.. Aha ha, just kidding... unless?





WOUNDS



Fainted Pokémon are easily identified by their little spiral eyes and a few extra lines and blotches on their bodies.

An attack must meet the target's Toughness value to inflict a Wound. Beating a target's Toughness by 6 or more is a Critical Hit. If a trainer attacks anything personally, it's a Fitness check tested against Toughness as in a Pokémon battle.

Trainers can take two Wounds, each inflicting a cumulative -1 penalty to all rolls, including the Pokémon die, before a successful final strike will cause them to white out and be incapacitated for the remainder of the encounter. In lighthearted games, they will wake up after the encounter with their Wounds counter reset. In more serious or survival-focused games, their wounds will remain until they can rest meaningfully or receive medical treatment.

Pokémon will also faint after taking three Wounds, but they do not take penalties along the way. A fainted Pokémon is similarly incapacitated, but unlike a trainer, they will not be able to battle or contribute again until they've been healed or significantly rested in some way.

MOVE EFFECTS

While Moves are extremely freeform by design, sometimes you just want to tell a Pokémon to tackle and have them tackle a dude. **Here are some guidelines that might be useful to fall back on** if the GM is having trouble coming up with novel effects or if the players would rather stick to the basics.





MOVE EFFECTS, CONTINUED

Area of Effect



Many attacks have the effect of hitting more than one target, or everyone on the field at once. Far be from it for me to stop you from hitting your Aggron partner with Earthquake, so if a Move has the effect of hitting everyone, simply hit everyone. I'm sure your teammates won't mind. In the case that you score a Hit on your teammates, the GM decides the effect.

Certain Movement Actions, special abilities, type immunities, and other effects may render a Pokémon immune or out of reach of such an attack.

In the case of Moves that simply target multiple Pokémon on the opposing team in the games, consider that they may be able to split up their effects on a Critical Hit and hit another Pokémon with the extra effect instead of the original target.

Critical Hits



A Critical Hit should always give the Move some extra oomph. Depending on the nature of the Move, here are some easy ways to reflect a Critical Hit mechanically:

- **Spend a Mastery.** The Move inflicts two Wounds instead of one. This is good for dramatic turnarounds. Any effect that requires spending Mastery on the roll (rerolls, Trump Card, Double Battler, etc.) opens up this option.
- **The Move inflicts a Status Effect.** Many Moves have secondary effects, like inflicting burns, freezing, paralysis, confusion, or even holding the opposing Pokémon in place. A Critical Hit should allow the Move to inflict a secondary effect that logically makes sense on top of a Wound.
- **The Move alters the terrain.** It creates a change in the arena significant enough to create a Hazard or Feature.
- **The Move gives the Pokémon a temporary buff,** such as +1 to their next Move or bonus Toughness, speed, or evasion. The enemy might also get a logical debuff.

On a Critical Hit, a GM should try and offer the player the choice of the options above based on what makes sense for the Move in question.

In encounters where the GM wishes to prioritize pacing over all else, or in fights against low-level mooks like wild Pokémon or cannon fodder grunts, it may be wise to allow the extra Wound effect as an option for free. Try out what works for your group!



Just get an Air Balloon. No one's ever been unsafe with an Air Balloon.



MOVE EFFECTS, CONTINUED

Evasion and Accuracy

Evasion doesn't work quite the same in Pokeymanz as it does in the games. After all, at first glance, accuracy seems to be rolled into Toughness, right?

Evasion's main purpose in Pokeymanz is to increase the Pokémon's resistance to status and other non-damaging Moves. The Non-Damaging Moves explanation goes into more detail on this, but Evasion can make the effective Threshold to get a Hit higher by giving penalties to incoming non-damaging attacks. Likewise, Accuracy can boost the likelihood of hitting with non-damaging Moves.

There's a little more to keep in mind, however.

First, Speed-boosting or slowing Moves can be used to modify Evasion along with their own unique effects.

Second, instead of boosting resistance to non-damaging attacks, a Pokémon can use evasive maneuvers to give bonuses to escaping hazards for the rest of the battle - a niche effect, compared to Toughness, but well worth it when the volcano starts erupting or when the floor is electrified.



Guards and Counters

Certain Moves protect the user or offer a counterattack. Generally, Moves like these should be called at the Top of the Round (see the initiative section for details).

The exact nature of the counterattack might depend on the situation, but players could choose to strike back after being hit with a bonus to their roll, or they could use the roll to enter a Beam Struggle with their opponent.

Guards may also offer wide-ranging defenses against most Arena Hazards. For the sake of Pokeymanz' nature as a multiplayer game, be flexible with allowing Guard Moves to be used on allies.

Healing

As a general rule, Healing Moves should heal one Wound on a Hit. Moves with healing as a sub-effect should activate that effect on a Critical Hit. Slow healing Moves like Leech Seed might recover lost Toughness or heal every other round.

The effectiveness of Healing overall depends on the tone the GM wants to set for the game, and may be limited - one suggestion is to make it harder to heal in a short timespan with progressive penalties.

#596 GALVANTULA

TYPE: BUG/ELECTRIC

Galvantula hunts its prey by shooting electrified fur from its abdomen. Cutting its opponents' ability to escape with paralysis, it finishes them off with a powerful strike from its then-boosted Electro Ball.

#595 JOLTIK

TYPE: BUG/ELECTRIC

Joltik is often found in the fur of other Pokémon, soaking up static electricity. Especially Electric-Types. It cannot produce electricity by itself.



MOVE EFFECTS, CONTINUED

Multi-Hit Moves >>

Multi-Hit Moves are tricky. It is **recommended NEVER to rule these Moves as extra attacks or more than two Wounds**, as that breaks the game's "action economy". They do open up a lot of unique possible advantages in battle, however. A Pokémon could use the extra effect of a Critical Hit to hit another opposing Pokémon on the field for a Wound instead of dealing extra damage to their target, partially bypass guards with quick successive strikes, or maybe get to add their Move die to assist an ally's attack that turn without using an action.

Non-Damaging Moves ○

If an attack doesn't do damage, the threshold for a Hit is 4, the same as a normal roll. This activates the Move's effect or inflicts its status effect. Toughness does not come into the equation in this case - but if the opposition has somehow put something in the way, or used a Move to increase their evasiveness or speed, this can impose penalties on the Move. Immunity sometimes factors in, but type effectiveness is otherwise ignored.

On a Critical Hit, GMs should offer players options like changing or creating Hazards or Features, or other scene-appropriate effects (Like giving the target an even more severe version of the status effect, for example).



Or just do damage lmao



MOVE EFFECTS, CONTINUED

One-Hit KO Moves



One of the design philosophies in Pokeymanz battles is to never have a player's Pokémon go down in one turn; one can only deal an additional Wound on a Critical Hit, after all, and trainer Pokémon have a minimum of three Wounds. This means that trainers will always get to try to do something meaningful in battle with each Pokémon no matter what. One-Hit KO Moves by their nature, then, present a problem to this balancing principle.

A suggested way to run these Moves to avoid this is to **treat them as "finishing moves", more likely to hit the closer an opponent is to defeat**. Roll the Move with +1 for every other turn the opposing Pokémon has been in battle, for a maximum of +4. However, the Move will not be modified by type effectiveness, though immunities may still apply.

Players who take these types of Moves **must keep track of each enemy's time out in battle themselves** if they wish to take advantage of this bonus!

Speed



On first glance, **Moves that increase Speed** seem to have no use in Pokeymanz, but on a general basis, priority Moves like Quick Attack can be used to act out of turn in initiative, and Moves that increase Speed could be used to permanently shift initiative order or give other Moves Priority.

Speed boosts can also be jury-rigged to act as Evasion instead, or to give the Pokémon bonuses to escaping hazards for the rest of the battle.



Trainer Tips!

"Does Evasion help with One-Hit KO Moves?" Yes, but also remember to go with the way most likely to feel awesome.





MOVE EFFECTS, CONTINUED

Stat Changes ↑

Many Moves raise the Pokémon's stats or lower those of the opponent's. As a general guideline, **you shouldn't be able to stack more than a +4 or -4 on any one variable.**

A successful Hit allows one +1 to be applied for the duration that the Pokémon is in battle. A Critical Hit allows a second +1 in that category or another that makes sense given the scope of the Move.

For example, a Pokémon using Dragon Dance might get a +1 to their damaging Move rolls, and on a Critical, they may also become speedier.

In the games, there is a clear and decisive split between "Special" and "Physical" attacks, which many Moves reference. In Pokeymanz, no such stats exist, as each Move is measured simply by how well the Pokémon can use its effects. As such, Moves like Reflect and Light Screen, which are functionally the same Move but split in this way, are considered the same in Pokeymanz.

Specific Effects ✕

Some Moves have incredibly specific effects and niche uses. A good example is Imprison, which seals any Moves that the Pokémon and the target share. Sometimes, these Moves' effects are so niche that they would seemingly never come up. It's easy for a player to take a Move like this for flavour, and be disappointed when it never proves useful.

It should be very hard to make a Pokémon that is actively useless in Pokeymanz. So, **for Moves like this, the GM should be extra generous with creative interpretations.** Allow Imprison (which is based off of Shinto sealing practices) to seal Pokémon that use the power of a certain region-specific gimmick, or to incapacitate trainers with evil in their hearts.

ENCYCLOPEDIA POKÉMONICA

MISSINGNO

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TRANSLATING MOVE EFFECTS



We checked with our top scientist, pictured above, to come up with these numbers

We've now seen some examples, but as of this writing, **there are exactly seven bajillion Moves in Pokémon.** No, don't check. I looked it up. *Pokeymanz* is written with the intent that it will be able to be used with future content from the series without big changes, so that number will only increase as time goes on. The question then becomes: **How do I translate effects from the games myself? What are the guidelines?**

First of all, always remember that **a lot of the time, you don't need to.** Moves (And Special Abilities!) in *Pokeymanz* are very freeform by their nature, and **can have multiple effects depending on context.** However, it can be good to have a "mechanical fallback", usually for battle - an effect that you know that you and your GM agree works most of the time that you can pull out when you're feeling uninspired. The effects listed in the pages above are good examples of this.

Some Loose Guidelines

- A 50% increase in damage (or in the case of status Moves, accuracy) is generally translated as **+1 to the Move roll.**
- A doubling of damage, like Super Effectiveness, is generally translated as **+2.**
- It's best to restrict persistent bonuses to **+1** unless the user rolls a Critical Hit.
- Situational Moves that require a specific trigger should be given bonuses (ie. Sucker Punch must be called correctly to go off at all, so giving it a +1 is reasonable).
- Healing is really good, so work with your GM closely. They may elect to limit it.
- Remember to check the games / anime / manga for inspiration!
- If a Move doesn't translate easily, think of how the Move works thematically and invent mechanics for that instead of trying to translate mechanics one-to-one.
- A lot of these guidelines also apply for translating Special Abilities!

An important note: if a player does work to make a fallback mechanic, **that doesn't mean that this is the only possible effect** of the Move or Special Ability, nor are the other players at the table bound to only use the Move in this way.





ARENA FEATURES

Every arena should have at least two and up to four notable features to make use of. Open terrain can be one of those features. Players can make creative use of these features to set up interesting situations or hazards, but a good default option for straightforward play is to **give a +1 on a roll if the terrain would be advantageous for a Move.**

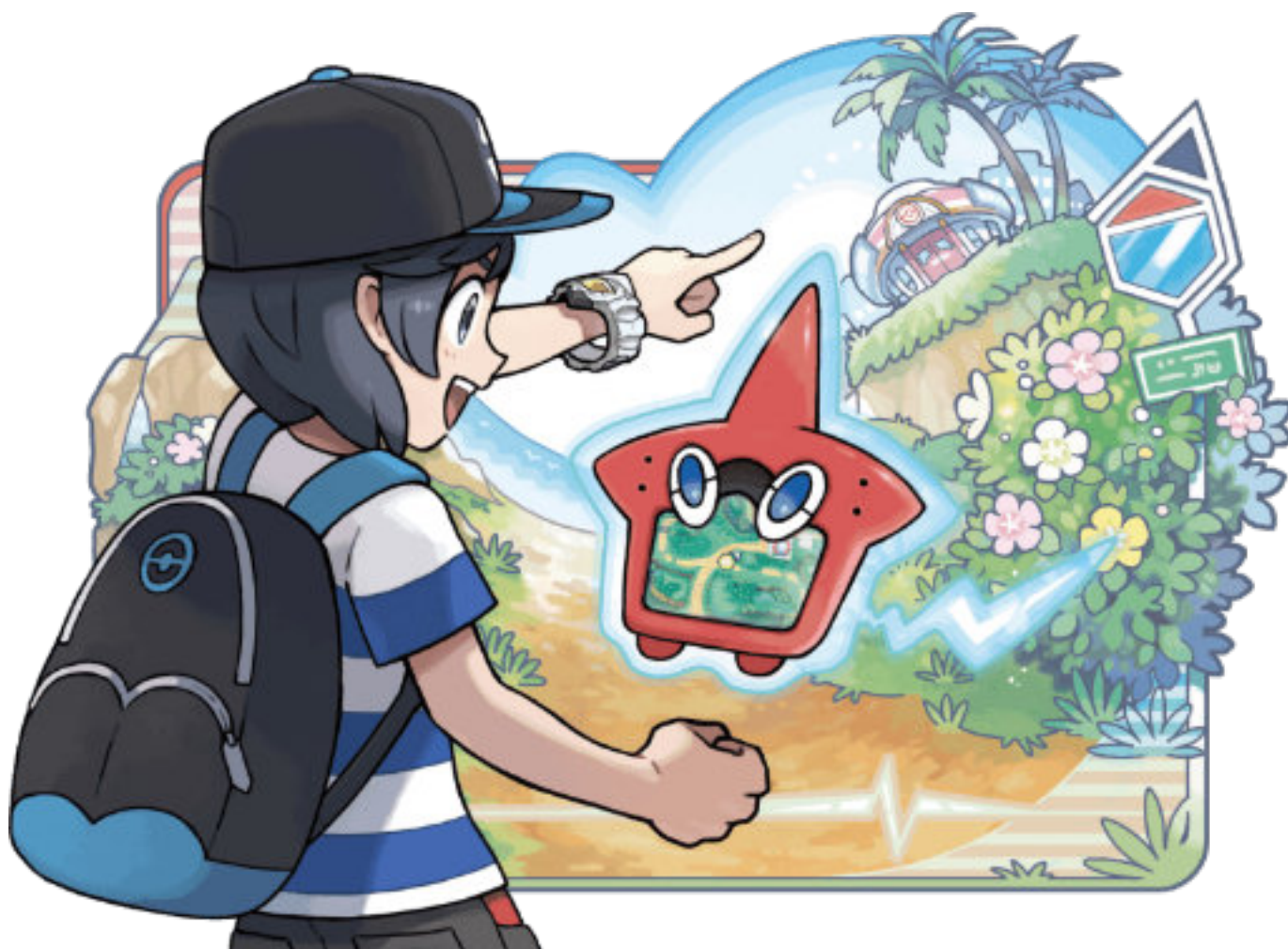
Example: A field may be Grassy (which could aid in the use of certain Grass and Bug type Moves) and Windy (which may make flight difficult).

As mentioned previously, **taking advantage of certain features may allow Pokémon to place themselves out of reach of certain attacks**, or restrict or enhance certain types of movement. Be creative!

The Misty Principle



Unless an arena's features specifically say or imply otherwise, always expect that there happens to be a convenient pool, stream, or fountain nearby in which to release a fully aquatic Pokémon.





ARENA HAZARDS

If a Pokémon or trainer encounter a **hazard**, they should try and find a **suitable counter-Move to get out of the situation**. The better-suited the proposed defense, the easier the roll, as dictated by the GM. (Example: Freezing lava to make a platform might be given a +1.) This roll is a Movement Action, made before the Battle Action on their turn.

If you fail, you take the effects of the hazard. This could be a Wound, status condition, or other more esoteric effect like a stat reduction, Feature change, or narrative effect.

Extremely large, dangerous, or difficult to avoid hazards might put the roll to get out of them at a penalty. These should appear mostly when environmental features dictate it (lava is Just Dangerous) or when a Pokémon Move interacts particularly well with the arena (eg. a Pokémon using Whirlpool in a body of water). **If a Pokémon dedicates Moves to “build up” a hazard by adding elements to it, it may also become progressively harder to escape or alter** this way.

Once a Pokémon or trainer has either successfully defended against or taken a Wound from a hazard, it will not damage them again unless the hazard changes in some way, like if a foe uses a Move to build up or alter the hazard, or the hazard is overwhelmingly dangerous or lethal (for example, a human in danger of lava - a situation that will probably only crop up in a very brutal game!). This is because the characters have learned their lesson and can navigate it well enough to avoid further damage. Out of character, this is because it is not particularly dramatic or cool to get stuck and take chip damage from Stealth Rock while an opponent laughs at you from safety.

In the case that a hazard (Such as the aforementioned Stealth Rock, or Spikes) works on switch-ins, **it only provokes a defending roll from each member of the target trainer side's team once.**

Hazards also count as Features when it comes to making use of the terrain.

Fainted Pokémon are easily identified by their little spiral
eyyyyyuuuhhh ohhhh





TYPE MATCHUPS


Typing is an important part of Pokémon battles, and they provide a large but not insurmountable advantage when utilized properly. Any time an attacking Pokémon uses a Move of a certain type offensively, check to see if the opposing Pokémon is weak to or resists that type according to the type chart.

If the opposing Pokémon is weak to the Move's type, the attack is **Super Effective!** Give the attack a +2 on the roll. If the Pokémon resists the Move's type, the Move is

Not Very Effective and takes a -2 penalty. Double weaknesses and resistances stack. A weakness and a resistance cancel out.

Pokémon that are immune to a certain type of attack cannot be damaged or affected by that attack directly. Full stop. Only creative use of a Move (eg. using the Move Psychic to pick up something to throw at a Dark type) can hope to bypass immunity.

Human Trainers are considered typeless.

		DEFENDER																	
		Normal	Bug	Dark	Dragon	Electric	Fairy	Fighting	Fire	Flying	Ghost	Grass	Ground	Ice	Poison	Psychic	Rock	Steel	Water
ATTACKER	Normal										X						●	●	
	Bug			▲			●	●	●	●	●	▲			●	▲		●	
	Dark			●			●	●			▲					▲			
	Dragon				▲		X											●	
	Electric				●	●				▲		●	X						▲
	Fairy			▲	▲			▲	●						●			●	
	Fighting	▲	●	▲			●			●	X			▲	●	●	▲	▲	
	Fire		▲		●				●			▲		▲			●	▲	●
	Flying		▲			●		▲				▲					●	●	
	Ghost	X		●							▲					▲			
	Grass		●		●				●	●		●	▲		●		▲	●	▲
	Ground		●			▲			▲	X		●			▲		▲	▲	
	Ice				▲				●	▲		▲	▲	●				●	●
	Poison						▲				●	▲	●		●		●	X	
	Psychic			X				▲							▲	●		●	
	Rock							●	▲	▲			●	▲				●	
	Steel					●	▲		●					▲			▲	●	●
	Water				●				▲			●	▲				▲		●

Key: ▲ is a Super Effective attack. ● is a Not Very Effective Attack. X is an immunity by the defender.



STATUS EFFECTS

Status effects are a common feature of Pokémon battles, and for those looking for a little more tactical depth, they can use them to turn the tides in their favour!

These rules are optional! It's highly recommended to use the mechanics in this section, but **these effects may be disregarded for a more appropriate narrative effect at the GM's discretion.** There are plenty of status effects or persisting effects of Moves beyond what's listed here; these should provide some mechanical guidelines on how to typically handle them, and they might also vary from situation to situation.

Burn



A burned Pokémon finds it painful to move, and their effectiveness is reduced as a result. **The Pokémon suffers stacking wound penalties, -1 to all rolls per Wound, while they are burned.**

Fire-type Pokémon cannot be burned.

Frostbite



The Pokémon's body is partially crystallized, slowing their movements and making their natural defenses more brittle. Frostbitten Pokémon take -2 to their Toughness and non-damaging Moves get a +2 bonus to connect with them.

For an effect similar to the traditional Frozen, try Trapped, instead.

Ice-type Pokémon cannot be frostbitten.

As noted above, **Moves that deal damage but also have a chance to inflict status effects in the games should generally inflict their effect on a Critical Hit.**

To see how Status-Effect-inflicting Moves can work, check Non-Damaging Moves in the Move Effects section earlier in this chapter.

Burn, Frostbite, Paralysis, Poison, and Sleep will all persist outside of battle unless cured. **A Pokémon (or human) cannot have more than one of these "major" Status Effects at one time.** Any number of non-major status effects may be stacked at once.

Imagine taking damage from status effects

This post was made by the Magic Guard gang



Paralysis



The Pokémon is paralyzed, and **cannot take their usual free Movement Action until or unless the paralysis is cured.** Running away, getting out of the way of hazards, and general positioning become much more difficult! Moves that rely on speed may also take situational penalties.

Electric-type Pokémon cannot be paralyzed.



STATUS EFFECTS, CONTINUED

Poison



The Pokémon is poisoned, a chemical or biological agent coursing through their system and weakening them. **For every round a Pokémon is poisoned, their Toughness is reduced by 1 at the end of their turn until they're retired from battle or faint.** If Toughness dips to 0, the Pokémon automatically faints (and is cured of poison as it runs its course).

Poison- and Steel-type Pokémon cannot be poisoned.

Infatuation



The player flips a coin. If the coin comes up tails, the Pokémon is too infatuated with its opponent to make a Battle Action. This condition is cleared at the end of the encounter or upon switching out.

Pokémon of the same gender, or genderless, can be infatuated! How this is represented in the narrative is up to the Pokémon's player; it could be "romantic" attraction, adoration, or admiration, all ramped up to debilitating levels.

Sleep



The Pokémon falls into a deep sleep. **Until awoken by an outside force or attack, they will remain unconscious for the rest of the encounter.**

Confusion

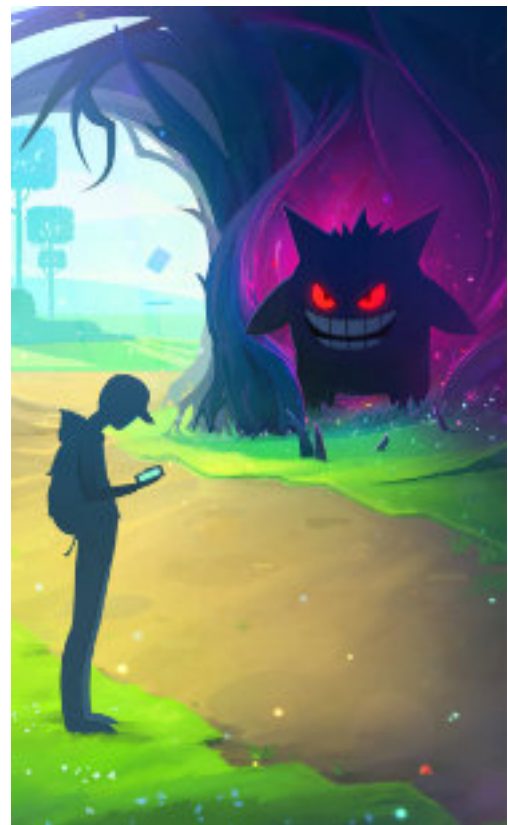


The Pokémon is confused, and is liable to hurt itself while flailing around. **On any rolled failure, treat the result as an Ekans Eyes instead of a normal failure.** Every round after finishing the Pokémon's turn, flip a coin. On heads, the Pokémon snaps out of confusion.

Flinching



The Pokémon's next Battle Action takes a -2 penalty as they flinch back and try to regain their bearings.



Not included: Cursed, which makes you see everything everyone you know has liked on Twitter



STATUS EFFECTS, CONTINUED

Trapped



As long as they are within the area of the Move that caused it, **the Pokémon is held in place and cannot make a Movement Action.** They may attempt to use a Battle Action to break free using a Move, however. Holding an opponent in place next to a Hazard is a common tactic.

Held Pokémon can't be switched out until they break from whatever is holding them.

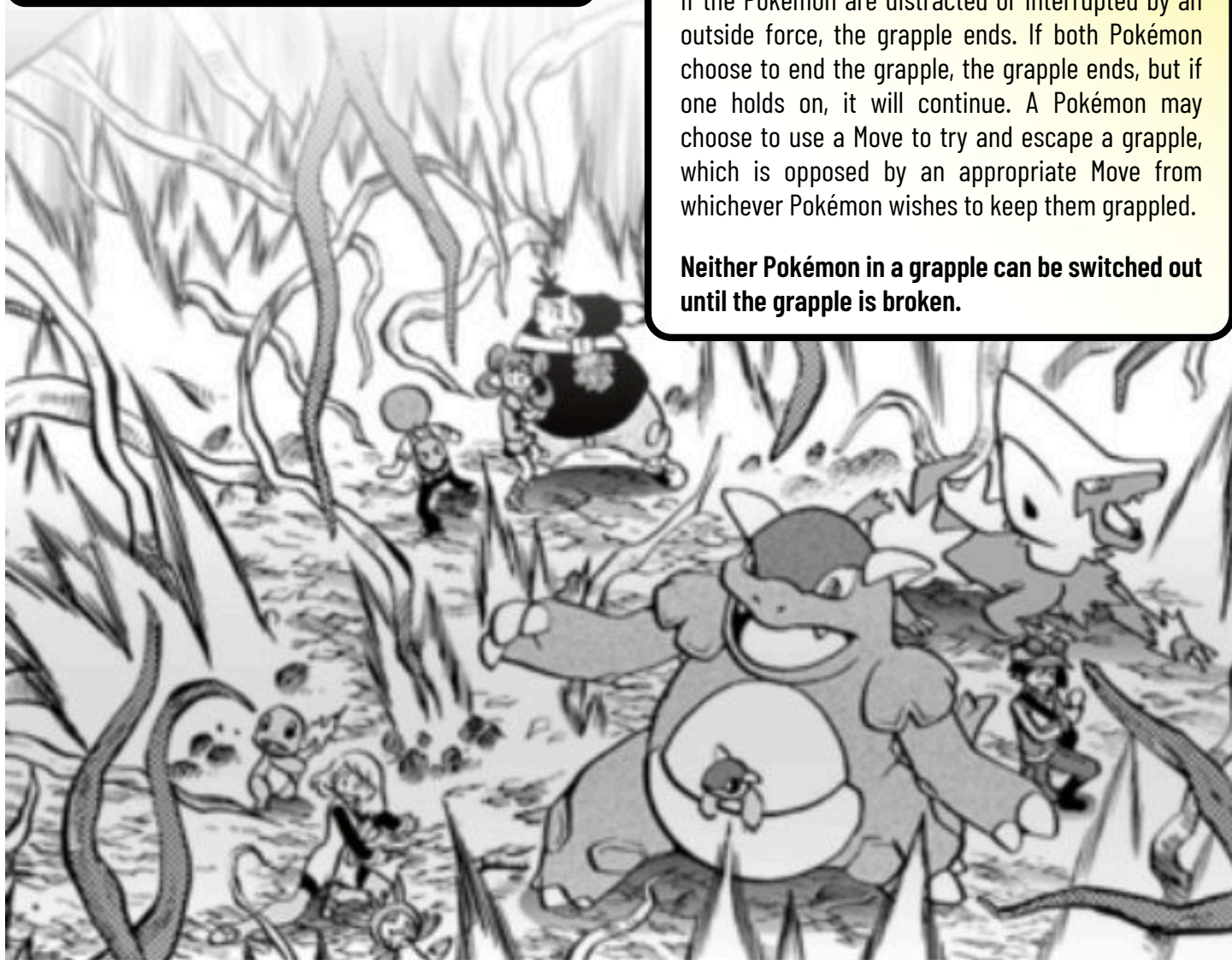
Grappled



Similar to Trapped, **but the Pokémon is being held by an opposing Pokémon directly.** Both (or as many Pokémon are involved) Pokémon in the exchange count as Grappled, and if one takes a Movement Action or is propelled by any other means, the other is dragged along with them. **Pokémon in a grapple get a +1 bonus to use offensive Moves against each other.**

If the Pokémon are distracted or interrupted by an outside force, the grapple ends. If both Pokémon choose to end the grapple, the grapple ends, but if one holds on, it will continue. A Pokémon may choose to use a Move to try and escape a grapple, which is opposed by an appropriate Move from whichever Pokémon wishes to keep them grappled.

Neither Pokémon in a grapple can be switched out until the grapple is broken.





Gotta Catch 'em All Gotta Catch 'em All

*And now the
Pokérap is stuck
in your head.*

CAPTURE

A wild Pokémon must be either **Befriended** or **Defeated** in order to be valid for capture. Either way, **the opportunity for capture generally comes once an encounter has been resolved.** Pokémon trainers are generally assumed to be carrying free pokéballs.

Befriending could happen in many ways - by gaining a Pokémon's respect during a story one way or another, by saving it, by engaging in a friendly sparring match, or just by enjoying each other's company over a period of time as determined by the GM.

Befriended Pokémon that are Captured **start with a free justification to buy up Mastery.**

Defeat is self-explanatory. Once per encounter, **Throw a Pokéball at a fainted Pokémon! Boom! Captured!**

Legendary or very strong Pokémon may resist capture and break out of their ball anyway. The GM should reserve this for especially unique cases, as doing this

too much will make your players fucking hate you.

If, for some reason, more than one trainer wants to capture a Defeated Pokémon, and neither is willing to back down, **the trainers must make a contested roll,** generally but not exclusively with Fitness, to represent their Pokéball-throwing skill.

Captured Pokémon start with identical stats to a starter Pokémon, but without the bonus Mastery, regardless of how powerful they were before. This represents the training a trainer and Pokémon need to go through to coordinate with each other properly.

In advanced games, having a new Pokémon begin at the level of a starter might be a severe balance problem or break suspension of disbelief. So, **at GM discretion, refer to the "Catching Stronger Pokémon"** section in the Advancement chapter for more detail on how to balance that for your game.

Cinnabar sure was nice!





Risin' Up to the Top

Pokémon love competition of all kinds - read on to get the scoop on how trainers can get in on it!



BATTLE FORMATS

There are as many ways to battle with Pokémon as there are people under the sun! Different regions and cultures have different ideas of what constitutes a Pokémon battle, and different Pokémon Leagues have different rules and regulations to abide by.

In general, though, you're not going to stray too far outside the examples provided in this section. Or maybe you will - I'm not Bob Game Freak. Even so, the formats in the section ahead should be more than enough to get the gears turning and give GMs and players an idea of what to expect in most games!



Trainer Tips!

Some Pokémon might have movesets more suited to exploration or utility than battle, but maybe the real optimization was the friends we made along the way.

WILD ENCOUNTERS

It's dangerous to walk in the tall grass without a Pokémon!

Pokémon in the wild will often attack travellers that disturb their territory or startle them. In *Pokeymanz*, wild battle encounters will generally include a few such Pokémon, or one or two very powerful Pokémon with more Wound boxes, Toughness, or Mastery than normal. **The goal in wild encounters is for all players to get a chance to participate and possibly capture a Pokémon.**

Give the non-Boss Wild Pokémon **two Wounds** before they go down instead of the full three - or even **one** Wound if there's a swarm or for a supporter type.





BOSS POKéMON

Some wild Pokémon stand head and shoulders above the rest. **These Boss Pokémon gain a Wild Die, a special d6 they roll like a trainer die even without a trainer.** They should have uncommonly high dice in their Moves and generally require some doing to take down!

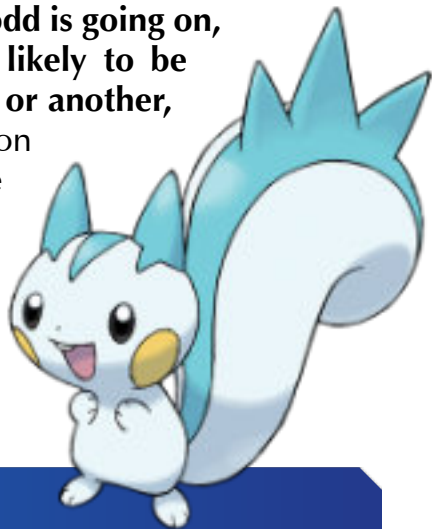
A Boss Pokémon also acts more frequently in the initiative order, sometimes as often as every other turn.

There could be many narrative justifications for these Pokémon (and why they don't retain this edge when caught) - maybe they're channeling otherworldly energy that's found

in the region, or maybe their hearts have been artificially closed off in order to grant them greater combat ability. Or maybe they're just like, off the fucking chain.

If something really odd is going on, a Boss Pokémon is likely to be involved in one way or another, making them common encounters at the end of an episode in the wild.

Does this look like the face of mercy



LEGENDARY POKéMON

Legendary Pokémon are technically up to GM discretion to stat, but *Pokeymanz* **as written treats Legendaries as truly awesome and mythical forces, beyond the power levels of even the most well-trained Pokémon.**

Their movepool should not be defined strictly, and **they should have access to potentially all of their abilities at any given time.** Their Moves should Just Work, without rolls, unless

they have been weakened or are fighting another Legendary or Legendary-level threat. They may do extra Wounds or effects on every Move by default, or do insane damage or even more extra effects with Super Effective attacks!

Legendary Pokémon take Wounds, however many the GM thinks is appropriate, but these don't count down to them fainting, just how long they will battle until they decide to retreat. If a Legendary is actually forced to fight to fainting, it should be a climactic event.

A Legendary Pokémon cannot be captured by normal means, and if a plot point revolves around a Legendary being captured, it will likely be a journey-central event. Legendaries may ally themselves with PCs, and if they do, they should be treated with the same rules as the Pokémon Ranger Edge and **remain under GM control.**





TRAINER BATTLES

Trainer Battles have a few differences from battles with Wild Pokémon. First, the enemy Pokémon and trainer are obviously rolling their dice together, making them a more formidable threat. Second, battles tend to be held in a one-on-one format as opposed to a free-for-all. Third, the opposing trainer will likely have multiple Pokémon with levels of Mastery!

According to league rules, Pokémon may never target trainers in a Pokémon battle. Less than scrupulous individuals can and will break this rule, as they know that without a trainer's direction, their opponents will be in for a quick defeat.

Individual matches might have other terms agreed to, however. **A common agreement is to use no more than the number of Pokémon that the person with the least Pokémon has on their person,** while gym matches might have more esoteric rules as part of their challenge.

You done walked into the wrong cave, friend



GYM BATTLES

The standard challenge for the would-be Pokémon Master, **Pokémon Gyms are facilities sponsored by and run according to the rules of the Pokémon League.** They serve threefold as training sites, qualifiers for the vaunted Pokémon League, and as centres of the

community. Gym Leaders are expected to act to defend their homes in times of crisis, nurture new trainers by giving them appropriate challenges for their skill levels, and hone their own skills at Pokémon battling.

A Gym battle will often be the capstone of a plot arc, but it's worth noting that Gym badges have also been given out by leaders who have noted that a would-be challenger has responded to a local situation in a way that

proves their skills already.

Gym battles should be tougher than regular trainer battles, and a Gym leader will almost certainly have a few well-practiced combo attacks up their sleeve. Gym leaders will generally tailor their team to the skill level of the challenger - some achieve this by keeping a B-team of weaker Pokémon at the ready, while others simply hold back from their full strength.





DOUBLE BATTLES

A common type of battle is the **double battle format**, sometimes referred to informally as “doubles”. The format has **some combination of trainers commanding two Pokémon at once and/or two trainers working together**. It enjoys a lot of popularity due to the tactical complexity that Pokémon duos provide.

It's also more than possible that PCs will often use tricks from this format as they battle together in a battle royale against a nefarious team. In any case, **coordination is the key in multiple-Pokémon formats**. Don't use an AoE Surf attack next to your friend's Charmander!

“Why don't I just pull out multiple Pokémon every battle instead of one to overwhelm my opponents?”



There are two reasons. First, this practice is **forbidden by League rules unless the participants agree to those terms of battle**. Those kinds of unfair tactics are reserved for scoundrels. Second, directing multiple Pokémon is extremely mentally taxing. In a double battle or even triple battle where both sides are on even footing, there are no modifiers; their strain equals out.

However, a trainer that has more Pokémon out than their opponent takes a cumulative -2 modifier to all rolls per extra Pokémon. They also **can't make Called Actions**, as their concentration is far too divided to strategize effectively. Most skilled trainers top out at three Pokémon under their command at once, anyway - and Double Battles are far more prevalent than Triples.

As an exception, if a number of people are in a battle and whittle down the opponent to one Pokémon that is outnumbered, no such penalties apply. This is because ~~bookkeeping the penalties every group battle would be a massive pain~~ the trainers involved are already tired from their efforts during the battle.



One rule about being themed around double battles: you have to look unhinged



NON-BATTLE ENCOUNTERS

Not all of the challenges a trainer meets will be battles or contests! Over the course of a Journey, trainers will likely have **many different types of encounters**.

There's a [more detailed rundown for GMs](#) in the Game Master's Manual (pg. 145), but **trainers can expect to see variations on the following archetypes of encounters** (and possibly more!) in addition to battles:



In the most challenging encounter of all, you will be required to go outside and take a walk for your mental health

- **Competitions.** Not necessarily formal Pokémon Contests, but competitions between Pokémon and people at something other than battling. **The participants will be racing to accrue Hits towards a goal.**
- **Disasters.** Many obstacles will threaten trainers and their progress directly in various ways, or unchecked events might bring ruin to things they care about. Trainers will have to **work with their Pokémon to handle the cause of the trouble.**
- **Puzzles.** Whether it's slipping and sliding on an icy floor in a specific pattern, investigating a crime, or translating braille, some challenges will call upon trainers to **put their minds - and their Research dice - to work to solve something.**
- **Social challenges.** Sometimes the problem can't be solved with a Pokémon battle (gasp, shock), and an accord of some kind needs to be reached, or maybe someone needs to be fooled. In social encounters, trainers will be **rolling trainer attributes and Moves in unorthodox ways, and getting bonuses for targeting social strengths, weaknesses, and motives.**
- **Tests of survival.** Trainers and their Pokémon will need to come up with strategies to survive in inclement weather, endure against waves of attacks, or get their driver's license renewed at the Poke-DMV. **A hazard of one kind or another will chip away at them** as they attempt to find a way through with minimal losses.



The Peanut Gallery

Coaching: In Pokeymanz, it's not only tournament legal, but expected!



SIDELINE COMMENTARY

One of the major stumbling blocks in translating Pokémon to the TTRPG realm is the simple fact that most Pokémon stories revolve around **one person challenging a lot of Gyms while their friends sit on the sidelines and watch**. While this can be fun for a one-off session, many players will want to have battles and contests solo pretty consistently - and it would take some doing to remove this element from the setting entirely!

It's possible to have games without this element, and some Pokémon media have the protagonists running around not even bothering with badges (eg. Gold in the GSC arc of Pokémon Special), but for those that want to have some of the classic flair, here is a set of **rules to allow the entire party to get involved in otherwise solo encounters**.



"Haha yeah Ash sure is getting owned out there"
- The anime probably

The **headliner(s)** - the trainer or trainers actually handling the encounter - and their opponents are the only ones able to make direct Moves against each other. They take their turns as in a standard battle or contest.

Everyone else gets **one commentary token**.



Trainer Tips!

Good friends support their friends, but if their friends aren't supporting them, then they're not very good friends. Surround yourself with the type of people who get excited for you!



COMMENTARY TOKENS

With commentary tokens, commentators can influence their allies' battles from the sidelines! As stated above, all commentators begin the battle with one token. **Every time an ally's Pokémon faints, all of their allied commentators recover one token**, to a maximum of their starting number.

They may spend a token at any point in the encounter to use one of the effects listed in the section below.

Players must roleplay out their commentary - they are encouraged to find justifications for how the mechanical effects of their spent tokens are actually happening. These explanations can be just as creative as any use of a Move. The GM is the ultimate arbiter of

whether a given use of a token makes sense.

