



# Guide to Writing for Dave Arneson's Blackmoor: The MM&PG

V.2

# **Guide to Writing for Dave Arneson's Blackmoor: The MMRPG**

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## **Guide to Writing for Dave Arneson's Blackmoor: The MMRPG**

### **An Introduction**

Congratulations on taking the first steps towards becoming an author for Dave Arneson's Blackmoor: The MMRPG. Reading this guide in its entirety is important to understanding and navigating through both the philosophy and expectations that the campaign has of authors.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to both new and returning authors to achieve the highest standard of quality in the creation of entertaining role-playing adventures without overly restricting creativity.

### **Writing Standards**

Dave Arneson's Blackmoor: The MMRPG appeals to a wide range of players. Good taste should be used in the development adventure ideas. These ideas should be original and creative while encouraging the triumph of good over evil through the heroic deeds of the players..

As with any writing standard, there are specific topics and situations that should be avoided in episodes for the campaign. The following list of offensive depictions should not be used in any episode:

- ❖ Excessively graphic violence.
- ❖ Nudity when creatures possess a human or human like form.
- ❖ Profanity.
- ❖ Religions of the real world or real world religious groups.

Additionally, the following situations should be used very carefully with good judgment:

- ❖ Addictions should not appear glamorous, but as a harmful habit.
- ❖ Prejudice should not appear in a positive light including race, sex, class, culture or religions.
- ❖ Sexual themes should not employ abusive or pornographic situations.

### **Writing Process**

#### **Getting Started**

The writing process begins with a creative idea for a story adventure set within Dave Arneson's Blackmoor. All adventures must be consistent with content and materials published by Zeitgeist Games, Inc and written with the D&D D20 System Reference Documents. In addition, adventures should be written for a four hour time limit with four to six players in mind.

Each adventure is considered an “episode” in the development of the Blackmoor world. Adventure ideas should allow players to make decisions that impact the world of Blackmoor in large and small ways rather than being lead by the nose through a story.

The difficulty of challenges faced by players in Dave Arneson’s Blackmoor: The MMRPG adheres to average party member level. Encounter level rules use the average table level to determine the difficulty of the encounter. No individual encounter should exceed more than three above the encounter level of the party. Encounters levels for Dave Arneson’s Blackmoor: The MMRPG are written in odd levels and may be written for levels as low as one. It is encouraged, but not mandatory that authors avoid encounter level spreads of more than six in an individual episode.

### **Submitting Your Idea**

Your new idea for an episode should be submitted in writing using MS Word to Dawn Coakley, Plots Coordinator ([dawn.coakley@dablackmoor.com](mailto:dawn.coakley@dablackmoor.com)). This write-up should not be longer than three pages Your outline will consist of the following:

1. Title – This is the name of your episode.
2. Author(s) – The person(s) writing the episode.
3. Teaser – A statement of no more than three lines that give either a hint or tease to the reader about the episode. It may also suggest appropriate or inappropriate player characters for the adventure.
4. Levels of Play – Provide the character levels that the episode is appropriate for based on the difficulty of the encounters.
5. Episode Background – Description of events leading up to the beginning of the adventure.
6. Episode Hook – How are the player character drawn into the episode.
7. Chapters – Description of individuals, monsters, traps or challenges that the player characters encounter during the episode.
8. Finale – Detail the potential outcomes of the player’s choices during the episode.
9. Mementoes – Detail the unique items that will become available to the. Each item should be linked to a chapter.

A Sample of this type of outline has been included in this document. See *Appendix I* for more details.

### **Settlements**

As an author of *Dave Arneson’s Blackmoor: The MMRPG* episodes, you are free to create new settlements for the campaign. To aid you, this document contains a sample format that should be followed. If you want to set your episodes in already established settlements, contact the Campaign Background Coordinator Richard Iorio II ([richard.iorio@dablackmoor.com](mailto:richard.iorio@dablackmoor.com)) who can provide you with the information you need. See *Appendix II* for Settlement Creation Guidelines for more details and examples of settlements.

**The Next Step**

Once the proposal is submitted, the campaign staff will review your proposal and provides you with an acceptance letter, rejection letter, or request for more information/feedback on your proposal. This process may take up to three weeks to finalize. Please be sure to double check your submission for accuracy and correctness to avoid delays in getting your idea approved.

