

# Khitomer Conference 2021

## Basics of Being a GM

Host: Steve Claypole ([Zodiac Fleet](#), [Gamma Exploration Command](#))

Room Two • Session 1

[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 9:58:49 AM

Hey everyone,

### **Welcome to Basics of being a GM**

My aim for today is to try and give wanna be GM's an idea of what a GM is like. Some people might think it's too technical, some may think they are not capable but i'm here to say that's not necessarily true.

Over the next hour or so, I'll discuss some key points and try to answer any questions you might have. I'm by no means an expert at being a GM and everyone's journey is different but I hope I can highlight some things that do come up. I have a few subjects that i'm going to talk about, please feel free to ask questions or bring up any points you want to discuss before moving onto the next topic. If i don't get to answer your question then there is a GM Q&A directly following after this panel.

A brief introduction, I'm Steve and i've been simming around 20 years. Finally took the plunge and started GM'ing about 5-6 years ago. I've had a fair amount of success running my own sims and a few hiccups on the way (It happens!). I currently run sims in Zodiac Fleet and Gamma Exploration Command. I've been an avid Star Trek fan for as long as I can remember. This is my first panel so be gentle! Let's get this show on the road!

[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 9:59:28 AM

*looks forward to this panel!!*

Skoll 2/20/2021, 10:00:03 AM

This one does sound interesting.

[GEC] Kuna 2/20/2021, 10:00:19 AM

*settles in*

[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:00:21 AM

*nervous!*

### **Lead By Example**

Our first subject is going to be Lead by example. This may sound obvious but I've seen it numerous times that GMs want games to work but don't actually put the effort in. If you want the sim to succeed, you need to put in what you expect to get out. You'll need to be composed and keep a cool head but it's the main thing a GM needs to be.

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:00:35 AM**

You'll do great!

**[16th-Academy] Kristi 2/20/2021, 10:01:34 AM**

Take deep breaths 😊

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:02:37 AM**

So, anyone want to chime in with our first topic

**[22] greenfelt 2/20/2021, 10:03:19 AM**

I've often found it to be true. There's nothing worse than a GM who won't actively stay involved in their game.

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:03:48 AM**

I love this statement. It's one of the most important for me as a GM. Lead by example. How can I expect people to be active and involved if I am not.

**[22] Taylor 2/20/2021, 10:04:08 AM**

This was one of the first things I had drummed in to me way back when, your game is as active as you

**[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:04:20 AM**

LOL Damn Steve, who sicced the gremlins on you?!

**Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:04:22 AM**

I've very rarely seen any sim outlast the GM losing interest, and that's often in those very few instances, because some other player effectively becomes the GM and it usually splits off somewhere else.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:04:35 AM**

Seems to happen a lot at the moment, lots of sims start and recruit well and then nothing happens. Writers will only write when inspired to do so

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:04:39 AM**

There's also a downside. When I'm inactive because of RL the others will also be inactive.

**[GEC] Kuna 2/20/2021, 10:04:43 AM**

There is also the sad truth that a GM can over commit there time to the sim, beyond what the crew might be capable of.

**[GEC] Kai1701E 2/20/2021, 10:05:00 AM**

I think bios are an excellent example of something you need to lead by example with also. For most of us, they are the first time we get to see what someone can write like. But you can't expect people to take the time and effort if you haven't.

**Skoll 2/20/2021, 10:05:28 AM**

Its been a while for me as a GM... even longer since I lead a trek game... active as a player and ever present in the discord chatting to your players and listening to their ideas/feedback (Stops the banshees screaming when they see running fireballs)

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:05:59 AM**

I agree. I often say to someone when they want an example of a bio to look at my CO character's bio.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:06:14 AM**

@Kate RL happens and can't be helped. Thats when a good command team comes into play or even core players who can pick up some of the slack. Communicating is key!

**[UES][5th] Stephen 2/20/2021, 10:06:21 AM**

I think one of my biggest flaws as a GM is that my motivation feeds off the interest of the others. When the crew is slow it makes it much harder for me to stay motivated so in turn it can get worse sometimes... something I've had to work on for years.

**[GEC] Kai1701E 2/20/2021, 10:07:01 AM**

I've experienced that too @Stephen but my XO @Linz got me through!