For instance, a trainer might point out that their friend has been training intensely in the nearby lava fields and so their Bayleef has developed a strategy of wearing razor leaves on the bottom of its feet in order to withstand hot ground, and thus it gets a reroll to escape the effects of a hot coals hazard.

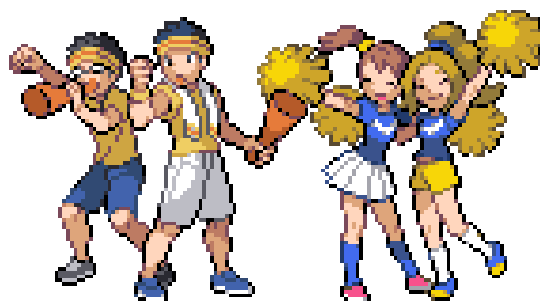
Alternatively, these tokens could represent simple moral support, or the declaration of a rival driving the headliner on with a heated utterance of "you can't lose here!". In more comedic games, the commentary could be hilariously convoluted, consist of actively stating the obvious, or be straight-up unhelpful sass.

COMMENTARY TOKEN EFFECTS

- The commentator may **negate a successful attack** on one of the Pokémon involved, once per session per commentator.
- The commentator may **add a previously unknown feature to the arena**, within reason. Their player must be able to explain why it would be A) there, and B) hidden or absent until now.
- The commentator may **change an existing feature of the arena**, within reason.
- The commentator may **"create" a hazard on the field** that all participants must contend with, by "noticing" something important.
- The commentator may **roll one of their own skills to affect the battle**, with GM approval. (Note: some uses of this

maneuver may not be League-sanctioned. Coaching your friend is probably okay! Punching out the opposing trainer may get them in big trouble!)

- The commentator may **turn one Pokémon's type immunity into a resistance**.
- The commentator may **grant their ally a reroll as if they had spent a Mastery**.





OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

Everyone loves optional rules to make a more modular system, which is why GURPS is played by everyone and is the first thing you think of when you think Tabletop RPG. More seriously, here are some rules to take out the -lite out of rules-lite and customize Pokeymanz to your your group.

DLC but for a Book

Pokeymanz tries to keep it slim for a few reasons. First, it's intended to account for a lot of variables by making calls at the table, and having less hard guidelines makes for less stuff to look up in the book itself. Second, because GMs will be doing a lot of said calls, keeping the number of subsystems down helps relieve some of the load. Third, less hard rules means more flexibility to mod in custom content. Fourth, though people like that certainly exist and are indeed valid, not everyone enjoys doing taxes.

But what if you want to have a little more crunch on some things? What if you find the capture rules too streamlined, or want to add in something you found cool from the games, manga, or anime?

There's nothing stopping you! *Pokeymanz* acknowledges that every table is different, and that everyone will want a slightly different experience out of the game. The core rules have been engineered to be a little vague and a little barebones, **but in the upcoming section, there are some possible options to get some of the complexity of some of Pokémon's more indepth gameplay systems into your group's game.**

And, of course, there's nothing stopping good old homebrew.





Gacha - uh, I Mean “Gotcha!”



Are you even a REAL
fan if you don't know
about the TYPING
BALL

CAPTURE CHANCE

By default, the rules of Pokeymanz say “**you just do**” in regards to capturing a Pokémon when an encounter has been cleared. Want to re-incorporate the fun of pressing “A” at the beginning of every shake in hopes that the Pokémon stays in the damn ball and praying

to any higher power that is listening that you didn't just use your last Dusk Ball when it breaks free?

These rules are for you!

THE CAPTURE ROLL

As with the default rules, **you generally get the chance to throw your Pokéballs at the end of an encounter**, at a defeated Pokémon. You also still automatically capture a befriended Pokémon - after all, there's no chance of breaking free if the Pokémon isn't resisting.

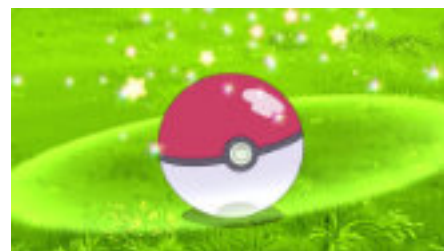
Here's the difference - when using the Capture Chance rules, **you can throw out a Pokéball whenever you'd like**. It's not guaranteed to *work*, of course.

Instead, **when a trainer declares intent to capture a Pokémon**, they must note down or otherwise depict a **Capture Chance “Counter”** everyone can see - a d12 is a great counter! This number **starts at 12** and bottoms out at **1**. **Pokémon marked for capture have 3 Wounds**, no matter what their original number of Wounds was for that encounter. They have simply become more strong and narratively important retroactively.

The number **ticks down (this many)** when:

- The Pokémon takes a **Wound (3)**
- They have a **major status effect (3)**
- The Pokémon has a **minor status effect**, not including roll bonuses or penalties. (**1 each**; eg. A grappled, confused Pokémon ticks down 2)

Boss Pokémon only **tick down by 1** each time the above are met, their counter is **never lower than 3**, and their **Wound count is unaffected**.



There's no feeling quite like it.



THE CAPTURE ROLL, CONTINUED



Aaaaand threw the wrong ball!

Alright!

Okay! Wow!

Good Journey everyone, I'm going home

On any of their turns, the trainer may use their **Battle Action to throw a Pokéball**. They need to **roll a d12** and **roll at or over the number on the counter** to succeed! While this roll does not explode and only consists of the one die, **Mastery may be spent on rerolls**, just like a normal roll.

If the group is using the **Item Rules**, appropriate **special Pokéballs** may modify the capture roll by +1 or +2. Depending on circumstance, there may be an opportunity to get a circumstantial bonus or penalty like on normal rolls as well.

On a 1 or a 2, the Pokémon **flees** (Or if it's a Boss Pokémon, **goes sicko mode and powers up like in Dragon Ball Z**). Bonuses to the Capture Roll from circumstances or a ball can prevent this on a 2, but **they will always flee on a natural 1**.

This is probably not goodbye forever, however; a sufficiently determined trainer may later **track down** a specific Pokémon they really wanted to catch. The exact **method and timeframe** for catching up with a missed Pokémon **may vary by the type of game and the trainer in question's approach!**





THE ETHICS OF CATCHING POKÉMON

You may notice that there is no mention in the above of **fainted Pokémon**. For the purposes of these rules, **fainted Pokémon are treated as having gotten away**.

This is because of the **principle of consent** - remember, in the Pokémon world, **Pokémon are not slaves**, nor are Pokéballs jails! They often **choose to go along with trainers** because they know that **humans can make Pokémon stronger by working together with them**, and they naturally enjoy battling and competition. While the anime often muddies these waters, **I have chosen to go with the game's logic on this one** as it more closely reflects this core value.

A Pokéball of legal standard simply won't capture a Pokémon that is completely debilitated, and if one waits around long enough for it to get back up, they're in for another (maybe shorter) battle or the Pokémon fleeing, depending on its disposition.

On a similar note, **a Pokémon that is asleep by the sleep condition is considered to have woken up when the ball hits its body**, at least long enough to make a decision on whether or not it would like to give the new trainer a shot.

Even **stolen Pokémon that come to work for their captors** are often those who care little for human morality and see new unscrupulous trainers as a new partner or friend to be forged.

There are **exceptions** to these rules, even in-universe. There is a device known as a **Master Ball** that can bypass this built-in failsafe, **capturing any Pokémon without fail**. A Master Ball will be an incredibly **rare and restricted item** in most regions, given only to trainers who have already demonstrated they won't misuse it. There is also the **highly illegal** and incredibly **expensive** to develop **Snag Machine**, which **overrides the trainer registries** built into Pokéball systems and **catches other trainers' Pokémon directly!**



And while you wait for them to wake up, you can take a nap! Win-win!



NEW EDGE: CAPTURE SPECIALIST



Capture Specialist



The trainer is a Pokémon capturing pro, or has trained under one, and is well acquainted with the tricks of the trade.

Capture Specialists throw Pokéballs out with dizzying speed and accuracy; their Capture Chance Number begins at 10, not 12.

Capture Specialists also gain +2 on any Research roll to track down any Pokémon or to find out what species of Pokémon are endemic to an area; even elusive Legendary Pokémon, though such beings might not be able to be caught even by a seasoned expert.

Once per episode, the player of a Capture Specialist can invoke one of two benefits:

- *Insert a specific species of wild Pokémon from the wishlist of anyone in the party into an encounter. How they fit into things is up to the GM to decide.*
- *A Pokémon someone in the party failed to capture comes back as a Boss. If the same Pokémon is called multiple times, they get stronger every time. The White Wailmer.*



MAYBE WE CAN...

...CAPTURE IT FIRST!



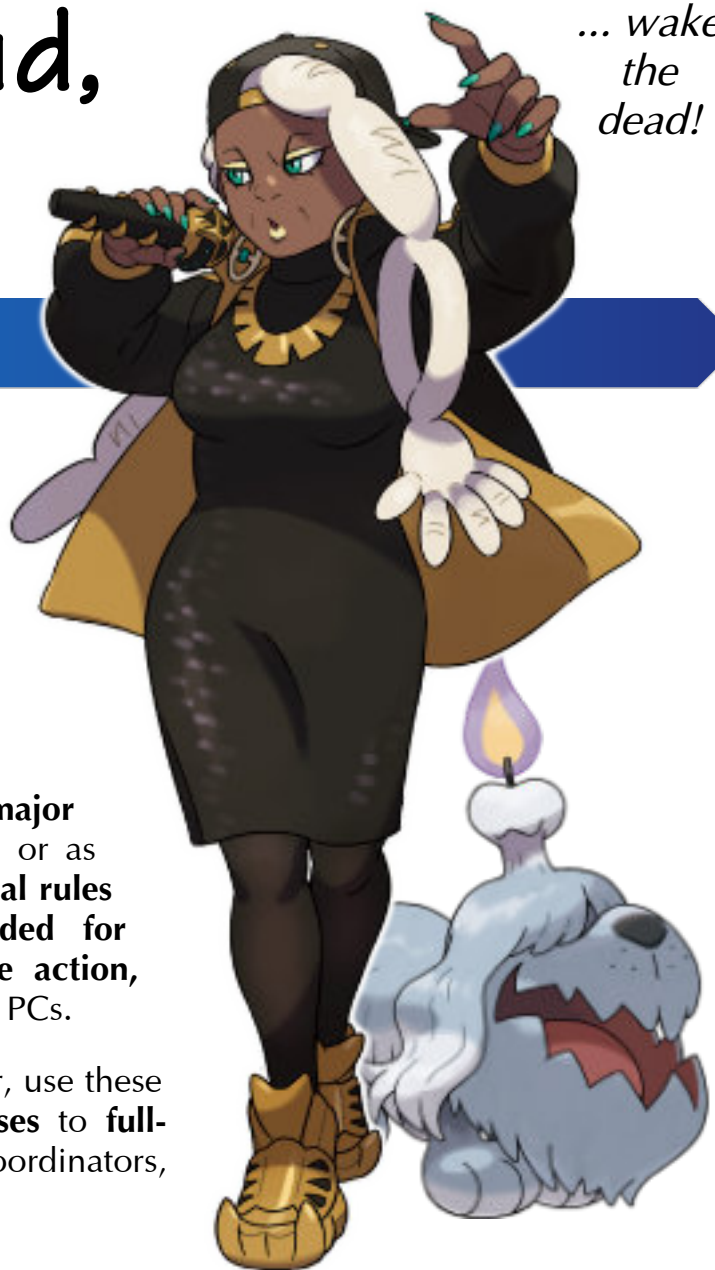
Crowds so Loud, They Could...

POKéMON CONTESTS

Sometimes, Pokémon and trainers **want to compete somewhere else besides the battlefield.** While the specifics vary from region to region, one practice sticks out from the rest - **Pokémon Contests**, where trainers gather to make dazzling spectacles with their Pokémon for the enjoyment and amazement of the crowd.

If your group doesn't want Contests to be a major focus, just run them as simple contested rolls or as [competition encounters](#) (pg. 149). **These optional rules are considerably more indepth, and intended for Journeys where Contests are a staple of the action,** perhaps the calling of one or more of the trainer PCs.

If they do want Contests to be a focus, however, use these rules to **run anything from one-time showcases to full-fledged Contest Circuits** with their own rival coordinators, recurring judge personalities, and drama.



... wake
the
dead!



YOU CAN'T
HIDE FROM THE
DEADMAN!!!

An important note: More than other types of encounters, Pokémon Contests are **likely to have more than one PC competing**, and usually against each other, too. **Base Pokeymanz is not geared towards PVP play**, with interplayer battles being showcases for fun more than anything. **Contests are built with slightly more PVP in mind!** If you'd like to run Contests with your group, remember to cover people's boundaries around PVP-style play in a discussion before the game or Session Zero. And be a good sport.



THE BASICS

While not every region enjoys a formal contest circuit, **use this format to represent any extended contest of skill that takes place in front of an audience** or a panel of judges. Think of them as the equivalent of a gym battle for competition encounters - **a longer-form, more indepth clash that will likely take up a whole session or at least most of one.**

This approach means that **Contests can be used to represent all sorts of different competitive events.** Racing, pro wrestling, battles of the bands, game shows, reality TV, video game tournaments, sports matches, cook-offs... **all of these can fit within the provided framework.**

Contests do have some things in common with battles. **Sideline Commentary** - with some tweaks - is here. Some **Battle Edges** might see play in Contests if the situation makes sense (such as using the combo attack from Double Battler in a team game, Trump Card for a massive crowd-pleasing finale, or custom styles for Master of the Styles). And, lastly, Contests do use **Round-based initiative.**

By default, **most Contests assume that each trainer enters one Pokémon for the duration.** However, this might not make sense for all forms of Contests (eg. Pokéathlon). In these cases, **when trainers switch Pokémon, any status effects and other penalties carry over.**





THE APPEAL ROUND & SETUP

Before the contest begins (in no particular order), **each PC duo will roll an appeal or preparation action to garner Appeal Tokens.**

In a traditional contest, this will simply be a **talent round** where they showcase their Pokémon's fitting traits with a **short performance related to the type of contest** but not bound by the themes of the individual rounds. **The attribute rolled depends on the nature of the Contest** - a rally race might use Athletics, while a Cuteness Contest is likely to use Heart. Relevant **Professionals** or **supernatural individuals** may also shine here.

In other types of contests, this could be things like: cutting a promo, describing the pair's beef with an NPC present to hype up the rivalry, cutting to the dastardly trainer sabotaging their opponents' vehicle or equipment unbeknownst to the PCs but knownst to us, warming up the crowd, attending a sports interview...

Everyone gets a baseline of **one Appeal Point**. A **Hit on this roll gets one more Appeal Point**. A **Critical Hit gets two**.

If the player **roleplayed out their appeal in detail**, **OR** if the player **brings some kind of creative work** of the duo **they did themselves** - art, poetry, a custom edit like a sprite edit, **anything of any quality as long as it's from their creativity and fits the theme**, give them **one additional Appeal Point**. Obviously, they can do both if they want, but it's one point.

Once the Appeal Round is over, **initiative is automatically assigned from highest to lowest based on the same ranking** (and in the case of a tie, exact rolls from) **in the Appeal Round**.



You know they say that all Pokémon are created equal, but you look at me and you look at Joey's Rattata and you can see that statement is not true.

See, normally if you go one on one with a Bibarel, you got a 50/50 chance of winning. But I'm a genetic freak and I'm not normal! So you got a 25%, AT BEST, to beat me. Then you add Masked Royal to the mix, your chances of winning drastic go down. See the 3 way at Sacrifice, you got a 33 1/3 chance of winning, but I, I got a 66 and 2/3 chance of winning, because Royal KNOWS he can't beat me and he's not even gonna try!

So Joey, you take your 33 1/3 chance, minus my 25% chance and you got an 8 1/3 chance of winning at Sacrifice. But then you take my 75% chance of winning, if we was to go one on one, and then add 66 2/3 per cents, I got 141 2/3 chance of winning at Sacrifice. See Joey, the numbers don't lie.



APPEAL POINTS

Contests have a special currency of tokens called **Appeal Points**, which represent an aggregate of the Pokémon and trainers duo's **preparation**, their **suitedness for the contest category**, and/or **how much the audience is hyped** to see them compete.

In Contests, **would-be spectator tokens are automatically converted to Appeal Points** that the audience can spend on a participant. However, **the performers themselves also have a well of these points**, which is earned during the Appeal Round.

Below is a **quick reference of all the uses of Appeal Points**. Some of these won't make sense until you've read this whole section!

Appeal Points can...

- ♥ Remove the Stale Moves penalty for a round
- ♥ Negate a status effect
- ♥ Cause Drama (once per PC, infinitely per NPC)
- ♥ Allow a reroll for yourself or a teammate
- ♥ Alter the theme of a round, by adding a twist



"For my preparation, I use my massive amounts of money to have my company print Toon cards just for me!"



CONTEST ROUNDS

After initiative, **each duo takes the round in turns.** In formats like quiz shows with a buzzer or other events where speed to respond is part of the game, consider turns to be highlight moments out of a broader performance.

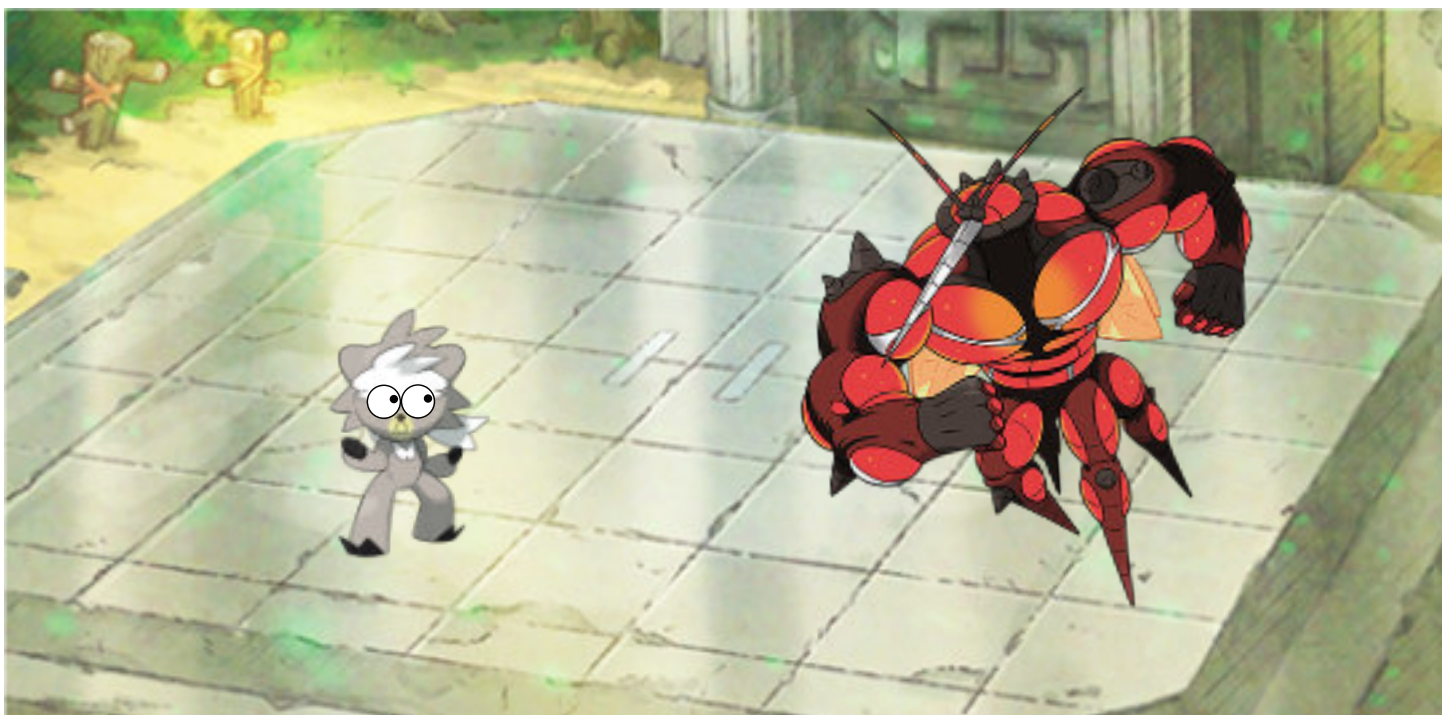
Like in [Competition Encounters](#) (pg. 149), the **object of a Contest is to accumulate the most Hits** by the end of the final round. Accruing Hits is as simple as **rolling a Move and attribute combo on the duo's turn - Critical Hits count as two Hits.** Hits can be pooled by a team of trainers and Pokémon or solo competitors can duke it out in a battle royale.

In the case of a tie at the end, the placement or winner is decided by **a simple contested roll.** If more than two people are involved, everyone rolls against each other and rank is by result from the highest down.

Rounds are composed of a title, a difficulty, and a description. The title counts as a Feature in the same way that Arena Features work - playing to them cleverly can give you +1 or narrative bonuses. **Difficulty** is just **how high (4 to 8) contestants have to roll** to score a Hit.

Some Rounds are **Hazard Rounds**, and **failure to gain even a single Hit nets a penalty** like a status effect, penalty for the next round, or even a Wound if it's a dangerous enough competition! Fainting from Wounds is an automatic withdrawal from most Contests.

Sometimes, in cases like sports games, **the title Feature of a Round might be mirrored by side**, like an offensive push for one team equalling a defensive play for the other. In that case, give bonuses for playing to the Feature based on their logical role in the equation.



Sometimes the twink-chucking round gives one participant more of an advantage than the other



STALE MOVES

Unlike a battle, **Contests are generally meant to entertain**, or at least require a level of variety in tactics to ensure that the you can't just DP on wakeup seven times in a row and win because your opponent kept jumping in. References aside, this is why **Contests have a penalty for Stale Moves**.

In other words, **once a Move is used in a contest once**, it loses its lustre and becomes a little more dull or predictable. **It takes a stacking penalty for the rest of the Contest**.

The exact severity of the Stale Moves penalty **depends on the number of rounds** in the Contest. **For three rounds**, make it **-2**. For **four to six**, **-1**. For seven or more Rounds... Your contest is too long, dude! Dial it back!

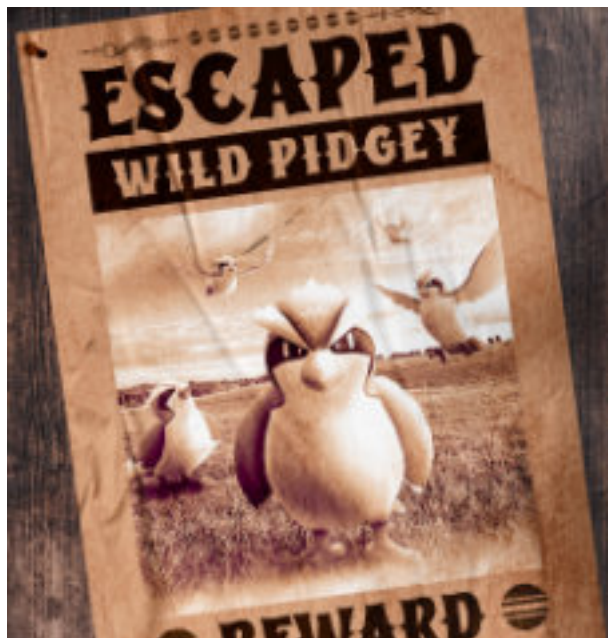
Well this
FUCKING SUCKS

What am I supposed
to do, not play Ken?



CAUSING DRAMA

At any point, the audience or participants can **spend Appeal Points to cause Drama**. Drama can only be caused **once per player per contest**; when used by a participant, it must be done on their turn. **NPCs can cause Drama as many times as they want**.



IMPRISONED for Drama Crimes

Causing Drama can:

- **Give another participant a Status Effect**. A duo may only have one status effect active at a time.
- **Jam an opponent**, adding a stack of Stale Move penalty to one of their Moves.
- **Rubber Band**, as introduced in competition encounters - at a great narrative cost, a character who's in last place can trigger an escalation with the leader at the Top of the Round. If they win, they can gain enough Hits to equal the leader's Hits minus one.
- Let the duo **Stop to Cheat**. This must be called at the Top of the Round. The duo can convert the round into a Hazard Round of their choice; how it works depends on the nature of the Contest and that round, and may not be literal cheating. If multiple people use this, or if the round is already a Hazard Round, **the Hazards stack**. Hazards still affect **everyone**.



CONTEST STATUS EFFECTS

Status Effects shouldn't show up in contests, would be what a COWARD would say. Instead of having traditional burns, try the burn of knowing your opponent's Rattata is in the top percentage of all Ra- wait, we did that joke already? Damn.

Like normal status effects, the utility of status effects in Contests is **somewhat wibbly** - if there's an alternative effect that would work better in a certain circumstance, go with that instead.

Also, as in battles, **Pokémon cannot be affected by more than one major status effect at a time.**

You're entering the contest in THAT? Take this. You're going to need it.



Burn



A burned Pokémon has been dealt a serious blow to their pride with a well-placed verbal barb, and has to work hard to deflect attention from it.

The Pokémon's Stale Moves penalties are doubled in the next round.

Freeze



The Pokémon is gripped with stage fright and rooted to the spot, unable to act until they have either had an Appeal Point spent on them, spent a Mastery, or made a roll at -2 to snap out of it and act as normal that round. No matter how the duo deals with it, the status is cleared afterwards.

Paralysis



The Pokémon is slowed down or distracted by some means, and their team can't concentrate on anything but staying in their lane. **In the next round, they can't cause Drama.** Clears automatically after.

Toxic



The Pokémon is on the receiving end of some serious toxicity, literal or otherwise. Incensed, they're compelled to be toxic themselves and **their next Appeal Point MUST be used to cause Drama.** This supercedes the normal per-PC limit on Drama. Clears automatically afterwards.

Drowsy



The Pokémon or trainer becomes very, very tired. They cannot muster up the same effort as usual. **They may only reroll once per round until the condition is cleared or cured.**



EDGE & HINDRANCE CHANGES

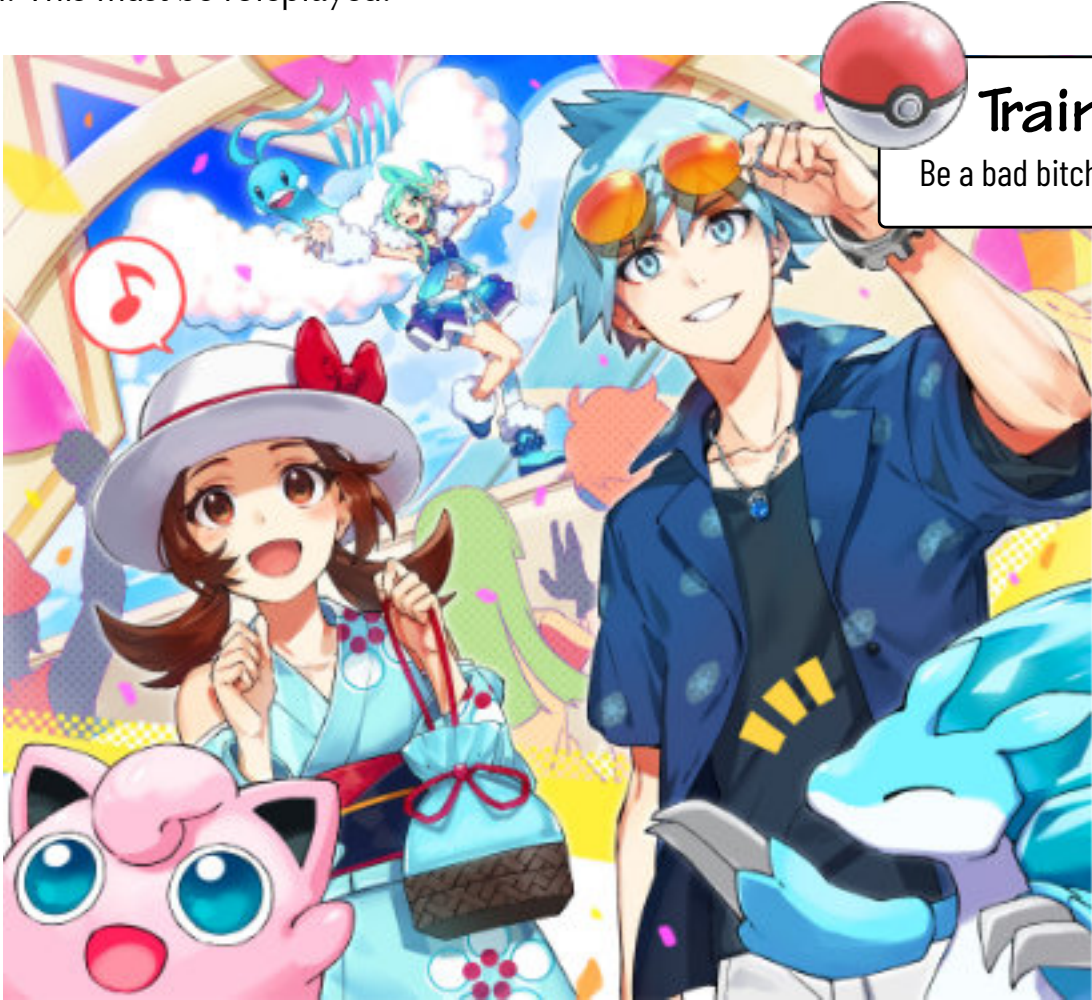
If the Pokémon Contest optional rules are being used, **the effect of the Pokémon Coordinator Edge is altered** (changes in italics):

The Trainer is seriously devoted to Pokémon Contests, and also knows the importance of spurring on their friends. Their Pokémon? Groomed, well-fed. Their vibes? Impeccable.

Coordinators know the value of morale. They can, once per session per teammate, use a Movement Action to restore a spent Mastery to one of a teammates' Pokémon by inspiring them. This must be roleplayed.

As to be expected, Pokémon Coordinators are fiends on the Contest circuit. They gain an extra baseline Appeal Point during the Appeal Round. They also know the mind games well and as a result have the option of causing Drama one more time per contest than normal.

Keen-eyed observers may notice that this new bonus replaces the Coordinators' 'Mean Girls Combat' from the core version. Players may still gain that bonus, and the general Competition Encounter bonus from the core Edge, **by taking the Edge a second time.**





It Just Appeared One Day...

*We were taking care of
your Pokémon, and -*

POKéMON EGGS

No one's quite sure how it happens, but from time to time, when Pokémon gather together, eggs appear! Those eggs can be taken care of and hatched by trainers and their Pokémon.

Since game series staples like IVs aren't a factor in *Pokeymanz*, Pokémon breeding and a complicated series of subsystems to support it aren't a necessity. And since one of the goals of *Pokeymanz* is to create a system where all Pokémon have the chance to be equally useful, a complicated breeding system for



creating the ubermon is something that's best left to individual groups if they desire it.

However, **hatching Pokémon eggs can be fun and rewarding for anyone!**

ACQUIRING POKéMON EGGS

Acquiring a Pokémon egg could happen in many ways. An egg could be entrusted to a trainer by a Pokémon professor, or the steward of a Pokémon day care, where eggs often pop up for mysterious reasons. A trainer could



They know.

even be given an egg to take care of by wild Pokémon, in dire circumstances or simply because they believe that their egg may be happy and stimulated with a human companion. A trainer may even find their Calling or make a living in hatching eggs for others!

A player may or may not know what species of Pokémon is bound to hatch from their egg - it depends on how they received it, and what kind of information is available to them! A GM may pick a species in secret to surprise a player.

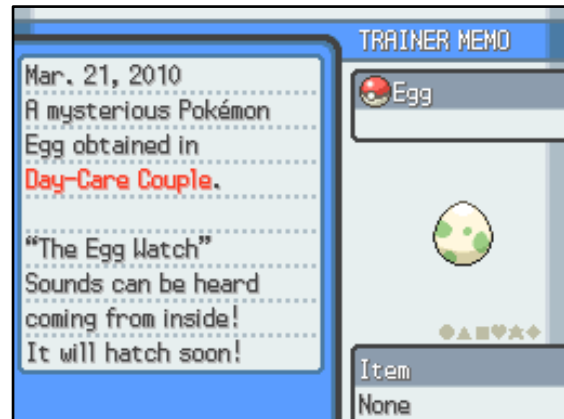
A Pokémon egg takes up one slot in the trainer's party.



INCUBATION

One thing is clear about the care of Pokémon eggs - **they require proximity to other Pokémon**, particularly Pokémon that are actively putting their abilities to use, to hatch. A Pokémon egg must be treated with a certain amount of care, but unlike eggs in our own world, it is hardy enough to take a tumble every now and then. That said, GMs and players are *incredibly* discouraged from setting up situations where eggs come to genuine physical harm.

An egg should take a while to hatch, usually a few episodes. The GM is the final arbiter of when a Pokémon will hatch from its egg, though a player has input to the process as well. During this time, **the trainer may direct**



But who watches the Egg Watch?

Pokémon EXP to the unhatched egg, which will be applied when the egg hatches. Eggs react well to the stimulus of being around active Pokémon and trainers!

HATCHING EGGS

When an egg hatches, a Pokémon comes out! The Pokémon in question will always be the first of its evolution line. For the trainer's patience, **hatched Pokémon have a few benefits right out the gate:**

- Similar to Starter Pokémon, a hatched Pokémon **starts with one Mastery.**



- Any **accumulated Pokémon EXP will be applied immediately** to the Pokémon, however the player chooses.
- Hatched Pokémon may know an Egg Move; **one Move that is normally outside of their moveset will be in their starting Moves** (This can be any Move, even a Move not on their ingame Egg Moves list - with common sense exceptions things like signature Legendary Pokémon Moves!).

Hatching may happen at any time, but for some odd reason, **it has a tendency to happen during dramatic moments.** Pokémon sure are fascinating! (It might be a good idea for a GM to communicate this to a player beforehand and give them some of the details to prepare, so as not to grind things to a halt to stat the new Pokémon during a climactic battle.)



FOSSIL RESTORATION

Fossils are a staple of the Pokémon games going right back to the first one. Pokémon DNA, apparently much harder than that of their real-world counterparts, **can survive the fossilization process and summarily be used to “restore” (realistically, clone) the long-departed tissue sample.** Generally speaking, a trainer will find a fossil early on and lug it around for weight training in their backpack until the appropriate facilities can be found to make a Pokémon out of it.

Because of this, in *Pokeymanz*, **fossils can be treated very similarly to Pokémon eggs.** Like eggs, while the trainer has them on their person, **they can assign part of their Pokémon EXP to the fossil** to be applied when it is revived. **They may also assign an Egg Move to the revived fossil Pokémon,** representing anything from previously unknown variations of the ancient species' moveset to a DNA mix-up in the lab.



It's more of an art than a science, really



However, carrying around a fossil is not the same as making a nurturing, active bond with an egg. **Fossil Pokémon do not start with the bonus Mastery** that Pokémon hatched from eggs do. Additionally, **a fossil cannot be revived on its own with time** like an egg being incubated; **the trainer will need to find the right facilities,** like a high-tech lab, machine, extreme time dilation field, or some kind of straight up magic at GM discretion to make the fossil into a living, breathing Pokémon.

For simplicity's sake and also because it is funny, **the benefits of the new Pokémon Breeder Edge on the following page apply to Fossil Pokémon as well.**



NEW EDGE: POKÉMON BREEDER



Pokémon Breeder



The trainer is unusually adept at finding and hatching Pokémon eggs, whether because of technical skill in taking care of Pokémon or a soul-deep connection that resonates somehow with the growing Pokémon within the egg.

Pokémon Breeders can always find an egg as long as there are Pokémon around. Wild Pokémon, if peaceful towards the trainer, will generally feel comfortable handing over their eggs to be raised by them, sensing their disposition. They will also be able to find any nearby day care centres.

In addition, Pokémon Breeders make the most of their time with an egg, bringing out its full potential. A Pokémon hatched by a Breeder starts with two Mastery unlocked at no EXP cost instead of one. The hatched Pokémon may also know up to two Egg Moves.

Restriction: Partnerless trainers cannot bring out the full potential of Pokémon, and are also distrusted by potential parents who can sense the trainer's lack of openness to their partners. They cannot take the Pokémon Breeder Edge.





Get in Losers We're Going Shopping



ITEMS



In the core game, items are kept intentionally vague and narrative so as not to bog down the system. However, if your group is looking for a little extra something to spice up battles and encounters, **adding items is a good way to add another dimension to the game.**

Adding Items to your game opens up, just to start, new ways to use trainer attributes, held items to add depth to battles, and resource management for more survival-focused games.





MONEY

Pokédollars don't grow on trees. Most trainers have enough to get by on, but to have enough to spend on extra supplies requires extra effort. *Pokeymanz* won't keep track of the exact number of Pokédollars that a trainer took from a small child's lunch money after beating up their single Caterpie, but **trainers using this system should record a general "Money" number on their sheet.**

At the beginning of their journey, a trainer should start with 0 Money. A trainer that starts with the Always Prepared Edge should start with 2 Money.

Money can be acquired in a number of ways.

Beating trainers in a battle or contest is one, but an individual character might have a legitimate employment attached to their Calling, or even have a job to "pay the bills" that isn't related to their Calling. The trainer should work with the GM to figure out where their money comes from while creating the character.

Portraying gambling as a reliable way to get nice things in a kid's game was bad and all but I wish people would give me casino chips to sod off



Here's a list of (non-exhaustive) examples:

- Beating a trainer in a Pokémon Battle or Contest
- Capturing a certain threshold of Pokémon for research or other purposes
- Submitting an outstanding picture to your magazine's editor
- Discovering and documenting archaeological finds
- Delivering important packages or documents
- Solving an issue or crisis that puts the trainer in line for hazard pay

The pay should be proportional to the accomplishment. A bug catcher is only going to give the aspiring Pokémon Master their pocket money of 1 Money, whereas triumphing over the Admin of an Evil Team, a story arc achievement, might net their considerable 3 Money.

Generally speaking, give out 1 Money for small accomplishments, 2 Money for difficult accomplishments, and 3 Money for extreme or capstone accomplishments.

ENCUMBRANCE

The bane of many systems. How much can one human lug around in a backpack? There's no hard and fast rule, but **if GMs want to avoid stockpiling, let trainers hold eight or so named items on their person at a time.** They can always store extras in their PC.

The fact that this means that one person could be carrying around eight different types of berries while another could be holding a bike, a tent, a grappling gun, a rusty ancient sword, etcetera... don't think about it too hard. Go and touch tall grass. It'll be okay.



TYPES OF ITEMS

There are many types of [items](#) in the Pokémon world, and this section will attempt to give a rough overview of the types of items available and their prices. This is not all-encompassing; an enterprising party may find other uses for some cash.

Curatives, Simple (1 Money)



One-use items like potions, berries, and other nutritious foods and herbs that will restore a Pokémon's health by one Wound or cure a status effect. Can be used during battle at the cost of a Battle Action.

Curatives, Greater (2 Money)



One-use items that can revive a Pokémon, recover more than one Wound, or cure most or any status effects.

Pokéballs, Specialty (1 Money)



[Only required if the group is using the Capture Chance optional rule.] Specialty Pokéballs like Net Balls and Dusk Balls that only aid capture in certain circumstances, or perhaps have an effect on how quickly the Pokémon acclimates to its new trainer.

Pokéballs, Stronger (2 Money)



[Only required if the group is using the Capture Chance optional rule.] All-around stronger Pokéballs that will give a greater chance to capture any Pokémon, like Great Balls and Ultra Balls.

Held Items, Disposable (1-2 Money)



Items that a Pokémon can hold and use in battle on their own. These take effect either on

their trigger, like a red card automatically switching a Pokémon out when hit, or when the Pokémon uses them, like eating a berry to recover a Wound when at low health.

Held Items, Persistent (2 Money)



Items that when held by a Pokémon have a special effect. This effect can vary greatly, but keep them similar in scope to the limits of a special ability (+1 in certain situations, niche effects that trigger in specific situations, etc.).