Additionally, all authors must sign a Zeitgeist Games Contributor Agreement for the written work. This document transfers all intellectual property rights to the work to Zeitgeist Games, Inc. Once these documents are fully executed, an episode code is assigned to the proposal and the formal episode writing begins.

Authors are paid \$50 per adventure published as part of Dave Arneson's Blackmoor: The MMMRPG. Payment for this service shall be made 90 days after the event premiers in the campaign.

## Writing Format

An approved outline moves into the manuscript phase of the writing process. The manuscript that is produced by an author allows the campaign staff to adapt the author's written work into the world of Dave Arneson's Blackmoor.

The title page of the episode is developed by Zeitgeist games staff<sup>1</sup> and includes the title, blurb, author, and levels of play. The remainder of the document is developed by the author and the campaign staff. The following guidelines allow for ease of conversion into campaign episode:

1. Complete your episode in MS Word.
2. Be sure that the file is single spaced.
3. Use one inch margins.
4. The main text is written in two-column format.
5. Any aids, maps, handouts, "Tale of Heroes: Episode Summary" are to be written in full page format.
6. Unique Monsters and Traps use formats provided in the *DMG* v3.5 pages 70-74 and 85-86.
7. When using rules from the core rule books use abbreviation for these books after the first usage (PHB, DMG, MM,).
8. Episode style definitions are as follows:
  - ❖ Chapter text: Arial 14 pt + bold
  - ❖ Heading text: Arial 12 pt + bold
  - ❖ Text read to players: Arial 10 pt + italics + gray shading+ box border.
  - ❖ Normal text: Arial 10 pt
  - ❖ Spells and magic items: italics

Take a look at *Appendix III* for a sample manuscript.

### A note on submitting your manuscript:

- Manuscript documents are not acceptable in PDF format. These documents are subject to change and editing by both Zeitgeist Games, Inc and Dave Arneson's Blackmoor campaign staff. Episodes that do not follow the listed format from this document will be returned to the author for correction. Please double check your format before submitting.
- The final story submission of the manuscript of an episode should not vary from the outline that is submitted and approved by Dave Arneson's Blackmoor: The MMRPG campaign staff. If changes are required, the outline should be updated with the requested changes. Changes should have identifying marks such as **bold** or *italic* text to ensure it can be easily identified. The revised outline must be resubmitted to Dawn Coakley, Plots Coordinator ([dawn.coakley@dablackmoor.com](mailto:dawn.coakley@dablackmoor.com)).
- The Dave Arneson's Blackmoor: The MMRPG Campaign and Zeitgeist Games, Inc. both reserve the right to alter an episode in any manner that is deemed to be

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<sup>1</sup> Title page requires ZG font, which is the property of Zeitgeist Games, Inc.

required to edit for clarity or to modify a potential offensive or otherwise unfit portion of an episode. Zeitgeist Games, Inc. reversed the full right to determine when such an issue exists and what constitutes an acceptable remedy to the situation.

- The author should submit a Tale of Heroes: Episode Summary. This is a brief questionnaire about the outcomes of the episode, which allows episode results to be reported for possible sequels or plot impact of the players' actions.

### **Source Books and Materials**

The campaign staff of Dave Arneson's Blackmoor: The MMRPG is proud to be presenting a campaign world that finds its roots predating the world's most popular Role Playing Game. Zeitgeist Games, Inc. has dusted off this crown jewel of role playing games updating it in the process for a new generation of role players. The previously published Blackmoor material by TSR, Inc.© is an excellent source of information on the Blackmoor world. However, information published by Zeitgeist Games, Inc. takes precedence as canon material for the campaign.

All adventures must be consistent with content and materials published by Zeitgeist Games Inc and written with the D&D D20 System Reference Documents. The System Reference Documents are found at this web address: <http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=d20/article/msrd>.

## **Appendix I: Sample Outline**

A Day at the Races

Written by Charlie Horse [C.Horse@Mystable.com](mailto:C.Horse@Mystable.com)

Teaser: Something sinister is going on down at the Farmtown Horse Racing. A Dave Arneson's Blackmoor episode for PCs levels 1 to 6.

