

The Game Master

The Game Master Certification Organization Standards for Game Masters (GMCO-GM) are the definition of excellence in Game Mastery. Game Masters that use standards have guidance in making their games better. Players know and recognize Game Masters by how well they achieve these standards. Professional Game Masters can use the standards to more quickly, thoroughly, and reliably explain their value to potential clients. Other professional practices may gain insights into gaming as a tool. These standards are drafted, adopted, maintained, and advocated for by the Game Master Certification Organization (GMCO). GMCO is dedicated to the Promotion and Enhancement of the occupation and avocation of Game Mastery, especially withing TTRPGs. GMCO provides the standards as a resource for public consumption. The GMCO-GM license and Standards can always be found free at gamemastercertification.org.

Standard Zero

Game Masters (GM) live their rule-zero in earnest self-reflection, in building positive relationships with and between participants, and in ruling wisely. This is indicated by the players.

The players

The players know and respect their Game Master. This knowledge and respect indicate the standards for GMs.

The Game Master Prepares

The Game Master as a Leader

Standard 1: Regarding Rulesets

Game Masters achieve rule zero goals by leveraging the rulesets to achieve quality in their gaming. This is indicated by

System Selection

Game Masters learn and select rule system(s) that match the aims and goals of the group

System Efficacy

Game Masters leverage the strengths of rules systems to meet the aims and purposes of their games

Game Enjoyment

Game Masters rulings are firm, fair, consistent, and expedient so that players can be comfortably immersed in a willing suspension of disbelief with common purpose

The Game Master as a Worldbuilder

Standard 2: Regarding Worldbuilding

Game Masters build compelling worlds for their players' characters. This is indicated by

Verisimilitude

Game Masters facilitate gaming by creating the willing suspension of disbelief in players that allows them to participate in a shared game scenario.

Strengths

Game Masters know their strengths and use them to craft compelling scenarios.

Tools

Game Masters utilize the right worldbuilding tool for the job and use them correctly.

The Game Master as an Artist

Standard 3: Regarding Administrative Duties

Game Masters honor their game time. This is indicated by

Time

Game Masters start on time so much as possible to get the most of their time. They end when games must end. The time spent during is well-spent toward achieving group rule zero.

Effort

Game Masters enrich their gaming time by putting work into their games.

Skills

Game Masters have developed and utilize the skills necessary to administrate their games. This includes:

1. Self-Motivation

Game Masters believe in the codification of Game Mastery standards for the sake of improving the game. They strive to exceed excellence in those standards to improve the game.

2. Organization

Game Masters ensure that the space(s), material(s), time(s), and other such logistical considerations are explored and responsibilities delegated.

3. Time Management

Game Masters have managed their time to ensure they are prepared before each session, that bookings are handled, and the group has the Game Master's attention during scheduled playtimes.

***Standard 3.2 - Certification Code**

Professional Game Masters have written professional obligations including attire, conduct, certification or licensure, contractual or otherwise, and/or et al. offered in digital or analog and available during price quoting and delivered with invoicing so that the relationship between participants and Game Master is not endangered. These written obligations to the customer denote the specifics of the Professional Code a Game Master must follow in addition to the terms of the GMCO-GM Standards.

***Standard 3.3 - Business Acumen**

Professional Game Masters have acquired the skills necessary to attract, collect from, and retain paying customers.

***Standard 3.4 Specialized Skills**

Game Masters take inventory of themselves and recognize their other specialized skills and knowledges that can equip them to handle the challenges of Game Mastery. They employ this knowledge appropriately.

They may certify such skills to the experts and authorities of those skills and earn a self-selected 1-3 word "of" title related to their endeavors.

Game Masters may have more than one title under this standard with multiple certifications.

Title selection is mutable, subject to record-keeping logistics.

Such titles should not subvert the standards.

***Standard 3.5 Digital Tools**

Game Masters may elect to use digital tools to automate or assist portions of their preparation. Game Masters electing digital tools ensure proper usage of their tools and should be verifiably proficient to regard the relevant administrative proficiency requirements irrelevant. Achievement of this standard confers the Game Master with the "ex Machina" to the end of their certified full and formal title. (i.e. Certified Professional Game Master, ex Machina.)

***Standard 3.6 Professional Specialty Game Masters**

Must maintain and have valid license, certificate, or credential as indicated by local law to practice in a professional capacity and can furnish proof at any time when acting in such a capacity of a specialist as a specialist foremost in that capacity.

Must follow the Professional Code of Conduct for their profession while practicing as a Professional Specialty Game Master.

Meet the criteria for the standards for

GMCO-Role Player

GMCO-Game Master, and

GMCO-Professional Educational Game Master

or GMCO-Professional Therapeutic Game Master.

or GMCO-Professional Life-Coach & Game Master

or GMCO-Official Organized Play @System* Game Master

or GMCO-Live Action Role Play (LARP) Game Master

or GMCO-Asynchronous Game Master

The Game Master at Work

The Game Master as a Narrator

Standard 4: Regarding Playing Games

Game Masters practice the art of game mastery.

Master of None

Game Masters do not infringe upon the agency of characters controlled by players except as agreed in Session Zero or later mutual agreement.

Jack-of-all-Trades

Game Masters are responsible for the narration of all persons, places, actions, things, rules, rulings, knowledges, et cetera that are not expected to be furnished by the players.

Preparation

Game Masters come prepared to their games and the heavy work of game mastery is already done when the session begins. This may include:

Necessary world building

Handouts

Visual Aides

Rules, knowledge

Downtime debriefing

Administrative requests

Paperwork

Character Stat Blocks, Character Scripts, etc.