Rare Items and Services (2-3 Money)



Technical Machines, Hidden Machines, and tutoring can all teach Pokémon new Moves. Evolution stones are precious and can evolve Pokémon into new forms. Most of these kinds of treasures don't come cheap!

Supplies (1-2 Money)



Items of various usefulness in the field. Escape Ropes, extra rations, Repels, and all sorts of specialty camping or hiking equipment might fall under supplies.

Key Items (3-? Money)



A great variety of items that are both repeatedly usable and give a trainer a new way to use their skills. Bikes, item finders, pokéflutes, new apps for a Pokégear... all of these types of items are Key Items.





CAMPS AND SECRET BASES

In default *Pokeymanz*, camping is expected to happen frequently and without much fanfare. However, **if your group is using the item rules, they can also get into the nitty gritty of camping and try out everyone's favourite forgotten mechanic: Secret Bases!**

Making camp is easy (in fiction). Most trainers are assumed to have at least a one-person tent or bedroll on their person, as well as some very basic camping gear, as camping is a basic necessity of Pokémon training as a vocation. As long as they can find somewhere flood-safe to set up, they're golden.

Secret Bases, by contrast, require a little more effort. **Secret bases are hidden nooks and crannies of shelter in natural areas,** and sniffing out a spot like this that is suitable for habitation generally requires either a lengthy search, a specialized eye (such as a Professional with an applicable skillset), or a Pokémon with the Move Secret Power. **Secret Bases are much safer, more hidden, and more comfortable than camps.**



Objectively the best base
don't @ me

Both camps and Secret Bases, once established, can make use of a special type of item called **Decorations**.

Decorations (2-? Money)



Items that are suitable to bring out in Camps or Secret Bases that give the party of trainers a bonus or utility while they aren't on the move. A big pot to cook healing curry, relaxing Pokédolls, a workbench and equipment to craft a certain type of item, a radio antenna to establish an internet connection out in the wild... these are all feasible Decorations.

Decorations are similar to Key Items, but they are not able to be carried in a trainer's inventory. They're too large and cumbersome. Instead, trainers using this ruleset are assumed to be carrying a small device equipped with a similar technology to a trainer's PC that can hold and deploy Decorations when the trainer has enough time and space to sit down and set up. Each trainer can have as many Decorations as they want stored away, but **most camps and Secret Bases only have space for about as many Decorations at once as the number of trainers in the party.**





EDGE & HINDRANCE CHANGES

If the Item optional rules are being used, **the effect of the Always Prepared Edge is altered** (changes in *italics*):

(. . .) *Once per encounter, the trainer can produce any disposable item that costs 1 Money or less as though they already had it on hand. This includes held items, which may be retroactively considered to have been held by the Pokémon all along so long as they weren't already holding something. They have to use it right away. Generally speaking, (. . .)*

Likewise, the **Always Broke Hindrance is also altered** as such:

(. . .) *along their journey, but the trainer finds accumulating Money extremely difficult. Any time the Trainer would get Money, halve the amount they would otherwise receive and round up. In Journeys where the GM plans to give out a lot of Money, like 2+ per episode, Always Broke should also be upgraded to a Major Hindrance or adjusted to have a less punishing effect, such as a -1 to a minimum of 1 Money per reward. The character is (. . .)*

The **Trump Card Edge** is altered with the Item rules, too. Because Trump Card is meant to



represent a wide variety of “gimmick” power-up mechanics, some of which have items (such as Mega Stones or Z-Crystals) as requirements, **some thought needs to be put into how to acquire said items.**

When Trump Card is taken, **you decide its form as normal**, with approval from the GM. If a Trump Card does not require an item, like Dynamaxing, decide its requirements as normal. If it does require some type of item, **decide what form that item takes.** Anyone who takes the Trump Card Edge in this form **begins with an item that allows them to use one facet of the Trump Card** (a specific Pokémon's Mega Stone, one type of Z-Crystal, etcetera) **as well as the means and knowledge to use it** (A keystone, knowing how to perform a Z-Move). Further Trump Card Items must be found, bought, or given to the trainer over the course of their Journey.

Trump Card Item (3-4 Money)



Brimming with mysterious energy, an incredibly rare item that allows the use of a specific type of Trump Card. Mega Stones, Z-Crystals, and other such items provide Pokémon massive power and fantastical alterations in short bursts.

While the item type above has a suggested cost, **GMs should feel free to lock Trump Card items behind player achievements** like trials, contests, as a reward for going off the beaten path, or other exceptionally difficult encounters. If they do this, they should communicate it to the players beforehand!

Don't worry guys, I bought a giant laser last time we were at the mall





NEW EDGE: HAPPY CAMPER



Happy Camper



The trainer is a camping and Secret Base fanatic, and has mastered the art of setup and takedown on the go to the point where it seems like they always have their hideaway at hand. A Happy Camper doesn't need to roll or make time to set up camp or a base; if at all plausible, they're assumed to have somehow found time to do so in a convenient, unthreatened nearby location offscreen.

"Plausible" could be as simple as the camera not focusing on them for an arbitrary length of time, or a reasonable argument that they could have set it up before the current scene at some point.

Even temporary campsites set up by a Happy Camper are considered to be on par with Secret Bases in terms of basic comfort and safety. In addition, when the trainer takes this Edge, they can choose two of the features on the following page (Or, with GM permission, custom features) to apply to every Secret Base or camp they create.

This Edge can be taken multiple times; for each additional time it is taken, the trainer can add two more features to their bases. If another trainer in the party takes this Edge, their shared bases or campsites may have all the features from all Happy Campers together. Teamwork makes the dream work!





EXAMPLE HAPPY CAMPER FEATURES

Connected



The space has internet access, and automatically has access to the Pokémon and Trainer PC networks without the need to set up Decorations to provide them.

Hangout



Allied NPCs hang around this location for some reason and serve as an easy source of contacts or services.

Hidden



Ne'er-do-wells or other troublemakers have extreme difficulty finding this site. Rolls to find it take a whopping -10 penalty.

Huge



Trainers can fit three Decorations each in the space. Can be taken up to twice for six each.

Haven



Even with enemies about, or in uninhabitable environs, the trainer can find and set up in a safe place. Still discoverable, unless Hidden.

Lure



The base attracts docile wild Pokémon from the area that come to play or socialize. They might have strange or useful insights.

Luxurious



The space has modern amenities and utilities (electricity, plumbing, kitchen, etc.) somehow without the need to set up Decorations to provide them.

Mobile



The site itself is static and can be moved around directly somehow; by default, it is on wheels. Spend another feature (each) to make it able to fly, seafaring, subterranean, or submarine.

Protected



The base is protected by some kind of security; it is favourable terrain for the Happy Camper in battle, and those forcing their way in are subject to a hazard roll at -4.

Special Deployment



The trainer can circumvent even finding time; for some reason (tech or supernatural), they can easily deploy a base at a moment's notice. The Move Secret Power confers this naturally.

Workshop



The base has tools and space to make any kind of crafts or work a breeze without the need to set up Decorations for individual workspaces.



brb taking hangout to never miss my dailies



NEW EDGE: ITEMCRAFTER



Itemcrafter

The trainer is an exceptional craftsman of one sort or another and specializes in making a certain type of Item (eg. Curatives, Key Items), chosen when they take this Edge.

Though attributes, such as those from the Professional Edge, may be used to make temporary gadgets or remedies on the fly, an Itemcrafter is in a whole other class. Given the right conditions, an Itemcrafter can make an expensive item themselves for half the Money cost of buying it (rounded up).

To make an Item worth 2 or more Money, the trainer needs time, generally an episode's worth or one downtime. It's difficult to sit down and make things while on the go. In addition, they need some sort of raw material. A TM might require access to a Pokémon with an appropriate Move, or a Spell Tag might require decent quality paper and ink. Lastly, they need appropriate facilities to work with. Someone building a bike needs a space and tools or Pokémon to help put it together.

Simple items are even easier. If an item would cost 1 Money, the crafter can assume they have the right materials and make it for no cost as long as they have the downtime.

The Itemcrafter Edge may be taken multiple times to be able to craft different categories of Items.



By the Skin of Their Teeth!

Every failure is an opportunity to learn, and learn you shall.

MOMENTUM

It never feels good to be a loser just because of bad luck.

While failure exists in *Pokeymanz* to give stakes to any given action, the fact of the matter is that **sometimes the dice can screw you over big time**. This is a natural part of the tabletop RPG experience - we've all had that one session where we failed action after action and felt sidelined.

Mastery exists to mitigate this, and it works - to a point! The dice luck in *Pokeymanz* is tilted in favour of the players, and that helps - to a point! For groups that find these measures to be insufficient, GMs and players can make use of a system called **Momentum**.

Using Momentum, **when a player fails a roll, they can choose to make things more interesting for a benefit** further down the line.



"Yeah, sure, I'll take a complication! What could go wrong?"



The player can propose to treat the roll **as though they had rolled Ekans Eyes**, and choose or allow the GM to choose a complication to add to the situation, which may not even be immediately obvious.

If the GM allows it, **the complication occurs and the player regains a spent Mastery** on a Pokémon of their choice. In addition, when running these rules, **regaining Mastery also now happens on any normal Ekans Eyes**.

There are some obvious caveats to this. If the GM feels there is no viable way to meaningfully complicate the situation, they may reject the request. Likewise, if the players are just throwing around dice for fun, like in social interactions with each other, a severe complication might not make sense.

There is one other way to make use of Momentum - **a player can choose to "invoke" a Hindrance, suffering a complication related to it** as long as it makes sense for the situation, regaining a Mastery as above. This gives Hindrances a bigger, more active role in play!



Who Needs Trainers?



Not included: the quiz you skipped to get the species you wanted

POKÉMON AS PCS



As wide and varied as human and Pokémon dynamics are, **sometimes players want to explore other options.** Maybe they want to be Meowth from Team Rocket, or maybe they want to change up the game's assumed structure and get creative, or more likely, they're a Pokémon Mystery Dungeon fan and they pressed Ctrl+F and typed "Playing as Pokémon" from the title page. I respect it.

If the game and GM allow it, **here is a set of rules to allow players to play as one singular Pokémon, or a "PC Pokémon", in Pokeymanz.**

The character sheet for PC Pokémon can be found [here!](#)





THEIR OWN POKÉMON

A PC Pokémon is almost always exceptional in some way. **There are a few things that separate them from a run-of-the-mill Pokémon**, in terms of how they play:

- They **cannot be caught in a Pokéball** - whether this means they are already technically registered under a trainer, they have too much force of will to be caught, or there is another story reason for this, they are never at risk of being forced to be a partner Pokémon.
- They have their own **Callings**, like a trainer.
- They have **Wild Skills: Heart, Strength, Wisdom, and Acuity**. They roll these alongside their Moves like Trainer Attributes, and roll Wild Skills with a flat d6 when no Move is applicable.
- A PC Pokémon has **Potential instead of Mastery**.
- A PC Pokémon **takes three Wounds to knock out**. However, they experience the **Shaken Status Condition** instead of immediately taking Wounds.
- They have the option of **taking Edges and Hindrances** with GM approval, with the same rules as trainer creation, and can take unique **Pokémon Edges and Hindrances**.
- A PC Pokémon starts with **six Moves** at creation (barring Edges), dice statted **just like a starter Pokémon** or freshly captured Pokémon with the two free dice step raises.
- PC Pokémon have much **greater well of mastery over their species' abilities** than a normal wild Pokémon or even a trainer's 'mon. Write down all of the starting **Moves and their dice values** on their **Move Sheet**. This won't be relevant until Advancement, though, so **don't bother for a oneshot!**

This is a lot to absorb, so take it slow and **don't be afraid to ask for help** making a sheet!









WILD SKILLS

Wild Skills are dice that are rolled alongside a PC Pokémon's rolls, like trainer attributes. More indepth than the Wild Die, these are **roughly analogous to each trainer attribute**. Stat them at creation like trainer attributes.

PC Pokémon Toughness is not determined by Strength, starting at 4 like a regular Pokémon's. Also, unlike trainers, the most often-used Wild Skill in battle will be Strength, not the equivalent of Tactics.

 <p>Heart</p> <p>Same as trainers. Pokémon & humans have hearts in common.</p>	 <p>Strength</p> <p>Push your body to the limit, go fast, and use brute force.</p>
 <p>Wisdom</p> <p>Recall, notice, and infer facts about the world. Grasp the abstract.</p>	 <p>Acuity</p> <p>Think on your feet and react. Coordinate with others in battle.</p>

Like trainer attributes, each Wild Skill represents a different approach to any given situation.

We Fudged it a Little

It should be noted that, canonically, even the most skilled Pokémon is not quite on the same level as a human being when it comes to abstract thinking, and the best results come from humans and Pokémon working together. However, the PC Pokémon rules bend this aspect of canon a little for the sake of allowing a different experience with minimal gameplay bumps. For the purposes of the rules, a Pokémon's rolls with Wild Skills are comparable to a trainer and their Pokémon's.

POTENTIAL



Potential is mechanically identical to Mastery, and in all applicable cases where Mastery is listed as a requirement, Potential can be spent interchangeably.

Instead of representing a Pokémon's bond with and trust in their trainer's guidance, however, **Potential Level represents the X-factor** that allows a PC Pokémon to push against their boundaries, grow, and translate their conviction to amazing feats.

PC Pokémon start with one free Potential Level at character creation, similar to a Starter Pokémon.



THE SHAKEN CONDITION

Shaken



The Pokémon is temporarily rattled, distracted, or shocked after having narrowly escaped injury. Shaken PC Pokémon take Wounds directly when hit. They can still act as normal, but must take one of the following actions to bring their guard back up.

The Pokémon can roll their Acuity and a d6 instead of a Movement Action (this cannot be prevented), removing the condition on a standard Hit.

They can also always choose to lose a turn's Battle Action and spend the round until the start of their next turn to shake it off automatically, recovering a spent Potential in the process.

Pokeymanz does away with *Savage Worlds'* **Shaken condition** for a very simple reason: a battle with a full or even partial team of Pokémon would take forever if they didn't go down quickly. A PC Pokémon, however, has no team or teammates to send out, and **thus must by necessity be more sturdy.**

When a PC Pokémon is struck with a blow that would normally inflict a Wound, **they instead gain the Shaken status condition**, as noted to the left, and are **only Wounded if their Toughness is met while they are Shaken.**

A **Critical Hit** that would normally inflict two Wounds will inflict the Shaken Condition **AND deal a Wound!**

MIXED GAMES

If a PC Pokémon is **played in a party of human trainers**, it is highly advised that they **have some means of communicating clearly with the rest of the party.** This could be psychic telepathy, the remarkable ability to use human speech at the expense of a Move slot or by taking the Human Bean Edge detailed later in this section, or creative use of other more esoteric abilities.

Another potential solution is to have at least one member of the trainers in the party have the ability to communicate with Pokémon, or for a plot contrivance to give all the party the ability to understand the PC Pokémon specifically. **Pick whatever works best for your game.**



I am so sorry Mr. Bewearington



POKÉMON EDGES AND HINDRANCES

With GM approval, **PC Pokémon** may have **access to the standard Edges and Hindrances** in the trainer creation section, if perhaps tweaked a little to allow for their nonhuman nature. There are some limitations, however.

Core Edges that should not ever be viable for a PC Pokémon include: *Capture Specialist*, *I Choose You!*, *Martial Artist*, *Master of the Styles*, and *Pokémon Breeder*.

Core Hindrances that should not ever be viable for a PC Pokémon include: *Partnerless*, *Unskilled*, and *Zero*.

These Edges and Hindrances mostly either involve actions specific to Pokémon trainers working with a team of Pokémon, or conflict

with the changes made to the PC Pokémon sheet to allow it to be played independently of a trainer.

Itemcrafter is allowed but may not be suitable for all Journeys. In the games, **Pokémon cannot conceptualize the abstraction that crafting requires** on the same level as humans, and their crafting capabilities are limited to simple one-use items and natural curatives via Professional skills or other means. However, this detail **varies by adaptation** and the GM decides what makes sense for their world.

There are limits to what Edges and Hindrances PC Pokémon can take from the base set, but they also have **exclusive access** to their own set of **Pokémon Edges and Hindrances**.



"It's from the GM! It says 'if you take No Guard on Honedge and give it a One Hit KO Egg Move I am not liable for what rocks may fall'."



POKÉMON EDGES



Hidden Ability

The Pokémon has trained hard to focus on their innate species' traits. They have two **Special Abilities**. Design the extra ability according to the normal Special Ability rules. Contrary to the name, this additional ability does not have to be the Pokémon's ingame Hidden Ability, which is always an option by default when choosing Special Abilities for a Pokémon.

Requirement: The abilities' effects may not contradict each other.



Human Bean

The Pokémon can not only speak a human language, understanding and being understood with the same clarity as human-to-human communication, but is also adept at navigating the human world on their own terms. Some Pokémon may not have the biology to speak human language verbally; in those cases, taking this Edge allows them to read, write, telepathically project, or sign as appropriate. By plot contrivance, all humans in the party and most humans the Pokémon meets can understand this method of Human-talk unless there is a specific reason for them not to (ie. illiteracy).

The Pokémon has also mastered, if not passing as a human, then at least passing under their notice. Humans have to make a Research Roll to notice if the Pokémon is out of place among humans; this roll is only triggered if the Pokémon does something overtly suspicious. Gullible humans can't roll.

The Pokémon can use human technology if their biology or an assistive device allows interface with it, or make a Wisdom roll for a workaround if neither apply.

A Pokémon that already sacrificed a Move slot to be understood in Human-talk as per the Custom Moves section may immediately reallocate it to an appropriate Move when they take this Edge.



And with interspecies communication comes harmony, peace, and - sorry wait you wanted to play a villain??



POKÉMON EDGES, CONTINUED



Move Master

The Pokémon is a master of their species' wellspring of techniques, adding four extra Move slots per session. They also add four Moves to [their Move Sheet](#) for free; if they already have any learned Moves, the cost for having learnt up to the first four is refunded.

These Moves can be picked from their level-up learnset as normal, but if the Pokémon also has the Pokérus Edge, they may also pick from their fully extended Movelist.

The Pokémon is also a keen study of other Pokémon - they may spend a Battle Action to analyze their opponents and discern their full current Moveset, but not dice values, or a Movement Action for just one Move, or in the case of other Pokémon PCs, their Rank.

Requirement: Move Master cannot be taken with the Partner Edge.



Partner

The Pokémon has a friend, minion, or tagalong. Stat them like a regular Pokémon with four starting Moves, and without Toughness or Wounds. These Moves can be bought up with the PC Pokémon's Pokémon EXP. Partners have their own special ability, and can hold items if using the Item Rules. They have a Move Sheet that functions the same as the PC Pokémon's, as well.

Partners share a Wound track with their PC Pokémon, basically acting as one unit, and are considered to automatically follow their leader when they use Movement actions. On your turn, they can use your Battle Action to use one of their Moves. The Partner Pokémon is played by the player of the PC Pokémon.

At any one time, only the Partner or the PC are "in front", and can be swapped with the same rules as for switching trainer Pokémon. The current frontrunner determines active ability, defensive typing, and held item.

Requirement: Partner Cannot be taken with the Move Master Edge.



Awww it's okay man maybe you'll get into Unite



POKÉMON EDGES, CONTINUED



Pokémon Alpha

Wait shit wrong one

Possessed of unusual size or other outsized attributes for their species, **an Alpha PC Pokémon is one tough customer, able to slip into a berserker rage when the need is dire.**

When in a rage, which they may enter freely at any time, they gain a +1 to all Moves and a +1 to Toughness, but at a dire cost: For the rest of the encounter, they no longer have the protection of the Shaken condition before taking Wounds, like a trainer's Pokémon.

In addition, they simply cannot shake off their enraged state until the problem in front of them has been dealt with, and the GM gets to treat them as Disobedient and take one action for them during their rage.



Pokérus

The Pokémon has a rare, benign, mysterious disease that increases their potential to learn. They may learn and add any Moves to their Move Sheet that they could normally only learn from their species' TM, Tutor, or Egg Move list in addition to their natural level-up Moves. If the Pokémon has a Partner, they are also considered infected. If taken at creation, any starting Moves may be Pokérus Moves.



Power of Friendship

The Pokémon is no one's but their own, but they have a strong relationship that lends them strength. They have a strong connection to an allied PC, human or Pokémon. This specific PC can spend Mastery on this Pokémon as through they were a trainer and Pokémon with a strong bond, holding up to one at a time. This special Mastery only refills once per story arc or as a result of a notable roleplaying moment. This Edge can be taken multiple times, once for each other PC.

Requirement: The benefits are temporarily lost if a relationship is strained, such as a serious argument or betrayal; resolving such a fight restores a Potential. Partnerless trainers aren't eligible for the Power of Friendship.



"No, Gyarados! Don't argue in the comments, it never helps!"



POKÉMON HINDRANCES

Minor Hindrance: Stunted

For whatever reason, this Pokémon's connection with their species' abilities is less than other Pokémon. This could be because they were raised away from a trainer or parent that should have taught them how to use their natural talents, they are disabled in this specific way, or a more esoteric reason like a curse or an inability to access an inner energy because of personal shortcomings. The end result is that the Pokémon doesn't have access to a Special Ability.

Requirement: Cannot be taken with Hidden Ability. If taking this Hindrance and taking away the Special Ability would be a net positive, as determined by the GM, instead make the hindering Special Ability more severe. Nice try, Slaking players.

Minor Hindrance: That One Move

The Pokémon has one Move that would be super duper great and immensely useful if it didn't keep blowing up in their face somehow every time they try to use it. Choose one of the Pokémon's (or a Partner's) Moves; flip a coin when it's used. Tails is treated as Ekans Eyes, no matter what the roll. This Move is rolled at two dice steps higher than normal. It can't be removed from the Pokémon's active Moves.

Major Hindrance: Papier-mâché

The Pokémon has a supercharged weakness, taking even more damage from Super-Effective Moves than your typical Pokémon. Any time their opponent would get +2 for a Move being Super Effective against this Pokémon, add another +2. The total bonus between all weaknesses cannot exceed +6.



EVERY TIIIIIIIIIIIME



ADVANCEMENT



PC Pokémon get Advancements in the same way that trainers get trainer advancement:

- They can **increase a Wild Skill** by one die step
- They can **buy an Edge**, as detailed later in this section
- They can **overcome a Hindrance** as normal

Pokémon PCs earn the same rate of Pokémon EXP that trainers do. However, because of the changes to game balance this brings, Pokémon PCs must adhere to a system of **Ranks** that **control what they can buy up** off the bat, rising with their Advancements.

Pokémon PCs in a long-running game also have a **Move Sheet** where they can keep track of an extended Move set, deciding which six to bring to each session.

RANKS

Pokémon PCs begin at the **Normal Rank**, and certain aspects of character progression are **capped out** until they gain Advancements.

There are **five Ranks**, with their limitations unlocked as follows:

- **Normal Rank** (**Character Creation**, Moves up to d8, max Toughness 5, starts with 1 Potential, Max Potential 1)
- **Bronze Rank** (**1 Advancement**, max Toughness 6, max Potential 2)
- **Silver Rank** (**2 Advancements**, Moves up to d10)

- **Gold Rank** (**3 Advancements**, max Toughness 7, max Potential 3)
- **Diamond Rank** (**4+ Advancements**, max Toughness 8, Moves up to d12)

GMs can feel free to alter or ignore the progression, especially in cases where the chosen Pokémon has an abysmal movepool or something holding them back. **Partners count as the same rank** as their benefactor.

Ma look I'm playable with mod support!





THE MOVE SHEET

While trainer characters end up having several Pokémon to split up their Pokémon EXP between to improve, **Pokémon PCs can only invest in themselves** or their partners' skills. To help keep playing as just one (or two) Pokémon interesting, Pokémon PCs have a **great number of techniques** that they can draw from - but, being Pokémon, they only have enough room in their heads **for an arbitrary number of useable Moves at once**.

The Move Sheet is **a way to keep track of all of these Moves** that are available to choose from. Each entry should have **room for a Move**, its **description**, its **dice value**, and how much **EXP** has been spent on that Move.

Starting with the PC Pokémon's **six** starting Moves, the player **writes down each Move and its dice value**. Use pencil. For the love of all that is holy, always use pencil.



Trainer Tips!

Don't panic! Remember your training!

Remember, just like ordinary Pokémon creation, the PC Pokémon starts with just two bonus dice step upgrades between all of their Moves.

While the continuing use of the Move Sheet is detailed on the next page, this primer is all you need to get started! Don't bother reading the next bit until you actually need to spend Pokémon EXP if you're feeling overwhelmed.

ENCYCLOPEDIA POKÉMONICA OLYMPIC MOVEPOOL

Ancestor of every Pokémon on the planet, and perhaps some off the planet, the legendary Pokémon Mew can learn almost any Move in existence with the proper TM or Tutoring. Some theorize that this is because Mew shares the DNA of every living Pokémon, but recent research suggests that its amazing abilities are because it is the cutest, ohhhh who's a cute little guy, it's Mew, yes it's you, schmoo gums, fwuffy kitty can have as many moves as they want, yes they can! Who's a kitten? Who's a mitten? Baby! oh and smeargle exists too





THE MOVE SHEET, CONTINUED

After the first session, **Moves from the Pokémon's available movepool can be added to the list** at their normal starting value for 1 EXP, or bought up normally as outlined in Advancement. Unlike a trainer's Pokémon, **PC Pokémon are not free to change around the dice values they've invested in Moves this way**, barring Evolution or training with a skilled tutor.

After that, the player simply **chooses which six (or more, with Edges) Moves to bring to the episode** their Pokémon PC is participating in. Once this choice is made, the Pokémon is **locked into that set** for the duration.

For the sake of consistency, this **shuffling of available Moves** will be referred to as

retraining even though it's not quite the same as the kind of retraining that trainers do. Sorry, no better word for it.

There is no limit to the number of potential Moves that can go on the Move Sheet, save the Pokémon's maximum possible movepool and the current amount of EXP available. Even then, custom Moves can expand this.

A note: While this mechanic is called the Move Sheet, and the electronic version is a literal sheet, it can **just as easily be used by organizing your Moves into cue cards or cut-up sections of paper**, switching the Moves in and out of a folder between sessions as desired. **Use whatever setup makes things the easiest for you.**



"Yeah, I use a whole posterboard for my sheet. Girls throw themselves at me in the street."



THE MOVE SHEET, CONTINUED

Move Sheets are a little more complicated than the standard *Pokeymanz* fare, so **we'll go over some miscellaneous specifics** to save on debates at the table.

- **TMs and Tutoring** can add to the Move List, but the Pokémon must still always **spend the 1 EXP cost** to add a new Move to the list **alongside the use of the item** or the training session.
- PC Pokémon can **retrain their Moves** either **between episodes** or if, mid-session, the party is granted **downtime**.
- They have **the same rules for Evolution** as those highlighted in the Evolution section of Learning New Moves. In that case, **they can respect their entire Move List at once**. But they probably won't because that's a paperwork nightmare.
- **Partners** have **their own separate section** on the Move Sheet and **follow the same rules for buying new Moves** as their lead Pokémon. Their Moves are also bought with the PC Pokémon's EXP. Partners' Moves are always **only allowed to be trained into one of the four slots** that the Edge grants.



Trainer Tips!

If you've somehow bought everything available on a Pokémon to its max value and you're wondering what to do now, maybe take up basket weaving?





PC POKÉMON CREATION QUICK REFERENCE

1. Make a copy of the [Character Sheet](#), or print one out from the back of this book.
2. Choose your Pokémon PC's **species**.
3. Record your Pokémon's **Type(s)**.
4. Give them a **name** and a **general concept**.
5. *(Optional)* Give your Pokémon PC a **nickname and gender**.
6. From their concept, give the Pokémon a **Calling**.
7. Stat their **Wild Attributes**, with **four die type upgrades** and a maximum level of d8.
8. Assign the Pokémon a **Toughness of 4**.
9. Assign them **one starting Potential Level**.
10. Create the **Move Sheet** or perhaps some kind of Move Cards for the next steps.
11. Choose **six** of your Pokémon's **Moves** from their natural learned movelist.
12. Assign **starting dice values** to the chosen Moves (d4 for Moves that match types, d6 for Moves that match a monotype, and d4-1 for Moves that do not match their Type).
13. Apply **two die step upgrades** to the Moves as desired.
14. *(Optional)* Pick **Hindrances**, in exchange for **Edges** or an **extra Attribute die step**.



Your GM starts the Journey.
You walk in. You see these
two. You walk out. You walk
faSTER-



Teamwork Makes the Dream Work

RAID BATTLES

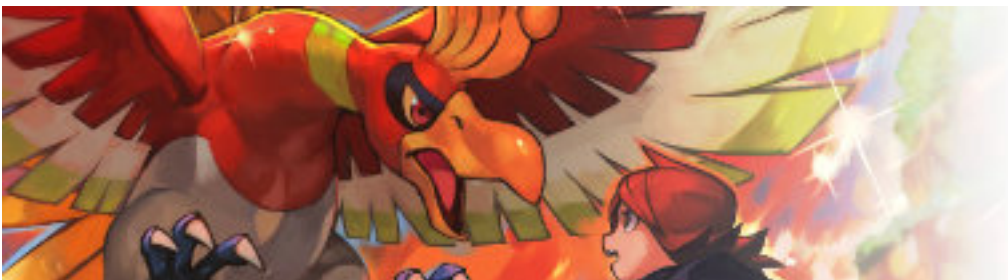
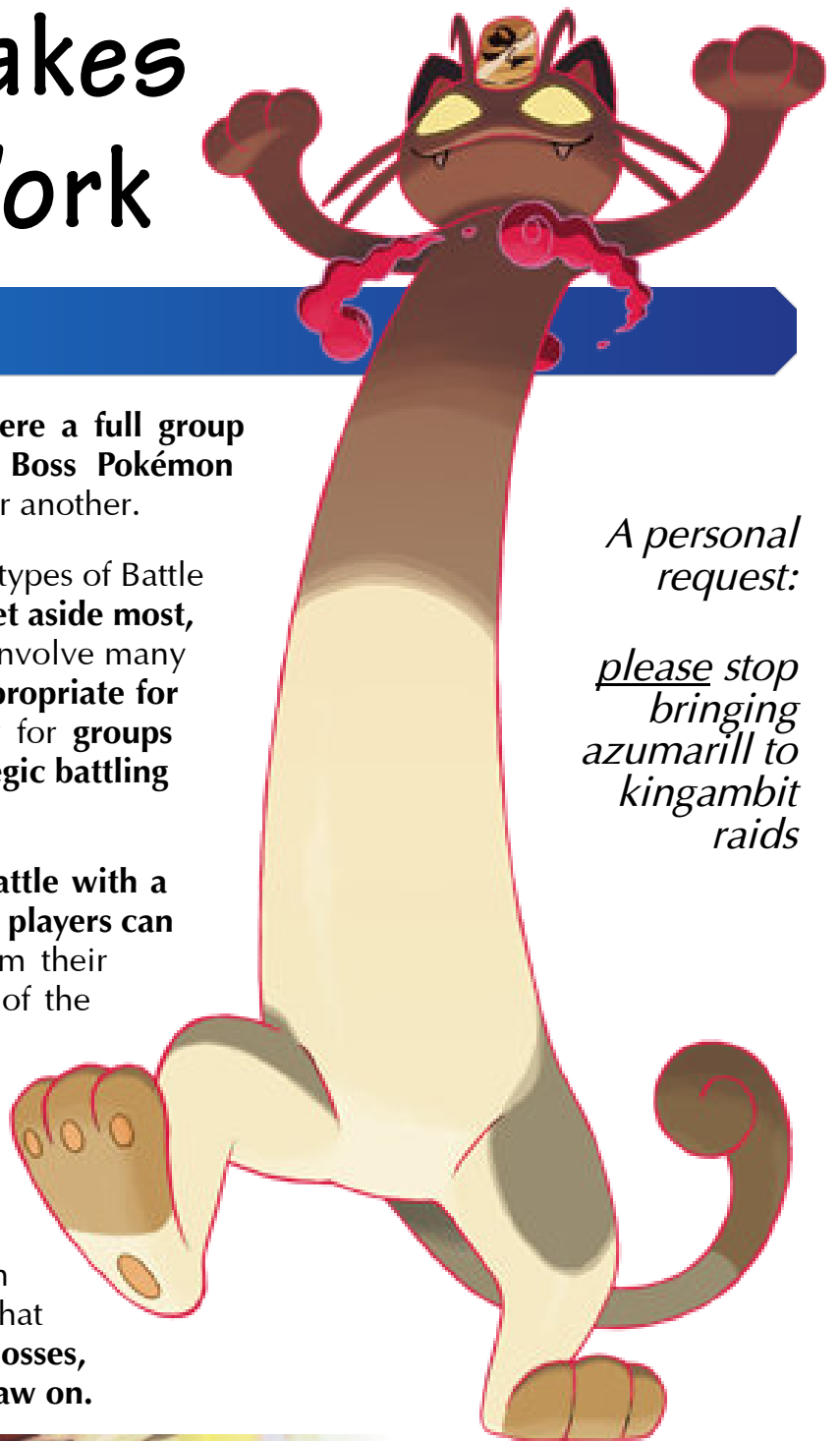
Raids are a type of battle encounter **where a full group coordinates to take down one mighty Boss Pokémon** imbued with great power for one reason or another.

Raids are **more complex** than many other types of Battle Encounter, and so it is **recommended to set aside most, if not all, of a session for a raid**. As they involve many interlocking systems, they **may not be appropriate for all games** and are recommended mostly for **groups that have a lot of fun thinking about strategic battling** - thus why they're an optional set of rules!

So **how do Raids differ from a regular battle with a Boss Pokémon?** The chief difference is that **players can usually only bring a single Pokémon** from their party to a raid. Whether this is because of the ambient power of an area preventing more than a certain number of beings to enter, social rules around the conduct of raids, or some other transparent excuse, the end result is that **the party will not have any extra Pokémon for backup, and must coordinate to battle effectively** with reduced tactical options. The Pokémon that are faced in Raids, referred to as **Raid Bosses**, also have a **number of unique tricks to draw on**.

A personal request:

please stop bringing azumarill to kingambit raids



Luckily, this isn't the games, so bringing Sneasel to the Ho-oh raid isn't **instant** failure



BUILDING RAID BOSSES

To build a **Raid Boss**, stat up a **normal Boss Pokémon** (ie. the Wild Die and a number of extra Wounds) **to begin with**. Define the length of a **countdown**, explained in more detail below. Then, decide on **extras**.

Raid bosses will often have **larger movepools** with as many as eight Moves to choose from, **access to a Trump Card**, complimentary **Arena Features**, and may even have **Raid Tokens and phases**, which are exclusive to Raids.

Raid Bosses can be given **3-5 Raid Tokens**, which **act as Commentator Tokens that they can spend on themselves** during the battle **with an expanded list of options** (see the list to the right). They may also have **phases**, which are covered in more detail below. Oh, and GMs, don't give Raid Pokémon self-Wound-healing Moves. **That's evil**.



Spending a Raid Token, the Raid Boss can...

- ☐ Ignore the effects of a status effect for 3 rounds
- ☐ Negate all negative effects and statuses on itself
- ☐ Remove all PCs' buffs and positive statuses
- ☐ Reset the field of battle to its initial state

Remember, these are on top of [the usual uses for a Commentator Token](#), like rerolls, creating Features and Hazards, or the negation of an incoming attack.

RAID INITIATIVE

Once a raid has started, **Raid Bosses always get a turn after each pair** in the order of original initiative, meaning that they will usually act every other turn. In addition, **almost all Raids feature a Countdown** of some sort - whether this is a **time limit** represented by player actions, a count of **how many times the PCs' Pokémon have fainted**, or some other metric, is up to the individual raid.



If Pokémon do **faint**, they generally **revive with full Wounds at the Top of the Round**, rallied for another go by their compatriots. **If a trainer goes down** during a raid, their Pokémon may fight on without them, but **they might not get back up until the raid is over!**

For **Raid Bosses**, Ignore the usual penalty for a called action not going off - instead, **when Raid Bosses call an action** at the Top of the Round, **it has all round to go off**. If their called action **fails to be triggered**, they take **-2 to their first roll next round**.

PC called actions function as normal, but the Raid Boss still goes after **when their turn would have been** if they had acted normally.



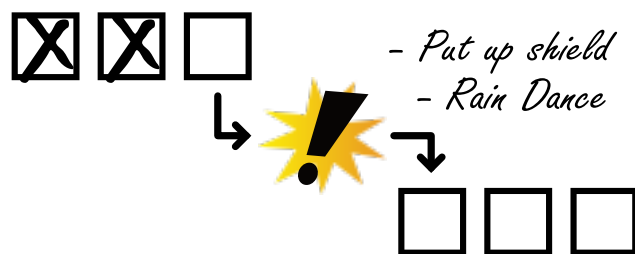
RAID PHASES

Sometimes, the Raid Boss will have “**phases**”, or rather **have their Wounds split up into thresholds**. For instance, the GM could decide a Boss with 8 Wounds should have two phases, and would hit the threshold after 4 Wounds are dealt. **When the Raid Boss enters the next phase**, it could get bonus actions, heal statuses, automatically trigger a Feature to appear on the field, or replenish some of its Raid Tokens... **whatever the GM thinks fits the battle best**.

When the phase changes, how many phases there are, or what the thresholds are **is up to the GM when designing the encounter**. It's recommended to **use a scrap of paper with the Wounds as checkboxes** to keep track.

On a slightly less mechanical note, for the GM, **phase changes are a really good time to get descriptive and show the fight getting more intense**. Raid Bosses might get visibly angrier and tougher, the surroundings might become more chaotic, a frantic energy might set in as the Countdown ticks down.

If the raid has serious stakes, **use this moment to drive it in!**



Average GMing enjoyer answering questions like “What if 6-Star raids had Beast Boost”



FINAL NOTES ON RAIDS

Not all raids must have all of the extra systems listed above - it's perfectly possible to run a raid without phases, Raid Tokens, Trump Cards, or anything fancy, and just have a four-on-one battle with a very strong Boss Pokémon. **Think of these as options** to add difficulty and tweak the encounter to your liking.

GMs should give out **more EXP than usual** for raids (a good rule of thumb is **one per participant**). **The harder the raid, the better the rewards** - raids are an excellent source of Trump Card related materials, plot-important objects, rare items (if using the Item Rules)

and/or unique insight into unusual phenomena. Raid Bosses are also often Pokémon with unusual and unique abilities and Moves.

Raids are almost always (but not exclusively) held against a **Pokémon that could be caught at the end of the encounter**, but GMs are encouraged to **find workarounds in case more than one player wants to capture that species**. Perhaps the Pokémon has an egg or eggs it's ready to entrust to the trainers who have earned its respect through battle, or there are other Pokémon of the same species in its group that were hanging back.



"I'm sure our team will remember to heal cheer us while we DPS! This is gonna be such a fun raid."




EXAMPLE RAID ENCOUNTER

you said god so I thought you meant Lechonk

Arena Features:
Berry Bushes
Muddy

Arena Hazards:
Flying Lechonks

 **Countdown:**
First of 20 PC
Battle Actions
OR 4 KOs

6 Toughness

#915 LECHONK

 GRASS
TYPE : NORMAL

Thick Fat: Fire and Ice-Type Moves roll against Lechonk with a -1 penalty.

Moves		Type
COVET	d12	NORMAL
THIEF	d6	DARK
BULLET SEED	d12	GRASS
MUD SHOT	d8	GROUND
ENDEAVOR	d10	NORMAL
STUFF CHEEKS	d8	NORMAL
STOCKPILE	d10	NORMAL
SPIT UP	d10	NORMAL







- Berry Frenzy

- Shield

- Terastalize

Nobody knows why this particular Lechonk decided to start its reign of terror, nor how it managed to surround itself by a swarm of flying brethren, but a **small countryside town begs the aid of the PCs to stop it.**

Lechonk resides in a den that was once a pigpen and gathers energy to blast challengers away as it fights. **Fainting reduces the Countdown by 1, and fainted Pokémon recover at the Top of the Round.**

Lechonk has some **bonus actions** that take place between phases:

- **Berry Frenzy:** Badly hurt, Lechonk searches the bushes for berries to spit up at the PCs, removing the effects of their Special Abilities a la Gastro Acid.
- **Shield:** Lechonk puts up a Tera Shield; until defeat, only Critical Hits, Trump Card activations, and attacks aided by allies will damage it. Statuses and debuffs can only be applied as part of a Critical Hit.
- **Terastalize:** Lechonk Terastalizes into a Grass-type and uses a massive Trump Card attack on everyone.