Episode Background: Farmer MacDonald's family has been running the Farmtown Horse Racing for over a century and has a reputation for the most honest horse races around. A nearby rival horse racing establishment, Boomtown Horse Racing has seen a decline in its patronage and want to steal customers from Farmtown Horse Racing. The owner of Boomtown Horse Racing, Patsy Cake has had her associates infiltrating the stables at Farmtown Horse Racing. The adventure begins as these associates prepare to strike to disparage the reputation of Farmtown Horse Racing.

Episode Hook: The players have been asked to work as bodyguards for Madame Exe, a wealthy patron and friend of Farmer MacDonald.

Chapter One: Madame Exe brings the players to guard her at a race. There the players can be familiarized with the operations of Farmtown Horse Racing.

Chapter Two: Etc....

Finale: Option 1: The players successfully foil the associates of Boomtown Horse Racing and identify Patsy Cake as the ringleader. Patsy Cake and her associates are placed in prison. Players have created new wealthy allies. Option 2: The players may successfully foil the associates of Boomtown Horseracing but not identify Patsy Cake as the ringleader. The associates are placed in prison and the players now have an unknown enemy and new wealthy allies. Option 3: The players join in on the Boomtown Horse Racing plot and Farmtown Horse Racing is ruined. Madame Exe pays the players for their services, but is disappointed and does not work with them again. The players have gained new underworld friends. Option 4: The players are foiled by Boomtown Horse Racing associates. Madame Exe pays the players for their services, but is disappointed and does not work with them again.

Mementoes:

Chapter 2: Potion of Bear's Endurance, Wand of Charm Animal

Finale: Option1: Recommendation of Madame Exe (+ 1 Charisma check w/ nobility); Gratitude of Farmer MacDonald, upgrade to animal barding to +1 magical, and *Horseshoes of the Zephr*. Option 2: Recommendation of Madame Exe (+ 1 Charisma check w/ nobility); Enmity of the Dark Horse Racing Cabal; Etc....



## **Appendix II: Settlement Creation Guidelines**

### **Generating Settlements**

In order to generate a settlement, you should first study the rules found on pages 137-139 in the *DMG v3.5*. Using these rules you can quickly assemble the basics of any settlement in Blackmoor. For the purpose of campaign background, no settlement larger than a small town should be created. If you want to create something larger, you must contact the Campaign Background Coordinator before doing so.

If you are unsure about Blackmoor's background, or how your idea fits within the campaign, you are encouraged to contact the Campaign Background Coordinator as well. In most cases the Coordinator will take over fitting the settlement into the campaign. You are still responsible for generating the basics of the settlement, however. These basics are: name, population, wealth, GP limit, power center, alignment, authorities, and demographics.

### **Settlement Format**

When describing a settlement the following format should be followed:

Name of Settlement (Type of Settlement; Population of Settlement; Wealth of the Settlement; GP Limit' Power Center; Alignment; Authority) Demographics, Characters By Class

Adept	(Refer to <i>DMG v3.5</i> , page 139)	Noble	1d4 + community modifier
Arcane Warrior	1d2 + community modifier	Paladin	(Refer to <i>DMG v3.5</i> , page 139)
Aristocrat	(Refer to <i>DMG v3.5</i> , page 139)	Ranger	(Refer to <i>DMG v3.5</i> , page 139)
Barbarian	(Refer to <i>DMG v3.5</i> , page 139)	Rogue	(Refer to <i>DMG v3.5</i> , page 139)
Bard	(Refer to <i>DMG v3.5</i> , page 139)	Ranger	(Refer to <i>DMG v3.5</i> , page 139)
Cleric	(Refer to <i>DMG v3.5</i> , page 139)	Rogue	(Refer to <i>DMG v3.5</i> , page 139)
Commoner	(Refer to <i>DMG v3.5</i> , page 139)	Sorcerer	(Refer to <i>DMG v3.5</i> , page 139)
Druid	(Refer to <i>DMG v3.5</i> , page 139)	Warrior	(Refer to <i>DMG v3.5</i> , page 139)
Expert	(Refer to <i>DMG v3.5</i> , page 139)	Wizard	(Refer to <i>DMG v3.5</i> , page 139)
Fighter	(Refer to <i>DMG v3.5</i> , page 139)	Woken	1d3 + community modifier
Monk	(Refer to <i>DMG v3.5</i> , page 139)		

## Racial Mix

Cumasti	Total number found
Docrae	Total number found
Dwarf	Total number found
Gnome	Total number found
Half-Elf	Total number found
Halfling	Total number found
Half-Orc	Total number found
High Thonian	Total number found
Peshwah	Total number found
Thonians	Total number found
Westryn	Total number found

*Note on Racial Mix:* Blackmoor is different when it comes to the setting races and their locations within the setting. The following tables replace those found on page 139 of the *DMG v3.5*, and should be used when coming up with the settlement's racial mix.

