

WHEN OUR CREW CAME TOGETHER

Character Relationships for *Star Trek Adventures*

It seems to have become something of a default, at least in my own experience, that a game of *Star Trek Adventures* and in fact many tabletop RPGs tend to begin with a session of the characters meeting each other. Whether it be over a prune juice at Quark's or on a runabout trip to your first mission, the need for an original meeting to inform character relationships seems to be a fairly common thread throughout the genre.

But does it have to be?

Star Trek Adventures, by design, takes the approach of mimicking the structure of a *Star Trek* episode and by extension your campaign is likely to mimic the structure of a series in its entirety. So how do the shows tend to introduce their characters?

With the exception of the original series, most of the series seem to favour a mixture of previously acquainted individuals, with one or two new additions to help welcome the viewer into the crew: Commander Riker and Tom Paris being the most obvious examples of this. Something the shows hardly ever do, however, is spend much time dwelling on these new introductions. Instead crews are flung into the middle of the action as part of their pilot adventure. Of course, these characters are written by a room of script writers rather than played by a single player each, which makes this *in media res* style approach a lot easier for them to manage.

So how can we achieve a similar approach without the players feeling like their characters have missed the chance to get to know each other beforehand? One way could be to embrace the collaborative nature of this game and guide your players through writing or "breaking" a mini episode together in the style of a writer's room. Through this exercise the players could gain much of the same benefits they would from actually playing the episode, but without the need for a GM to prepare an introductory story, or for the group to spend precious game time playing it out.

The Questions

Below are a series of questions designed to prompt the creativity of your group into developing the story of "when our crew came together." These questions are designed for the standard Starfleet Senior Staff style of game set up, however they could be adjusted to fit another style of game.

These questions should be asked in order, skipping any from roles not being filled by a Player Character (unless the GM decides to ask them to enhance the Supporting Characters). This creates a more complete picture without missing relationships. The story created should be a challenge, something that no individual crew member could have overcome entirely on their own. This challenge allowed the crew to draw on each other's abilities and become greater than the sum of their parts, setting the foundation for any ongoing relationships and dynamics that the players may wish to explore as their characters progress through the games.

Each player should have total control over the question relating to their role. They are welcome to discuss other ideas with the group and may encourage others to pitch suggestions to them, but they have the final say over the answer that is recorded. A player's answer should never dictate the action of another player's character, however, with any such instances coming through agreement between the players. It is also important that the answer stays true to the narrative which has already been presented, considering the answers to the questions that came before. The GM should be actively involved in this discussion, to both steer it in a direction that fits with the world they have planned and to embed themselves within the group's existing story.

Throughout the process, the group as a whole (particularly the GM) should ask additional questions to fill in any gaps or additional details until everyone has a clear picture of the event and how everyone was involved.

Role	Question
Chief Security	We overcame a dangerous complication to complete our mission. Who or what was it?
Helmsman	We ended up somewhere that we hadn't intended on being. How did we end up there?
Chief Science Officer	We damaged or destroyed our surroundings. Where were we? What did we damage or destroy?
Counselor	We almost failed because of a particular cause of friction or offence. What was the cause of the friction or offence?
XO	We initially struggled to work together but managed to overcome the difficulties. What changed? Or who instigated the change?
Doctor	We saved someone or something important. Who or what? Why are they important?
Navigator	We gained access to a place where we had previously been unwelcome. Where?
Engineer	We broke some rules or regulations to overcome the situation. What rules/regs? Who's rules/regs are they?
Captain	We disproved some preconceptions about one of our officers. Who was it? What were the preconceptions?
Communications Officer	We gained a favourable outcome from a mistake or misunderstanding. What was the mistake or misunderstanding?
Chief Tactical Officer	We paid a high cost for our success. What was it?
Operations Manager	We did well and impressed someone of importance. Who did we impress? How?
Diplomatic Attaché	We gave a prominent individual a reason to distrust us. Who? Why?
Strategic Ops	We now have a grudge held against us. Who or what holds the grudge? Why?
Fleet Liaison Officer	We now owe an ally a favour for their assistance. Who? How did they assist us?
Intelligence Officer	We found signs that the incident was possibly part of something bigger. What were the signs?