In Need of Compassion

SHADOW POKÉMON

Shadow Pokémon are Pokémon that have undergone inhumane experiments to have the doors to their hearts shut artificially. They are unable to control their emotions, lashing out with increased strength at any who oppose them, and **are unable to form a trusting bond with anyone, their trainer or otherwise.**

Pokeymanz has a lot of jokes in it. **This isn't one of them.** To tackle Shadow Pokémon as a subject, you need a group that can handle the



concept of Pokémon abuse, and your group needs to be on the same page about what they want to do with that subject. **These rules are written with the idea in mind that your group will want to rehabilitate them and help them heal** - if you want anything else, write your own rules and think about your choices.

CAPTURING SHADOW POKÉMON

By their nature, Shadow Pokémon are often in the hands of cruel trainers, such as the members of evil teams. Normally, most would never think of taking away another trainer's Pokémon unless they were being abused - but this is, of course, such a case.



Unless a trainer can get their hands on obscenely rare black market technology like a Snag Machine, Shadow Pokémon can only be captured in **certain kinds of Pokéballs**, designed to be used just on Shadow Pokémon.

Dark Balls will capture a Shadow Pokémon, even from another (defeated) trainer, but merely possessing them marks you as the trainer of a Shadow Pokémon... a status that may invite distrust with many. **Having a Pokémon in a Dark Ball immediately gets you the effects of the Bad Rep Hindrance from anyone who would recognize the ball for what it is if they see it.**

This is bound to create trouble, especially if the trainer or party's reputation matters or if they have no one vouching for them.



SHADOW POKÉMON STATISTICS

Shadow Pokémon have many differences in their capabilities from normal Pokémon. The process that shut down their connections with others granted them savage strength in battle, and an uncontrollable, constant anger.

Shadow Pokémon:

- Have **Fury Level** instead of **Mastery Level**, and start with three maximum Fury.
- Start with **6-8 Toughness**, depending on their power as determined by the GM.
- Always have a **Shadow Move** as one of their Moves at d12+2. It's a Typeless attack. This hurts the Pokémon, causing it to lash out. A trainer ordering the use of this Move always triggers Disobedience.

- Cannot be retrained out of the Moves that they are obtained with - which all start at d10-d12.
- Cannot have **Pokémon EXP** spent on them in the normal way (We'll get to that).
- Are **Disobedient** up to as many times in each session as their **Maximum Fury**, in addition to the Shadow Move's effects.

Fury works like **Mastery** in some ways, but not others. Like **Mastery**, it allows rerolls of botched rolls, and can be spent to do extra Wounds on Critical Hits in battle. **It cannot, however, be used to activate Edges alongside the Shadow Pokémon's trainer.** Its heart is closed to its trainer's love.





PURIFYING SHADOW POKÉMON

So how does a Shadow Pokémon get better? It takes time and patience, and it's not easy. A trainer has to work with the Pokémon and treat it well to slowly gain their trust.

Shadow Pokémon do get Pokémon EXP, but they take it **in reverse** - for each EXP given to the Pokémon, they get equal regression to their Moves, Toughness, and Fury. **That's right - EXP makes the Pokémon weaker.**

... Except the Shadow Move. Until the Pokémon is purified, **its Shadow Move will always remain at a d12+2.**

The above numbers are designed for a Journey where Shadow Pokémon are rare enough that you will only be working with one at once - **if Shadow Pokémon will be as frequently caught as they are in, say, Colosseum, feel free to modify this system** so that 1 EXP counts for two for buying Shadow Pokémon stats down, or to introduce "bonus" EXP for good roleplaying that can only be used for this purpose. Keep track of how much EXP has been assigned, before modifiers.

The GM should be stringent on buying down Fury. It should reflect a genuine moment of breakthrough in trainer trust and bond whenever Fury is reduced.



When the Pokémon's total Fury is zero, none of its non-Shadow Moves exceed d6, and its Toughness is 5 or less, **the Pokémon is now able to be purified.**

The exact method of Purification may vary narratively. There may be a **legendary Pokémon involved**, a **special location** tied to them serving as a way to tap into their energies to make the final leap. **There may be human science involved**, undoing what has been done by human hands. Or maybe the Pokémon is able to master themselves and **move forward to the final step of healing in the heat of a dramatic moment.**

In a process similar to evolution (and that may even include evolution!), **all of the EXP is immediately re-available to be re-spent on a complete re-spec of its stats** (If you modified the amount as mentioned earlier, use the "true" EXP number before modifiers). It might even have a special Move, like an Egg Move, representing its metaphorical rebirth.

Whatever exactly happens, **the door to the Pokémon's heart is open - they're finally able to live happily again.**

GAME MASTER'S MANUAL





GAME MASTERING

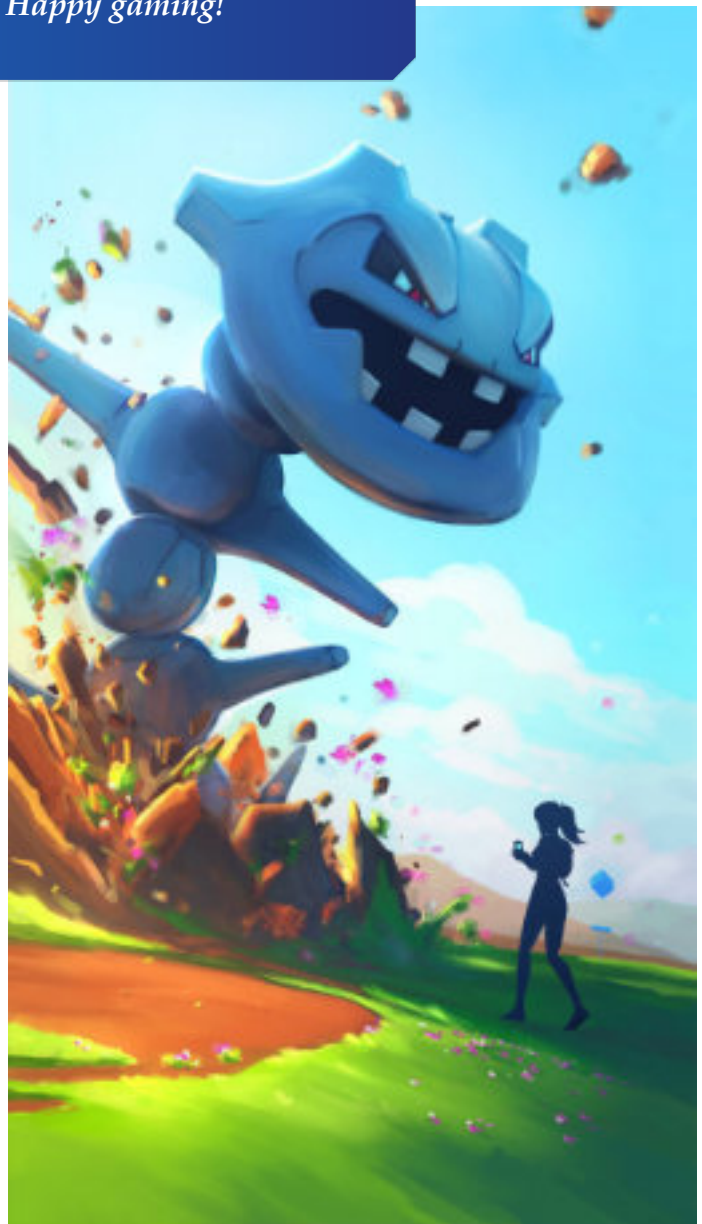
It's a thankless job, but someone's got to do it! GMing is one of those tasks that everyone has opinions on, but practical experience is king. Even so, there are tips and tools of the trade that can help. Happy gaming!

Riding the Lightning

GMing in Pokeymanz is a lot of work. A GM's job is to set up the situation and the story, present challenges, and then make a lot (a LOT) on calls on what does and doesn't fly. As a very open and narrative system, *Pokeymanz* asks a lot of a prospective Game Master.

Pulling aside the curtain, the design goals in *Pokeymanz* has been to make a rules structure where PCs can ask to do something cool and the rules don't hamper that from happening, and for the book not to have to list every single possible Move, Pokémon, and edge case. **This means that the system asks for a GM (and players) that are willing to improvise, even more so than in most other systems - and it asks for a GM to know when to toss whole sections of the rules aside in the name of fun.**

However, GMs are not alone! In this section, the **basic guidelines and resources for GMs** will be laid out to help lift some of that burden and give an idea of what's necessary to get started with a game of *Pokeymanz*. In later sections, we'll get into the **mechanical cogs of GMing** the game, **techniques to improve your improv**, and then finally a guest-written **sample episode** to run out of the box.



Real footage of a first-time GM learning on the job



GENERAL ADVICE

GMinig is a balancing act between improv and preparation, and is an intensely collaborative process. For foundational advice, the following principles are good to keep in mind:



1 Be the PCs' Biggest Fans

It's hard for many GMs, especially beginners, to wrap their head around, but **the story belongs to the main characters**, not just the GM's intentions. Its major elements should revolve around them and their personal struggles, and you should be rooting for them. Challenges, and some inevitable failures, should be aimed toward encouraging them to grow and become stronger, both mechanically and as people.

2 Present Situations, Not Rails

You can't predict what the PCs will do. Players are wonderful, chaotic creatures that exist to do exactly the opposite of what you thought they would. To avoid this derailing your plans, keep them flexible and **present the players with a problem that they need to figure out how to tackle** instead of having a set idea of the answer in mind yourself.

3 Pay Attention to your Players

Different players find joy in different aspects of the game. To ensure that people are engaged, watch what your players respond to with enthusiasm and what bores them. Watch for character moments and conflicts that you can use that arise naturally. **Deploy problems that allow people to indulge in the part of the game they love**, and keep an eye out to make sure that one player's fun isn't coming at the expense of another's.

4 Have Fun

If you're running a game and you're miserable doing it, stop. No amount of others' fun is worth forcing yourself to phone in the motions. If you're having burnout, discuss it with your group honestly and frankly. And if your players expect you to keep going when you're miserable, get new players. They're breaking Golden Rule One.



Oh, and GMs get first dibs on snacks. It's only fair!



THE UNWRITTEN AUTHORITY

As a side note, as the GM, you will be viewed as an authority figure at the table. This may put you in the place of needing to step in to mediate some kind of conflict, or in the worst case, having to make a difficult call about your players and their behaviour. Communication is on everyone, but be ready to have this role

thrust upon you as the final arbiter, and make decisions about what you will and will not allow at your table.

Note that this doesn't mean you need to be the group's therapist, **just that you need to hold people accountable and be ready to make a hard call if one needs to be made.**

"YES, AND"

Pokeymanz is a system that puts a lot on the GM. It asks them to make interpretations on the fly, to play fast and loose with the rules, and to allow just enough bullshit to make things interesting while keeping the reins on enough for things to be a challenge.

As a GM, you may find "Yes, and" to be a helpful guiding principle. The idea is, is that when someone asks to do something, it's usually better to allow them to try it and then give the action consequences that make things more interesting than to outright say no.

There are absolutely situations where a GM should put their foot down and say no. When an action is totally inappropriate to the tone or setting of the game, when an action should be impossible or ridiculously implausible, or when someone at the table is triggered by or made uncomfortable by an in-character action in a way they didn't sign up for... **all of these are scenarios when the fun of the game is being compromised and it should be appropriate to give a hard "no".**

However, by and large, if someone wants to try to attack a Rhydon's horn to bypass their immunity to electricity or something, give

YES, AND IT
KICKS ASS



them a shot at it. Make it hard, have there be consequences (ie. The Rhydon's attacks are now supercharged, the electricity dissipating into the ground has caused a colony of Pokémon to be disturbed, the check is at a -2, the list goes on), but **have fun with it.**



SAFETY TOOLS

Safety Tools are a collective name for techniques to avoid players and GMs being harmed at the game table when traumatic or triggering material comes up in a game.

The greatest safety tool of all is **open communication**, and as mentioned above, the GM will generally have an unequal burden here because of their de facto position as an authority figure over the game. Players should all be considerate of each others' needs, and in an ideal world, everyone would look out for each other. In fact, if you are a player reading this section, I encourage you not to leave it all up to the GM and simply to abide by the golden rules, speak up if something is

bothering you or someone else, and be sensitive to the needs of others.

Realistically, though, there may be situations where a GM needs to step in and facilitate communication between players, or rebuke thoughtless or inappropriate behaviour. This could be for many reasons; trauma survivors often have difficulty processing their emotions in the moment when something triggering hits them, and it's entirely possible for selective mutism and other communication disorders to flare up in times of stress. In general, some people just freeze up when they're confronted with something that makes them scared or upset.

Society if everyone
used Safety Tools





SAFETY TOOLS, CONTINUED

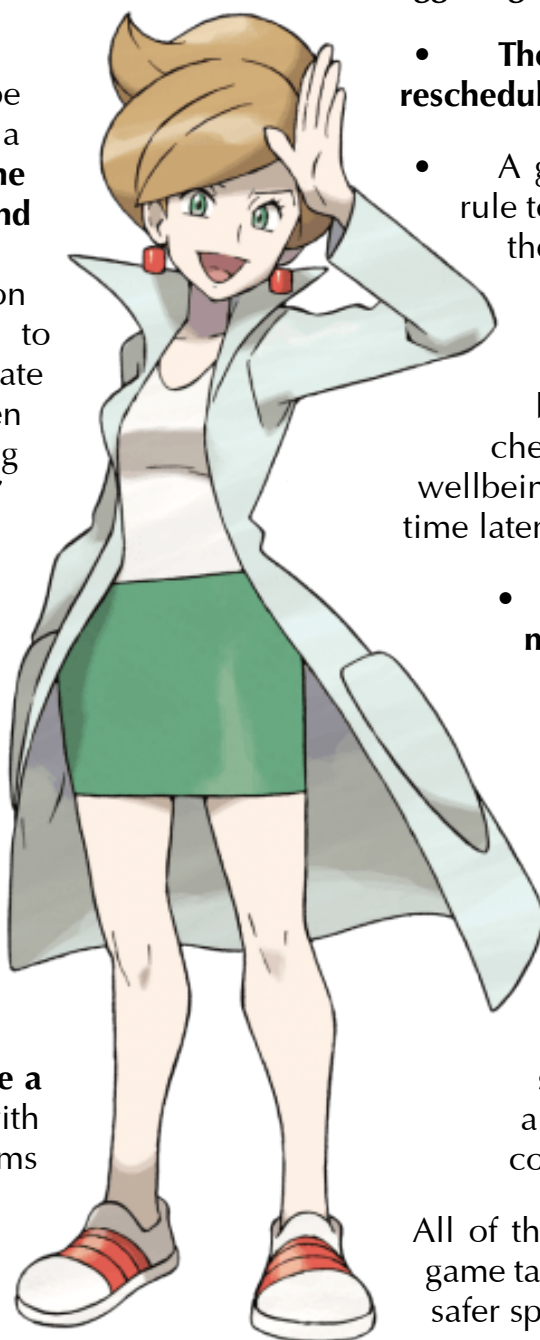
So what techniques can be deployed to try and avoid these kinds of situations? **Here are some basics:**

- GMs **can ask players before a game** to submit any content that they Do Not Want To See in a game, either openly or privately.
- A “**session zero**” can be held before the start of a journey to **discuss the tone of the game and expectations**. The GM can facilitate conversation on what people don’t want to see, and communicate private wishes they’ve been sent without revealing individual players’ experiences.
- During a Session Zero or otherwise, the **GM may choose to give the players something like the [RPG Consent Form](#)**, which has a number of possibly sensitive topics listed along with the players’ level of comfort with them.
- Players and GMs can **make a habit of checking in** with each other if someone seems uncomfortable or upset.
- Players or GMs can **reserve the right to**

pause or suspend the game session and talk about content that makes them uncomfortable or upset.

- “Rewind” and “Fast Forward” shorthand can be employed to **skip or retcon triggering material**.
 - **The game can be halted and rescheduled** to continue another time.
 - A group might find an “**X-Card**” rule to be helpful, where a player or the GM can **ask that certain content be retconned or skipped** without explanation. X-Card should be paired with basic empathy actions like checking in with the person’s wellbeing when there’s an appropriate time later.
 - **Problem players can be made to leave**. This can be rough, especially because many roleplaying groups are also friend groups. But if someone is making others uncomfortable or acting inappropriately, and do not stop the behaviour when talked to, **they need to go**. It should go without saying that if a player does something awful enough, that an auto-kick from the group could be warranted.

All of these things can help make the game table a more open and hopefully safer space for its participants.





SESSION ZERO

Session Zero is an invaluable tool for any game. At its core, it's just a **meeting of everyone involved before the game starts to hammer out expectations**, brainstorm characters, and get everyone on the same page about the game.

Here's a list of **what kind of things are good practice to cover in a Session Zero**:

- A short **primer on the game's setting**, so players know what their characters should know about the world.
- Establish the **schedule** for the group, including what happens if someone can't make it to a session.
- **Character creation**, including rough backstories, player connections, and teaching the very basics of the system.
- **Safety Tools** discussion, like what Safety Tools there will be and how to use them.
- **Collection of wishlists and Callings**, and all of the other things the GM needs to personalize the game.
- **Make sure all of the players understand and agree on the tone and genre of the game.** The importance of this one cannot be overstated; **this is the primary reason games fall apart** next to scheduling issues.
- **Establish player and GM expectations.** Is this the kind of game where the players are expected to engage with and drive events in the world, or more of an episodic romp? Is the GM going to keep rulings consistent or go back on them if needed? Establishing clear expectations before the game starts can avoid a lot of bitterness later.



Nobody wants to have the game where one player is miserable because they expected serious intrigue and then the other players rolled up in a clown car



QUICK GM TOOLS

A number of good folks have developed some **handy tools** that can give a *Pokeymanz* GM a headstart on building their games.

[Courtney's Pokeymanz Encounter Generator](#) and [Pokémon Generator](#) would be especially **useful for a GM pressed for time who needs ideas for what 'mons are around or stats for a 'mon on the spot!** The generator also includes generated Moves and an ability for each Pokémon, along with habitat filtering, which makes making encounters on the fly much easier. Courtney has also made a [Trainer Generator](#) that may help in making NPCs.

In addition, the author of this game has developed a [randomizer for arena / area features and a plot randomizer](#) to **jumpstart ideas for encounters and plots**; Courtney has also developed a [Gym Leader Generator](#) with ideas for their tactics and overall demeanour.

To stat out quick encounters, there's a [GM Screen](#) made by the author of the game that has a disconnected PC Box for quick statting!

For easier initiative tracking, GMs can use a web-based program such as [this one](#). There are also many mobile apps available, though they tend to come and go. Empwleon has made [a tracker](#) that includes Arena Features.

To get a visual for larger battles, a map can be helpful. [Owlbear Rodeo](#) (and [its app](#)) is simple and free, and thanks to Boku and Croco, there is a [Roll20](#) sheet with automation, too!

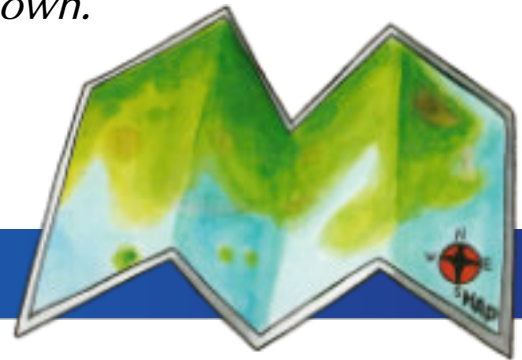
For original regions, Courtney's [Pokémon Tales Region Generator](#) generates a hex map of a region step by step, and [The World of Pokémon](#) has a generator that generates a full region at once, as well as a single-location generator.





We All Live in a Pokémon World

A world very much unlike our own.



THE POKÉMON SETTING

The Pokémon world is a place where humans and Pokémon live in harmony and make their way together. The Pokémon world is divided into regions, and a Pokémon journey will typically take place inside of one region.

In *Pokeymanz*, players and GMs may choose to set their adventure within an established region of the Pokémon world, or an original region with its own original themes, locations, and gameplay gimmicks.

Some general things to keep in mind about the Pokémon world when designing for the setting:

- A sense of **optimism**. The Pokémon world is generally optimistic, and even the most canonically edgy of material holds out hope for a happy ending.
- Focus on **harmony with nature**. In the Pokémon world, the natural balance and

coexistence between humans and Pokémon is considered of sacred importance. If things are out of balance, it's a sign that something is very wrong.

- Amazing **technology**. Tying in with the above, the Pokémon world is slightly further ahead than our own in regards to technology. They have teleportation, can hold physical matter in a digital space, and can generate power in ways that doesn't damage the environment. While this isn't universal, and many places and people live closer to nature, this means that it is wise to think about the way technology might interact with the way of life in any given area.
- The **Pokémon League**. While not all regions have a League proper, most areas have strong trainers that act as community leaders. In most media, this is the furthest into the political structure of the setting that the official material is willing to delve. While there may be other factors at play, whatever structure equates to the Pokémon League in a region is bound to have involvement in important events.



Your group doesn't have to follow these guidelines. But these are principles that might help set the tone for a game that follows the "original flavour" of the Pokémon world!



SCENARIO DESIGN

I'm not saying go make a lore powerpoint describing all the ways you would change the canon plot points to fix the stuff you don't like, but it just so happens that this is probably the best excuse you'll ever have to show USUM the door. First of all, the core themes are TOTALLY ruined -

Running the Game

Okay, that's all a good start? But **what about the actual game**, you know, the one I'm reading this section to learn how to run? The game specifically made for Kuzco? Kuzco's game?

There is a structure to running a game. In many ways, GMing is an exercise in game design itself, where the **GM makes calls on what challenges to throw at the PCs and how**, based on what they think will be **fun and engaging**.

The following section is written with **mechanical structure and guidance for challenges** the PCs might face, a **primer on storytelling structure** and how it pertains to **campaign planning**, some helpful tips on how GMs can **write notes and keep track of NPCs**, and lastly **some tips on how to tweak the levels of challenge** in their games.

It's **highly recommended to read this section before running a game** - and the Encounters section is the most important read of all!

Now go forth and make your players scream, laugh, cry... Within established boundaries, of course.



Making a big bad guy for your game that everyone unanimously hates isn't a necessary step, but it's definitely a fun one



Each Step you Climb

... is one more step up the ladder! (The ladder is a session.)

ENCOUNTER DESIGN

Encounters are the basic building blocks of player engagement in Pokeymanz. They are challenges that trainers have to get their way out of or resolve, one way or another. Episodes will generally have several encounters one after the other, broken up by roleplaying and other scenes.

GMs are encouraged to give the players a variety of different kinds of challenges, even within combat! A lot of things can happen to trainers and Pokémon on their journeys, including getting lost in the forest, getting trapped in caves, being overrun by stampedes



of wild, rampaging Pokémon, falling into pit traps at inconvenient times, finding other trainers who have lost their mojo in need of encouragement... those are just the kinds of things that happen to Ash Ketchum, so **treat encounters as a chance to get creative and give players interesting problems to solve.**



If you stat it, the players will battle it. Or they'll ignore it and fight something you didn't stat instead one of the two



GENERAL TIPS

There are a lot of different kinds of encounters, but **keep these things in mind for all of them:**

- Try to design your encounters so that **each trainer will get to contribute at least once** to solve it.
- Try not to **make most encounters overly complicated** or intricate - focus on giving the players **one problem to crack** at a time.
- The exception to the above is **if the point of the episode is a larger challenge**, such as a global countdown to disaster, a session-long gym challenge, or if the climax of the episode has many factors at play.
- Remember that **the party doesn't have to be successful** at navigating an encounter to get **Pokémon EXP** from it.
- Remember that **any kind of encounter can be complicated by Hindrances** and other factors, and that as a general rule **one twist per encounter is often enough**.
- Make **exceptions to the one twist per encounter rule** where it is A) **funny**, if that's what you're aiming for, B) would **drive the episode's plot** forward, or C) **adds tension** as needed. A clown car pileup of Hindrances is a great way to put some teeth on a climactic encounter!



I can definitely fit the Elite Four challenge all in one session, right? It's just five encounters, right?



THE COUNTDOWN

A great tool to make players sweat is the **countdown**. While it's recommended not to use an actual timer, as player response to being put under that much pressure can differ a lot from the character's supposed ability to respond to a crisis, there is a way to give the sense of impending doom.

Think of how many player actions you think it might take to solve an encounter, add one or two on top, **and then indicate to the players how many of their (non-Movement) actions until something terrible happens**. There should be some in-character extension of the ticking clock, too - an oncoming storm is an obvious time limit, as is a literal timer.

Another way to use the countdown mechanic is to give a **very, very short countdown** - two actions is ideal - until an immediate danger does something very bad. A trainer dangling over a whirlpool losing their grip might have moments to spare before falling, for instance.



You have two actions before the bidding on Ebay closes on this limited edition merch, go

STATTING ENCOUNTERS

So you've got structure for your encounters, but **how will they work mechanically?**

(Note: It is recommend that if you do not already have a document where you keep your notes, **create one at this step**. Try to keep things centralized to one or two documents or

tabs as much as possible! Keeping organized will minimize mental effort spent tracking things down while actually running.)

First, create the idea for the encounter, maybe with the steps in the outline section. This is your outline, and now it's time to fill it out a little further.

Okay, but **how do I stat encounters**, you may ask? **What types of challenges** can be presented to players, and **how do I represent my idea for a fun challenge in numbers?**

First, **get the idea down** in bullet point form. You'll want to **know what you're going for before putting a mechanical framework around it**, especially if there are story beats or other considerations you want to hit.

After that...





ENCOUNTER TYPES

Battles are far from the only obstacles trainers can face in *Pokeymanz*.

An encounter is defined as “an obstacle that faces the players that must be overcome before continuing towards a goal”, and that could include things like getting out of a pitfall trap, convincing someone to do something, chasing down a thieving Mankey that stole your hat... all of these are encounters. **But how do you run these sorts of challenges?**

Battles are already well explained in the Trainer’s Manual, and for good reason. **The climax of many games is likely to be a battle of some kind** - and while the following section will include some pointers on battles from the GM’s perspective, **we’ll be taking a look at how the mechanics work for other types of non-battle encounters** that trainers are likely to get into along the way.

These categories are largely tools for the GM to keep track of and to streamline prep, but **it’s good to give the players a heads up on what kind of encounter they’re in**, if only so that they know what they’re rolling for and if certain Edges and Hindrances apply.

Players’ approach to a situation will affect what kind of encounter they end up in - if a party of trainers try to talk down the grunt of a villainous team when the GM anticipated a battle, it’s a wise decision as GM to shift the intended battle to a social encounter at least some of the time. **Players should have agency**, and this is where **prepping situations and not plots** can help a lot.

While the above still holds true, **remember the “not enough dice in the world” clause** - sometimes the bad guy is going to battle you no matter what and they cannot be swayed by words, at least before they’re beaten. Save this clause for truly important characters or exceptional circumstances, though, and **by and large let players try what they want to try**.

This is how you know a situation is truly dire, Jigglypuff

We can’t girlboss gaslight gatekeep our way out of this one





BATTLE ENCOUNTERS

Pokémon battle mechanics are covered extensively in their own chapter, so here we'll just cover how to run them from the GM side.

First, **decide how many Pokémon you think will be a challenge for your players**. A good rule is to remember that each additional Pokémon adds a minute or two to the turn order, so keep in mind the balance between having lots of Pokémon to fight and making combat drag. A good option if you feel combat is typically too slow is to **have fewer, stronger Pokémon**, and giving them more actions a la the Boss Pokémon mechanic. A good rule of thumb is one action per player action.

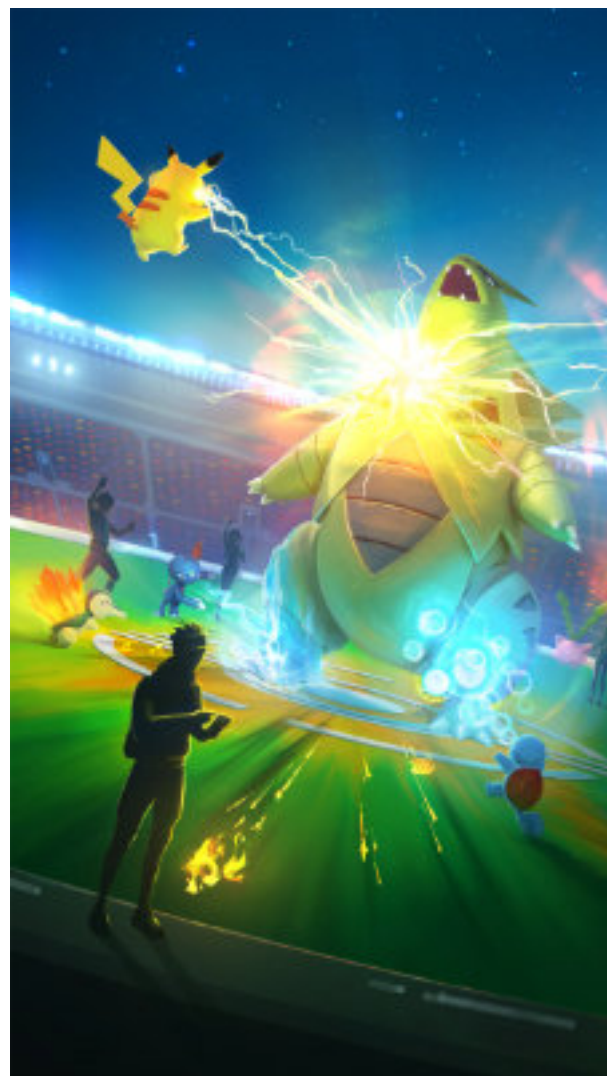
Don't bother with EXP calculations for enemy Pokémon! Just throw on the numbers that feel right. If a Pokémon should be consistently good at a Move, give them a d8+. If you need to come up with an encounter on the fly, **open up a few related Pokémon's wiki pages and just pick Moves off of their Movelist** as you go. It's more important to make things interesting than to stick to the rules!

For wild Pokémon battles, **try and create a group of Pokémon with a variety of Moves**, and see if any of them have Moves that would complement or support each other and incorporate them. If a certain Pokémon has a fun gimmick, feel free to start with that and build the surrounding Pokémon to support that gimmick.

For trainer battles, **think about the theme of the trainer and what their strategy might be in battle**. If nothing comes to mind on that front, give them Pokémon that are thematically linked or linked to the story (a fisherman with all aquatic Pokémon, for instance), and just

have fun giving them Move combinations that sound interesting. If they've had time to prepare for the PCs, they might even have a strategy to counter one of the PCs' common tricks!

Put your stats in the appropriate place in your notes so you can easily access them as you run!



There's always that one person who was fooling around on their phone and didn't think of what to do before their turn came up



COMPETITION ENCOUNTERS



THIS ISN'T WHAT I MEANT WHEN I SAID I WANTED TO
RUN ROLLOUT ON FURRET YOU GUYS

Trainers and their Pokémon are likely to get into many different types of contests and competitions outside of the battlefield. **Competition encounters** cover this middle ground between these more defined systems and a simple contested roll; in fact, in essence, **a competition encounter is just an extended version of a contested roll.**

Competition encounters happen any time two or more groups enter a non-battle competition; tug-of-war, chase scenes, and scavenger hunts all count as competition encounters, and for groups less invested in the nitty-gritty of Pokémon Contests, they can slot Contests into this category as well.

Competition encounters should include **consequences for failure** or refusal to participate. Potentially, **there may also be a reward for winning**, such as a coveted item.

The meat of a competition encounter is **rolling in turn to accrue Hits** - the GM **decides ahead of time how many hits must be accumulated for success**, and each team rolls one member, going back and forth (or in the case of more than two teams, in a randomly determined order with the PCs first) at a time until that threshold is met. **Critical Hits may count for two Hits if Mastery was spent** at any point during the roll, similar to the way they work in battles. Alternatively, **there might be a countdown of rounds instead of a threshold** and the aim might be to just accrue as many Hits as possible.



COMPETITION ENCOUNTERS, CONTINUED

If the gap between the two parties gets too big one way or the other, deploy **rubber banding** - a team way behind can suddenly catch up to become a threat **in the final round, at the cost of some important resource, item, or other narrative consequence.**

NPCs and PCs have equal access to this option. Ideally, use rubber banding to make things **more interesting** - perhaps a PC's zealous methods to get ahead in the snowman-building competition triggers an avalanche nearby, or an NPC wins the competition but loses to the PCs in another arena (such as love!).

Sometimes a **GM might want to have a competition be the point of a session**, such as a Bug-catching competition. In that case, instead of a contested series of rolls, **devise a scoring system for the rest of the encounters in the session** and count those as Hits.

As an individual encounter, **try to aim for two total rolls per player**, three at the top end.

Some example competition encounters:

Participating in Pokéathlon. A chase scene. Pokémon Contests. A canoe-carving contest. The Bug-Catching Contest. A tug-of-war.



"Our opponent may be a legendary Pokémon and a Tyranitar with Sand Stream, but with the power of friendship and the strength of our bonds, we can probably cheat hard enough to win."



COMPETITION ENCOUNTER TABLES

Below and on the right are some **tables with example types of competition**, possible **opponents for the party**, and **rewards** to add stakes. Remember - rewards cut two ways! If the party doesn't win them, the opponent often does!



Sometimes you can't even use the reward. It's not about winning. It's about sending a message

COMPETITION TYPE

1	Sport match (Soccer, Rugby, etc.)
2	Obstacle Course
3	Traditional Pokémon Contest
4	Pokémon Capturing Contest
5	Scavenger Hunt
6	Dance-Off or Rap-Off
7	Audience-swaying Debate
8	Competitive Video Games
9	(Skill)-off (Cooking, Sailing, Photography, etc.)
10	Pokémon Type themed challenge
11	Hybrid Encounter (Quiz Show, Survivor, Etc.)
12	Roll again; Add as extra round; Roll +1 Reward

Roll a d12 for the type of competition and the opponents, and then **roll a d8** for rewards. You're not beholden to the results - **simply mix and match off each table** if you feel like it.

OPPONENTS

1	Unusually Organized Wild Pokémon
2	Gangsters / Delinquents / Villains
3	Type Specialists
4	Supernatural Adepts
5	Themed after Specific Occupation
6	Led by PC Rival / Known NPC
7	Shared Group Ideology / Hobby
8	Plucky Kids
9	(Competition Type) Fan / Adept / Athlete
10	Local Important NPC and co.
11	High School Stereotype
12	Roll again, combine archetypes

REWARDS

1	Impress relevant NPC
2	Favour OR Money
3	Sought after Item
4	Useful information / clue
5	Gym Badge / Ribbon or equivalent
6	Plot Coupon / Device
7	Gain positive local reputation
8	Catch Chance OR Pokémon Egg



DISASTER ENCOUNTERS

Disaster encounters generally happen when **something about the environment or situation** prevents progress towards a goal or puts something important in danger. While battles can have elements of this, use this framework **when the threat is not able to be managed simply by defeating an opponent**, but requires the actual situation to be addressed to progress.

When designing a disaster encounter, **choose “stakes”**, or what will happen if the disaster is not managed, and **make sure to communicate it clearly to the players**. This should ideally be something they care about. An important NPC could be in trouble, they could miss an appointment if the disaster is not dealt with, they could take Wounds, or **any other consequence that matters within the context of the episode**.

Similar to a battle, **disaster encounters make use of Features and Hazards**. The “arena” is the scope of the disaster itself - it could be anything from a small room to a whole town!

Choose a “main” Feature or Hazard; this is the cause of the disaster. It could be a caved-in wall, an approaching sandstorm, a broken bridge... anything that presents a challenge. You can add other **supporting Features** as well! Disasters frequently but not exclusively use the **countdown mechanic** to add tension.

Disaster encounters can be mitigated, stopped, escaped, or navigated by any number of approaches, as long as it would **logically prevent the stakes from happening**. It's also possible to make a disaster worse or cause it to become someone else's problem, which could be good or bad depending on the situation and whose problem, exactly, it becomes.

Some example disaster encounters:

A block in the road that will make the trainers late to an important event. An avalanche approaching an unsuspecting lodge. Missing the bus to school. Being trapped by a cave-in. A town's water supply in trouble.



No, no, that's “an encounter with disasters”. That happens anytime you enter the group chat.



DISASTER ENCOUNTER TABLES

Here are some **tables** to help the aspiring GM come up with disaster encounters on the fly. **Roll a d12 for the obstacle** and a **d20 for a stake or consequence for failure** to navigate the obstacle.

While not exhaustive, **different combinations of obstacles and consequences** should hopefully get the brain juices going. For best results, **combine with a random [Pokémon generator](#)** to spit out the involved Pokémon.

OBSTACLE

1	Blockage en Route to destination
2	Natural disaster descends on area
3	PC or NPC trainer and Pokémon separated
4	Fall into deliberate or natural trap
5	Tinderbox situation, disaster easily triggered
6	Mischief, NPC causing inconvenience
7	Haunting or Supernatural Event
8	Hindrance creates tricky complication
9	Foe impeding progress by indirect means
10	Hazard heading right towards party!
11	Roll again and add / shorten countdown
12	Roll again and combine results

CONSEQUENCE

1	Party Pokémon take a Wound
2	Party Pokémon receive status effect
3	Fail to make important appointment
4	Local Pokémon become hostile
5	Important Object or Location lost / missing
6	Party owes someone a big favour
7	Become easy picking for villains
8	Crucial clue lost to players (telegraph this!)
9	Items or important supplies lost
10	Party gains temporary Minor Bad Rep
11	Significant property / habitat damage
12	Strange phenomena begin / escalate
13	Everyone is annoyed; Lose a Mastery
14	Session / Journey foe accomplishes a goal
15	Area hazard; trigger survival encounter next
16	Unresolved; Inconvenience later hounds PCs
17	Trigger a battle with a strong foe
18	Thing that would be the worst / funniest to happen right now happens right now
19	Party trainers take a Wound
20	Reroll; party suffers both consequences





PUZZLE ENCOUNTERS

Puzzle encounters happen when there's a mystery to be solved, some kind of deduction to make, or an actual literal puzzle laid out in front of the PCs. In broad strokes, **a puzzle encounter is an encounter where the object is to figure out or find out a specific piece or pieces of information** - whether that be the Who, What, When, Where, Why or How is up to the specific scenario.

Classic examples of puzzle encounters would be engaging with smaller chunks of overall mysteries like Phoenix Wright-style detective work, quizzes, and environmental logic puzzles like those found in classic D&D modules.

Puzzle encounters are unique in the fact that **they have a very strong amount of bleed over into what we'll call "player ability"** - where

the player could know the answer when their character logically wouldn't, or when a character should know an answer that their player doesn't - and that **it's not entirely possible to separate out metagaming** of this nature from these situations. With that in mind, **lean into this fact**. Successful Research rolls and creative use of other abilities should be used to give out hints, but you can **just lay out an actual puzzle** and let the players work to solve it both in and out of character.

With this in mind, **puzzle encounters are incredibly freeform and should be tailored to the group**. Don't give your liberal arts majors a sliding sudoku.

Also, as an important note, **if you think the puzzle is easy, make it easier**. It's always easy to the puzzlemaster.



I WANT TO PLAY A GAME, HILBERT. HERE'S WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU LOSE. YOU WILL PLAY MY LONG CUTSCENE OVER AGAIN WITHOUT THE OPTION TO SKIP IT. LOOK AROUND, HILBERT. KNOW THAT I'M NOT LYING.



