

# *The Teller System*



*1<sup>st</sup> Edition RPG System by J David Dawson*

The Players

The Teller

The Fate



# The Teller System: An Overview

The Teller System has been devised as a means of championing the most important aspect of RPGs: the fun of roleplaying and the revelation of character through an emerging story. The system strips away all rules, turns, and dice, emphasising 'role-play' over 'roll play' and shifts the role of the Teller - the equivalent of the GM - and that of the Players away from traditional RPG formats whilst also introducing a new role: the Fate, who works alongside the Teller and Players.

In theory, it should be possible to use the Teller system with a minimum of 3 participants (Teller, Fate, & a single Player) but in order to get the most from it it would be advisable to run it with a minimum of 5, with a recommendation of between 6 & 8 implying that in terms of Players, an active set of around 4-6 would be most conducive in generating a satisfying gaming experience.

As a note, it is not a strict requirement for there to be only one Fate and in instances where characters 'leave' the story, it would be advisable for any Player in that instance to be shifted over to the Fate side, and assist, so as to keep them actively involved. As we proceed through further explanations, hold this in mind, for in certain instances, dependent upon the types of story being told, it may be useful to consider having more than one Fate to assist from the get go.

## What Makes The Teller System Different?

Most RPGs rely on mechanical resolution - dice rolls, modifiers, and stats to determine success or failure. And, moreover, rely on the GM to be the active narrative voice, determining outcomes and story. The Teller System removes

these mechanics entirely and, utilising a set of ‘principles & conventions’ (note there are no rules), shifts the responsibility of the ‘emergent story’ onto the Players (and the Fate).

To understand this perspective it can be useful to consider the old adage that “characters form the heart of a story”. In other words, if you have a suitably defined environment in which well-conceived characters are ‘let loose’ then the story will organically emerge from character/character & character/environment interaction. From this perspective then, it is imperative that a richly drawn (or familiar) environment is provided for, and establishing this, known as **Event Framing** is the first and most important responsibility of the Teller.

Once an environment and tone has been established, then it is up to the participants to as authentically as possible express the characters that they are to play within this environment. It is this fundamental notion of **authenticity** which is paramount and allows Players & Fate the collective responsibility to be ‘in control’ of the emergent story.

## An Emphasis on Storytelling and Character

In essence The Teller System is a system for those who value character-driven storytelling. At its most advanced, it is about navigating complex interpersonal dynamics, making authentic choices, and exploring the tension between individual character aims and larger narrative goals. With the concept of authenticity there are no winners or losers in the traditional sense - goal attainment, treasure acquisition, and character survival are not the focus. Instead, success is measured by how faithfully Players embody their roles and contribute to the evolving story, even if that means their character meets a tragic or untimely end.





While Players are encouraged to be deeply invested in their character's portrayal and development, they are also encouraged not to be possessive of them. If death - whether by sacrifice, accident, or external malign intent - feels natural for the character in a given situation, then it should happen. Similarly, the narrative may organically shift away from certain characters and onto others.

For this reason, it is not characters that gain 'experience points,' but Players. Experience points reflect how well a Player has authentically represented their character and developed their storytelling skills. Mastery of emergent storytelling, balance in narrative control, and thoughtful role-play are the markers of progression in The Teller System.

If you're looking for a game system that prioritises immersion, character embodiment, and emergent storytelling, The Teller System offers an RPG experience unlike any other.