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:07:03 AM**

@Kai1701E I agree, you cant complain that writers bios aren't complete when your own characters bio isn't either

**Skoll 2/20/2021, 10:07:26 AM**

CO bios that are empty, drive me absolutely bonkers... if I know the co its one thing if I don't I'm clicking the x button... I mean come on guys you have the bio, you know the character.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:08:02 AM**

@Stephen Yeah, most definitely.

**[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:08:31 AM**

Some CO bios, especially ones that are crafted over long years of active writing, can be super daunting.

**[UES][5th] Stephen 2/20/2021, 10:08:45 AM**

Another one of my flaws, I absolutely hate bio writing. lol

**aio 2/20/2021, 10:08:57 AM**

There's a fine line between a good length bio, and a scary long one.

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:09:16 AM**

It's kind of the same with kids. Try having them eat their vegetables if you're not eating them yourself.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:09:23 AM**

@Skoll I agree, when I start a sim my character bio has to be complete before I think about recruitment. Knowing a CO helps people what to join the sim.

**Skoll 2/20/2021, 10:09:26 AM**

There is such a thing as too much information in an application.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:09:45 AM**

That too!

**aio 2/20/2021, 10:10:08 AM**

I'm like that. I don't enjoy bio writing to be honest. But that's for two reasons. For me a character doesn't really have a bio when I start writing them, and the bio grows organically from there. The other reason is I am consistent about details, meaning something happening in one bio, that may affect another, has to match, perfectly.

**[OF] Aranis 2/20/2021, 10:10:13 AM**

I try hard to find that line, I often write El Aurians so for me a good bio is key due to their lifespan, I keep it to key events and not too much a full bio. Things that made them who they are, the CO they have become.

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 10:10:34 AM**

I'm the other way, most of my NPC's have full bios.

**Skoll 2/20/2021, 10:10:48 AM**

I've read novel length bios and hit the rejection button, I'm not exacting with bios but if I am spending more than ten minutes reading a history I'm going to get turned off

**Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:11:15 AM**

I generally feel that if I want to write a 45-page bio

(I've seen one being submitted before) - I'll submit the 1 page CV of it

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:11:29 AM**

@aio Im sometimes like that. I know the back story but I don't know how he/she will be until i start writing but i suppose the good thing about bios is they can be edited

Ok, im going to move onto my next topic...

### **Being a fair GM**

Being a Fair GM can be quite difficult. You will probably get friends and/or acquaintances that join your sim. This can be great fun and work really well, sometimes, however, they might start to drag their feet and start pushing sim rules. I personally think it's fair to treat everyone within a sim the same. If someone you know is pulling a fast one and you give them a lot of leeway then pounce on someone else for not following the same rules it doesn't become fair. Yes, I've removed friends/acquaintances from my Sims in the past because of this, but I'm not heartless, I give everyone a chance to explain themselves. I find you get better output from writers if they're treated fairly.

**Skoll 2/20/2021, 10:12:10 AM**

Can we bring up avatars here or do i get shot... its fair to say I prefer to know what the character looks like if his humanoid.

**Skoll 2/20/2021, 10:12:29 AM**

Or she

**[UES][5th] Stephen 2/20/2021, 10:12:32 AM**

Another issue, with the bio thing, is I often think much more about the sim when creating one then I ever do about the CO character. The sim idea, the plot, the story, that to me is what I focus on the CO is like Step 3 or 4.

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 10:12:49 AM**

Let's keep on with the hosts topic and come back to that @Skoll

**Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:13:58 AM**

My sole experience with GMing is in D&D and eventually, probably, in STA, so I don't really have much personal experience (I prefer rules-heavy systems.). I can say, from experience as a player, exempting people from sim rules.. ends in disaster for the sim if you're uncareful.

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:14:01 AM**

I'm probably way to lax with my writers. Mostly about posting rules. But I've not had people that pushed at the rules.

I am very strict when it comes to the rules. Don't have a grey area. People know this of me, and I've never had to remove anyone for breaking the rules.

**[GEC] Kuna 2/20/2021, 10:15:11 AM**

I have had both extensive rules and no rules at all. Each sim I have ran has had a variation on those same rules. Now? I keep to the basic respect rules and fleet rules to make things work.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:15:25 AM**

@Kate I think everyone can be. I'm very lax at the moment with my crew but with the world craziness I don't want to force people to a computer if mentally they are not up to it.