PUZZLE ENCOUNTERS, CONTINUED

Puzzle encounters are also **an excellent time to let more mentally-inclined characters and abilities shine**. Some abilities or moves **might even bypass the intended solution** completely. Whether or not this has consequences is up to the GM and the scenario, but **let PCs cut the Gordian Knot every once in a while if they're clever**.

Like always, **it's important to lay out the stakes of a puzzle encounter**. Finding the wrong evidence could mean the criminal team eludes the police, or failure at the quiz could mean that the gym challenge is delayed another week. Failure to solve the ruins' floor tile puzzle could even net a trainer a Wound as a trap is triggered by a wrong step! **The rewards of solving the puzzle encounter exceptionally well** could include better information, items, or advantages going forward, too.

Some example puzzle encounters:

A mysterious message on the wall in braille that suggests an action required to gain passage. A pop-up quiz show gym challenge. A floor tile puzzle connected to a riddle. Figuring out where the member of a criminal team went with the Pokémon they stole.

On the right are some **tables with some more examples of puzzle encounter types** and some (at the time of writing, unbroken) links to sites that generate them. **Roll a d10** - Use them as inspiration, take them wholecloth to include in your prep, or use the table to quickly grab something quick on the fly.

PUZZLE ENCOUNTERS

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1 | D&D Style Room Puzzle |
| 2 | A Tricky Riddle |
| 3 | Pokémon (Or Other) Trivia Questions |
| 4 | Crossword |
| 5 | Sliding Puzzle |
| 6 | Jigsaw Puzzle |
| 7 | Logic Puzzle |
| 8 | Math Puzzle |
| 9 | Timed; roll again and add a countdown |
| 10 | Hybrid; Mystery, competitive quiz show, timed puzzle, tracking, etc. |



oh no please not again. i'm not strong enough



SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS

Sometimes, a situation calls for words above all else. **Social encounters** happen when the meat of the encounter is persuading, communicating with, bolstering, or otherwise socially interacting with one or more humans, Pokémon, or other entities. Obviously, **Heart is the go-to trainer attribute for social encounters**, with other attributes being applicable situationally!

When you're statting a social encounter, **each NPC involved should have a personality Trait and a Hesitation**. A Hesitation is the reason that they aren't immediately going along with whatever it is that would be most convenient for the party, a **motive** that is in their own interests in some way or another **that clashes with the PCs**. A **Trait** is a **simple descriptor** - coward, people-pleaser, one-track mind, that sort of thing - **that gives them a little character**.

Important NPCs might take from their established **Quirks and Sadnesses** for these, if you're using that method (more on that later). The NPC's Hesitations, or even their Traits, **are not always explicitly stated to the players**.

Rolls or Moves that "target" the Hesitation or Traits should be treated like Type Effectiveness is in battles.

For instance, **accurately identifying a way to mitigate a concern the NPC has should cause a Move to be Super Effective** (ie. making coffee for the cranky guy who hasn't had his coffee yet). Conversely, **rolls and Moves that run up negatively against these traits should be considered Not Very Effective** (ie. trying to argue with the cranky coffee guy that he's blocking the road will be less effective because of his Belligerent Trait.)



Casual reminder that Heart is also the cooking stat in Pokeymanz. OP pls nerf



SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS, CONTINUED

Treat social encounters similarly to disaster encounters in that **their main feature, the Hesitation, must be successfully addressed to overcome them.**

An important note about social encounters is that, because of the nature of roleplaying games, **sometimes a social encounter may be cleared even without rolling a single die** - if the party's argument or solution is strong enough. Generally, though, it's good practice to ask for rolls **after they've done the bulk of roleplaying, or at a critical juncture in the conversation** where the result will heavily affect how the rest of the encounter goes.

Even so, while roleplaying is always heavily encouraged, keep in mind that **not everyone is a wordsmith** and that stats exist to let people play something they can't do in real life. **There should always be the option to say "I say something like X" and roll** to see how well their character presents their case.

Sometimes, PCs will decide to **"blow the safe"**, so to say, and **force their will through intimidation, fear, or simply bypass the NPC's Hesitation** in a way that is callous or cruel to them. If they choose to do this, it isn't disallowed. However, **it's highly encouraged for PCs to be held logically responsible for their actions.** Word could get back to someone important that they were cruel, a grudge could be formed and give the PC a new Hindrance like Rival or Wanted, or the NPC might refuse to help them at a critical juncture later on. In the Pokémon world, **what goes around tends to come around.**

Some example Social Encounters:

The mayor isn't taking the threat of a villainous team seriously. Two Pokémon are fighting over territory. A girl and her Pokémon are having trouble understanding each other. We need to convince this grunt that it's in their best interest to let us through without a fight.

The Ball Guy Principle

Sometimes something that a character would know better than to say slips out of their player's mouth. If someone makes a gaffe like asking if someone wants to see their balls and their character would obviously know better, have some mercy and let them rewind.





SOCIAL ENCOUNTER TABLES

Here are some tables to help the aspiring GM come up with Hesitations and personality traits on the fly. Roll a d20 to select a random entry, pick one that fits your scenario, or come up with your own traits, with blackjack and hookers.



Whoa! Says here your personality trait is "likes to forfeit when you get frozen on Showdown!"

HESITATIONS

- 1 If you get what you want, I'll lose something.
- 2 I'm covering up my involvement in something.
- 3 Facing this makes me deeply uncomfortable.
- 4 I fear for my safety if you do this.
- 5 Someone I care about opposes you.
- 6 What are you gonna offer me to help?
- 7 I have other, urgent business to attend to.
- 8 I have a goal that conflicts with yours.
- 9 I know info about this that I can't let you know.
- 10 I don't have all the information I need here!
- 11 I don't like one of you on a personal level.
- 12 I disagree with a core value you're acting on.
- 13 I've got my own problem I'm struggling with.
- 14 My superior told me to stand in your way.
- 15 Why should I care? It's not my problem.
- 16 One of your Hindrances matters to me a lot.
- 17 I've been fooled about what's really going on.
- 18 I have a Hindrance; it's creating friction here.
- 19 I stand to gain a lot if you fail here.
- 20 I'm in a bad mood and it's everyone's problem.

TRAITS

- 1 Brave; Valiant; Adventuresome
- 2 Hardy; Resilient; Belligerent
- 3 Quirky; Funny; Head-in-Clouds
- 4 Serious; Dry; No-Nonsense
- 5 Adamant; Resolute; Stubborn
- 6 Lonely; Edgy; Self-Sufficient
- 7 Naughty; Impish; Goblin Mode
- 8 Bold; Audacious; Dauntless
- 9 Relaxed; Lax; Lazy
- 10 Modest; Humble; Meek
- 11 Quiet; Restrained; Unruffled
- 12 Rash; Reckless; Decisive
- 13 Calm; Docile; Placid
- 14 Careful; Fearful; Anxious
- 15 Gentle; Mild; Kind
- 16 Sassy; Uses Reddit; Jokester
- 17 Hasty; Impatient; Problem-Solver
- 18 Jolly; Friendly; Lively
- 19 Naive; Optimistic; Foolish
- 20 Timid; Bashful; Wallflower



SURVIVAL ENCOUNTERS

Sometimes trainers will need to endure a harmful environment for a time. **In a survival encounter, you can't get rid of the hazard causing the encounter**, only work to mitigate it and escape it.

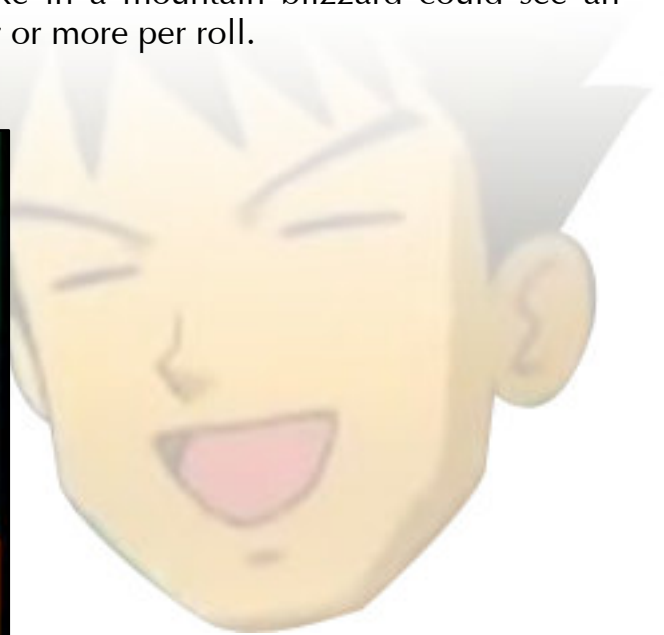
Survival encounters always have at least one main hazard, and a **countdown** until that hazard subsides or a **goal to escape** the hazard, **possibly both**. They should also have **supporting features** and maybe even extra hazards like a battle arena would.

The effects of the main hazard should be clearly communicated to the players - by giving trainers and their Pokémon a chance to see it coming if they would logically have the means to do so, or maybe by just having it take effect (the Dark Souls Method).

The main hazard's effects can vary, but it should always be something that can chip

away at the PCs over time. Poison swamps might drain Toughness similar to the suggested rules for poison, sandstorms could cause Wounds, tainted water might ruin supplies or items one at a time, or the trainer's relatives talking about Kanto-Johto League politics might cause the effects of the cursed status. **The main hazard should be given a numerical difficulty**. Choose a number **from 4 upwards** - this is the number the PCs will need to roll against to get a Hit.

Typically, **each roll the PCs make** during a survival encounter **counts as one tick on the countdown** and one more chance for the main hazard to affect them. **The countdown can represent different timeframes** depending on the immediacy of the hazard - near-boiling water or thorns and brambles will likely be representative of seconds or minutes, whereas a hike in a mountain blizzard could see an hour or more per roll.



I don't have to put anything here.
You thought the line in his voice



SURVIVAL ENCOUNTERS, CONTINUED

When in a survival encounter, **trainers and their Pokémon should be able to work together to mitigate the effects of the encounter.** If they direct their efforts towards mitigation, a Hit can gain them temporary relief from the main hazard, **protecting the party from the main hazard for that roll and one more after it.** With a Critical Hit, they may gain another tick's worth of protection on top of that. This means that one trainer and Pokémon pair can **buy time for the rest of the party to act** to escape or set up defenses, maybe even lowering the difficulty of the main hazard.

Some example survival encounters:

We're out of food and the next town is a ways away. There's a bad storm coming. This terrain is dangerous. We have to get through this press conference without ruining our rep.

Below is a **table of common survival encounters** for a travelling party and their common effects, as well as guidance for how to resolve them. **Roll a d12** and take the result, **or roll for each column separately to mix and match** for unique encounters!

HAZARD	DAMAGE	RESOLUTION
1 Inclement Weather, Extreme Temperatures	Frostbite or Burn	Outlast or Escape
2 Inclement Weather, Rough Precipitation	-1 Toughness	Outlast or Escape
3 Incl. Weather, Disastrous (Lightning, etc.)	1 Wound to lead Pokémon	Outlast or Escape
4 Food or Supplies Shortage	Penalties OR activate Minor Disability	Outlast
5 Hazardous Terrain, Minor (Hot sand, etc.)	-1 Toughness OR Appropriate status	Escape
6 Hazardous Terrain, Major (Briars, etc.)	1 Wound OR Ruin supplies	Escape
7 Malevolent Supernatural Force	-1 Mastery	Escape
8 Awkward Social Obligation	Temp. Bad Rep OR lose services	Outlast
9 Innavigable Terrain	Lose progress for 1d2 (block of time)	Escape
10 Toxic Environment (Spores, etc.)	Paralysis, Poison, OR stacked penalties	Escape
11 Mysterious Gremlins / Electromagnetism	Supplies lost OR crucial malfunction	Outlast or Escape
12 Roll again and combine results	<— Uh oh!	N/A



HYBRID ENCOUNTERS

Sometimes, **an encounter won't fit cleanly into one category**, or you'll want to borrow mechanics from one to enhance the other. **Hybrid encounters** are when you **slam together the mechanical framework** of or borrow the mechanics that work best **from two or more encounter types**.



¿Por qué no los dos?

You might take, say, the Hesitations and personality traits from social encounters, and have the NPCs be holding back a crucial piece of information that could be figured out by comparing the inconsistencies in their stories. There you have it; a **social-puzzle encounter!**

Pokémon Contests, holiday dinner with a psychic damage survival countdown, an investigation where the trail will run cold if the rain isn't mitigated as the party follows it, a competition of ego to see who can deal with a disaster the fastest... **All of these, and even many of the examples already given, can be run as hybrid encounters.**

A word of advice, though: **remember to keep most encounters simple** enough to be cleared in a reasonable amount of time and effort, and **keep the more intricate and extensive encounters as capstones for an episode** or as the main feature.

MAKING SHIT UP

"Okay, but what I want to do doesn't fit in any of these encounter types. Not even if I squint."

That's fine! **Feel free to borrow mechanics from other systems or dream up your own encounter types.** These encounter types are merely **guidelines** to make it easier on GMs to run a variety of different challenges for trainers and their Pokémon.

If you want to make shit up, don't let the rules constrain you. Remember Rule 4 and bullshit away.





ADDING TWISTS

We've defined **different kinds** of encounters. But **how do you make an interesting and satisfying encounter?** You don't always want your party to be able to conquer any given situation with a flat roll, right?

A very easy way to make any kind of encounter is to follow **three steps**:

1. **Establish a problem.**
2. **Put something obvious in the way of solving that problem.**
3. **Complicate the situation or establish a twist.**

For instance, let's take a fairly common situation: Wild Pokémon are attacking! Oh no! Shouldn't have stepped in the long grass, should you have, punk?

We'll build an encounter using the above steps.

1. Wild Jigglypuff are attacking the party!

This is a problem. Nobody likes being slapped around by a glorified Kirby clone, much less more than one of them. The obvious solution to this problem is to fight them or talk them down, but that's very straightforward, isn't it?

2. In the air, the trainers hear the beginnings of Perish Song! These Jigglypuffs know a rare Move! There's a timer on the battle, now, before the trainers' Pokémon (And possibly even the trainers themselves) go down!

Okay, so the trainers manage to beat the Jigglypuff gang down. That was harrowing.



Twist: They're all named "Hungrybox"

But, wait. The situation wasn't all that it seemed.

3. Having defeated the Jigglypuffs, the Perish Song is still going. It turns out that it was actually another Pokémon singing it - a cruel and ruthless Boss Wigglytuff! With only a round left on the timer, the trainers must find a way to shut this Pokémon's song down and end its reign over the local Pokémon.

Using this method, **even a very standard setup for an encounter has twists, turns, and tension in it.** Common ways to complicate or twist a situation could be adverse weather, hidden motivations, or unique utility of Moves. Whatever it is, it should add tension and possibly up the stakes.

The above steps should be useful even for making entirely environmental or social encounters! **Mix it up!**



TENSION

A final, somewhat advanced note: keep an eye on the **Tension** of the game.

As a GM, when designing encounters and statting them out, you want to **consider how much pressure you're putting on the players**. Tension is important - it sells emotional stakes and conflict, and it's a powerful tool in the storyteller's arsenal.

From a storytelling perspective, **tension should generally start low and build in steps towards the finale**. For most games, you'll want some moments for the PCs and players to feel "safe" and able to breathe between major encounters. This is important to allow them a chance to process what has happened.



"So... This is bad, right?"

Different styles of story use tension to create different feelings, though, and you should consider this when putting down encounters for your episode. For horror games, when you want to give players a feeling of helplessness, or if you want to build momentum towards a finale, shorten or undermine these moments to retain built tension. Other stories could use a big, splashy encounter right at the beginning to hook player interest and set a tone going forward.

Another essential part of building tension is **stakes** - you want something that matters to the PCs (or the players) hanging in the balance, with **more important stakes creating more tension**.

More important battles and encounters should be built towards, should have higher stakes, and should put more pressure on the players than in a typical encounter. In important moments, feel free to pull the rug out from player expectations, throw seemingly hopeless odds at them, and **make player choices matter**.

(Asking the question "**are you sure?**" during an action that will have a big effect on the situation is a good trick to put on pressure, as a side note.)

If you are an inexperienced GM and want to master this, it might help to note somewhere in your notes how much tension you *want* there to be at this point in the episode, and keep an eye on it as you go.



Lay the Foundation

You gotta crawl before you can setup sweep OU and pick your checks and counters

GAME STRUCTURE

Stories! They're hard. They can take many forms, and **the question for every GM is how to present players with a good narrative.** Or at least how to give stakes to a cool battle. Or at least how to make an excuse to tape cool battles together in a mildly cohesive format, like in the games.

The crux of any story is the **conflict - there is a problem to solve.** There is a lot of theory behind storytelling as a whole (Dan Harmon's Story Circle is a good primer), but for GMs, the idea is to take players through:

- **Setting up** the conflict
- Giving the PCs **a reason to care about it**
- **Dealing with** the conflict



- **Solving** the conflict
- **Wrapping up** the effects of the conflict

Steps one and two are crucial to player engagement, while steps three and four are the meat of what will actually be happening onscreen. Step five is the "epilogue" - showcasing how the players' actions made a mark on things and wrapping up loose ends.

There are **different formats** that tabletop RPGs tell stories in, generally differing in length, so to give an example of how to apply these principles in action, **we'll look at two common game types.**



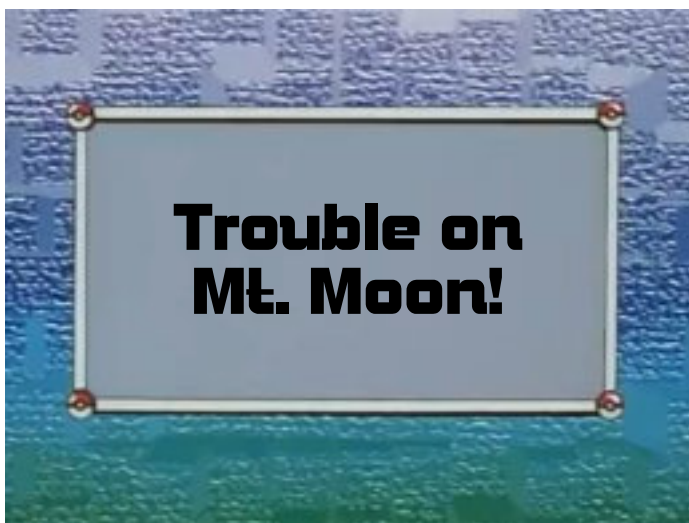
Get ready to have seven tabs open minimum



ONESHOTS (AND EPISODES)

Oneshots are so named because they happen in “one shot”, or one or two sessions sitting around the table. The idea of a oneshot is to have a set of characters deal with one central problem that is placed in front of them, with the story being wrapped up after that conflict is resolved. **Pokeymanz** calls oneshots “**Episodes**”.

A good Episode would be: A group of trainers that live in Cerulean City have to deal with an infestation of Clefairy from the nearby Mt. Moon. They need to go to Mt. Moon and deal with Team Rocket’s Pokémon-repelling device, intended to drive the rare Pokémon out so they can easily be captured.



I know what you’re thinking and the font is called “Bolt”. Go nuts making title cards

In the beginning of this episode, you would generally have all of the PC trainers describe where they are and what they’re doing when the Clefairs start swarming the city, **give them a fast reason to be together**, such as already knowing each other or being in the same place at the same time, and **make the**

problem affect each of them personally.

Mary, Shelley, Taupe, and Vlad all happen to be near the Pokémon gym at Vlad’s flower shop when the wave of Clefairy hit. Vlad’s business is in trouble! Shelley, his childhood friend, is eager to help him. Mary needs flowers for her upcoming date, and Taupe, who has been tailing Team Rocket for weeks now, knows this stinks of their wrongdoing.

Note that **part of the job of a player is to bring a character who will be motivated to participate**. As GM, you should only need to give them a nudge.

The party quickly rush out of the flower shop and find the local Gym overwhelmed managing the crisis. Misty, the Gym Leader, sees that they’re ready to help and sends them to investigate Mt. Moon, even though a Gym trainer with her doubts their skills and asks to be sent instead.



I was conditioned to fear this creature



ONESHOTS (AND EPISODES), CONTINUED

Note that this is only one of many ways the players could be pointed towards Mt. Moon - in fact, a simple Research check could tell players that the Clefairy's natural habitat is up in the caves there, and a canny set of PCs may just follow that lead on their own. **This is where situational preparation as opposed to planning specific steps comes in handy** - if the PCs fail to talk to Misty, there are going to be other ways that the source of the problem is apparent.

There are one or two battles with disturbed local Pokémon on the way to the top of Mt. Moon, and a cave-in nearly traps the group in the caves before they make it to the summit.

This is where the bulk of the GM's preparation and most of the session time will probably be focused, with **statted encounters**. Be creative and give players **a variety of challenges**. Even the most combat-loving player will appreciate the opportunity to hunt down their quarry every once in a while.

At the summit, they find a former admin of Team Rocket! A tough battle ensues with her and her grunts. To make things worse, the emitter they're using to drive out the Pokémon has been turned up, and the group's Pokémon are at a disadvantage until the machine is taken care of!

A tough capstone encounter is a good way to give a session a climax! For extra spiciness, give it a foreshadowed twist - like, maybe:

After the fight with Team Rocket, a gym trainer comes onto the scene and reveals that he had defected to Team Rocket (gasp) and would have gotten away with distracting Misty, too, if

it weren't for you meddling kids. He tries one last attack on them, putting the trainers in mortal danger!

Luckily, they pull through, and go home to be lauded as the heroes of the day.

After this point, **it's wise to put in a period where the trainers can wrap up their conflicts**, such as Mary getting her date after all, get a little roleplaying out of the way, and generally wind down.

Episodes have a few strengths as a format. They:

- Are a **smaller time investment** than a larger game.
- Put **more focus on the story concept than on the characters**, which benefits certain types of story.
- Allow players **to try out gimmicks** and aspects of a character that they would otherwise need to commit to.
- Are **easy for a GM to put together** and don't require a ton of foreplanning.
- Are the **building blocks of larger journeys**.

What does that last one mean? Well...





BUILDING EPISODES



Encounters are building blocks. **Use them as nodes to structure a larger story!**

To give a better idea of scale, an episode would be “The party gets lost in a cave”, whereas an individual encounter might be “the group has to deal with a cave-in!”

Or, to give an example of **how an episode might look in a rough outline form:**

My Super Cool Session That Will Make People Like Me. By: me

- Open up on them leaving town from last episode
 - Let people banter a bit! :)
- The party gets lost in a misty forest! Oh noes!!!!!!
 - (Disaster Encounter) The trainers have to figure out what direction they’re going in the mist!
 - (Battle Encounter) They’re ambushed by a colony of Noctowl and other nocturnal Pokémon!
 - (Puzzle Encounter) They meet a set of weird twins who play the “one tells a truth and the other lies” game!
- After that, turns out it’s a Ghost Pokémon problem creating the mist!
 - (Battle Encounter) Face off with the Mismagius that’s keeping them in the forest to play!

Reminder: As a general rule, **most encounters shouldn’t be a slog and should be able to be cleared by one or two Pokémon from each trainer.** In a basic encounter, one or two of the trainers’ Pokémon might come out to fight, or if it’s purely an environmental or social challenge, one or two Moves or trainer rolls from each party member should take care of things. Battles tend to be longer, so it’s a good idea to **have more non-battle encounters than battles; they’re easier to drop for pacing if need be.** Seriously, too many battles and you’ll be there all day.

More dire or important encounters, like Gym battles, big Contests, or crossing dangerous terrain **might be more complicated and fraught.** These should be saved for episode capstones, or in some rarer cases, may be the entirety of the encounters in a shorter episode, such as a Gym challenge.



OUR BATTLE
WILL BE
LEGENDARY



CAMPAIGNS (AND JOURNEYS)

There are a few ways to run a **campaign**, known in *Pokeymanz* as a **journey**, but in the spirit of the Pokémon series and its trappings, **the ideal way to run Pokeymanz is episodically.**

What this means is that there will be a steady roster of characters who, on their journey, encounter smaller stories much like episodes that may or may not be connected to an overarching narrative.

This is the format for which the character creation rules are designed, with the idea that over the course of events, trainers and Pokémon will get stronger together.

An episodic journey should have the larger pieces in mind - for instance, the machinations of a nefarious Team, or the effects of the awakening of a Legendary Pokémon. There may even be a few different things going on underneath that, which are less important but still personally affect the players, that stretch over the journey.

The idea is to take the same steps as the Oneshot, namely -

- Setting up the conflict
- Giving the PCs a reason to care
- Dealing with the conflict
- Resolving the conflict
- Wrapping up the effects of the conflict

- but stretch it out over a number of episodes, each of which goes through their own, smaller iterations of those steps.

For instance, in the games Pokémon Black and White, the overarching plot is that of Team Plasma's machinations and the mysterious N's role in things. But at the same time, the main character is taking on gyms to reach the Pokémon League and dealing with their friends' personal dilemmas and growth.

The individual conflicts of each episode, or city or town, are **handled and resolved one at a time, while building towards that whole.** You can thwart Team Rocket's SlowpokeTail-dealing plan in Azalea, and make friends with old man Kurt along the way, but what was it they were trying to get all that money for...?



The same thing they do every game, Pinky



CAMPAIGNS (AND JOURNEYS), CONTINUED

From a GM perspective, when planning an episodic journey, look at these things when devising each episode of the journey:

- What is the **overarching plot** I'm building to? What is my main antagonist working towards and what are they doing right now?
- What are the characters **going through**? Are there any conflicts that would complement them well?
- What kind of **story** do I want to tell in the Pokémon world?
- What's a cool **setpiece or challenge** I can give my players?



I WANT TO CLIMB THAT VOLCANO

From there, build out stats and encounters like you would for a oneshot, with the difference being that at the end of the day, the trainers move onto the next thing.

It's recommended to plan only one or so episodes ahead in more than barebones notes, though it can be helpful to have dossiers on important NPCs or background elements. This style may not work for everyone, but planning one leg ahead is generally the best way to prevent GM burnout.

The journey format has many advantages. It:

- Allows for a much **more complex and deeper story** than a oneshot.
- Makes the story **much more character-driven** and gives players the opportunity to roleplay deep character moments and bonds.
- Allows players to feel **growth in their characters' stats and power** throughout the run of the journey.
- Emulates **the feel of most mainline Pokémon media**, giving players a chance to capture and raise their Pokémon.
- Can be a good excuse to **see a group of friends** and do something with them on the regular!

Whichever format you choose to run, hopefully this section has been helpful to you.



DOWNTIME (AND FILLER EPISODES)

Sometimes, players need a break from **nonstop action** in order to take an emotional breather or in order to work towards personal goals. The concept of allowing the characters the time to accomplish mundane and interpersonal things outside of high stakes situations or work towards background goals is generally referred to as **“downtime”**.

In the context of the episodic journey, a good way to give players some downtime is to have a **Filler Episode**. In a Filler Episode, characters get into a relatively trivial situation like hanging out at a beach or just take some time

to regroup and talk. Players may also let the GM know what they’re working on in the time between episodes.

A GM might run a Filler Episode by asking each player what they’re working towards during the downtime and running smaller scenes for each character individually, or plan a more lighthearted-than-usual scenario to allow the characters to unwind from the stress of fighting Team Villain or whatever else is going on. They might even do a mix of the two! **Preferences for the style of downtime may vary by group. Try experimenting!**





POKéMON WISHLISTS

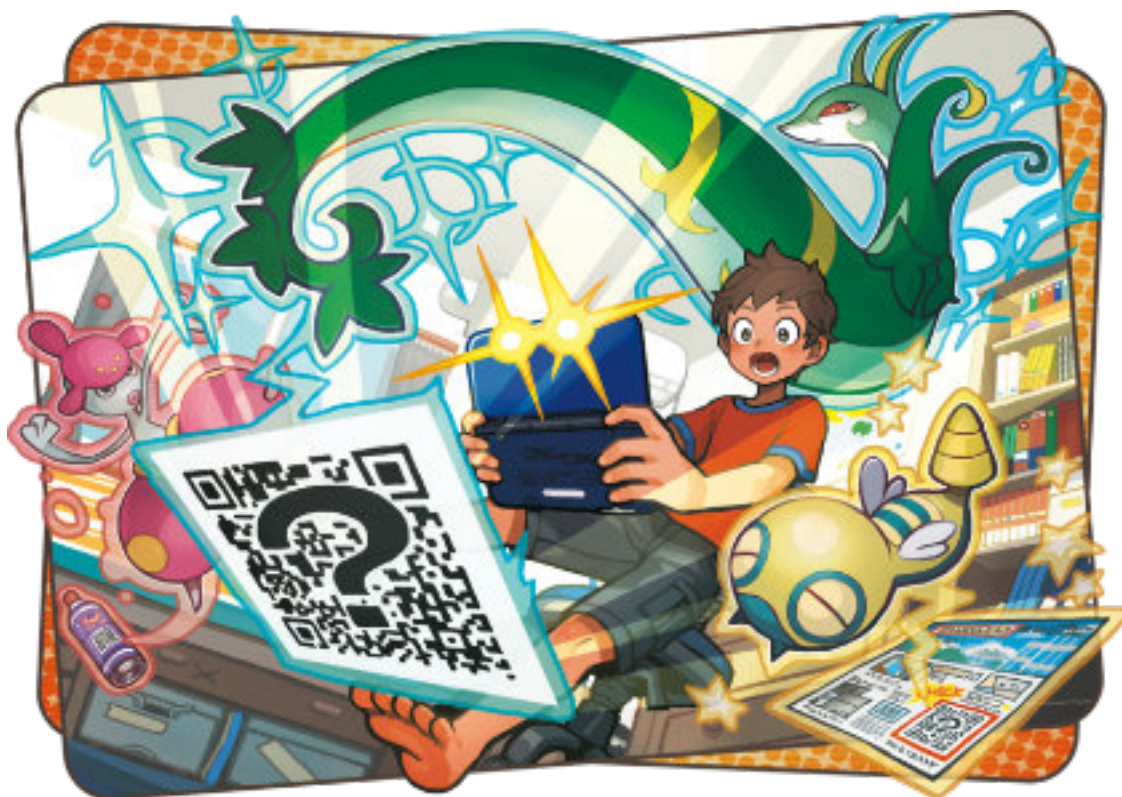
Everyone has their favourite Pokémon, and if they have bad taste, it's probably not even Galvantula. Whether because of out of character preferences or a desire to chase a theme for their trainer, **most people who pick up Pokeymanz will have at least one or two Pokémon that they will want to be added to their team during their Journey.**

As a GM, this desire should be weighed alongside everything else. Everyone gets one for free - the Starter is entirely up to the player, after all - and there is something to be said for making the best out of what you get, but even so, it can help both the GM and the player for the GM to have **a list of Pokémon that the players want to see.**

To this end, players should communicate -

ideally in the form of a **wishlist given to the GM** - what Pokémon they would like to capture. They may want to keep this updated on their own sheet, if their sheet is in digital format, or a written scrap of paper might serve just as well in a traditional tabletop setting.

The GM doesn't have to stick to a wishlist, but during encounter prep, they can make an effort to slide in a Pokémon that is on a player's wishlist. This has two benefits - for one, obviously, **it gives the players a chance to catch the Pokémon they want.** More subtly, it **reduces the burden of choice on GMs.** There are an awful lot of Pokémon, and GMs that suffer from choice paralysis might find a wishlist a welcome aid in narrowing down the potential selections for an encounter's roster.



Hard Mode: give your GM the QR code and make them play a peripheral game to find out



Freaks and Geeks

Unhinged, and yet sympathetic. Perfectly balanced, as all things should be

NPC DESIGN

So you've designed your setting and the rough beats of the story you want to share with the players. We're done, right? Oh, wait. **People** live in that world. **You need NPCs.**

NPCs aren't given a lot of focus in most systems, at least in terms of how to make them work for your story. **How do you make an NPC truly stand out?** The Pokémon world is absolutely bursting to the seams with memorable and fun personalities.

In order to create a game world that players will like to be in, **GMs should consider more than just a character's role in the plot** - they need to consider **what about an NPC makes them connect with the players and their characters.** At the same time, a balance needs to be hit between the uniqueness and character of an NPC and the fact that **the story should always belong to the PCs first.**



I'll stop dropping images of them when they stop being perfect examples



With that in mind, let's build up a way to **notate** NPCs in a way that's **quick, flexible, and formulaic** - and that **will work in service to your players and your game.**

Which brings us to...



NPC ROLES

Mechanically, it's straightforward to sit down and make an NPC's stats. After all, the rules of the game itself give a clear framework for it. It's also easy enough to make notes for yourself as a GM **what an NPC's intended role in the story is - what they've done, and where they've been, even what their motivations are.** All of that fits in with the natural process of making notes for a Journey or Episode. In fact, **the first thing we'll define for our formula is an NPC's Role** - a short description of what they do for the story, something that is kept GM-side.



Roles like "Some Kind of Cave Demon" are acceptable

However! As any seasoned GM can tell you, **it's not enough to have an important and well-conceived NPC.** Players will get attached to one-off characters you made up on the spot to man a store counter, they'll be uninterested in the villain's sympathetic motivations and stomp on them...

Players like to follow their own organic attachments, and this isn't necessarily a fault - it only becomes a problem if your players are actively fighting against your intended direction, which is a communication problem that needs to be settled OOC. Generally, though, this behooves the GM to **come up with ways to deal with this tendency** while not throwing away all of their notes.

The first tactic to deal with this which every GM should master is **the ability to retroactively involve any NPC the players get involved with into the plot.** If the players get attached to the schmuck that works in the Pokemart, **have them pop up again** either to help them in some material way, to provide a pointer towards the intended plot by giving them a stake in whatever is going on, or both.

This can also take the form of **replacing NPCs that were intended to serve a role in the plot with NPCs the players have "picked up" along the way.** Do you have a region's champion planned out ahead of time, but the party got attached to some guy who likes rocks they met doing a delivery in a cave? Congrats, they just met the champion and they had no idea.

As a tip, try to **keep a list of NPCs in its own document for Journeys** - it'll make changes like these easier to manage!



QUIRKS AND SADNESSES

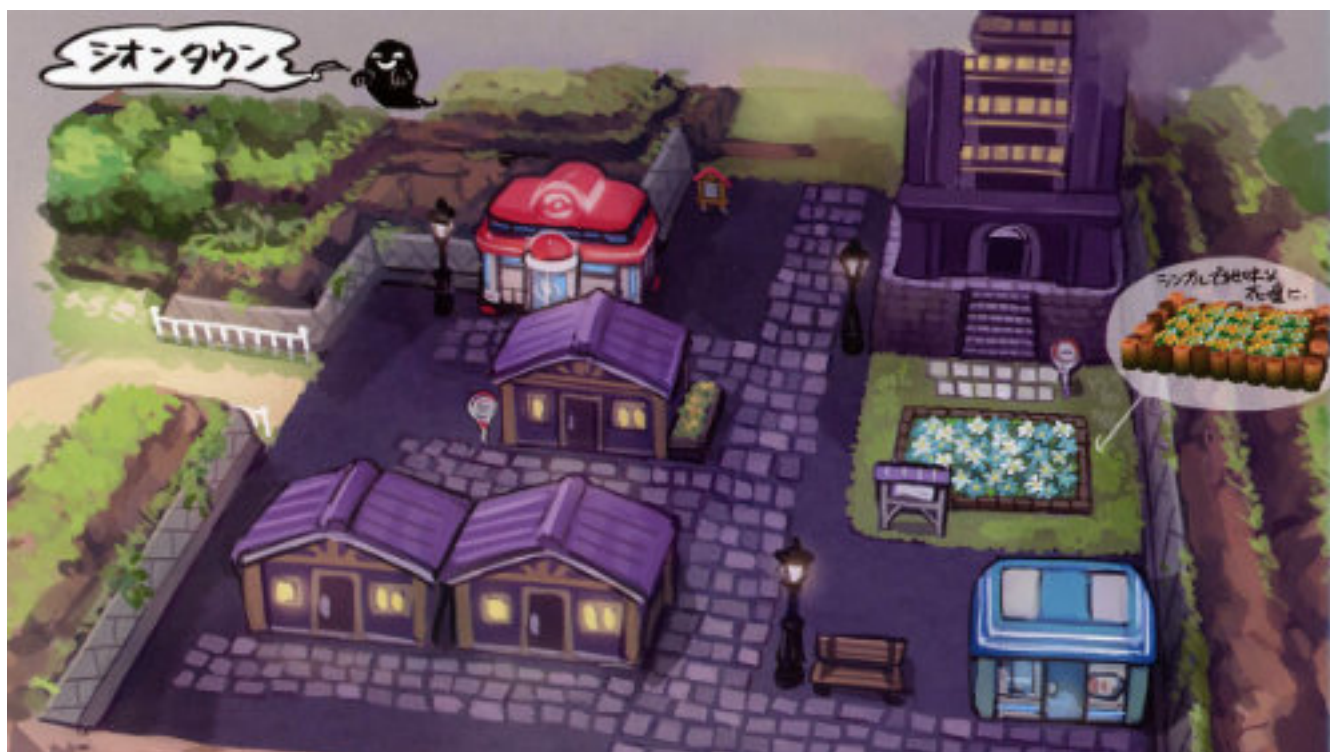
The Pokémon world is full of colourful, larger than life characters. **Everyone important in this world immediately pops out in one way or another** - and GMs can use this to their advantage.

Quirks and Sadnesses are short notes on what about the NPC would **hook a player emotionally**. Every NPC should have **at least one Quirk**, or a thing about them that is immediately noticeable that is intriguing or entertaining, **and at least one Sadness**, which is something about them that pulls at the heartstrings or is relatably difficult about them.

Quirks should always be front and centre, and **Sadnesses should be introduced after the Quirk is established**. Sometimes the Sadness will even take some digging to find out. **The**

more important a character is intended to be, the more likely they should be to have a second Sadness, and that second layer should almost always be revealed (or perhaps devised, if you're improvising) **only when the players have invested time and energy into that NPC**. This could change their relationship with that NPC in a meaningful way, and provide natural hooks and roleplaying opportunities - **some kind of emotional reward for getting to know people**.

The most useful thing about Quirks and Sadnesses is that, because of their simplicity, **they can be made on the fly in response to player interest in an NPC**. This makes them a powerful tool for improvisation. In addition, Quirks or Sadnesses can **easily be translated to Traits and Hesitations in Social Encounters**.



This formula can also be applied to locations! Spooky meme town, nothing heartwrenching here :)



TEAM GIMMICKS

While the entries above could be used for any system, **Team Gimmick is a Pokémon-specific aspect of NPC creation.** Simply put, what kind of relationship does this person have to their Pokémon, and **how is this reflected in their team composition?** Their team can speak volumes about their personality, and make a trainer immediately memorable.

Here are some examples of **team gimmicks that can say a lot about a trainer:**

- The trainer **has a clear type specialty.**
- All of the trainer's Pokémon are **the same species.**
- The trainer's Pokémon all **follow a clear theming.** (Trees, jewels, humanoid Pokémon, dogs...)

- The trainer has **just one super-powerful Pokémon** partner.
- All of the trainer's Pokémon are suited specially **to help with their hobby or job.**
- The trainer's Pokémon are all **Pokémon that share a particular battle gimmick,** such as a stall team.

Obviously, this one applies first and foremost to trainers - **when designing a Pokémon NPC, their species and what friends they have** can serve a similar function. What do you think of a Pachirisu with a Gyarados partner? Does it strike fear into your heart?

Have fun with this! Even if you need to discard an NPC later, themed teams are always fun to throw out as an encounter.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

After putting all these things together, we have a **"story statblock" for an NPC** that looks a little like this:

Steven, uh, idk. Stone?

Role: Pokémon League Champion

Quirk: Likes Rocks. Likes Rocks a LOT

Sadness: Hounded by the responsibility to take over a company he doesn't want to someday.