Isolated	Mixed	Integrated
80% Thonians	50% Thonians	35% Thonians
10% High Thonian	20% High Thonian	20% High Thonian
2% Halfling	10% Halfling	18% Cumasti
1% Dwarf	6% Cumasti	12% Halfling
1% Cumasti	5% Dwarf	10% Dwarf
1% Other	5% Gnome	3% Gnome
	1% Docrae	2% Half-Orc
	1% Half-Elf	
	1% Half-Orc	
	1% Westryn	

*Religious Shrines:* Which Blackmoor deities have temples and shrines in the settlement.

*Background:* This section should include information on who is in charge, what services are available, as well as background on the history of the settlement.

Example of a completed settlement:

**Hanford** (Large town; population 3,100; Wealth 465,000 gp; GP Limit 3,000 gp; Power Center Non Standard; Alignment NE; Authority Military Command—General Brutus Hovertz)

*Demographics:*

Characters By Class:

Adept	9th Level	Noble	7th Level
Arcane Warrior	4th Level	Paladin	7th Level
Aristocrat	6th Level	Ranger	4th Level
Barbarian	6th Level	Rogue	10th Level
Bard	8th Level	Sorcerer	6th Level
Cleric	9th Level	Warrior	10th Level
Commoner	16th Level	Wizard	9th Level
Druid	8th Level	Woken	5th Level
Expert	12th Level		
Fighter	8th Level		
Monk	5th Level		

Racial Mix: Afridhi 30%; Tenians 15%; Thonian 10%; Gnomes 10%; Dwarves 10%; Halflings 10%; Half-Orcs 10%; Half-Elves 5%

Racial Shrines: Baldin; Henrin; Hersh; Kadis; Khoronus; Phelllia; Zugzul; Charis; Gorrim

Background: This small yet bustling agricultural center has suffered through two tragedies in its history. Almost two centuries ago, it was sacrificed by the barons of Ten in their fight for independence against Thonian Empire. The Tenian generals knew that once the warlike generals of Thonia had a taste of blood, they could be lured more easily into an ambush. Thus it was that the cheerful town of Hanford, one of the earliest settlements in the region, served as bait. The Thonians burned it to the ground as an example to the other rebelling factions. Soon after destroying the town, the Tenian forces lured the imperial army into a deadly trap within Brushy Fen, and the Thonian army has never again set foot within the duchy.

Hanford's people have never forgotten this historic sacrifice, and beyond the already rebellious nature of all Tenians, they harbor a deep resentment towards all things Thonian. Thus, while most of the Duchy of Ten appears to outsiders as a curious mirror image of old Thonia, Hanford's style and culture are truly unique. Constant contact with the people of Blackmoor — sometimes friendly, sometimes not — has turned Hanford into a melting pot, with immigrants bringing pieces of their own culture to the place. For this reason, the town has always played home to a substantial number of gnomes, dwarves, halflings, half-elves, and even half-orcs.

Irreverent humor is considered the social norm within the town, and anyone with too serious an attitude may find himself conspicuously out of place. Nowadays all the humor has gone underground. Those who keep their ears to the ground know that the best jokes at the expense of the Afridhi originate in Hanford.

All know that Hanfordian festivals are timed to occur on days of the year when no Thonian ritual observances take place. This is one aspect of Tenian life the Afridhi tolerate, as they have developed a concerted plan to stamp out all remnants of the Thonian church in Ten. At one time the festivals drew substantial crowds of professional bards, jugglers, and acrobats, all performing alongside the famous Hanford puppeteers (who fled to Kenville just before the invasion). Now that the Afridhi are in control, the festivals are short, tense gatherings of “official” artists and performers, who are forced to perform acts which demean the spirit of the lost Duchy of Ten and grossly exaggerate the power of Toska Rusa.