**[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:15:38 AM**

When it comes to rules I remember that we're all here for fun, and that means that if someone is not engaging with something on the sim and by doing so is pushing rules boundaries something is going on. I reach out and talk to them. Anything is possible as long as we keep communicating with each other.

**Skoll 2/20/2021, 10:15:39 AM**

Making exemptions on small stuff is going to mean at some point someone saying well you allowed that why won't you let me do this? Its no different.

**[GEC] Kai1701E 2/20/2021, 10:15:55 AM**

I've had all that and more with friends who join and just vanish too, then expect a second chance. I'm maybe more lenient than I would be, which is stupid. Especially if you've had your fingers burnt before. But now I try to find a balance. Having a good command team helps because we make decisions together and keep on top of things, regardless of who the player is.

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 10:17:08 AM**

I think the important part on the rules as the GM is to be following them yourselves. Ie: Not just asking ppl to post and not posting yourself.

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:17:49 AM**

Exactly, and that has been the reason why I'm very lax with posting rules for the last year almost.

**Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:17:54 AM**

(for context, one of the sims I was in eventually exploded due to the CO/GM not following the rules of the fleet we were in, to the point where the command staff had to step in and investigate.)

and this was largely due to one of the players being exempted. >\_>

**Skoll 2/20/2021, 10:18:21 AM**

I have a friend who created a points based star wars system, great game if you don't look at the admin teams first characters. (So as a starting character you are going to get around 2500 points to spend on skills and what not more if you make a request) You earn more points by posting and creating threads to create characters. When you see people struggling to make decent characters with their starting characters and you see the gm playing a 13000 monster of a character. You are looking at the GM and thinking at what point did you think that was a good idea. The game is struggling because people noticed.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:18:25 AM**

I've stupidly had one person as an XO 3 times and they've always let me down. Its also reflected badly on me as my sim suffers. It is hard trying to be a fair GM but its better in the long run for yourself and for you writers. If they know where they stand, it helps. Again communication is key, any problems, speak up. RL happens to everyone, it doesn't take two ticks to shoot and email or message.

**[22] greenfelt 2/20/2021, 10:18:26 AM**

Part of being fair is recognizing that each player has a different set of RL circumstances. Understanding those needs to be a part of fair play.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:19:26 AM**

I agree @greenfelt

**[UES][5th] Stephen 2/20/2021, 10:19:50 AM**

This being a hobby is an important thing to keep in mind.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:20:26 AM**

Most definitely!

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:20:30 AM**

Yep, and communicate to the other a (condensed) version of why the rules are different for someone. Assuming they are different for RL circumstances. Like activity or something

**[UES][5th] Stephen 2/20/2021, 10:20:34 AM**

On the other hand people did voluntarily sign up so if they want us (as GMs/fellow crew) to be flexible they should be communicative.

As a GM I don't find it frustrating when people can't post or are having a hard time creativity wise the most frustrating thing is lack of communication.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:21:08 AM**

Its a tough balancing act, but it can be achieved fairly.

**[GEC] Kuna 2/20/2021, 10:21:10 AM**

For some, this hobby is a very important part of peoples lives as it provides an outlet from their stress at home and acts as a pure form of enjoyment.

**[UES][5th] Stephen 2/20/2021, 10:21:45 AM**

In the day and age of communication available at every turn 30 seconds to send an email or a note on Discord is something that should be fairly easy to accomplish.

Great escape for me.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:22:06 AM**

Ok, on to topic 3

### **Crew Problems**

Again, I'd love to say in an ideal world, you don't get crew problems but from time to time it does happen. Going back to the fair subject, if you treat the situation fairly then you can resolve most problems. Hear both sides of the problem and bring your command team in. My advice is not deal with things by yourself, get your XO/2XO involved to help resolve things.

**Skoll 2/20/2021, 10:22:41 AM**

I've struggled with returning to the independent circuit because the posting requirements are a lot simpler in star trek than some of the games I have played in.

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:23:49 AM**

Makes sense. Although it does depend on the issue. If its a delicate issue it's not always better to get multiple people involved. Although that doesn't mean you shouldn't let the rest of your command team know what's going on.

**Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:23:56 AM**

A good FO/2O will WANT to help you with anything that comes up



**[GEC] Kuna 2/20/2021, 10:25:13 AM**

I can not recall how many times I have let two players come back and sim with my group, each time under the promise they will keep in check. I had to ban them from my games recently because of the problems that were created. I hated doing it, they were/are good friends, but it needed to be done for the health of the sim and other players.

**[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:25:20 AM**

What if you've found it impossible to find an XO?

**Skoll 2/20/2021, 10:25:48 AM**

If you have a friend you trust in the game then ask... your xo doesn't need to be your actual xo

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:25:54 AM**

@Kate I agree, of course, sometimes the problem needs tact rather than informing everyone in your command team the problem, but letting them know that there is something going on can help.

**[UES][5th] Stephen 2/20/2021, 10:25:54 AM**

Personally, I try not to always link the in character roles to the out of character roles when it comes to my "Assistant Game Masters".

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:26:02 AM**

Finding a good XO is tricky. I've had a number of XO's in my GM days.

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 10:26:05 AM**

Sometimes you have to wait for your Prince Charming

**[UES][5th] Stephen 2/20/2021, 10:26:06 AM**

Because... I've had people who want to help run the sim who want to play an NCO and do a great job of it.

And you have people who want to be the XO IC but have zero interest in actually being involved in the development of the sim.

**[OF] Captain Hawkins 2/20/2021, 10:26:26 AM**

If you are unable to find an XO, then you can reach out and offer it up as a PNPC or special guest position.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:26:32 AM**

I hear you, its difficult to find that one person who you click with and will help you AGM the sim.

**[GEC] Kai1701E 2/20/2021, 10:26:51 AM**

I run a command authority, made up of me and my AGMs, usually tied to position, but not always. They are an excellent sounding board and I go to them all the time with things.

**[OF] Aranis 2/20/2021, 10:26:57 AM**

Other than that you can use the other CO's in your fleet. Someone you trust to speak too. I have a few of those in OF

**[GEC] Kuna 2/20/2021, 10:27:02 AM**

I firmly believe that your Morale officer works both IC and OOC to help support the crew.

**[22] Taylor 2/20/2021, 10:27:14 AM**

I never match AGM with a position

I've seen some great XO characters, but really poor AGM's

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:27:31 AM**

@Kuna Don't jump ahead 😊

**[GEC] Kai1701E 2/20/2021, 10:27:32 AM**

Yep, me too.

**[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:27:48 AM**

Perhaps I should consider doing that as well. Also First Mate is not really integral to my sim anyway 😊

**[GEC] Kuna 2/20/2021, 10:27:48 AM**

**jumps back a step**

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:28:15 AM**

I used to have the IC and OOC positions not be the same, but I got so tired of having to explain it to everyone all the time. Luckily we changed things and my XO and 2XO are now also my IC XO and 2XO.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:28:28 AM**

@Taylor Very true, AGM doesn't need to be an XO. Like @Stephen said, an NCO can be an awesome AGM

**[UES][5th] Stephen 2/20/2021, 10:28:40 AM**

Honestly, I have a friend who loves to do administrative things but isn't always into the writing aspects of things. They have had been administrators on all of my websites, discords, whatever, and are FANTASTIC at always having my back.

**[OF] Aranis 2/20/2021, 10:28:53 AM**

I was an AGM on board a sim when I was Chief of the Boat 😊

**[UES][5th] Stephen 2/20/2021, 10:28:53 AM**

So it's not the norm but works for me and keeps my sim(s) and other groups running.

**[GEC] Kai1701E 2/20/2021, 10:29:11 AM**

That's the key - a system that works for you and your sim

**[UES][5th] Stephen 2/20/2021, 10:29:11 AM**

I mean, the COB is part of Command so that makes sense either way you look at it.

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:29:25 AM**

My first XO was my Chief of Research.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:29:25 AM**

@Stephen Who is this holy grail you speak of? 😄

**[OF] Aranis 2/20/2021, 10:29:36 AM**

Yeah, but it was more showing that it doesn't have to be an XO position 😊 hehe

**[UES][5th] Stephen 2/20/2021, 10:30:18 AM**

@RedBird is my holy grail

**aio 2/20/2021, 10:30:34 AM**

The same Aaron from the Healy days?