Team Gimmick: Steel-Type specialist

Notes: Devon heir. Players met him in Dewford Cave and took a shining to him. Likes to infodump. Tie him in with main plot? Knows regional legends? Maybe he's friends with Wallace, that sounds funny

This format will let a GM **fill out a cast quickly, add new entries quickly, and quickly make edits if need be.** It's not the end all be all of making NPCs - sometimes you really do have a character that needs to have a five page dossier. But GMs are forever in service to the reality that **plans change,** and this technique **can make it easier to be adaptable** in the face of player actions.





Hey Bro, What's Your ELO?



When asked the secret to her success, Champion Cynthia simply said "Get out of the airship, Colress, you're wanted for countless felonies"

DESIGNING FOR DIFFICULTY

Pokeymanz is at its heart a system **designed to be fine-tuned** at "the last mile" - that is to say, GMs and their groups are **encouraged to throw out or rewrite large chunks of the rules** because they don't vibe with the gameplay experience or story desired. This extends to the system's difficulty balancing, which as written is heavily **tilted towards the players' success** - which may not be suitable for all games!

Even if you're not designing the *Tomb of Horrors*, as a GM, you will usually **want to know what rules contribute to making things**

easier and what rules contribute to you laughing maniacally - sorry, I mean, **making things harder on the players.**

There are three main places to turn the dials for difficulty: **outright house rules, resource management, and encounter tuning.**

A note: This section doesn't cover every possible element of the game's design, but they should give you some **concrete examples to start with** when customizing the game for your group's needs and **what certain rules are designed to do.** Happy experimenting!



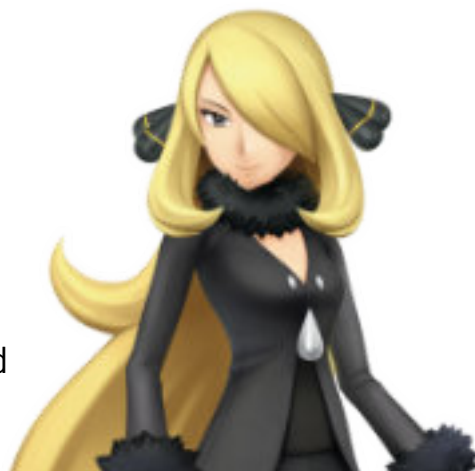


HOUSE RULES FOR DIFFICULTY

Using **house rules**, a GM **modifies an aspect of the system outright** - usually by declaring a certain rule has been changed, removed, or added. **House rules should always be clearly communicated to the players** along with the reasoning for their implementation, and it's a good idea to **make sure everyone is okay with them** before putting them into practice! There are more reasons other than difficulty for implementing house rules, but we'll focus on that here.

- **Raising or lowering the Hit or Critical Hit threshold:** The Hit threshold by default is quite easy to hit with mid-range dice steps. Adjusting the core thresholds to use Moves and Attributes even by one will make the game feel very different.
- **Critical Hits:** By default, Critical Hits suggest that one spends a Mastery to use the extra damage effect unless the battle is trivially low stakes. Encounters where you demand a Mastery to use this effect will be less "swingy", ideal for climactic encounters or encounters where you want the battlefield to seem more "even". They will also, on average, be slower. Allowing use of the damage effect without a Mastery will swing things hard, often in the players' favours, with the biggest advantage going to those with the largest team size.
- **Rerolling Ekans Eyes:** Allowing players to reroll an Ekans Eyes takes a lot of pressure off and gives them a comfortable safety net.
- **Switching:** *Pokeymanz'* initiative offers the ability to swap out at the top of the round with a Movement Action. Taking the ability to switch without a Battle Action away, or making switching a Movement Action any time, battles can require more careful planning or become less thoughtful.
- **Optional Rules:** Which optional rules are included in a Journey can shape its difficulty curve. Items, for example, offer a larger depth of strategy, but can open up extremely effective strategies with limited counterplay.
- **Edges and Hindrances:** Homebrewing different Edge effects, restricting trainers from taking Edges and Hindrances, or other tinkering with these parts of the game can affect the overall difficulty of the game.
- **Legendary Pokémon:** By default, trainers can't capture and use legendaries like regular Pokémon. However, running a game with a legendary that has a super OP ability and super special extra cool stuff, available to the PCs to direct as normal, might tilt things ever so slightly in the PCs' favour.

It's very simple, just put a randomizer on your Journey and let it choose a random room every time the PCs move to another area, and one of them has Cynthia in it





RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Resource management is a decision the GM makes on **what is available to the players and what isn't**; a lot of difficulty can be found simply by restricting access to one resource or another. A game with a high degree of resource scarcity will have a very different tone and playstyle than a game where trainers can walk back to the Pokémon Centre between every. Single. Battle. For free healing.

- **Wounds and Healing:** Perhaps the most impactful resource management decision in *Pokeymanz*, to the point where it has been given its own section - check out *When to Heal?* on the next page for a more detailed breakdown of handling this.
- **Party Size:** An extension of the above, restricting the number of Pokémon available to the PCs at any given time serves a dual purpose. Number one, it sharply cuts into the number of potential Wounds a party can take. Number two, it restricts the total possible pool of Moves, which means that the potential number of ways to solve any given encounter is cut more and more with each slot disallowed. A game with three Pokémon per trainer has a very different feeling to the standard six.
- **Pokémon Availability:** While less of an issue in *Pokeymanz* than most games, what Pokémon show up and don't show up in a game can still limit or completely head off certain strategies if the GM wishes to make sure they don't show up in the game. This is probably the least fun way to enforce difficulty, as exerting too much veto power here runs counter to the core tenet of letting players play their favourite Pokémon.
- **TMs and Tutors:** In *Pokeymanz*, getting access to Pokémon's extended movesets is entirely dependent on how the GM chooses to allow access to TMs and Tutors. Take advantage of this to make Really Useful Moves something the players need to go through hoops to get, or give them out like candy for more of a careless fun romp.
- **Item Availability:** Tying in with the above, though mostly an issue if the group is running the Item optional rules. GMs that run with the suggested "ask me if the item is here" rule will have a different game than those who prepare carefully curated shop stocks in every town.
- **Survival:** Making players keep track of supplies in the wild will produce a wildly different gameplay experience than the game's default assumption that they're more or less able to subsist without extra effort.
- **Commentary Tokens:** Limiting spectator interference can make things harder, but remember these tokens exist to keep things fun for the sidelined!



If you get to the point where people are making spreadsheets for the extra stuff, you have either gone too far or you should try out Traveller (my beloved)



WHEN TO HEAL?

As a GM, a pertinent question is **“When do I let players get to a Pokémon Centre?”**

It’s a real one. Letting them walk back and forth from town while grinding, while serviceable in the games, doesn’t usually jive with a tabletop game. It’s also important to remember that as a party’s Pokémon get knocked out, their “toolkit” of Moves becomes smaller and smaller, meaning that **the longer a party goes without healing, the more difficult each successive encounter becomes.**

In this department, it may be good to take a page out of the anime’s book. Not every region will have this feature, but **many places in the Pokémon world have vast stretches of wilderness in between towns and cities where wild Pokémon roam free.** Cars exist, but where there is travel infrastructure out there, it tends to be public transportation like trains and ferries, with minimal environmental impact. That is to say, that **most travel on foot between places is likely to take days.**

A GM has a choice, then, to make about the tone of their game. **If they would like to put emphasis on the survivalism** and trailblazing aspects of Pokémon, **then it’s good to space out Pokémon Centres** and other places of healing and let the players play resource management with their Pokémon as their parties get worn down. This assumes a game with time to spend multiple episodes on the road, though, and a lot of groups might favour a City -> Route -> City approach. Another problem with this is that it necessitates either ramping up the difficulty of encounters significantly or making routes longer as the trainers’ parties fill up to six (though a possible solution here is to limit party size).

And **this is ignoring the possibility of the party bringing their own healing Pokémon** or a trainer with skills in the healing arts!

As of this writing, the general advice is this: **hit players with a lot of challenge, or a lot of challenges. Make battles costly, and choices matter.** And if the party is weary, and the pressure is starting to detract from the fun, **put a Pokémon Centre or other opportunity to heal in their path so they can regain their bearings.** Maybe even at a price - after all, how many rural Pokémon Centres have Ash and company bailed out of trouble?



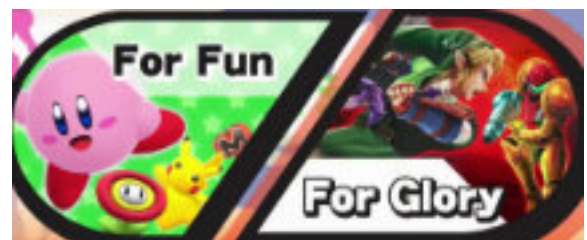
You’ll need a Pokémon Centre after playing the TCG with a Nurse Joy



TUNING ENCOUNTER DIFFICULTY

Sometimes a GM will want to take it easy on the players, and sometimes they'll want to up the challenge for a specific encounter, like a gym battle. **Fine-tuning difficulty in encounters** is where a GM will be spending a lot of their time, sweat, tears, more tears...

- **Context:** The same encounter that is a cakewalk for a fully rested party will be a nightmare for a party that badly needs the services of a Pokémon Centre and has run through their curatives.
- **Conflicting Stakes:** An encounter that has more objectives that the PCs want to fulfil will almost always be more difficult. An encounter that has the PCs torn between two objectives is delicious.
- **The Countdown:** Any kind of time pressure on an encounter will immediately add pressure and urgency, locking out the possibility of throwing Pokémon at the problem until it works.
- **Competence:** The rival looked up the strategy they've been using and *learned how to counter it*. Illegal! When I do it, it's strategy, and when they do it, it's cheating! More seriously, making an adversary clever can really trip players up. Read up on [Tucker's Kobolds](#) for one of the most stark and fiendish examples available.
- **Arena Features and Hazards:** Tilting the Features of the arena towards the instigator of the problem to give them an advantage will force players to either take the increased difficulty of the situation or find a way to even the odds - or even Uno Reverse them.
- **Higher Dice:** Giving foe Pokémon and trainers very high dice is an easy way to make an encounter more threatening. This is recommended - hit the PCs hard!
- **Action Economy:** The more often the other side gets to act, the harder the battle. A battle will usually start to tilt towards one side when they cut down on the others' numbers, so always remember that the GM is allowed to cheat a little and make enemies go more frequently if they really need a punch. It's recommended not to use this in most league matches, which should feel hard but fair.
- **Fucking Bullshit:** Also known as *GM Fiat* or *fudging*, sometimes the dice go against you and take the teeth out of what was supposed to be a threatening encounter. Just pretend you didn't roll a one there, or that the gym leader had a held item that gave them an advantage all along, or in the other direction, pretend that the Pokémon they were using *didn't* have an ability that nullified that Trump Card roll, because that would feel really lame for the players. Generally, use this sparsely and don't let kayfabe drop when you do it!



In this encounter there will be No Items, Fox Only, Final Destination



CUSTOM EDGES & HINDRANCES

While *Pokeymanz* tries to include broad Edges and Hindrances along with setting-specific fare, and to cover as many bases as possible, **there may be something you want for your game that is not covered** under the umbrella of rules provided. That's okay! **Here's a (very) rough guide to making your own custom content for Pokeymanz.**

The number one rule for custom content **for GMs** is that if you're going to bring it into a game for the first time, **you need your players to be the kind of people that are okay with tweaks** to it as balance issues inevitably come up. In the making of this system, Edges have been some of the hardest things to do right, and **you WILL need to make tweaks to custom mechanics.**

The number one rule for custom content **for players** is **try and make what you want with the Edges given** or with light tweaks **before asking your GM to include custom content!** As mentioned back there, anything you do will leave your poor GM to balance around it.

Edges are very difficult to balance. Some rules of thumb are: New Edges **shouldn't overlap too much with existing Edges**, unless they replace them. They should be **at least as useful to your game as the die step bumps from Type Specialist.** They should contribute to each character having a **useful niche** - that is, a character should be able to **take Edges to *specialize* into something.** Keep these principles in mind and your offerings will be easier to keep up to snuff.

Hindrances are easier. **Minor Hindrances should be inconvenient some of the time**, and **Major Hindrances should be inconvenient a lot of the time or outright devastating some of the time.** Again, try not to overlap too much... but it's slightly less important with Hindrances. Their function is to help flesh out a character and make interesting situations, not offer a specialization.

Finally, **always ask a friend** who plays the game **if they can see an obvious hole** in your idea before implementing it.



Seriously, it would be easier to catch Mew IRL than to make a perfectly balanced game



IMPROV & OPEN GAMES

"They have one thing you haven't got: a diploma. Therefore, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Universitartus Committitartum E Pluribus Unum, I hereby confer upon you the honorary degree of ThD . . . That's... Doctor of Thinkology." — The Wizard of Oz

Hit the Ground Running

At this point, the keen-eyed GM may be asking "Hey, you've given me an awful lot of advice on prepping linear encounters and stories, **but not much middle ground between that and completely making shit up!** That runs against GM Rule Number 2, doesn't it?"

... **And they'd be right!** As written so far, a GM would prep a story they intend to run from start to finish, albeit probably with a dose of flexibility. That's an okay way to run things, especially oneshots - the sample episode at the end of the book is even formatted that way. However, **This section is about taking your tools** - encounters, NPCs, and the structure of storytelling itself - **and learning how to deploy them on the fly in response to player actions**, as well as how to prepare your Journey's structure to be receptive to this kind of reactive GMing.

The tips in this section apply mostly to the **Journey format**, though tricks from it can taken to spice up standalone episodes, too. And while I've obviously had further thoughts and applied it to the tools at hand, the following section takes a lot of ideas [from this foundational series](#) by Justin Alexander. **This series of articles is perhaps the most useful reading you'll ever do as a GM**, so I highly recommend you give it a look.



I don't know if I trust these guys not to railroad...



A Game Called Scenes from a Hat



*Where the scenes
are made up
and the notes
don't
matter!*

THE ART OF IMPROV

Improvisational storytelling isn't all of GMing, but it is a good deal of it, and blatantly **stealing the tricks of the trade** for your own benefit will make you a **more confident GM** and **cut down on a ton of your prep** workload.

That's what *Pokeymanz* aims for as a system for the GM, in the end: **to be fun even on an absolute minimum of prep time, and to be easy to bullshit**. To make the most of that, though, a GM needs to **know their fundamentals** - how to **improv effectively**, what the **fundamental structure** of the system is designed to do, and finally **where and how to concentrate their effort in prep**.

Wow, that sounds hard and dumb, said everyone who doesn't have game designer brainrot. Well, the good news is that you can easily pick up on most of this **intuitively!** Most GMs **learn improv skills in practice**, and **this is by no means required reading**.

There's even a **prep checklist** for the style of open-ended GMing that this section will be teaching at the end of the chapter, so **you can skip there if you want the TL;DR for the practical stuff**.

Also, **watch Whose Line Is It Anyway**. That shit rules.



Accurate depiction of GM panic as the players enter the prepared material and make unexpected choices



“YES, AND” (REVISITED)

You may remember “Yes, And” from the section on the basics. That guideline is a sort of player-facing version of the full truth: **“Yes, And” means that everyone at the table builds on what has been laid down before.** This is the core tenet of improv - that **within reason and comfort, you build the scenario together.**

The “Yes” part is pretty easy to grasp. **You don’t ixnay someone’s idea unless the fun of the game is ruined by it somehow,** like breaking a personal boundary or if the proposed thing would completely break the game world’s internal logic. **“And”** is the fun part. It **means that you build actively on what is put down in front of you,** fleshing out what’s put down and giving it a new spin.

In a typical session, both **players and GM will be going back and forth** building the story

together. **Players have a responsibility to be active and add to the table** as much as the GM does, while **the GM is responsible for building on their actions and giving them new developments to react to and options to pursue.**

This is why GM Advice Number 3 exists, by the way. **You can’t build on what your players are putting down if you’re not paying attention** to what they want and what they’ve done.

Sometimes, “Yes, And” doesn’t work - as outlined in the initial section. In cases like that (cases where it just wouldn’t work, not when the player is being an ass), **try throwing out “No, But”** and giving the player **another possible course of action or more information** they can use to come up with something else.



GM Tips!

If a player starts asking very pointed and specific clarifying questions one after another without revealing the reason that they’re asking, you’re either about to have a lot of fun or be very tired. Or both.





STORY STRUCTURE ON THE FLY

Are you hearing a scare chord? You could be forgiven for being a little tired of hearing “Star Wars Episode IV follows the Hero’s Journey -” at the slightest provocation. **Theory around story structure tends to be dry, and we’ve already covered** how to adapt it in a general manner for building a scenario.

GMs will still benefit from understanding how a story works, though, because **if you have internalized the basics of how stories progress,** in what order things feel good and right to happen, **you will never find yourself wondering what to do** at any given time. “Where am I on the story circle” can orient a GM and tell them where to head next or how to make their material hit harder.

Am I in the very **beginning** of the session? Then I should write down or mentally **note that the players are talking about a PC’s recent relationship problems,** and see if I can’t bring in faer boyfriend to be involved later on.

Did we just have our **low moment** where everything seemed like it went wrong, **but the PCs are rallying?** Maybe time to **cut a planned encounter** that doesn’t add anything and **head to the finale.**

Did we just have a **climactic battle?** Maybe it’s time to have everyone **wind down and showcase how their actions changed the situation.** (For the better, right? ... Right?)

Truly internalizing story structure to be your compass is a soft skill and it **takes time to master.** But it will improve your GMing, and as a bonus, **make you more resilient when things do not go as expected.**



GMing is much like training by jogging on the beach: It's coarse and rough and irritating... And it gets everywhere.



TRICKS FOR PACING

When it comes to doing **pacing on the fly**, you want to **make your story feel like it's moving** without skipping important bits or making the players feel like they're being herded. Here are **three tricks** to keep the game moving and keep the pressure on:

- An event comes **Knocking**, bringing the action to the PCs. **Knocking should happen when the PCs are dallying** and their RP has started to get a little offtrack or meandering. **Don't use Knocking to interrupt general RP or important moments**; use it to regain momentum when the RP moment is naturally over and PCs aren't doing anything else.
- End session on a **Cliffhanger**. Something unexpected, interesting, or exciting happens! **The next interesting story beat is introduced**, and the PCs are about to react! Wow good game guys, let's go to break slash see you next week. Cliffhangers solve the question of when to end serial sessions - **you end them when it'll make everyone want to see what happens next**.
- **Start in Medias Res**, or in the middle of the action. "You're already on the heels of Team Bad after what you decided last week. **Here's the scene - what do you do?**" Not for every session, but **starting out with action helps forward momentum**.



LAST TIME, ON DRAGON BALL Z



KILL YOUR DARLINGS

A necessary corollary of “Present Situations and Not Rails”, **killing your darlings** is the **gentle reminder** to all GMs everywhere **that no plan survives contact with the enemy**. The players are not literally your enemy (and don’t treat them as such), but **your carefully crafted bad guy** with an extremely detailed backstory and motivation **will be oneshotted, befriended, ignored, or otherwise dealt with in a manner you didn’t prepare for**.

You have to let it happen. It doesn’t matter how cool the final battle with them was going to be, or the speech they were going to make. It’s gone now. **Don’t try and plan contingencies** to prevent it from happening - build on what the players have done instead. In fact, **don’t come up with overly elaborate specific scenarios** that require players to act a certain way to get there in the first place! Why? Because **player choice matters**.

PLAYER CHOICE MATTERS

As mentioned above, but bearing repeating here, **the GM’s job** boils down to:

1. **Give the PCs choices** to make, and
2. **Give those choices consequences** within the framework of a story.



CURSE THE PREDICTABLE CONSEQUENCES OF MINE OWN ACTIONS

GM Advice Number One! **Be the PCs’ biggest fans!** “I want to see what they do when I do this” is subtly but **importantly different** from “I want to see them react to the thing I made!”

But...

The GM is also a player. **The PCs’ actions give the GM a set of choices to make**, too; the difference is the **scope** of the GM’s responsibilities. Players should not expect the GM to give endlessly; **they need to enjoy their role in the story, too**.

Players who choose to **actively spite** the GM on an out of character basis, those who **refuse to be proactive** to the point of needing spoonfeeding, and those who **attempt to take the story in their own direction to the detriment of everyone else’s fun** by force can be **just as frustrating** as the classic caricature of the railroading GM.

The solution to gaffes in either direction are... **communication and conflict resolution** skills. Sorry, no avoiding that.



THEMATIC QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

An important **thing to understand** about **Tabletop RPGs** is that **no one person is in control of the themes of the story**. If the GM is trying to make an overarching narrative and not just a series of cool encounters, they will at some point (intentionally or not) **create Thematic Questions**, capitalization for emphasis.

Perhaps you've created a rival who denies that friendship with Pokémon is useful to her battling career, and made the evil organization of the story an uncaring conglomerate of disillusioned office workers with no work-life balance. **Congratulations, you've posed a question to the party**: "How important is it to share your life with other people even when it's not measurable with money or success?"

How the player characters respond to thematic questions like this will determine the themes of the story. A GM's job from a storytelling perspective is to **keep posing questions**, following their values and continuing to pose questions **that have meaningful answers**.

Themes are a useful tool for GMs because if you know what your story has been about, you can figure out what to do with it next. If you have "Importance of work/life balance" as a theme in your notes, you can use it as a **springboard for designing scenarios and encounters**.

If you're **blanking on what random problem** should be plaguing this small town or the next gym leader or something, you can **look at that central question you've been asking and find a new way to ask it**. Maybe the town is struggling with the culture shock of a new big box store (let's pull a name out of a hat and call it Junes or something), or maybe a weak Pokémon wants more than anything to fight alongside the gym leader because they did them a kindness, but the leader is preoccupied with training their main team for an upcoming tournament.

Use thematic questions as prompts in your game and you'll never run out of material - and will always be **creating opportunities for the players** to shape the outcome, too!



Greg -

Greg if,

Greg!

Greg if two geodudes -

Greg if two geodudes were on the moon and one used rock throw on the other would that be fucked up or what



THE INVISIBLE RAIL NETWORK

Okay, I made - look, they identified Lysandre was the villain in the first meeting. **Literally my whole idea for an overarching plot revolves around his actions**, not just specific encounters or battles. I'm in shambles. **How am I supposed to recover from this?**

You want to have a sort of **Schrödinger's Content** as a GM - when you prepare something specific, **as long as the players haven't seen it yet, that content could either be in Kansas or Missouri**. Or anywhere else you need it to be. Rather than railroading to a specific place, **take material that didn't get used** when the PCs didn't do a thing **and put it to work later** in a context that they do pursue, **with tweaks** based on how they got there - conceptualize this nebulous backend as a **responsive delivery system that packs up and delivers content** you've devised when you order it. An **invisible rail network**.

We'll be getting into this more, but for the moment - okay, so **how does this apply to the original question?** Well, I don't think I could ever put it as well as [The Principles of RPG Villainy](#) did, but the TL;DR is that **this principle works for plot points just as well as it does for statblocks**. If Player Choice causes Lysandre to be outed as a villain, have him retreat, have him run Team Flare from jail with all the consequences that brings, have some twink-ass smug fucking scientist pick up on the ultimate weapon project for their own ends and make the team into sky pirates. Wait, what the fuck is Colress doing h



Your ass is NOT WELCOME!!



Unfortunately for BW2, the super-powerful ex-PC was stuck in a delay on the TTC the whole game

Point being, **alter the situation so that the PCs made progress** and maybe even considerably set things back, but **you can still reuse some of your material**.

How do I prevent this from becoming Actual Railroading, you may ask. Well, adhere to the following when employing the Invisible Rails:

- **The players can never see this** part of the game. Perhaps long after the game has concluded, but never in the moment.
- **Recontextualisation** doesn't mean they would get exactly the same encounter in Place B that they might have in Place A. You might use the stats from Place A, but **that doesn't mean that the consequences for failure or the goal of the encounter are the same** when run in Place B.
- Most importantly, **DON'T use the Invisible Rails to make something cool or meaningful a PC did pointless**.



"In one moment,
Earth; in the next,
Heaven."
- Academician
Prokhor Zakharov,
"For I Have Tasted
the Fruit"



Become a Massive Tool

THE GM TOOLBOX FOR IMPROV

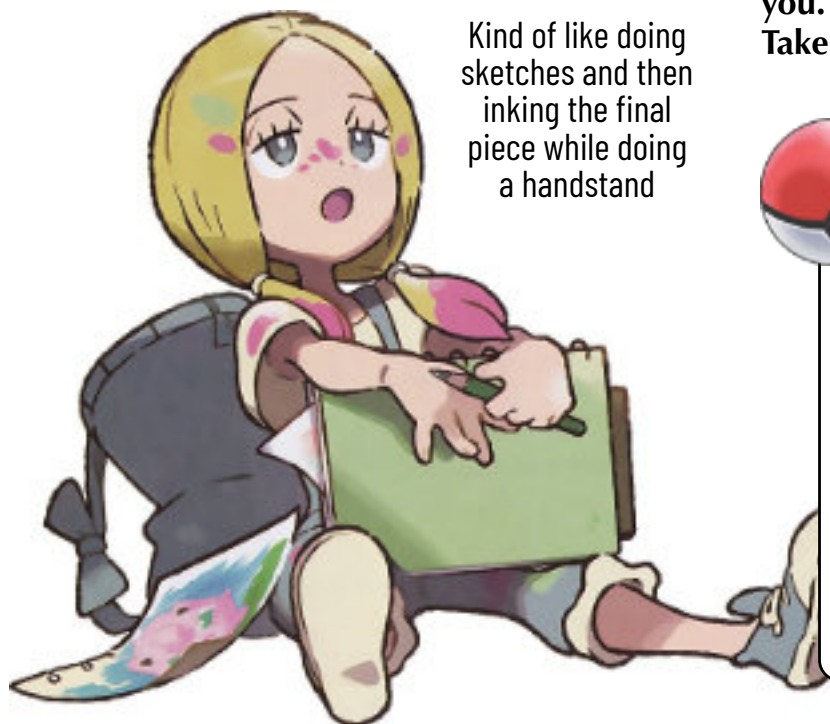
Toolification. It's not just what happens when Chairman Rose gets his hands on an orphan.

The **GM Toolbox** is a **philosophy of prep that focuses on breaking up parts of preparation material into little manageable chunks** (The Alexandrian calls them Nodes) that **the GM can shuffle around, quickly reference, and throw out reactively on the fly** to player actions. At the minimum, your GM toolbox should be **aimed at making running the game easier for you**, whether that's reducing prep time, making it easier to make encounters at the table, or to help guide your overarching plot along.

The final form of a GM Toolbox is ultimately going to look different for every GM, and that's because every GM has their own strengths, preferences, mental blocks, and style of game. Having tables at hand may work wonders for one GM who wants to be able to roll or pick entries, while a generator that eliminates choice paralysis and forces creative thinking to apply the results to the situation as-is might be just what another GM needs.

The tools here are the **building blocks** for the prep techniques that will follow in the final section, but they're also **broadly applicable and should be yanked if they look useful to you**. Don't worry if they don't work for you! **Take it or leave it as needed.**

Kind of like doing sketches and then inking the final piece while doing a handstand



GM Tips!

Tools exist to mitigate brain strain while doing the improv that is so central to GMing. Everyone's brain is different, so think about what you have trouble with at the table when trying to find the tools you need to excel.

Some things, like tracking initiative, can be pawned off on unsuspectin- er, I mean accommodating players.



TOOLING ENCOUNTERS

To **use an Encounter reactively**, the prospective GM wants it to have **two attributes** - it needs to have a **statblock**, or most of the mechanical information to run it, and it needs to be **stored in a way that is accessible** to the GM when they need it.

To tackle number one, **there are a number of approaches**. Some GMs may prefer to make an **encounter archetype and slot in the particulars**, like Pokémon types, **on the fly**. Others might **carefully calibrate** a challenging and balanced battle experience. Either way, **make sure that you know what information is needed to run your chosen encounter type**, complete with the blanks that need to be filled, and **have it all in one place**.

Number two is **organizational**. There are two major things to consider: **Keying** and **Getting Organized**. Keying is a trick where you **keep the details of something in a repository** of some kind and **then assign it a key phrase**,

number, or letter **to refer to it in the main body of text or in other places** in your notes. As long as there's an easy way to **get to the information chunk you want** from your main notes, like a hyperlink, you're good.

Getting Organized is an optional step, but it helps a LOT for tooling encounters. Putting all of your encounters in one document or folder, for example, might allow you to quickly skim over all your hard work on encounters when you're in dire need of mechanics to pull out of your hat.

If you **organize your encounters** in this way, you'll find yourself **able to change and reuse things as needed** down the line. **Recycling encounters** can be used to great effect **to reduce prep** - whether this is a recurring encounter, such as an evil team often laying pit traps for our hapless heroes, or simply recontextualizing as outlined in The Invisible Rail Network, **you'll get more bang for your buck out of your work**.

Me? Reskin encounters?



It's more likely than you think.



REACTIVE NPCs

NPCs run the gamut from important to throwaway, but **they are key tools in most Journeys**. A lot of information for building NPCs concisely is covered in the NPC Design section, **but for a reactive Journey, replace Role or add a new section to your notes: Goals & Motivation.**

Example: Steven Stone wants to **explore the region (goal)** to **avoid taking over his father's company as long as possible (motive)**.

As mentioned previously, **if an NPC with a really important goal and motivation are stopped prematurely**, you can always **transfer some of this information** to another character. Giovanni's goal is to take over Kanto because he loves money and hates childcare. When the players thwart his plans mid-campaign, now they face Giovanni's four sims, whose

goal is to take over Kanto and Johto because they want him back! **Characters' goals may also shift if their motivation dictates it**; it may be possible for the party to sway Silver, whose goal is to steal powerful Pokémon because he wants to get stronger, to a new goal: train with his existing team and create a strong bond with them.

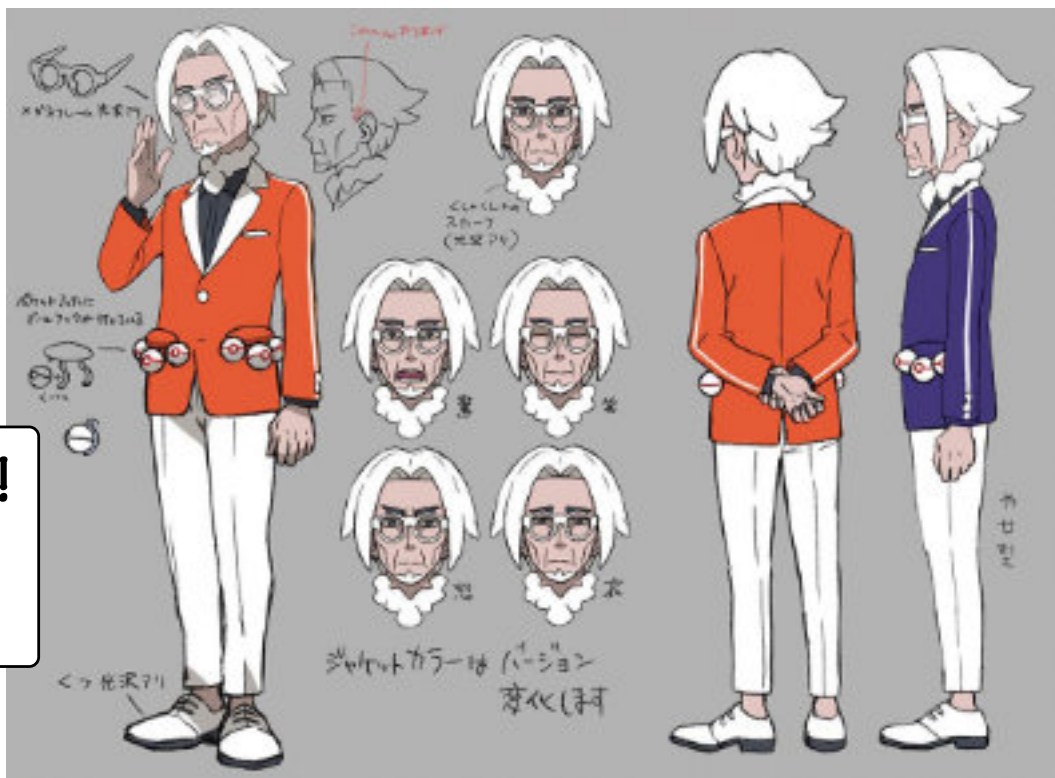
What the NPC wants and why they want it are the Lagrangian of a character. In an improvised environment, you want to be able to divine as much about how to play an NPC as possible from the least prep possible; goals and motivations will tell you how they're likely to react to the PCs' actions, naturally allows Hesitations to arise for social encounters, and what they're likely to do when the PCs aren't involved. Speaking of...

Sorry guys. I really wanted to put Clive here but there isn't really any official art of him. Have this old weird guy instead :)



GM Tips!

Gullible is the best Hindrance for an NPC to have. I promise.





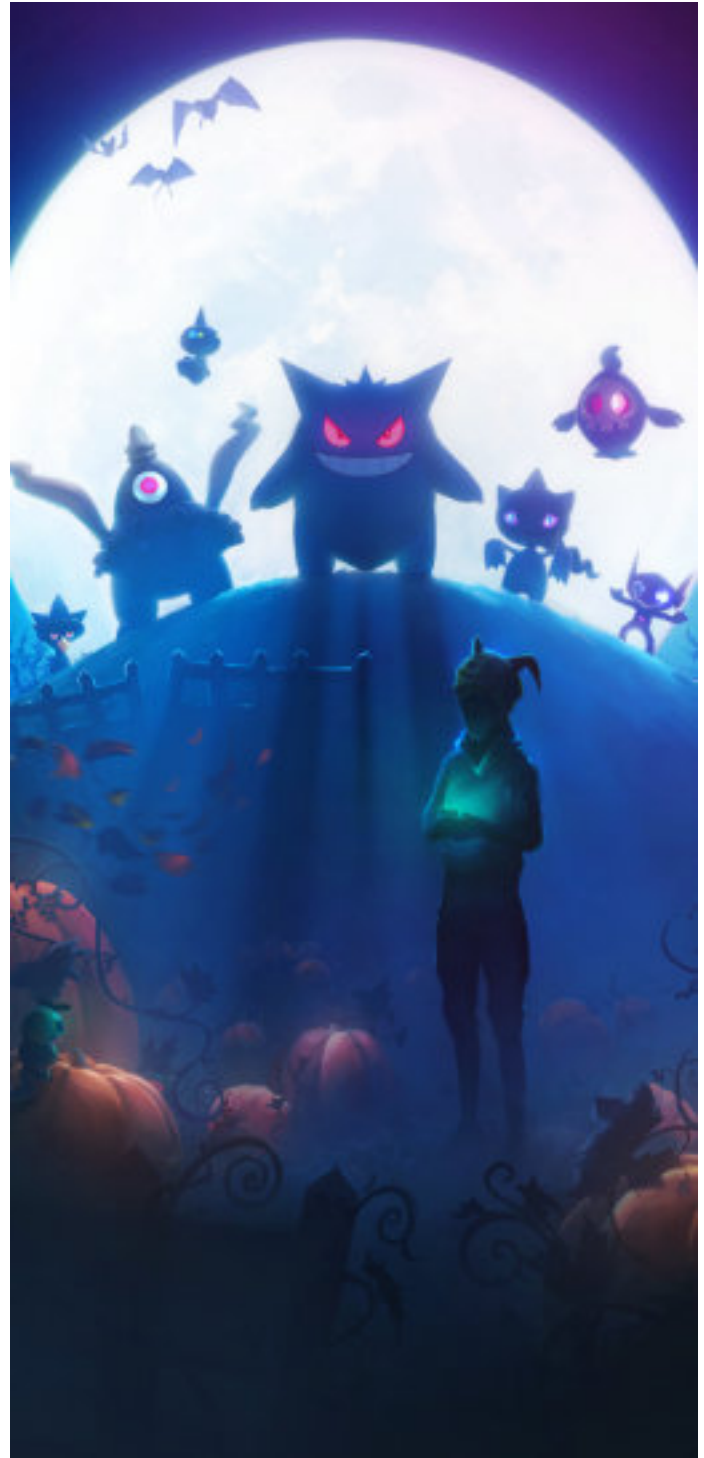
NPC FACTIONS

A **faction** is a simple way of **organizing who's working with who that is doing anything relevant in the Journey's world**. In practice, they end up being a **macro-NPC** of their own, in that they'll end up **sharing some traits with** what we use to create **individual NPCs**, but they are a group. Think of them as **an entity on the level of the party of PCs** - that is to say, they're **a group that gets to Do Stuff that Affects Things**.

Unlike the party, a **faction should be notated as simply as possible**, because ideally there will be two or three of them working for their own purposes in the background and **we don't want them to become too much to keep track of**. The most important things to note are **what NPCs are affiliated with** a faction, what the faction's **resources** are, and what the faction's **goals and motivations** are.

To figure out what NPCs are affiliated to a faction, just drop them in there in the big ol' bubble or in the list. Whatever format you're using is fine. Jessie, James, and Meowth collectively make up the Team Rocket faction in Ash's Journey.

Then, give the faction resources. Resources can be as precise as a specific legendary Pokémon with a statblock, but at minimum, **think of them like macro-level Moves available to the faction**, a solid asset or ability that they can draw on **that has an obvious narrative utility**. Team Rocket tends to have "Access to giant robots", "Meowth-head balloon", and "Cunning disguises". Obviously, a faction shouldn't be able to bring to bear a resource that doesn't fit the situation.



Quit your job. Join my emo band



NPC FACTIONS, CONTINUED



And now, our emo band will TAKE OVER THE WORLD!

Lastly, **assign their group's goals and motivation.** Team Rocket wants to please the Boss (motivation), so they're looking to steal Pokémon in general, but their number one goal is to steal the coveted Pikachu to impress him and they'll drop everything to do so!

Factions can have different relationships to the party. They could be allied to the party, neutral, antagonistic, or **shift over the course of a Journey due to aligning or conflicting goals and player actions.** In some cases, they may even like one party member and be wary of another because of something like Bad Rep!

You can use Factions with a tight system of faction actions, assign their resources and members rolls to add some randomness to events, or just use them as a bookkeeping tool for grouping ideas. For the sake of keeping it light, I (sadly, with all the sorrow in my heart) **won't be dropping a whole subsystem for Factions here.** But you can have a lot of fun as a GM playing around with them!

Factions can optionally have other traits as the GM sees fit for their story. Weaknesses, additional quirks, codes of conduct... **these may all be added** as needed. In addition, **a GM could even introduce a group without one of the core three traits and flesh them out later** as they go (ie. introducing the aftermath of a strike by an evil team and figuring out who's in charge of the grunts later)! The bottom line is that factions will help the world move around the PCs. This is because **factions and their actions exist to generate story hooks.**



STORY HOOKS & NEWS

Story Hooks are, in simple terms, the thing that stops player characters from doing the smart thing and not getting involved in trouble. They are **events that affect the world and give a reason for a PC to go somewhere and do something.**

In a **sandbox game** or longer Journey being created on the fly, **hooks will be created as you go and disseminated to players** through what I'm going to collectively call "News" - **News refers to anything that happens during the journey that results in a hook that is relayed to the PCs through exposition** somehow. In other words, News could be an NPC telling the party that a recent Pokémon theft has them on edge, rumours, literal news coverage about an event that reaches the party's ears, or even an allied faction becoming too busy to help the party because they have to deal with the aftermath of something big.

Faction actions create News. This includes the party's actions! When you're sitting down and planning your next session, **think about what the party did**, and what the **factions** are doing.