Player mediation

Personal Growth

Improvisation

Game Masters recognize the impossibility of planning for all player interactions in any particular game and have thus become masterful in their improvisational skills.

***4.2 Homebrew**

Any rules not included in the official rule system are explained to players to an extent all players know all rules.

***4.3 Compartmentalization**

Game Masters delegate duties and time to ensure that business matters, personal matters, and game matters are separate entities so much as possible to protect the game.

***4.4 Specialized Skills**

Specialized Game Masters, during game sessions, always declare either they are not practicing their specialty, or, they certify in writing the intent to practice by those rules and standards of stricter authority for the entirety of these sessions.

***4.5 Digital Media**

Game Masters using a digital medium to facilitate game sessions should have competence and confidence in their preferred software suites. Game Masters may certify "of the Optional@Medium Domain" (e.g. "Game Master of the Woldian Games Domain") upon achieving this standard per any media.

***4.6 Professional Specialist Practice**

Professional Specialist Game Masters operate legally, ethically, responsibly, and recognize games and play are precious things. Professional Specialist Game Masters using games as tools for their profession do so with great care to ensure not only all their professional obligations but also the duties and responsibilities of an excellent level Game Master.

The Game Master as a Guide

Standard 5: Regarding the Players

Game Masters believe games are a collaborative process. This is indicated by:

Positive and Responsive Interactions toward

Player with non-player character

Player with environment

Player with Game Master

Interjections

B. Obfuscation

Game Masters are knowledgeable in ethical obfuscation practices and theory.

C. Support players in their roles

Game Masters understand all people to be acting in a role while gaming, and help the player reach excellence in that role.

D. Storytelling, Impromptu, Handouts, and Visual aides

Game Masters have theoretical knowledge about the art of storytelling and employ it with the use of their tools such as voice, acting, performance art, music, props, impromptu handouts, visual aids, tokens, et cetera. Game Masters use these tools to enhance the game.

The Game Master as Judiciary

Standard 6: Regarding Wisdom

Game Masters recognize the value of wisdom and seek it as a guide to their own decisions. This is indicated by:

Remediation

Game Masters acknowledge their failures, shortcomings, struggles, and mistakes. They take responsibility for these things, provide avenues for players to provide feedback in regards to these things, and earnestly considers earnest feedback.

Adjudicating Rules

Players work to ensure their rulings are:

Firm – Rules may be mutable, but they should be prepared, firm during their lifetime, enforced to ensure equitability.

Fair – Rules may be mutable, but they should be prepared to ensure equitability to the players.

Consistent – Rules may be mutable, but changes should be determined in advance and rulings consistent with the group consensus.

Exercising Authority

If there should come a time, Game Masters deal with players or situations that are detrimental to the game. Game Masters that must deal with these things do so in service to

Rule Zero, concerning the players involved, and in accordance with their highest standards of professional and personal acumen.

The Game Master reflects

The Game Master as an Analyst

Standard 7: Regarding Improving in the Craft

Game Masters employ advanced techniques to ensure the aims of the game. They do this through

Player Interactions

Game Masters observe their players, learn what makes the game better for them.

B. Game Logistics

Game Masters observe the logistical considerations of their sessions and ensure their administration is smooth for the players.

C. Game Observation

Game Masters always observe their games and ensure they understand the action happening sufficient to participate fully, and for later reflection toward better practice.

D. Personal Observation

Game Masters study themselves as they do their players, connecting authentically and sympathetically with themselves.

The Game Master as a Scholar

Standard 8: Regarding Loving the Craft

Game Masters love their craft. This is indicated by

A. Continued Education

The Game Master finds means to educate themselves. They use self-reflection to find weaknesses to strengthen and strengths to capitalize. The Game Master does not allow analysis work to go to waste.

B. Promotion of the Craft

Game Masters endeavor to promote the craft via

- 1. Producing Games Sessions**
- 2. Promotion of the craft directly via public announcement, paid advertisement, and/or promotion of game sessions created by Game Masters**
- 3. Contributions to the community of Game Masters**
- 4. Recruitment of Players**
- 5. Recruitment of other Game Masters**
- 6. Training of Players**
- 7. Training of Game Masters**

The Game Master as a Gamer

Standard 9: Regarding Being Good

All Game Masters certifying affirm that gaming is for the benefit of humanity. Therefore, Game Masters are responsible to be good.

A. As a Player

Participants should meet the standards they expect of their players.

B. As a Person

Game Masters strive to better themselves, and achieving such is good.

C. As a Game Master

Game Masters are responsible for other peoples' most valuable resource, time. Game Masters work to ensure that time is good.

Definitions

Rule Zero – Rule(s) that supersede other rules, particularly rules that supersede entire rules systems.

Know (verb) the lowest level of knowledge, expressed here as time spent. Measurements might be expressed in hours, weeks, months, years, decades. Each corresponding step up the time metric corollary with assumed growth of knowledge of the quality of a Game Master.

Respect (verb) the most basic term for the sweeping processes of a complex system of reward toward Game Masters. Reward redemption includes agreement to rulings, repeated attendance to games, outright expressions of appreciation, et cetera.

The willing suspension of disbelief (noun) A state of being on a spectrum of relaxing normal observations of reality to engage in activities that the person knows to be untrue, e.g. taking on the role of a character, imagining or creating boundaries, setting rules, et cetera.