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:30:36 AM**



**RedBird 2/20/2021, 10:30:39 AM**

I just don't put up with his BS and tell him how it is 😊

**[UES][5th] Stephen 2/20/2021, 10:30:41 AM**

@aio that's the one

**Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:30:47 AM**

I've seen GMs run with bad or no FOs before too..

**RedBird 2/20/2021, 10:30:48 AM**

Yes dearest @aio

**aio 2/20/2021, 10:30:49 AM**

Blast from the past!

**Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:30:56 AM**

It uh.. ended very badly. Because the GM had to do all of their taskloading

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:31:02 AM**

Ok, moving on...

**Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:31:06 AM**

Or train them while handling their taskloading, etc.

**aio 2/20/2021, 10:31:08 AM**

It's been a long time!, but not to distract from the topic...

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:31:09 AM**

### **Delegation**

Delegation can be a massive thing in simming. Who do you trust with leading types/parts of a mission or story? This generally comes down to your command team or your core players, however, you have to let them in first. Speak to your writers and let them know what you have planned, they might surprise you and add to you idea in a way that you might not have thought. Make sure you use them 😊

**[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:31:47 AM**

How much of the plot do you reveal to the 'players' to get this kind of input?

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:31:59 AM**

I think I've done that rather well. Delegating leading missions to the writers.

But I have about 7 missions running at once.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:32:29 AM**

Thats true, but sometimes you need to let people in to get the best out of them.

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:32:33 AM**

So don't really have a choice.

**[PF] AlexM 2/20/2021, 10:32:50 AM**

I think that's a tricky question. I've struggled with that a few times. You want to keep surprises, but you also want the players to be engaged and to offer ideas.

**Skoll 2/20/2021, 10:32:54 AM**

None at all unless it applies to the player in question... or if I need the player to push something in a direction only their character can do.

**[22] Taylor 2/20/2021, 10:32:56 AM**

Setting expectations and boundaries helps, a lot of writers I've written with didn't want to step up in case they broke the GM's rules

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:32:57 AM**

Please, no bragging about number 😁

**[GEC] Kai1701E 2/20/2021, 10:33:18 AM**

Ha! Ask my XO, we always have secret planning rooms on the go where we talk through ideas and plot points with different people - everyone is involved in making the story what it is. When it comes to running the sim, I try to contain jobs to the command team because I don't want to burden players, but I make my command team aware of expectations before they join it. One big thing I delegate to the AGMs is awards. I don't have anything to do with them really.

**Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:33:45 AM**

I'm torn here, because I don't think the plot should ever be dictated ahead of time. On the flipside, very good plots often require some plotting

**[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:33:56 AM**

personally am more of the 'collaborative writing' persuasion, but it needs a strong set of writers to want to go along with that. This means I'll usually reveal all the plot points to the players. Just because writers know doesn't mean characters do. That way we can all work together to write the best possible plot 😊

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:34:02 AM**

I put a warning in my join form that we are looking for independent players. Who can run stories without needing someone holding their hand and telling them what to do.

**[UES][5th] Stephen 2/20/2021, 10:34:02 AM**

I think it's also more fun when the crew is surprised.

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 10:34:09 AM**

Needs a skeleton at least, the plot.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:34:10 AM**

Then the GM needs to look at their rules if they're that strict!

**Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:34:13 AM**

But I've been in plots where the entire *plot, including when the acts of it* have been emailed to me

so that I know the entire arc and what happens. And I.. I just can't get myself to care.

**[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:34:37 AM**

What's the bare minimum you'd require?

**[22] Taylor 2/20/2021, 10:34:39 AM**

But they're not, it was the impression of the writers - not the rules of the GM

**aio 2/20/2021, 10:34:40 AM**

I would give certain plot points to certain people to run with, or plan for specific areas. I have the A and the Z, and then various letters in between, but how we connect those dots, go nuts with

**Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:34:45 AM**

What's the point? I can't influence it. I know how it ends. Why am I even there? (and that's my problem with oerplotting)

**[GEC] Kai1701E 2/20/2021, 10:34:46 AM**

It's fine lines again. There's surprise and there's nothing to work with.

Then there is too much information.