Make a list of obvious hooks that are brought to mind because of that. For instance, let's say **the party recently broke a dam** while fighting a Boss Bibarel, and **grunts of an evil team tried and failed to rob a bank** one town over. The News that would be generated from that could be something like:

- **There's a ranger cleanup effort downstream trending on local social media** to restore the damage done by the dam bursting - the sentiment is that the damage could have been worse, but it's still a lot of work.
- A TV news report comes on in the Pokémon Centre that morning and **talks about the attempted break-in and how the suspects are still at large.**

This immediately **gives PCs two possible hooks and a meaningful choice** to make - do they help with the cleanup effort, possibly ingratiating themselves to a local NPC, or chase after criminals? **Their actions here will decide the next set of hooks, and the next.**

Hindrances especially can often generate hooks. Wanted is the poster child for this, often creating the hook "GET THE HECK OUTTA TOWN", but Organizational Ties and other Edges come with some hooks built in. **Connected characters and Pokémon Researchers might find it easy to dig into potential News for further details, too.**

One last note on News: **Having their actions visibly impact the setting can be a good way to reward the players** for engaging with the game. Always make sure that the world acknowledges their actions somehow.



"Team Rocket Blasts Off Again - Continued on Comics Page?"



ACTIVE & PASSIVE HOOKS

News is a way to give the players **passive hooks**, but **some hooks will not wait for the PCs to come to them**. Sometimes, in Soviet Russia, the hooks come to the PCs.

It's **not recommended to have every hook be an active hook** in an open game, as this can foil player choice, but sometimes you pissed off the bad guys and the bad guys send a grunt

to mess you up. Or maybe you have an encounter that you absolutely want the players to have for story reasons, like introducing a legendary roaming Pokémon.

Active hooks, especially those that arise naturally because of player action, **play their part in making the world feel reactive** in a reactive game.



Source: sylzagoon2 on Twitch

READ HIGURASHI

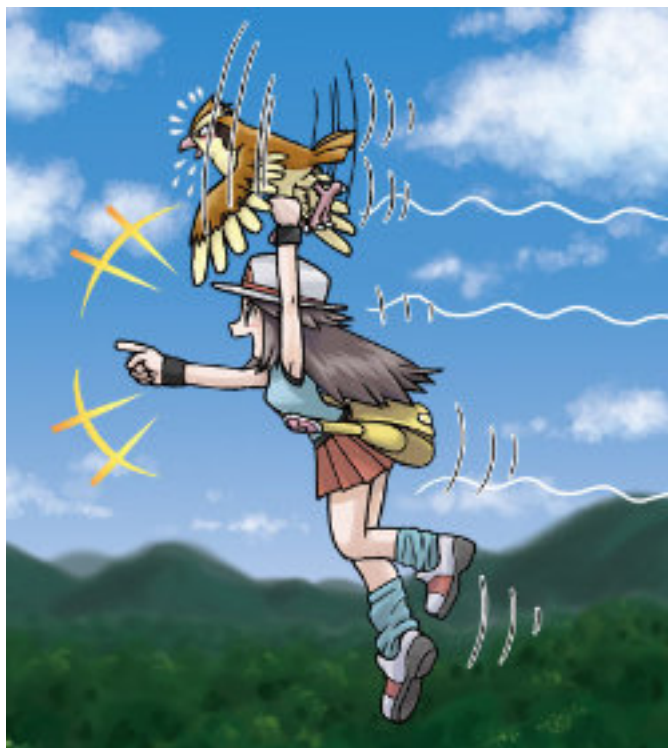
For instance, certain kinetic novel experiences will appear and attack in the tall grass



HOOK COUNTDOWNS & TRIGGERS

As part of designing an open Journey, there might be **things that you want to happen** in a certain order if the PCs don't interfere, **or something critically important that might happen if certain events come to pass**, or just generally **time sensitive events**. Hooks of this sort should be assigned a **countdown or trigger** - they **don't come to pass** and become News (in other words, broadcasted to the PCs or fully underway in a way the PCs can chase down) **until this timer ticks down to zero or until a faction acts upon them** in some way.

For example, consider a party having **two episodes until the evil team's evilness laser is fired at the town of Backstoryville**. Or maybe there's a tournament happening nearby, but the PCs have a four episode window to make their way there and compete!



Disaster in 3... 2... 1...

PCs may or may not be aware of a countdown - some countdowns may be **invisible** to the players **unless the players are actively paying attention** to and researching their source, such as the GM setting a three episode countdown to the players' first introductory encounter with the evil team that they later plan to have making trouble on a worldwide scale.

Keep your prep countdowns on the same timescale (always episodes, sessions, arcs etc.) to make bookkeeping easier on yourself.

A **trigger**, on the other hand, **releases a hook to become News when a certain set of circumstances is met**. Examples of triggers are Cerulean Cave only becoming accessible after obtaining the rank of Champion, thwarting a faction's current plan opening up an area they were previously guarding, the collection of fancy dinner plates paving the way to a god... **when you note down a potential hook** in your notes, **be sure to list what needs to happen** to pull the trigger on it.

A **trigger could be unknown to the players**, BUT don't have too many un-telegraphed secrets laying around. It'll clutter your notes and tempt you to subtly push the PCs to them.



GM Tips!

If the concept of individual countdowns is too much to keep track of, try organizing it as an editable "Timeline of Events" that contains a list of chronological events that happen at a specified time if the PCs don't intercede.



CLOCKS

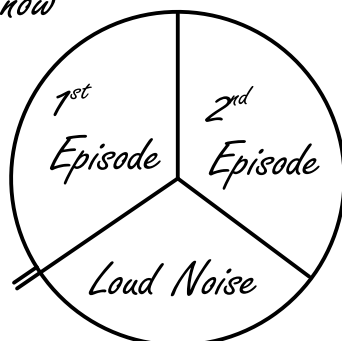
Okay, so **we have triggers**, which are hooks waiting for a specific event to trigger them, **and countdowns**, which go off at a specific time. These can be great on their own and are very simple to conceptualize and write down, but **what if I need something a little more complicated?** They can be **combined**!

Let's say I have a situation where **I need a mix of these two** - I have an event which will become a hook **when some time has gone by AND requires a trigger** after that time. In cases like these, it can be good to conceptualize a **clock**.

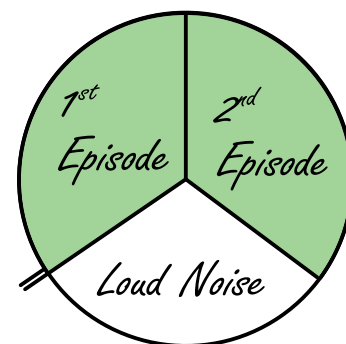
Clocks are a diagram explaining what steps, in what order, need to happen for a given outcome. They can be used in moment to moment play, but as a prepping tool, we're going to want them to **generate hooks**.

For our example, let's say that the PCs are in a mountain area and the GM wants to unleash an avalanche if they stay too long and act foolhardily. They **set up a clock**: Two episodes in that region, and it's primed to blow. After that, if anyone in the area causes noise, **a giant avalanche could cause a mountainwide disaster!** This could look like this in the notes:

*Your motherfucking mountain ends
2 episodes from now*



As we go, we'll fill in or check off the requirements. **When the clock is filled** (clockwise, of course), **the associated hook** (in this case the very immediate hook of DEAL WITH AN AVALANCHE) **reveals itself to the players.** The News for this one might be, say, an ominous rumbling from uphill.

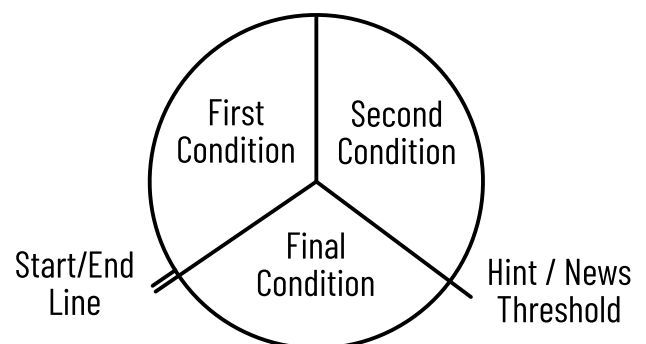


Wuh oh

Because clocks are organized in discrete steps, it's possible to send out News in the form of **hints** (think of these as "soft" Hooks) **to the players that something may happen** if they don't head it off. This is as simple as **adding a note at a certain step to put out that News to the players.** In our example, we could say that after one step on the clock, the PCs should find a hint that the snow is unstable.

Here's a template clock (more or less steps can be added as needed!):

Title (What happens when the clock fills)





CLOCKS, CONTINUED

There are many advantages and disadvantages of clocks as a note-keeping device. The **advantages** are:

- They pack a **lot of information** into a **simple diagram**.
- Clocks are **intuitive** for most people, but especially visual thinkers, to understand.
- Clocks are **highly customizable** to the needs of any specific countdown, as we'll get into below.

Some of clocks' **disadvantages** are:

- They are **not supported natively by many digital prep tools**, meaning that it will often take more effort to rig up digitally than in a notebook.
- Because they're so easy to make, it's **easy to get carried away** with pages and pages of clocks **and bog down prep**.
- **Blades in the Dark fans** will want to strike up conversation if they see your notes.

CUSTOMIZING CLOCKS

As mentioned above, there are tons of ways to customize clocks to your exact needs. Here are a few examples of how to hack them:

- A clock **can be filled non-linearly**, such as the collection of a number of different specific artifacts for some ritual.
- Clocks can have **conditions under which they lose steps**, such as player intervention or the failure of a condition to manifest.
- To step off from the above, **clocks may start partially filled already!** This might happen if they represent a struggle between two groups or people for control over something.
- Clocks **may be visible to the players**, such as if they're used to track projects that the players or their allies are undertaking.
- **Clocks may form Clock Voltron** and have sub-clocks where their steps require steps. Not recommended most of the time.

Sometimes clocks can even fail you if you're a night owl and your Pokémon Sleep starts at 4:01 AM and thus counts as the next day's sleep and scams you out of a day of research!

No salt. No salt. No s





(OPTIONAL) FACTION TURNS & PLANS

J/K lol I'm dropping a whole faction subsystem here. The system described above works for content that may arise and disappear with inaction in a streamlined way, but it doesn't give **structure** for **how a group could interact with the behind the scenes clocks** and countdowns. For this, we have **Plans**.

Plans are composed of: a **faction** attempting to execute them, a **tangible goal** (get another resource, dunk on a competitor, finish their homework), and a **clock** to track progress.

The trick is to count down not on time, but on **successful actions**. Require a faction to **devote their actions**, their "turns" in between episodes **to a hook for X amount of actions before it comes to fruition**. X is dependent on the scale of the plan; huge Journey-spanning Plans might take ten actions or more, while small ones could be a mere two or three.

Different factions may have more turns available to them, depending on a few factors.

A faction will **roll to advance the Plan with whatever NPC and resources they have** available to work on it. They **roll together** exactly like a trainer and Pokémon would, and a **Hit moves the clock forward** one step, while a Critical Hit puts it ahead two.

Plans should usually be telegraphed to the players, even if indirectly. For this, use the "hints" mentioned on the previous page to subtly let the players know when progress is being made on a Plan at certain intervals.

When PCs interact with a Plan and defeat its NPC or cut off its Resources, it may be **Foiled** - The faction will generally **have to choose between losing access to a member, a resource, or scrapping the Plan** altogether.



"Gah! Not the couple where circumstances have forced them together against their will and they spend all their time bickering and criticizing each other except during the intermittent occasions when they are saving each others' lives! The Evil Overlord List was right!"



FACTION TURNS & PLANS, CONTINUED

When you design Factions, **be sure to consider scale**. A regionwide organization may **group together minor NPCs** into one NPC unit, or **count mooks as a resource**.

With that in mind, to **convert factions created with the faction notes toolset** in previous sections, simply assign all of their members and resources a die step based on their competence and/or usefulness to the group. **An Admin or superweapon might be d10-d12**, while a washed out pair of incompetent thieves with a Meowth might count as a single **d4 NPC** on the scale of the group at large.

It's also notable that the **PCs collectively count as a faction**, and as such they may even **cook up their own Plans** using their downtime and actions during sessions if they would like to use this framework. **Enemy factions may even have Plans to Foil them!** (Though of course PCs should have different sacrifices to make besides members - **don't make people lose their Pokémon or character** unless the group wants to tell that story!)

For best streamlining these rules, **I discourage having more than 4 active factions**, including the PCs. In addition, **try not to exceed three plans per faction** for the least headaches.

But how often do factions get to roll? For maximum simplicity, give small factions one action per downtime and large ones two or three. **For more granular control**, give a faction one action per each notable member.

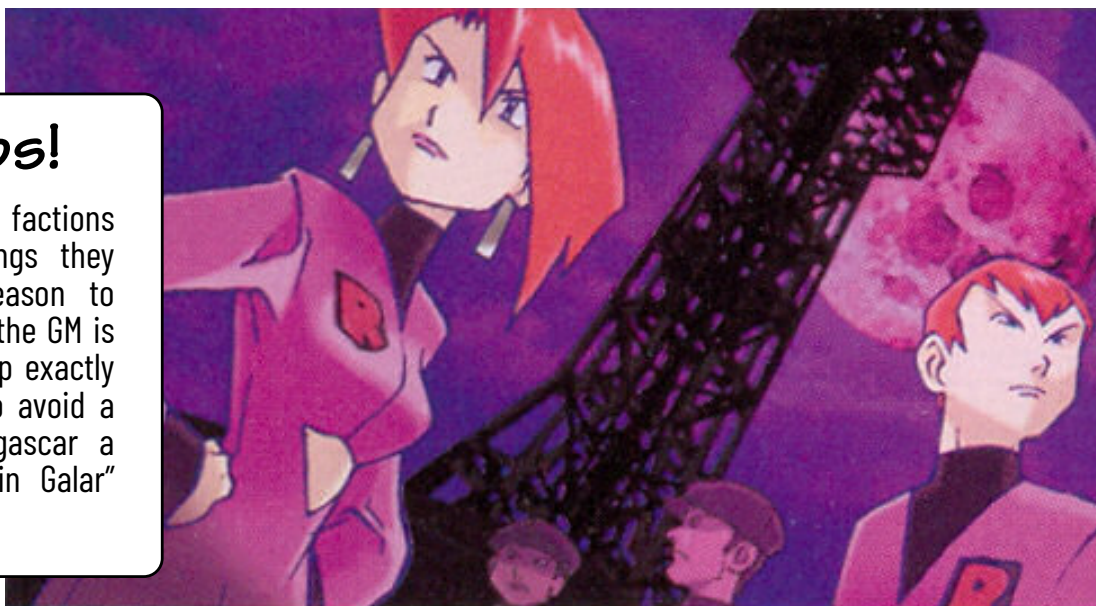
A final note: **Events during sessions may influence a faction** even outside of its Plans' clocks. A powerful asset degrading with each use, the actions of the PCs prompting a returning mook to be more dangerous, a major villain having a change of heart, or other **story reasons for membership and resources' values and existence to fluctuate are all fair game**. These rules are a framework to help tell a dynamic, reactive story, not a ball and chain.

A final FINAL note: **these are a super-optional tool!** They're a little **complex!** Use and discard as needed!



GM Tips!

Remember to have factions only react to things they have a logical reason to know (even if only the GM is privy to or made up exactly HOW they know) to avoid a "President Magcargascar a man is sneezing in Galar" type situation.





FACTION TURNS EXAMPLE

Let's put all this together in an example. **Let's say Team Rocket**, whose faction motivation is to swim in money like Scrooge McDuck, **has a Plan in Celadon City** - to use their casino front to gain enough money **to add another resource to their faction in the form of Slots Revenue (d10)**.

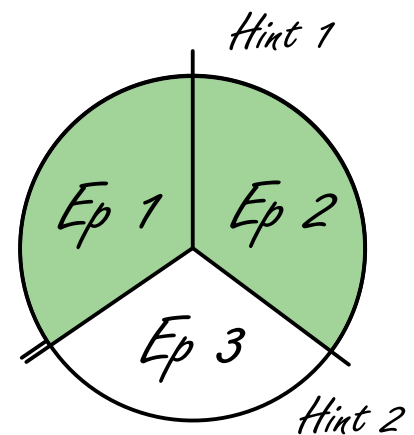
The GM decides that this is a **small scale but important operation**, so it's got three actions required to complete, and **Team Rocket is currently putting an action towards it with one of their Admins** (the acting NPC) **and a group of grunts** (the resource) **every episode**. They could really use that Slots Revenue to help expedite their other Plan in Saffron City!

Nothing could go wrong!

The GM begins the clock as the PCs get to Celadon. The Admin **rolls a success on both actions**, putting the clock up by **2 steps!**

As the PCs cross through town, during other activities **over the course of two episodes**, they see a Rocket Grunt near the Game Corner (Hint 1), and hear rumours that the Game Corner's Pokémon Prizes came in a strange unmarked truck (Hint 2). **On the latter hint**, the players decide to act.

Rockets get Slots Revenue (d10)



Just one more to go! I got a good feeling about this one, Boss!



FACTION TURNS EXAMPLE, CONTINUED

In the example above, **the PCs choose to use their next episode to investigate and follow the News they've been given.** They discover and charge into the Game Corner's hidden Rocket base, **cleaning the place out in a lively session full of encounters** and, on the GM tracking side, **Foiling Team Rocket's Plan.**

Rather than risk their precious Admin or let their grunts be captured and interrogated so close to the fruition of their Saffron operation, Team Rocket chooses to **let their Plan fail and let go of that new resource they wanted.** In a different circumstance, they may have let their Admin go to jail or let the grunts take the fall. Enough of these types of failures and **an organization could very well dwindle and fall!**

Had the PCs not interfered here, the Rockets may have **taken a near-unshakeable control of Celadon** with all that money, similar to the way they did in Saffron while the PCs were busy elsewhere. **Or maybe grunts in Silph Co. would have healing items** on hand from that extra funding if the PCs eventually tried to foil that Plan, **or maybe the money would have allowed them to roll a critical on another Plan roll and capture Mewtwo** before the PCs even arrived in Saffron! Either way, **they'd hear about it through News,** as events that unfold send out their ripple effects through the world!

You can see how **a faction Plan can provide Hooks to the PCs** in an organic way, **causing logical consequences from action or inaction.**



Be like THE Team Rocket. Never throw a bro under the bus. Always choose to blast off again



OPPOSED FACTION PLANS

Wait, **what happens if** bad bitches, sorry I mean **NPCs fight?** Well, consider that **the faction rules exist** not to simulate real battles between factions, but **to facilitate making the PCs stick their nose into things in** a dynamic world. To that point, **conflict between NPC factions is considerably simplified.**

There are two simple options:

- The **first option** is that, when an NPC faction goes to stop another one's Plan or they have conflicting Plans, **they are deadlocked until the PCs do something about it.** This has the advantage of requiring much less upkeep and always involving the players.
- The **second option** is that, when factions come to conflict as above, the GM sits down and **does a one-time calculation** of how many dice steps the acting NPCs and their resources have. The calculation is:

Divide both factions' NPC dice + resource dice by two (eg. $d10 + d4 = 14$, divide by 2 for 7). Round down the number for both.

Once you've got both numbers, take the smaller one and divide by 2 again, rounded down. **That's how many episodes it will take for the weaker side to lose** - it's now a simple **countdown**. On a tie, they are deadlocked like in the first option.

In either case, **the NPCs and resources involved in the conflict will be inaccessible to their respective factions** until the conflict is resolved or one side withdraws. **The loser is treated as having been Foiled.**

Note that **these types of conflicts only happen when factions are actively struggling against each other** or vying for the **same goal or mutually exclusive goals** where getting one would forbid the other. Normally, **if, say, Team Rocket is scheming against the League unbeknownst to them, that's a regular Plan.** You only pull this out if Team Sea LARPer and Team Land Hall Monitors are **fighting over a volcano or something**, or if you **ask your ally Lance** very nicely to go ahead with his Dragonite and hold up Team Badguy in Fuschia while you do Pokéathlon.

We need to send our best matchmaker. They would make the cutest couple ever if only they could find common ground. Or ocean. shit

Think of the enemies to lovers, Lance!!!!





Shop to Live, Live to Shop

I see a Little Guy. I go ham. I battle it. I catch it. I see a Little Guy -

GAMEPLAY LOOPS

A **gameplay loop** is a term for the main point of a game. **It's the cycle of activity that you engage in when playing**, and making a fun gameplay loop is the most unshakeably important part of any game. It's called a loop, of course, because **following it will lead you to another loop of the same gameplay, but changed**.

In the **Pokémon** games, the gameplay loop is: **Get to new area, catch new Pokémon, train, do an important capstone event usually followed by a battle, unlock new area** or way to interact with existing areas, **rinse, repeat**. It is, and I can't stress this enough, **amazing actually**.

Pokémon, the franchise, lives and dies on this loop. The main games use this loop. Pokémon Snap uses this loop. Pokémon fucking SLEEP uses this loop. **It works.** It's formulaic. It's adaptable. It's elegant. You are rewarded with more Little Guys for your efforts. Ten out of ten. Anyone who ever said people would get tired of Pokémon, DAD, didn't understand this loop.

Okay, so **we want to adapt this for Pokeymanz...** but how? How do we take a video game's core gameplay and **make it something that works in tabletop?**





THE DEFAULT GOAL

We can learn from the above that the key point of Pokémon's gameplay loop is finding more critters and going to new places to find more critters. However, *Pokeymanz* allows a range of Callings. **How do we reconcile this?**

Well, for the GM's sake, we can **understand all Callings to be appended by "by interacting with new Pokémon in some way"**.



"Huh... Where are all of them, anyway?"

I want to be a photographer (by photographing new Pokémon)! I want to defeat an evil team (by catching and training Pokémon)! I want to save my gym from closure (by finding new trainers and allies with new Pokémon). **This is a Pokémon game first and foremost**, after all. What are you doing if your Calling doesn't involve Pokémon?

If you think about this, as the GM, **you can set up personalized gameplay loops for each Calling**, and if you're clever, you can combine them and get as much of the party's goals in each area as possible. A battle against an evil team for one trainer is a photo-op for another, and may yet still hold a possible ally to cart back to the gym or information on why their town stopped getting visitors for another.

GAME STATES

Put simply, **game states are the different phases of playing a game**. In the intro, we highlighted the parts of Pokémon's gameplay loop - Travel, catch, train, battle, etcetera. **Each of these phases carries its own gameplay and decisions to make**. Travel to a new town is the activity of walking around, talking to people, and stocking up on supplies. Going out to a route is putting yourself in a state of battle, training, and discovery as you press onward. **You might flip between those phases as you go along**, creating that loop, and you might get very tired of the game if it was all one activity over and over.

In tabletop, **each different type of encounter or interaction is a game state**. Stopping for RP is a game state. Shopping is a game state. To

find a fun loop, you need to **be aware of how these interact and feed into each other**.

Don't fret! **You'll probably find a decent loop naturally** - just be aware that **variety** is the secret. Variety and **different states leading into each other**, like downtime preparing for a big gym battle, or a big gym battle leading into being allowed into a new area.



"Whew! They'll never find us under this header."



THE PURPOSE OF DOWNTIME

For the theming, they're called Filler Episodes, but **downtime in Pokeymanz is rarely wasted**. It's time for players to stop, plan, shop or craft, pursue personal goals that might not be a great fit for the whole group to chase, process emotional beats, or gather information. **These are all things that naturally lead into other game states.**

In other words, downtime of SOME kind is a key part of a good gameplay loop **as a transition state**, whether you sit down and have a whole session dedicated to it or you ask the players to submit what they're doing between episodes via a form or something off the wall like that.



Wrong. Downtime is exclusively for drawing my OCs doing cute shit

MAPS



So travelling is a really important part of Pokémon - but in most of the games up until very recently, travel is in a straight line. So what is the point of the travel game state? Exploration and a sense of novelty. In older games, this exploration is handed to you - new place, new Pokémon, look for secrets to create the illusion of true exploration. Recent entries have expanded on this to add true exploration.

To create a sense of exploration in tabletop, we have more options than in a video game, but always remember that whatever you do, **it should create novel experiences and allow encounters with new Pokémon.**

In more short or linear games, borrow the toolkit of the older games and plan a variety of encounters and possible rewards for being clever. In a sandbox game or a longer-haul Journey, though, you're going to want a **map**.



MAPS, CONTINUED



Regional maps have many advantages for open games:

- They make players to feel **grounded in a world that exists around them**
- They **allow players to make meaningful emergent decisions** about navigation and destination
- Maps make it easy to **generate content on the fly** as the players move into each new area
- Maps are **easy to organize with keying techniques**, especially those with distinct areas
- Moving between areas **marks a clear progression of game states**
- **Maps are cool**
- bottom text

A good map will take a lot of planning off a GM who has the right tools, and will allow players to naturally move between game states every time they make a decision about travelling - creating that sought-after gameplay loop!

There are a lot of different map creating softwares, but **for the sandbox style, a good old fashioned hex map** is probably the ideal way to make an interactable map quickly.

To that end, here is a **free hex map generator and editor** to get started: [Hextml](#). There's also the [Pokémon Tales Region Generator](#) for more procedural generation with **more Pokémon-specific content**.



It's a Whole New World we Live in



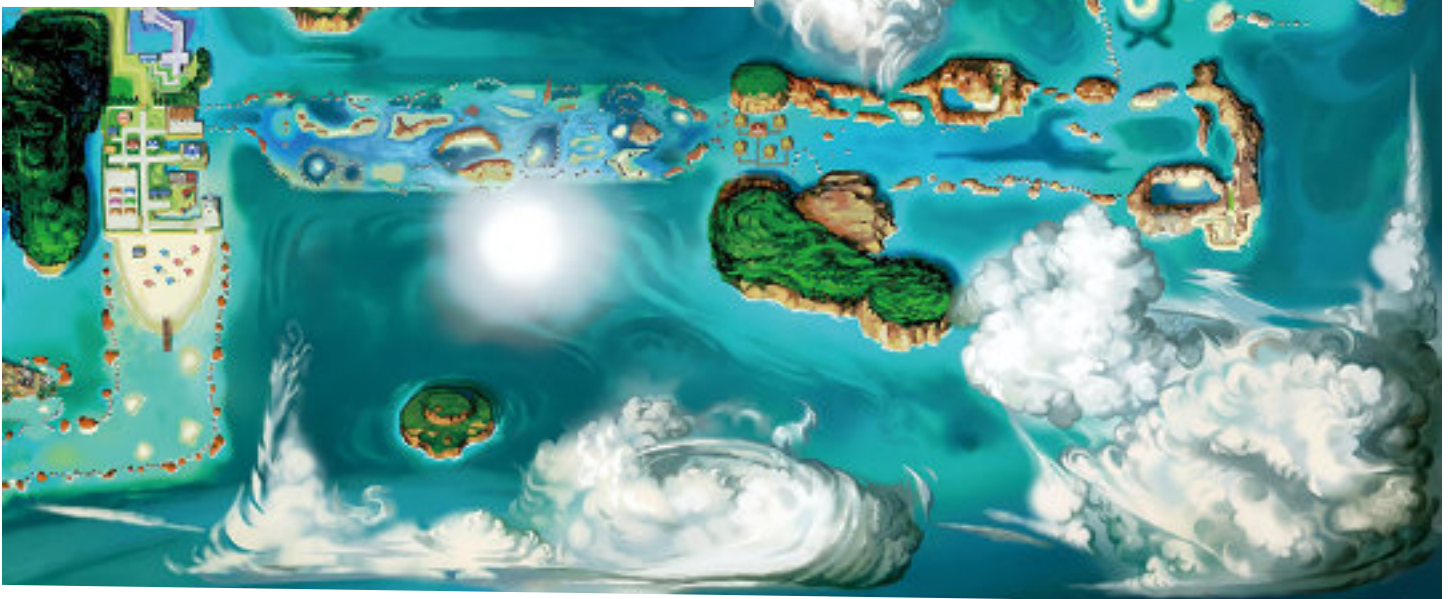
Oh yeah I'm making a whole region for the game I'm gonna GM. It rules, check it out

PREPPING AN OPEN JOURNEY

This is where we take the pieces we've been building up and put them together. **We're going to make a prep loop**, or a checklist of prep that can be **repeated every episode** to **generate content** for an open-ended game that isn't planned ahead much more than that.

This is not a definitive guide, but **it is a concrete set of steps** you could use to put the building blocks we've discussed together into a game. **Take or leave what works for you**, adapt it, mangle it as needed.

If you want to skip to the checklist, it's [like six pages from now](#) in a convenient quick reference form. If not, read on for the deets!





FOUNDATIONS

When you're sitting down to make a game, before you pitch it to the players, **consider what you want out of the game.** At this step, we'll call it Session -1, come up with a **Thematic Question**, a preferred **Gameplay Loop** (or what thing you'd want to focus on the most), and **the very bare bones of a world.** Or nab a canon or fanon region and let someone else do the work.

Next, **find players.** Generally, **have a Session Zero BEFORE you commit to the hard boundaries of the Journey**, as their Callings will affect how the world and game is built. Some GMs may prefer to set things like Callings up and let players pick from a predetermined set of goals, which is fine as well, but works better when the GM is recruiting players from a public site as opposed to working with a friend group.

All the usual Session Zero stuff still applies here! Remember to cover all or most of the [recommended topics](#) (pg. 140)!

Make sure to communicate during this stage that this is not a game where the PCs can passively wait for things to come to them, or at least that will make things much harder for them.

Once session zero has been held and expectations set, you can really get down to it.

Set up your map (or just your world, if you're not using a map), and **sprinkle it with as many points of interest as you desire** - you might be a "build the whole world GM" or a "come up with it on the spot GM", and the former shines here.

If you have any plot events on a timer or trigger, now is the time to set them up, pin them on the map, and put them down in your notes. **Make sure to give each player at least one destination related to their calling to visit** if they want.



Increase the difficulty of session zero by attacking your players in real life as they pick their starters

(DO NOT ACTUALLY DO THIS)



THE PREP LOOP

This is the week to week work of maintaining the game, planning its direction, and generating new hooks and content. In all stages, **apply Rule 3** of GMing - pay attention to your players and their PCs!

After every episode, you should...

- **Check in on player goals and story beats.**

Take a minute to think about what happened last session and put it into the larger context of the plot. **Is there anything you can use from a PC's actions, flaws, or insecurities that would drive things forward?** A written summary of the story so far can help, but isn't required.

- **Have factions act and react.** If the PCs did something, that was their "faction turn". Now it's the other factions' turns to act. **If you aren't using formal Faction rules**, you can simply **not make factions roll and just give them "faction turns" they can reasonably accomplish** between between episodes related to their resources or members. If you want to introduce some simple randomness, though, **roll some dice!** Leave the degree of success or failure to surprise you and keep you on your toes.

You may or may not want use the Plans framework, but either way, **one or more of these faction actions might generate News or a trigger or countdown hook.**

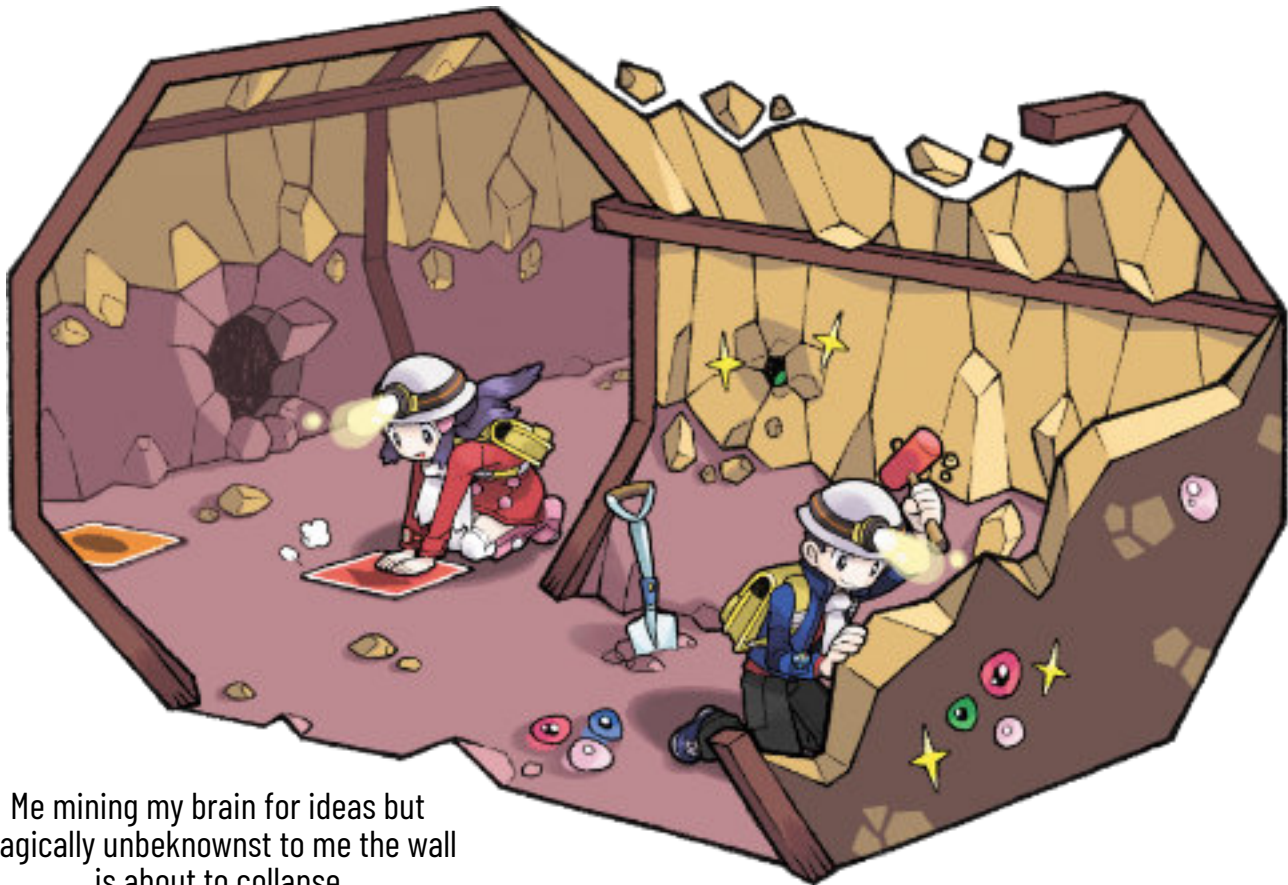


GM Tips!

This list is meant to cut prep down to the bare minimum. If you have fun, for example, making extremely detailed maps, by all means do the fun part too! Just always get the minimum done first.



THE PREP LOOP, CONTINUED



Me mining my brain for ideas but
tragically unbeknownst to me the wall
is about to collapse

- **Create points of interest.** If you have an idea for something cool, like a setpiece, cool encounter, or maybe a neat opportunity for a PC Calling, slip it in here. It doesn't need to be long! In fact, **keep it to a sentence or two** at this stage.
- **Manage story hooks.** Using the information from the last two steps, add in any new hooks. Mark their status - triggers, countdowns, and whether or not the hook is currently News. This is also the step where you mark down an active countdown by one.
- **If a News hook was left untouched** last time, **consider if it disappears (and what the consequences might be) or escalates.**

A Pokémon swarm might dissipate, simply leaving the party having missed an opportunity, whereas a series of break-ins might progress to a gang problem if left for a while. When making this decision, **consider if the number of hooks is getting onerous or if the hook could be merged with another somehow**, like un-dealt-with break-ins netting a faction a new resource before disappearing. **Don't overload yourself** and look for ways to keep the story naturally interwoven!



THE PREP LOOP, CONTINUED

- **Plant News.** Using the above list, **make short snippets** to give to your players **before or during the next episode.**

A good way to handle this for your sanity might be to have a **board or channel where you post the News** in between sessions and let the party vote on what they want to go after or otherwise decide ahead of time, giving you some prep time for when you need to prepare the actual content.

Other GMs might prefer to **seed it naturally during a downtime portion** or filler episode and get a final decision as the downtime concludes.

- **Let the players pick and get ready to improvise.** Your players might ignore every single piece of News you give them and decide to do something of their own volition. This is fine - they are simply making their own point of interest. See The Invisible Rail Network on recycling content and salvaging exposition, or improvise something entirely new to match.

Just **let the existing hooks develop** around the PCs and let the realistic **consequences of their actions** follow. Drop non-important hooks that the players aren't interested in. The game is about the PCs, after all.



Look, fellow player characters! It's the one thing that the GM didn't think to account for! I'm suddenly dead certain we have to go that way!



THE PREP LOOP, CONTINUED



So many ideas. What to terrorize the players with? A Legendary Pokémon, or a turtle having an existential crisis?

- **Expand on the chosen hooks.** When the players choose a path to follow, you're going to need to turn your rough notes into a full session or episode. I don't recommend having each hook mapped out in detail, but rather creating a system that works for you where you can quickly expand on and stat out the hook the players do end up picking in the end.
- **Plagiarize yourself.** Reduce, reuse, **recycle!** Remember the **Invisible Rail Network**? If you had something statted out that wasn't used before, an encounter idea, NPCs that would slide in nicely, etcetera, **apply your saved material as you expand hooks!**
- **Run the game!** During this step, your PCs take actions and make decisions about what happens, grow as characters, clown around, make enemies, catch Pokémon...

Again for the back: **DON'T prepare the details of every hook you write**, unless you're prepared to quickly recycle that mechanical prepwork when the players don't pick it.

At the end, **return to the beginning and repeat!**



PREP LOOP QUICK REFERENCE

1. Check-in on **Player Goals & Story Beats**
2. Have **Factions** Act and React
3. Create **Points of Interest** (Optional)
4. Create & Update **Hooks**
 - a. Make **new** Hooks
 - b. Track **Countdowns** and/or **Plans**
 - c. Check **Triggers**
 - d. Make sure to **prune or combine** Irrelevant Hooks
5. Plant **News**
6. See **What the PCs Pick**
 - a. Make yourself **Kill your Darlings** (Mental Exercise)
 - b. Expand and **Prep Encounters**
 - a. Remember: **Recycle** your work
7. Finally, **run the game!** Rinse and repeat!



FOOTNOTE: FURTHER READING

I read a lot of **books and blogs** by some very smart people while thinking about how to structure a Pokémon game, and while these all tackle different kinds of games and have their own biases and uses, all of the following are **good reading for any GM who's been running for a little while** and has gotten their feet wet enough to **look into theory**.

- **The Alexandrian**, as previously mentioned, and Justin Alexander's book [So You Want to be a Game Master](#), compiling and refining his blog posts, is source numero uno on **nonlinear prep** and has many many useful **breakdowns of RPG conventions**.
- [Return of the Lazy Dungeon Master](#), while geared for D&D, is a condensation of **what needs to go in a game's prep at minimum**
- and has a lot of good tips on **reigning in scope and focusing on strong concepts**.
- [Robin's Laws of Good Gamemastering](#), while dated in many ways (hello assumption that all gamers are male, hello irrational hatred of roleplayers), gets very into the fundamentals of **identifying what each player wants from the game** and how to be mindful about **making sure everyone has something fun to do**.
- Christopher Chinn's post [The Same Page Tool](#) really digs into the often not well discussed **underlying assumptions about how a given game is supposed to be run**.
- [The Without Number series](#) has oodles of GM tools and advice for sandbox games.



Live footage of your prep when you get achieve a strong combination of theory and practical experience



SAMPLE EPISODE

Sometimes you just don't want to cook for yourself. This is like that, except it doesn't break the bank, and also isn't food.

Help! I have no Notes for Session Tonight!

Running an Episode or Journey can be **intimidating** as a first-time GM, even with the tools in the above sections. Sometimes even an established GM would like a structure or starter from which to run, too!

Or maybe you just didn't have time to make notes this week and you're dying. You're dying, Squirtle.

To remedy any or all of these situations, **here is a sample Episode** to run for a group of newbie to moderately experienced trainers, authored by Schocar: **A Noble Cause**, a tale of high miscommunication that can be run on its own or easily slotted into an existing Journey.

It is recommended to read through the entire module before running this Episode!



GMing? Here, you dropped this





A NOBLE CAUSE

In this episode, the party is hired by the local **Pokéfan club** to investigate a local archaeology dig on claims that their digging has caused the strange occurrences around the area. The adventure begins when the party finds and saves the archaeologists, who tell the party that they would leave if they could find some artifacts that had been stolen...