Since the Afridhi’s arrival and the “second burning” of their town, as Hanfordians refer to the invasion, Hanford has grown densely packed. Full to the brim with over eleven hundred Afridhi military troops and another thousand Afridhi civilians, the town has almost tripled in size. Within the freshly built walls, the Tenians of Hanford make due. The Afridhi require most to work as slaves in the fields they once owned. However, Hanfordians are used to hard work and bear their burdens with the same irreverent dignity that has always helped them persevere through adversity.

Since the Afridhi conquest, scores of professional bards and performers, who had just arrived in town for a major festival scheduled to begin the morning after the invasion, mixed with the farmers. They attempt to pose as authentic peasants in order to avoid decapitation at Afridhi hands.

While the bards feel they are doing a great service to the people by living and singing among them in the muck and the dust, the peasants know that only if they keep the bards and minstrels busy working with their hands will these wayward souls find the mental strength that is the key to surviving the cruel occupation.

## **Appendix III: Sample Manuscript**

### **Episode Background**

Description of events leading up to the beginning of the adventure.

### **Episode Hook**

How are the player character drawn into the episode.

### **Chapters 1**

Describe what happens here.

*Read aloud text.*

Description of NPCs, monsters, traps or challenges. See *Appendix I* for nonplayer characters, monsters.

### **Chapters 2**

Describe what happens here.

*Read aloud text.*

Description of NPCs, monsters, traps or challenges. See *Appendix I* for nonplayer characters, monsters.

### **Finale:**

Detail each potential outcome of the player's choices here.

*Read aloud text.*

### **Experience Points:**

Reward the player characters experience points for items completed below:

(Maximum 750 XP)

### **Mementoes**

List by each chapter what the players may have to take away from this episode. Values provided are full market value. Items sold are redeemed at half value, while gems may be redeemed for full value. Maximum gold piece value for the episode (excluding certificate) is as follows:

ATL 1: 500gp.

ATL 3: 750gp

ATL 5: 1,000gp

ATL 7: 1,250gp

ATL 9: 1,500gp

Chapter 1: 50gp

Chapter 2: ***Wand of Charm Animal*** \*

\*This wand is carved from the tibia bone of a Peshwah stallion with a burnt cinder centaur carved onto the end of the bone. The activation word, "Na Kuji" is burnt into the side.

Episode 3: n/a

Finale: *Horseshoes of the Zephr*

## **Appendix IV: Writing Do's and Don't's**

Below is a list of helpful hints to assist you in the writing process:

- ❖ Be sure to refer to your adventure as an “Episode” of Dave Arneson’s Blackmoor.
- ❖ Do not shorten words or use acronyms. Examples: “PC” should be player character; “cert” should be certificate; “GM” should be game master.
- ❖ Traps and statistic blocks should be written in *DMG 3.5* format.
- ❖ Complete statistic blocks should only appear in the episode appendices.
- ❖ Do not use non-player characters to prop up the players. Players are meant to be heroic. When higher-level non-player characters jump in to save, assist, help the heroes, the victory is much less sweet.
- ❖ Vary skill checks and challenges as much as possible throughout your episode. This allows more players to shine with their unique and special differences.
- ❖ There are treasure caps measured by ATL (Average Table Level). Keep this cap in mind when determining mementoes by ATL. If you employer pays 500gp at ATL 1, your bad guys will be in beggar rags and fighting with bare hands. ☺
- ❖ There are six players to divide treasure among. It is preferable to have a variety of smaller items rather than one or two larger items.
- ❖ Avoid using “wish factors.” Wish factors are unexplainable things that “just happen.” “Wish factors” are not hidden explainable reasons that something happens. Example of a wish factor: “If the player falls from the cliff, they die.” This should be, “If the player falls from the cliff, they take 20d6 points of damage from the fall.”
- ❖ Paragraphs should not be indented.
- ❖ Avoid excessive use of future tense, usually the use of the word “will.”
- ❖ Be sure to calculate the EL (Encounter Level) and list it in the episode. This table can be found on page 49 of the *DMG v.3.5*.