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 10:35:49 AM**

Just a basic framework of main points that have to happen, stopping short of resolution. I usually build a block in at the end so that the finish can't be ruined (usually a surprise)

**[GEC] Kuna 2/20/2021, 10:35:56 AM**

I have let the crew know what we are going to do and how they can go about doing it but if they come up with a better way, I let them have at it.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:36:01 AM**

I think you can point the right writers in the right direction with the just about enough info for them to make it work. There's also creative license, sometimes writers will put in their own twist that works really well.

**[GEC] Kai1701E 2/20/2021, 10:36:03 AM**

I like to say to my people we're starting at A, we need to get to E, but what happens at B,C,D are either a secret or up to you and how you take the mission forward.

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:36:28 AM**

Most of our missions are of the kind where we know A and Z and the mission leader has some ideas for the in between part. But they don't reveal all that at the beginning.

**Skoll 2/20/2021, 10:37:11 AM**

I loved playing in your games Kai and it's definitely fun getting to point e...

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:37:20 AM**

@Kai1701E Exactly, people are here to write, let them create some of the story, plus it takes some pressure off of the GM.

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 10:37:26 AM**

I agree. You want the players to get creative, but you want that creativity to be a curvy road back to the main point. Not a hard left turn.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:37:55 AM**

What are you talking about? @Kai1701E crashes all the time 😂

**[GEC] Kai1701E 2/20/2021, 10:38:14 AM**

Rude lol.

**Skoll 2/20/2021, 10:38:15 AM**

Something @SteveClaypole they do may add to your own story.

**aio 2/20/2021, 10:38:20 AM**

I've written in the past where someone would literally write everything, leave space for me to reply with an Aye Sir, and have everything pre-planned. No creativity, I was there just for Aye.

**Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:38:29 AM**

Oh, that's fun

**[GEC] Kai1701E 2/20/2021, 10:38:38 AM**

Literally a yes man lol

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:38:40 AM**

True!

Same!

Alright, onto my next topic...

### **Engaging with the writers both ICly and OOC**

Engaging with your writers is a good thing both IC and OOC. You get to know them and how they tick, it will also help guide you in future mission/story plots. You may be able to give them more focused things to do by getting them to write to their strong points or even open up ideas that you might not have had.

**[UES][5th] Stephen 2/20/2021, 10:40:47 AM**

I think engaging with crews OOC is hugely important.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:40:53 AM**

@Kuna You may now speak, lol

**[UES][5th] Stephen 2/20/2021, 10:40:56 AM**

In fact I'm happier to have the crew chatting daily then posting daily.

**[GEC] Kai1701E 2/20/2021, 10:41:06 AM**

Discord makes it easier than ever I think.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:41:48 AM**

I agree to a point, however, i dont want people to feel like they need to be active or chatty.

**[UES][5th] Stephen 2/20/2021, 10:41:53 AM**

I've always had IRC... Did slack for a bit before Discord took off in the writing communities.

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:42:09 AM**

The OOC community is very important to me. Most of the writers on my sim I consider good friends. That grew over the years and started with a active OOC discussions.



**Skoll 2/20/2021, 10:42:14 AM**

Having started plotting and rping on cbox's I can whole heartedly agree that discord makes things a lot easier and a hell of a lot less confusing.

**[GEC] Kuna 2/20/2021, 10:42:16 AM**

*steps back forward* Morale officers. If you find the right person for the job they can be the spirit of the ship. I also do a lot of custom work for each of my sims position wise but I always make sure to leave a morale officer spot for that right person.

**[22] Taylor 2/20/2021, 10:42:19 AM**

I pair discord with world building activities, using discord to get feedback from those who want to give it - then tailoring things based on peoples interest

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:42:57 AM**

Thats a great idea

**[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:42:57 AM**

Exactly how I like to use Discord for my games

Both world building and plotting

**[GEC] Kuna 2/20/2021, 10:43:11 AM**

I know who will take on other roles as well and who can make a strong lead and those that do best at following.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:43:56 AM**

I always try and engage my players on discord, sometimes they want to talk sometimes they don't. which is fine. my dm is always open to anyone

Yeah, knowing your writers OOC is a big thing as it helps with making strong leads

**Reminder 2/20/2021, 10:45:08 AM**

*This is your 15-minute warning*

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 10:45:25 AM**

i love discord teambuilding, but i'm sad watching some of my non-chat interested writing friends being sort of left out of the loop. i try to keep them up to date via email.

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 10:46:03 AM**

It's important to have a good XO that can do that.