Setting: This Episode starts in a small town near some woods with a large river running through them. GMs can call it **Satpool Town** (and the surrounding area Satpool Woods), or change the names of the various locations to fit it into the geography of their existing region.

If you're running this with a fresh group that only has their starters, it's advisable to **allow them to heal up newly captured Pokémon** so they can use them in the upcoming encounters.

To new GMs: there are plenty of opportunities for creative use of Moves and abilities to **mix up how trainers approach the upcoming encounters**, such as using trapping Moves to prevent running and force a fight. Some examples are given for alternatives, but **don't feel constrained by what is on the page** - think of it as a jumping-off point, and think of how player actions would affect the whole picture.

The river here is flowing gently.
Someone might be hiding
nearby...



READING ENCOUNTERS

This episode has numerous Pokémon battle encounters, and thus has stats for each encountered Pokémon. **Below, there's a sample statblock to demonstrate the layout of each encounter.**

Each Pokémon has a **Special Ability**, **Type(s)**, **four Moves**, and a **Toughness** score. There may be more than one of a stat for a Pokémon in an encounter; it will be specified in the text describing the encounter's setup if this is the case. There's also a space for **Features and Hazards**.

Remember, non-Boss **Wild Pokémon** have two **Wound** boxes by default!



"No Rei we can't fight all of them at once. Horde battles won't be invented until - OH ARCEUS A PARAS"

Anatomy of an Encounter Statblock: Joltik

The Pokémon's Special Ability and a suggested ruling for that Ability

The Pokémon's Toughness rating

Pokédex ID and name of the Pokémon

4

#595 JOLTIK TYPE: BUG/ELECTRIC

The Pokémon's typing

Swarm: It calls in backup when cornered. When down to one Wound, Bug-Type Moves gain a +1 bonus.

Moves	Type
STRING SHOT d8	BUG
ELECTRO BALL d6	ELECTRIC
GASTRO ACID d4	POISON
BUG BITE d6	BUG

A good boi. A fine lad



The Pokémon's Move list, the dice step associated with each Move, and its type

Arena Features, Hazards, and misc. notes

Arena Features:
Arcade

Arena Hazards:
Gamers



GETTING THE ADVENTURE STARTED

Open on the party arriving in the mid-morning at **the Pokéfan club**. Kids and adults alike gather here to celebrate their love of Pokémon and to work on projects involving them. Soon after the party arrives and interacts with the other members, **Geoff will approach the party**.

Once their intention to help with the archaeologists is confirmed, **he will give a rundown on the situation**:

- A small group of archaeologists has begun **digging in a cave** in the forest recently, and has uncovered a lot of artifacts and precious stones.
- Around the same time that the archaeologists began digging things up (about a week ago), **the forest's ecosystems have been thrown into disarray**. The normally bustling woods have been almost empty of Pokémon, and those that have remained have been **more aggressive than usual**.
- Within the past couple of days **the nearby river has been breaking its banks** and causing trouble for the Pokémon that live on its edge.
- If pressed, Geoff will tell the group that the fan club itself has tried convincing the archaeologists to stop their dig before, but **hopes that a third party asking them will be more convincing**.

Once the party understands the situation, Geoff will give them instructions on how to reach the cave where the archaeologists have

been digging and send them on their way with haste! He lets them know **they can return to the Club once the job is done to get rewards**.

The trek through the forest should display some of the problems Geoff mentioned. Luckily, it's a short jaunt to the cave where the archaeologists are working. Before the party enters the cave, though, **they can hear sounds of conflict coming from inside**, with multiple voices yelling and lots of crashing and banging.



Pokéfan Geoff

He/Him. Head of the local Pokéfan club and avid Pokémon cosplayer. Loves the unique ecosystems in the woods around the area, and is genuinely worried about the wellbeing of the Pokémon in the area given how odd they've been acting lately. Should be played with complete earnestness, never doubting his conviction that the archaeologists are to blame for everything.



ENCOUNTER: STOP THE CAVE POKÉMON!



Archaeologist Terra

She/Her. Leader for the archaeologists excavating the ruins cave, and good friends with Kayla. Has a Kabuto, which she dotes on. Just wants her stuff back, and is willing to even work with the party sent by the Pokéfan club to achieve that. Should be played rather deadpan and straight to the point, but not emotionless. If the party shows an interest in her work, she gets just as energetic as Geoff.

The archaeologists are being assaulted by a small group of very agitated Pokémon. If the party looks closely at the scene, they can deduce that the Pokémon aren't hurting anyone, and are mostly just trashing their camp and causing property damage. **Terra**, who until now has been trying to convince her Kabuto to battle the wild Pokémon, **will ask the party to help them.**

Include a mixture of the following Pokémon equal to the number of players. It's also a good chance to look at your players' wishlists and put any cave Pokémon they want in here! This encounter **can be approached as a social or battle encounter.** If social, the Pokémon's Hesitation is that "without a ranger, the team has been disturbing their nests by accident!" Their Trait is "ride or die for cool rocks".


A note: if the wild Pokémon are rolling terribly, don't be afraid to quietly "fudge" or adjust rolls to make things more interesting.

4

#293 WHISMUR TYPE : NORMAL

Rattled: Dark-, Ghost-, and Bug-type moves scare it when hit; its next attack has priority.

Moves	Type
SCREECH d6	NORMAL
ECHOED VOICE d6	NORMAL
SUPERSONIC d8	NORMAL
ASTONISH d6	GHOST




4

#703 CARBINK TYPE : ROCK/FAIRY

Sturdy: This Pokémon can refuse to take an additional Wound from a Critical Hit once a battle.

Moves	Type
SMACKDOWN d6	ROCK
MOONBLAST d6	FAIRY
TACKLE d4	NORMAL
POWER GEM d8	ROCK



Arena Features:
Fragile Valuables, Rocky Terrain



THE BRANCHING PATH

Once the problem Pokémon's rampage is dealt with one way or another, Terra will thank the party for their help and ask what brought them to the cave. If the party brings up the Pokéfan club, Terra will immediately get defensive and start bad-mouthing the club as "nosy busybodies". **Her side of the story is:**

- The archaeologists **found this cave with valuable artifacts inside** of it and went through all the legal channels to start digging here. They even got a Pokémon Ranger, Kayla, to help them make sure they didn't disturb any Pokémon.



Ranger Kayla

She/Her. A rookie Pokémon Ranger who 'assigned' herself to the archaeologist team to help her friend Terra. Her partner Pokémon is a Combusken. When the players encounter her she should be panicked, since her mission is in jeopardy. She won't hurt Pokémon, but is fully willing to help the party with what they ask (especially if they have a Ranger among them). Also works as an easy source of knowledge of the area/items/etc. if the players need any extra help, treat her as though she has Always Prepared.

- About a week ago, they found a **King's Rock**, along with a stash of evolutionary stones. Then, about five days ago, every pointy stone they had found was stolen, including the King's Rock.
- The culprit **left tracks behind**, in the shape of a cylinder with small protrusions from it. Terra thinks it's the tail of one of Geoff's Kangaskhan cosplays.
- Then, two days ago, **all of the evolution stones were stolen from the camp**.
- The tracks left this time **looked like small ovals**. Terra thinks the size means that the club employed children, those dastards!
- If pressed, Terra will admit that their only "guard" was her cowardly Kabuto.
- Last night, Kayla **decided she would go after the thieves**, and hasn't reported back since. Terra is worried for her, since the Pokémon have been more aggressive lately.
- Today was the first time the archaeologists had been actively attacked by Pokémon, though. Probably because Kayla wasn't here.

Terra says that their dig is mostly done anyways, and that if the party finds the thief and Kayla, they'll leave. Their best lead, besides the footprints, is that Kayla said she'd follow the stone thieves' footprints. **She can't remember if she went downstream or upstream, though.** The river swelling has washed away the footprints, too. **The trainers' best bet is to pick a direction and walk!**



ENCOUNTER: UPSTREAM SLOWPOKES!


As the party travels upstream, nothing noticeably changes. It will take some work (maybe a Research roll) before they find **multiple tracks in the mud** near the river that **match the description of the tracks Terra told them about** earlier. Following these leads the party to a **Slowbro**, sitting at the edge of the river, tail in the water, who ignores the party at first. Soon, it should become apparent that **the area is swarming with Slowpokes** and Slowbros. Roleplaying these Pokémon is easy: They are very dumb, and are very slow to react to nearly anything.

Soon, the Slowpokes begin to congregate at the river's edge. Being led by two Slowbros, **they start to Rain Dance in unison**, bringing harsh rain to the river, and threatening to break its banks. **If the trainers don't stop this,**

everyone in the area will be washed downstream!

This is a hybrid disaster-battle encounter. The trainers have **three to four rounds of countdown** before being swept downstream. If the trainers fight their way through this one, **three** Slowpokes will protect the **two** Slowbros. **If they are swept away, transition appropriately to the climax.**





Professor Birch look out

4

Oblivious: It's not picking up what you're putting down. the Pokémon is immune to Infatuation.


Moves	Type
SURF d6	WATER
HEADBUTT d4	NORMAL
WATER GUN d8	WATER
AMNESIA d6	PSYCHIC

#080 SLOWBRO TYPE : WATER/PSYCHIC

4

Own Tempo: It's moving at its own pace. The Pokémon's Initiative order cannot be changed.

Moves	Type
SURF d6	WATER
RAIN DANCE d10	WATER
DISABLE d6	NORMAL
AMNESIA d6	PSYCHIC



Arena Features: Heavy Rain
Arena Hazards: Rapids



SLOWPOKE ENCOUNTER AFTERMATH

Once the dance has been stopped, **the party will be approached by Bumpy the shiny Slowpoke**, who seems frustrated at the party and his fellow Pokémon for stopping the dance. Being smarter than the other Slowpokes, though, the party is able to get through to him. There is a pit full of the stolen pointy rocks (**including the King's Rock**), which Bumpy will show the party, and then put on the King's Rock. With no Shellder, though, **he can't evolve into a Slowking**. The Slowpokes can also try to convey that there is a **blockage in the river to the Shelders**, which they hoped to destroy with the flood.

Once the party understands the situation or starts to head downstream or both, they will meet a fraught Kayla along the way, with no stylus, who tells the party that **an enraged group of Poliwhags, Whirls, and Wraths are marching towards them** to grab the King's Rock. **Head to the climax.**



Slowpoke Bumpy

He/Him. A shiny Slowpoke named for the noticeable large bump on his head. Wants to become a Slowking to lead his clan of Slowpokes. Shows slightly higher intelligence than your average Slowpoke, even before evolution, and has a dogged determination set for everything he does. Solves problems with brute force.



Bad news everyone, the victory selfie session is
CANCELLED



ENCOUNTER: DOWNSTREAM POLIWHIRLS!

As the party heads downstream, after a time, they hear a girl yelling in the distance. It's pretty easy to make out that she's arguing with someone who took something from her. That girl is **Kayla, the Pokémon Ranger** who was helping the archaeologists with their dig.

Her assailants are a group of **two Poliwhags and two Poliwhirls, one of which is Rocky**. The reason that she hasn't reported back to camp is obvious, as **the Poliwhirls have stolen and broken her Ranger Stylus**; it's being tossed between the Pokémon. **She'll ask for their help dealing with them.** If asked, she'll explain that she followed the footprints downstream and ended up going in circles until this group jumped her. Her Combusken won't be much help because of its typing.

The Poliwhirls also split off to play with the

party. They'll try to grab anything that isn't tied down. **Their leader, Rocky, is the one the players have to appeal to if they want this to stop.** As soon as anyone starts to be aggressive, though, the Poliwhirls will freeze, then **jump into the river and swim away, still holding any items they stole.** The chase is on!

This is a **competition encounter**, where the PCs will race to get more Hits than the Polis. **Each Pokémon or trainer and Pokémon team should get two rolls before the chase ends,** taking turns. At the end of the rolls, the team with most Hits succeeds. Critical Hits should give Hits toward the count **and** a chance to modify the Arena.

To give the players an edge, **have there be one less Poli than the total player count.** The difficulty can be tweaked by adding more.

#060 POLIWAG TYPE : WATER

4

Damp: Prevents the use of explosive moves by dampening its surroundings.

Moves	Type
BUBBLE BEAM d6	WATER
HYPNOSIS d6	PSYCHIC
EARTH POWER d4	GROUND
BELLY DRUM d6	NORMAL

#061 POLIWHIRL TYPE : WATER

4

Moves	Type
MUD SHOT d6	GROUND
RAIN DANCE d6	WATER
WATER GUN d6	WATER
HYPNOSIS d4	PSYCHIC

Water Absorb: It heals a Wound when hit with Water-type moves.

5

Swift Swim: When rainy, The Pokémon's Initiative roll gets +2.

Moves	Type
HYDRO PUMP d10	WATER
DOUBLE EDGE d6	NORMAL
WATER PULSE d6	WATER
SWAGGER d6	NORMAL

(BOSS) ROCKY TYPE : WATER

Arena Features:
Rapids, Marshy Ground

Sample Episode: A Noble Cause

225

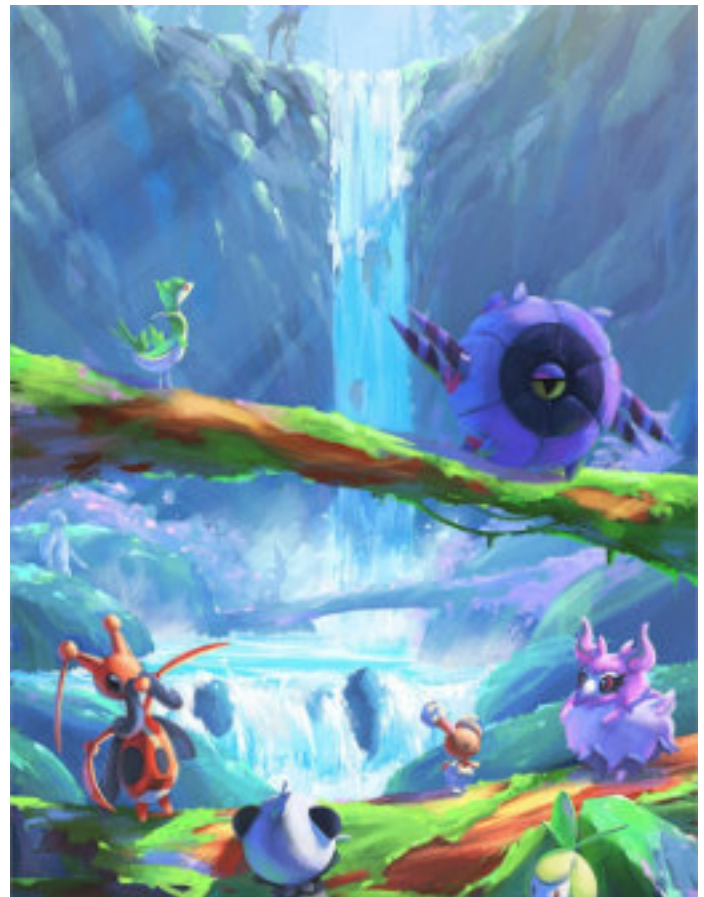


POLIWHIRL ENCOUNTER AFTERMATH

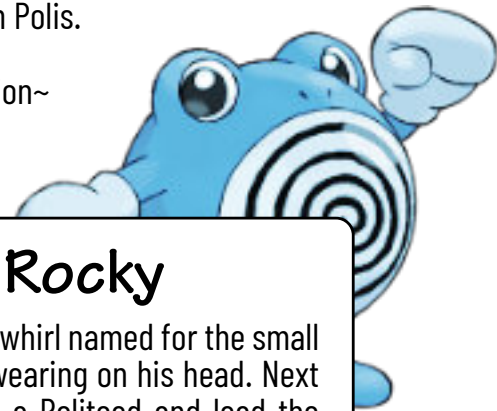
The Pokémon are much more cooperative after being chased down. They'll hand back anything they stole, and take the party further downstream, **to the dam which the Poliwhirls have built.** If the party lost the previous encounter, they can easily track the thieves down here by the direction they were going.

The dam is rather large, the result of around two days' work. **It's also definitely the reason why the river has been breaking its banks lately.** There are lots of Poliwhirls and even a few Poliwraths working on it, including any 'mons that escaped the earlier chase. The guide 'mon will lead the party beyond the dam where a Politoed has built a small shelter in a bundle of trees. **Rocky is here too, if he escaped.** After a quick talk between the Pokémon, the Politoed will convey to the party via drawings his side of the story: **Rocky needs the King's Rock to evolve into a Politoed and lead the clan, but the Slowpokes won't hand it over.** So, they built the dam to block the Slowpokes from reaching the sea and the shellfish, and stole the evolution stones to evolve into Poliwraths. **They would love to tear down the dam if the Slowpokes gave them the Rock.**

Once the party has an understanding of the situation or enough time has passed, **the ground starts to rumble a little bit, and the sound of rushing water slowly grows louder,** accompanied by the unmistakable sound of *Sloooooowpoooooke.*



This image but with Polis.
Use your
~imaaaaaagination~



Poliwhirl Rocky

He/Him: Shiny Poliwhirl named for the small stone he took to wearing on his head. Next in line to become a Politoed and lead the clan of Polis. Mischievous and on the rude side, Rocky only really shows deference to the current Politoed leader. Prefers to run away or let others handle fights for him instead of getting into conflict himself.



CLIMAX ENCOUNTER: FACE-OFF!

If the party went to the Slowpokes, the poliwhirls are making a break for the King's Rock, which the Slowpokes stand firmly in the way of.

If the party went to the Poliwhirls, the slowpokes crash through the dam, and the Poliwhirls stand a last defense to keep the Slowpokes from getting to the sea.

Either way, the two sides are standing face to face, with the party the only thing that can stop this from becoming an all out brawl. Kayla will say she has an idea, and tell the players to keep the two clans occupied while she catches a Shellder. She runs off, and now it's time for the trainers to try and calm the Pokémon down.

This is a social encounter. Each group's Hesitation is that they want the King's Rock over the other. Bumpy's Trait is "hypercompetitive", and Rocky's Trait is "leads from the back". The collective mooks on each side have the "spineless grunt" Trait and simply follow their leaders because they seem competent.

If they fail at or decide not to talk the Pokémon down, a brawl starts. If the party managed to solve their river encounter, that side's Pokémon won't attack them.

Ready to battle are one Slowpoke, one Slowbro, one Poliwhirl, one Poliwrath, Bumpy, and Rocky. Refer to the stats on the previous pages for the first three and Rocky.

4

#062 POLIWRATH

TYPE : WATER/FIGHTING

Water Absorb: It heals a Wound when hit with Water-type moves.

Moves	Type
SUBMISSION d10	FIGHTING
EARTH POWER d4	GROUND
CIRCLE THROW d6	FIGHTING
WATER GUN d8	WATER

5

(BOSS) BUMPY

TYPE : WATER/PSYCHIC

Regenerator: Restores a Wound when withdrawn from battle.

Moves	Type
HEAL PULSE d4	PSYCHIC
SURF d8	WATER
YAWN d6	NORMAL
ZEN HEADBUTT d8	PSYCHIC

Arena Features:
Crowded, Loud

Arena Hazards:
River Flooding



CONCLUSION & REWARDS

Whoever ends up with the Rock (and the Shellder, once Kayla returns rather quickly), **will put it on** and wait to evolve... **but nothing will happen.** Chaos will quickly break out as both clans of Pokémon begin to panic. **Smart trainers will know you have to trade a King's Rock in order to evolve with it.** The solution is friendship, in the end. Aw. Both Bumpy and Rocky will be pretty open to suggestions now, since their plans didn't work.

Once the evolutions have happened, the day is saved. Together the clans will tear down the dam, and both will go on their way organizing themselves after the harrowing week they've had. Kayla will say she should check in with the archaeologists first, and offers the party to follow. Bumpy and Rocky will give the party a last farewell.

Terra, and the archaeologists in general, **are extremely glad to see Kayla return safely.** The party can explain what happened, and **Terra will affirm her promise to stop the dig now**

that everything is solved. She also says to send her apologies to the Pokéfán club, though she's reluctant to admit she was wrong in thinking they were the thieves.

Upon returning to the Pokéfán club, it's beginning to shut down its operations for the day. **Geoff is still there,** though, and glad to see the party. He's reluctant to accept the apology, but harbors no ill will. He guesses. **He'll quickly give his rewards to the party,** and invite them to have a few Pokémon-themed cupcakes as well.

For Rewards, Try...

3 Pokémon EXP, and an evolution stone or a King's Rock to evolve a Pokémon in the party. If running Item Rules, give 2 Money.

Egg Rules: If a trainer happens to want an egg, the Pokéfán Club is full of them! The Archaeologists could have a spare fossil if the party earns their trust, too.



Another adventure over, and many yet on the horizon... So can I have my loot yet?



GM TIPS

If you have a group that **likes to completely ignore plot points**, employ the “invisible rails” technique and make sure that the overarching issue **finds them no matter where they go** - for instance, if the group fails to follow a lead to a certain camp, have that camp or a caravan with the dig’s materials pop up in the direction they happened to be heading anyway - **or look at player Edges or Hindrances to find a way to nudge them in the right direction** without putting down a hard wall on their progress.

As mentioned in the intro, this Episode is **designed with a branching path**, but **there are logical connections between all the locations**. If players do something outside of the box, **think about how it would affect the various pieces of the puzzle**, and don’t be afraid to add in interesting consequences or Arena Features down the line if they, for instance, dump a Sludge Bomb in the water while battling upstream.

TIMELINE

For the sake of clarity, **here is a timeline of events** that happen before the players arrived on the scene.

1 Month Ago: A small group of archaeologists set up camp in a cave in the woods.

1 Week Ago: The archaeologists find old ruins in the cave, along with a King’s Rock and plenty of evolution stones. Strange events begin here.

6 Days Ago: The local Slowpokes/bros steal the King’s Rock.

2 Days Ago: The local Poliwhags/Whirls steal the evolution stones and construct a makeshift dam to stop the Slowpokes from getting downstream to the Shellder population.

Last Night: Kayla leaves the archaeologist camp to find the thieves.



I couldn't find a credit for [this card](#) if you made it please contact me so I can shake your hand



INDEX

A

Advancement 52
Aiding Another 10
Arena Features 60, 72, 85, 141
Arena Hazards 9, 60, 72–73, 85

B

Battle Action 62
Battle Encounters. See Battles
Battles A, 59–60, 65, 79, 81–82
 Raid Battles 126–130
 Trainer Battles 81, 148
Bonuses 10
Boss Pokémon 80
Breeding. See Pokémon Eggs

C

Called Action 3, 63
Calling A, 3, 12, 51, 53, 104, 125
Campaign. See Journeys
Capture 78, 87
Capture Threshold. See Capture
Character Creation 11
 Pokémon Creation 43
 Quick Reference 51
 Trainer Creation 12
Character Sheet A, 11, 51, 112, 125
Clocks 198–199
Combat. See Battles
Commentary Tokens. See Sideline Commentary
Contested Rolls 9
Contests 23, 91–98, 149, 151. See Also Non-Battle Encounters, Competition Encounters

Countdown 146
Counters 67
Credits 1
Critical Hits 3, 8–9, 66, 75
Custom Moves 47

D

Dice Steps 3, 7
Disobedience 57, 132
Double Battles 82
Downtime. See Filler Episodes

E

Edges 3, 15–18, 20, 22–28, 98, 102, 107
 Battle Edges 16–18, 20
 Optional Rules Edges
 Capture Specialist 90
 Happy Camper 108–109
 Itemcrafter 110
 Pokémon Breeder 102

Pokémon Edges 116–119, 125
Sanctity of Edges 15
Social Edges 26–28
Utility Edges 22–25

Egg Moves 102. See Also Pokémon Eggs

Ekans Eyes 9
Encounters 3, 141, 144, 146, 163, 167
Episodes 3, 165–167, 170
Escalation 9

Beam Struggle 3, 64, 67

Evolution 4, 48–49, 55, 105

Example Session 167

Explosion 8

F

Factions 193–195, 200–204, 215

Filler Episodes 170, 207

Fossils 101. See Also Pokémon Eggs

G

Game Structure 164
 Gameplay Loops 205–206
 Maps 207–208, 210

Gender 43

Glossary 3–5

GM Tools 141

 Arena Randomizer 141

 Generating Encounters 141

 GM Screen 141

 Plot Randomizer 141

Golden Rules 2, 138

 Golden Rule One 2, 30, 59, 136

Grappling 77

Guards 67

Gym Leaders 81

H

Healing 65, 67, 105–106, 179

Hesitations. See Non-Battle Encounters, Social Encounters

Hindrances 3, 29–30, 32–42, 98, 107

 Major Hindrances 29, 38–42



INDEX, CONTINUED

- Minor Hindrances 29, 32–37
- Overcoming Hindrances 30
- Pokémon Hindrances 120
- Hits 3, 8
- HMs. See TMs
- Hooks 195–197, 212–215
 - News 195–198, 203, 211, 213, 215
- House Rules 177. See Also Screw the Rules
- I**
 - Immunity. See Types
 - Improv 182–183, 190
 - Initiative 141
 - Items 103–107
 - Money 104
- J**
 - Journeys 4, 168–169
- L**
 - Legendary Pokémon 80
- M**
 - Mastery 4, 48–49, 51, 54, 78, 81, 85, 100
 - Momentum 111
 - Move Effects 65–70
 - Movement Action 62, 73
 - Moves A, 3, 45–47, 51, 55, 65–70, 125
- N**
 - New Moves 22, 55, 105
 - Nicknames 43
 - Non-Battle Encounters 83, 147, 167
 - Competition Encounters 23, 149–151
 - Disaster Encounters 152–153
 - Puzzle Encounters 154
 - Social Encounters 83, 156–158
 - Not Very Effective. See Types
 - NPC Creation 172–173, 175
- O**
 - Oneshots. See Episodes
- P**
 - Optional Systems 86
 - Pacing 167, 186
 - Parry. See Escalation, Beam Struggle
 - PC Pokémon 112–116
 - Move Sheet 113, 122–124
 - PC Pokémon Creation Quick Reference 125
 - Rank 121
 - Wild Skills 114
 - Penalties 10
 - Pokéballs 78, 87, 105
 - Pokémon Abilities. See Special Abilities
 - Pokémon Battles. See Battles
 - Pokémon Contests. See Non-Battle Encounters, Competition Encounters
 - Pokémon Dice 8
 - Pokémon Eggs 99–100, 102
 - Pokémon World 142
 - Potential 113–114. See Also Mastery
 - Prep Loop 209, 211–214
 - Prep Loop Quick Reference 215
 - Priority 64, 69
- Q**
 - Quick Play Guide A, 11
- R**
 - Raids. See Battles, Raid Battles
 - Range. See Arena Features
 - Reach. See Range
 - Region Maps. See Game Structure, Gameplay Loops, Maps
 - Rolling A, 8–10
- S**
 - Safety Tools 4, 138–140
 - Sandbox Game. See Improv
 - Screw the Rules 2
 - Secret Bases 106
 - Session Zero 5, 30, 139
 - Sideline Commentary 84–85
 - Special Abilities 44
 - Spotlighting 58
 - Starter Pokémon A, 5, 43, 51, 125
 - Status Effects 75–77
 - Stored Pokémon 43
 - Story Structure 164, 185
 - Success Threshold. See Hits
 - Super Effective. See Types
- T**
 - Table of Contents B
 - Thematic Questions 188
 - TMs 55, 105
 - Top of the Round. See Initiative
 - Toughness A, 5, 13, 50, 65
 - Trainer Advancement 5, 30, 52–53
 - Trainer Attributes A, 5, 13, 24, 41, 51, 53, 103, 110, 125
 - Trainer Battles 81, 148
 - Trainer Class. See Edges



INDEX, CONTINUED

Trainer Dice 8
Traits. See Non-Battle
Encounters, Social
Encounters
Types 44, 74

W Type Chart 74
Wild Pokémon 79, 148
Y Wounds 5, 65
Yes, And 137, 184



Thanks for
reading!



POKÉDEX POKEYMANZ SHEET

Made by Empwnleon in several fits of manic lunacy

With help from FrostyVale and feedback from the Discord server, based on ChronicDelusionist's original sheet

Woah there, Torracat! This sheet isn't just print-out-and-play: get ready to fold it up like origami so that it can hold all your pokeymanz!

Think of the **Pokédex Sheet** as an folder: once the Trainer sheet is folded up, you can slot Pokémon sheets into the pockets. Carry them around, write up & add new mons, and easily swap between your party and PC as needed. Then, once it's game time, lay them out on the table for easy referencing!

It also has extra cheatsheets you can print out and slide in to help out during gametime! And don't worry, GMs, we got a little something for you too ;)

To print the sheets, print p. 3-6 as **(1) double-sided, (2) landscape orientation/flip on the long edge**, and **(3) as actual size (100%)**. If you have an I Choose You Edge, print p. 3-4, 7-8 instead. (Pages 9-10 are Xtra Cardz for optional rules. Pages 11-14 are PC Pokémon, and p. 15-16 are for Partner or Move Master edges.)

Follow the steps below to fold up the Trainer sheet for play! (Though, proportions in the drawings were sacrificed for clarity; don't mind if yours looks a bit different.)

While Pokémon sheets are best when cut into sixths, if you don't have Scizors, go fold the page up instead! (Use the symbols in the bottom-left corner for tracking.)

1. Orient the page so **TRAINER** is right-side up. Fold the right edge of the page to the gray line.



6. The goal is to fold in the loose corner of the tab! To start, pull down (but don't fully unfold) the corner.



11. Slide the corners of the front **TRAINER** page into the tabs!



2. Flip the page over, preferably on the long side.



7. Fold the corner in so it lines up with the bottom edge of the page.



12. If tucked into the tabs properly, the page should stay in place.



3. Fold one edge of the page to the other, then unfold.



8. With the corner still folded, fold the bottom edge of the tab back up.



13. Flip the sheet over, this time on the short side!



4. Fold the top & bottom edges to the gray lines. This will expose the corners of the earlier fold as tabs!



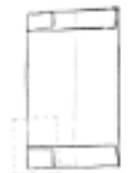
9. The tab should be in its original spot, but now with a slanted edge! Repeat Steps 6-8 on the other tab.



14. Fold the top edge down to the bottom so **TRAINER** is on the outside...



5. The next few steps are tricky, so let's zoom in on a tab to explain this next fold!



10. Fold the right edge of the page to the left edge.



15. And ta-dah! Sharpen your creases, and your sheet is ready to be filled out!



Trainer Name's

Types

TOUGH

Attributes

Wounds

-1 ☐

-2 ☐

KO ☐



HEART



FITNESS



RESEARCH



TACTICS

Edges / Hindrances



Bag & Notes

Trainer Adv

Pronouns

Trainer's Calling

First Impressions

Trainer Name

TRAINER

Player Name

Notes

Description

Use ⚔️ to mark Edges and ⚡️ to mark Minor / Major Hindrances.
You can also fill in the space to the left of the circle to color-code them.
List a Major Code of Conduct in the extra-large Edge / Hindrance box!

When building your Pokémon, mark moves that have free dice step upgrades (i.e. ★)
Black out Mastery boxes that you don't have yet to indicate your Pokemon's Mastery Level.
Write your Pokémon's name on the back of the card too! (Use the corner symbols to check.)

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XP Total	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Tough	<input type="checkbox"/>		
M. 1st	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Move 1	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Move 2	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Move 3	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Move 4	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Wounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
XP Total	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Tough	<input type="checkbox"/>		
M. 1st	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Move 1	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Move 2	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Move 3	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Move 4	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Wounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
XP Total	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Tough	<input type="checkbox"/>		
M. 1st	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Move 1	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Move 2	<input type="checkbox"/>		
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Move 4	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Wounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
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Wounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Move 1	<input type="checkbox"/>		
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<div>Details</div> <div>Notes</div> <div>Nickname/Species</div> <div>Type Matchups</div>	<div>Details</div> <div>Notes</div> <div>Nickname/Species</div> <div>Type Matchups</div>	<div>Details</div> <div>Notes</div> <div>Nickname/Species</div> <div>Type Matchups</div>	<div>Details</div> <div>Notes</div> <div>Nickname/Species</div> <div>Type Matchups</div>
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Nicknames / Species		ICY / TOUGH		Types	
Species / Variant		Gender		Hulmman's Quing	
Ability					
Wounds		T		d	
Mastery		T		d	
XP Total		T		d	
Tough		T		d	
M. Lvl		T		d	
Move 1		T		d	
Move 2		T		d	
Move 3		T		d	
Move 4		T		d	
Move 5		T		d	
Move 6		T		d	

Nicknames / Species		TOUGH		Types	
Species / Variant		Gender			
Ability					
Wounds		Y		d	
Mastery		Y		d	
XP Total		Y		d	
Tough		Y		d	
M. Lvl		Y		d	
Move 1		Y		d	
Move 2		Y		d	
Move 3		Y		d	
Move 4		Y		d	

Nicknames / Species		TOUGH		Types	
Species / Variant		Gender			
Ability					
Wounds		Y		d	
Mastery		Y		d	
XP Total		Y		d	
Tough		Y		d	
M. Lvl		Y		d	
Move 1		Y		d	
Move 2		Y		d	
Move 3		Y		d	
Move 4		Y		d	

Nicknames / Species		ICY / TOUGH		Types	
Species / Variant		Gender		Hulmman's Quing	
Ability					
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Nicknames / Species		TOUGH		Types	
Species / Variant		Gender			
Ability					
Wounds		Y		d	
Mastery		Y		d	
XP Total		Y		d	
Tough		Y		d	
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progression

Advancement

Spend a Trainer Advancement to:

A) Upgrade an **Attribute** by one die step. (Max d12.)

B) Take an **Edge**.

C) With GM & players' approval, overcome a **Hindrance** by...
Removing a **Minor**: 1 Adv

Reducing a Major Hind 1 Adv
to its Minor version:

Callings

Callings

Major progression towards your

Calling grants you a **Trainer Advancement** or, if not using that rule, a **Plot Device Token**.

Plot Device Tokens can change some **major detail** of a scene or call in a **friendly NPC**.

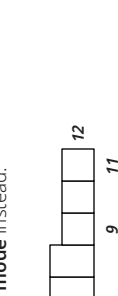
Use a **Battle Action** to throw a Pokéball; roll a **d12**. Meet or beat the current counter to succeed! The counter lowers:

- Per **Wound** lost: **-3**
- If they have a **major status**: **-3**

Boss Pokémon only tick down -1 per condition & can't go below 3

Special Pokéballs from Item Rules give +1 or +2 to the roll.

On a 2 or natural 1, normal



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Special Pokéballs from Item Rules give +1 or +2 to the roll.

On a 2 or natural 1, normal

[illegible]

Pokémon Name's

Types

TOUGH



Wild Skills

Wounds



HEART



STRENGTH



WISDOM



ACUTY



Ability

Edges / Hindrances



Bag & Notes

Pokémon's Calling

Adv

Pronouns

Species




PC

Player Name

Name

Notes

Description

Use  to mark Edges and   to mark Minor / Major Hindrances.
You can also fill in the space to the left of the circle to color-code them.
List a Major Code of Conduct in the extra-large Edge / Hindrance box!

Black out Potential boxes that you haven't bought up to yet.
Make sure to select your # of Prepared Moves from your Move Deck.
If you have Partner, mark your Move Cards as either "PC" or "Partner".

Shaken

Place token



mark status!

Lose Move Act:

Roll Acuity + d6,
clears on Hit

Lose Battle Act:

Clears your next
turn, regain 1 Pot

Potential

☐☐☐

Pokémon EXP

Total ☐

Moves ☐

Tough ☐

Pot. Lvl ☐

Rank

Max Move ☐

M. Tough ☐

Max Pot ☐

Type Matchups

 ☐

 ☐

 ☐

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Moves Prep.

☐

MOVE CARD / PC / PARTNER

Move Name

STAB? Boost?
● 00 00 ○ ○
Type

d4-1	<input type="checkbox"/>
d4	<input type="checkbox"/>
d6	<input type="checkbox"/>
d8	<input type="checkbox"/>
d10	<input type="checkbox"/>
d12	<input type="checkbox"/>

d12+1

EXP

MOVE CARD / PC / PARTNER

Move Name

STAB? Boost?
● 00 00 ○ ○
Type

d4-1	<input type="checkbox"/>
d4	<input type="checkbox"/>
d6	<input type="checkbox"/>
d8	<input type="checkbox"/>
d10	<input type="checkbox"/>
d12	<input type="checkbox"/>

d12+1

EXP

MOVE CARD / PC / PARTNER

Move Name

STAB? Boost?
● 00 00 ○ ○
Type

d4-1	<input type="checkbox"/>
d4	<input type="checkbox"/>
d6	<input type="checkbox"/>
d8	<input type="checkbox"/>
d10	<input type="checkbox"/>
d12	<input type="checkbox"/>

d12+1

EXP

MOVE CARD / PC / PARTNER

Move Name

STAB? Boost?
● 00 00 ○ ○
Type

d4-1	<input type="checkbox"/>
d4	<input type="checkbox"/>
d6	<input type="checkbox"/>
d8	<input type="checkbox"/>
d10	<input type="checkbox"/>
d12	<input type="checkbox"/>

d12+1

EXP

MOVE CARD / PC / PARTNER

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● 00 00 ○ ○
Type

d4-1	<input type="checkbox"/>
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d6	<input type="checkbox"/>
d8	<input type="checkbox"/>
d10	<input type="checkbox"/>
d12	<input type="checkbox"/>

d12+1

EXP

MOVE CARD / PC / PARTNER

Move Name

STAB? Boost?
● 00 00 ○ ○
Type

d4-1	<input type="checkbox"/>
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d8	<input type="checkbox"/>
d10	<input type="checkbox"/>
d12	<input type="checkbox"/>

d12+1

EXP

	d4-1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	d4 <input type="checkbox"/>
	d6 <input type="checkbox"/>
	d8 <input type="checkbox"/>
	d10 <input type="checkbox"/>
	d12 <input type="checkbox"/>

d12+1

	d4-1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	d4 <input type="checkbox"/>
	d6 <input type="checkbox"/>
	d8 <input type="checkbox"/>
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	d12 <input type="checkbox"/>

d12+1

	d4-1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	d4 <input type="checkbox"/>
	d6 <input type="checkbox"/>
	d8 <input type="checkbox"/>
	d10 <input type="checkbox"/>
	d12 <input type="checkbox"/>

d12+1


EXP

<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px; width: 100%;"></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>d4-1 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>d4 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>d6 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>d8 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>d10 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>d12 <input type="checkbox"/></p> </div>
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d12+1

Name	Age	Gender	Partner's Name	Relationship / Occupation	Date

<i>Ability</i>	

Place token

mark status!

*Choose at the start of an encounter:
Use the Partner's Ability instead of your own.*

The Partner of	

Partners share your Toughness, Wounds, and Potential!

Trainer Name's

Expanded inventory card for the optional Item Rules (p. TBD).

Brought to you by Bagini!

Backpack EX

Money

Name _____

Description

royal dog in

Details

Type Matchups

9

3

4	5
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●	※
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4	5
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1



3

Q

1	2
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9 5

19

3 C

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Nichols/Spicer

Notes

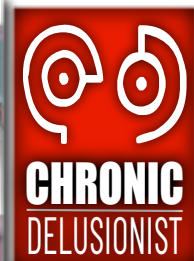
Gotta play 'em all!

Countless Pokémon. All of you.

What's a trainer to do? Pick up the Unofficial Tabletop RPG and grab some friends! It's an incomplete and honestly kind of vague guide to emulating that thing you saw Ash Ketchum do that one time, and it will help you be the very best - the very best at whatever you've wanted to do in the Pokémon universe!

- **TIPS** on how to make characters worse
- A **DISCORD** where barely anyone knows what they're doing either
- **NO STATS** on any Pokémon (Except once)
- A **TYPE CHART** I worked really hard on

AND
Your cool
OCs!



herduliek