*cough*

**UncleBirdy 2/20/2021, 10:46:07 AM**

Yeah, I agree about the OOC knowledge of writers. It helps to build stronger storyline between characters.

**[GEC] Kuna 2/20/2021, 10:46:29 AM**

I haven't had a non discord player in so long I would probably have to relearn how to keep them in the loop.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:47:02 AM**

Its a down side as there are players that dont use discord. I try and use an OOC saved post to keep everyone informed with thats going on.

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:47:07 AM**

We had a good discussion about that earlier. About what to do with a applicant who doesn't want to be on discord. When discord is where most of the OOC stuff happens. Not just the chatting, but also world and storybuilding.

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 10:47:11 AM**

They're a little less common, but they're still out there. Shame to loose them.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:47:28 AM**

Saved OOC post 😊

**Nikki 2/20/2021, 10:47:54 AM**

I've seen others use an open nova post for coordinating talk too. good call.

**[GEC] Kuna 2/20/2021, 10:47:54 AM**

Aye, those I still use to some degree of effectiveness lol

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:48:16 AM**

This is something I need to do more of on my own sims. I even have the channels and rarely use them!

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:48:40 AM**

Or there are also the writers that create a discord account and get it running because you told them all the things that happens there. But then they are never online.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:49:27 AM**

@Kate I hear you there, I have one on Kumari, lol

**[22] Taylor 2/20/2021, 10:49:45 AM**

I've been in a position where people have wanted to join the game, but not use discord or Nova. Sadly I've also had to make the choice to cut those people because of the effect on the game as a whole

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:49:52 AM**

Ok, my final topic...

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:49:54 AM**

I don't have one right now. But I ended up talking to that one writer using facebook messenger.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:50:00 AM**

### **Open to ideas**

Being open to ideas from your crew/writers helps them feel involved. Whether its mission ideas or just ideas to help you with your current mission/story and move it a different direction. Ive changed mission plans numerous times because a writer has come up with an awesome idea that I just couldn't say no to.

When I first started GMing sims, I was very much my way or the highway. I had a strict way of how things went, which thinking back on it was very stressful and took the fun away from my early missions. Now I try and let my writers get creative and push stories along when needed.

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:50:06 AM**

Which I then always forgot that I needed to do that. 😊

**[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:50:40 AM**

No plan ever survives contact with the players... D&D taught me that 🤖

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:51:08 AM**

lol

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:51:17 AM**

That's why I don't do missions that involve the whole group.

To many people, easier to just do missions with smaller groups.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:51:56 AM**

Ive had to rethink numerous mission/stories due to writers coming up with better ideas than what ive come up with, lol

**[GEC] Kuna 2/20/2021, 10:52:26 AM**

A few of my sims have stalled due to group missions and the players busy RL. That is why I no longer aim for large sims but relish in small sims.

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:53:17 AM**

Makes sense. I've also had people leave after a short time because we just were to complicated. They only looked at the big picture.

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:53:52 AM**

It is tough trying to keep all peoples involved in one mission, idea just had to throw a curve ball in one of my sims to get things going again.

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 10:54:36 AM**

Sometimes that's the downside of the skeleton plan being too fleshy. ppl run out of room to maneuver

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:55:04 AM**

Everything has positive sides to it and negative.

**Reminder 2/20/2021, 10:55:10 AM**

*This is your 5-minute warning. Consider moving the conversation to the appropriate overflow room.*

**[16th/GEC] SteveClaypole 2/20/2021, 10:55:34 AM**

My door is always open to my crew, i've had a few want to do character building etc and im always happy to do it, sometimes, if it works, ill try and incorporate what they want to do into the main story. (If it works)

Yeah I agree, sometimes an idea gets too involved and you forget some writers. Im guilty of that, but i do try and get things moving again.

Well, Id like to say a massive thank you to everyone who got involved. I hope this has helped everyone, I've definitely learnt somethings Ill be taking away with me. 🙌

**[16th] Kate, GM Langley Station 2/20/2021, 10:59:42 AM**

You did great! Very nice discussion.

**[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 10:59:52 AM**

We'll be in overflow two if y'all wanna continue 😊

**[16th] Harrington, SB50 2/20/2021, 10:59:58 AM**

@SteveClaypole great panel, thanks!