Mephit's Guide to Gamemastering
Star Trek Adventures

SETTING RESOURCES

The world of *Star Trek* is so thoroughly cataloged and researched that there's little point in recreating the wheel at this stage. If you need some refreshers, though, or if you need details on a series you're not entirely sure about then consider the resources listed below to help.

- **Memory Alpha (memory-alpha.wikia.com):** Named for the central database at Starfleet Command, this wiki site contains all the canon information from the TV shows and movies. This should be considered the core of any rendition of the *Star Trek* universe since it's the source of everything else. It's also probably the stuff that your players are going to be the most familiar with and what got them interested in the first place. One thing you'd have to figure out, though, is whether to include the recent reboot movies in any way.

- **Memory Beta (memory-beta.wikia.com):** The counterpart to the site above, this is the wiki collected all the canon sources for the expanded breadth of *Star Trek* material: comics, novels, reference books, roleplaying games, video games... everything inspired by the *Star Trek* series. It's pretty extensive but it's also full of contradictions from all the different authors out there. This means you'll have to do some arbitrating as the GM to clear up "your" version of *Star Trek*. Some GMs will want to lay down blanket decisions ("Novels are out except for this author, and the animated series is in") while others will want to pick and choose ("Sure, that alien species looks good but I don't like the technology they are listed with").

- ***Star Trek: The Roleplaying Game*:** Produced by FASA Corporation (the first producers of the *Shadowrun* game) from 1982 to 1989, this was one of the first licensed RPGs for *Star Trek*. This means several things, some good and some bad. On the good side, the game worked freely with Paramount Pictures so much of what's included in its setting material was closely matched with the original series and subsequent movies. It actually made some things up that were later picked up in other products that were fully licensed but not RPG material, setting some things up as canon that *Star Trek: The Next Generation* contradicted (and causing some stir among fans). On the bad side, it's an RPG from the 1980s so there's a lot of confusing, incomplete, and frustrating aspects to the books and system. Regardless, it deals exclusively with the 23rd century universe (since it predates later series) which is either a good thing if you want to play in that era or use it a lot, or a bad thing if you don't.

- **The *Star Trek Role Playing Game*:** This short-lived RPG was licensed through Last Unicorn Games using their "Icon system" (it's sometimes called *Star Trek* LUG or *Star Trek* ICON for all of this) and includes just three published books. There are separate books for the original series, *The Next Generation*, and *Deep Space Nine* and there's tons of fan material available online. In particular, *The Way of Kolinahr* (Vulcan guidebook), *The Way of D'era* (Romulan

guidebook), *Starfleet Academy*, and *A Fragile Peace* (a Neutral Zone book) should help you to flesh out the setting for wherever your players go.

- **The *Star Trek Roleplaying Game*:** Produced by CODA using the Decipher system (again, you can find it as *Star Trek* CODA or *Star Trek* Decipher), this is the most modern-looking of the RPGs on this list. The books includes all the TV series and movies, including *Star Trek: Voyager*. The *Starfleet Operations Manual* and *Mirror Universe* books are particularly helpful but generally the descriptions of the *Star Trek* universe are things you can lift entirely.

- ***Star Trek: Attack Wing*:** This tactical miniatures game by Fantasy Flight Games presents many different ships and many different factions and is a great resource if your players really like the space combat part of *Star Trek*. Keep in mind, though, that the tactical detail of this game is about a thousand times more than what you need for a game of *Star Trek Adventures*. Check out the fleet engagement rules in the *Command Division Supplement* and the squad combat rules in the *Red Alert* supplement for a look at something more tactical that fits the mechanics of *Star Trek Adventures*.

- ***Star Trek: Online*:** This MMORPG is the current go-to for a *Star Trek* RPG experience. The plotlines are set several decades after the end of the TV series, and the technology is similarly advanced, but that means you can turn to this game (and the wiki at sto.gamepedia.com) for inspiration about where to take the events from published *Star Trek*. If you're familiar with this game (or you've looked at the website above) you will see a lot of the game theory from that game in this one to a degree. It's simple and straightforward which helps to deal with things on the table. Of course, if your players are *also* familiar with *Star Trek: Online* you don't want to borrow from that too closely. Unless that's what your group wants to pursue.

RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN

Designing a Series

A *Star Trek Adventures* series is analogous to a campaign in other settings, but it can be something broader than that as well. Just like a television series, a game series has the same cast, setting, and feel. Potentially, you can have multiple campaigns in a series or you can have a campaign that encompasses stories and elements from multiple series.

Arguably, there are several different campaign arcs within the series of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* that might be different campaigns: first the gaming group is exploring as they figure out what the Bajoran wormhole is and where it leads, then they run a wartime campaign as the Dominion invades and they have to fight them off. Likewise, the same group of characters from *Star Trek: The Next Generation* goes on to star in the movies *Genesis, Insurrection*, *First Contact*, and *Nemesis*. There is a markedly different feel to the movies, not to mention that the *U.S.S. Enterprise*-D is destroyed in *Genesis* so the crew is aboard the *Enterprise*-E after that. This could be a gaming group continuing a campaign through multiple series, following up on the same plotlines and stories even as their characters and the wider setting evolve.

Series Elements

Borrowing from the *Narrator's Guide* of the Decipher *Star Trek Roleplaying Game*, consider using a series profile to hone in on your plans. There are five different elements to a series profile: Setting, Crew, Base of Operations, Adversity, and Feel.

Setting

The setting is where most of your stories are going to take place. This includes…

- **Era:** What stage of the *Star Trek* universe is your game taking place in? It might be any of the *Star Trek* series or it might be something from before *Star Trek: Enterprise* or after the movie *Nemesis*. It might even be from the *Star Trek* reboot series of movies! As a default, this game assumes series taking place during or just after the Dominion War.
- **Region:** What parts of the universe are your players most likely to explore? This can be incredibly narrow (such as *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* which was mostly concerned with a small corner of the Alpha Quadrant) or very broad (like *Voyager*'s trek through the Delta Quadrant or *The Next Generation*'s jaunts from Cardassia to Romulus).
- **Traveling:** How are your player characters getting from place to place and story to story? Usually they have a ship that can do this but if their Base of Operations (see below) is stationary what sort of ships can they call up? For that matter, if you've chosen a Region above that is fairly small, your player characters might be a mobile band without a set vessel that takes rooms on freighters, starships, and shuttlecraft as needed.

Crew

Put some thought into who is on board your ship to give your players direction. In addition to stating what equipment they get for free and other mechanical issues, consider the following…

- **Organizations:** Most series will be focused on Starfleet crews but others might branch out to be about the Klingon Defense Force, the Obsidian Order, or even the Dominion. You can find my guides to playing non-Federation groups on *Continuing Mission* but groups within the Federation

like the Starfleet Corps of Engineers or the Federation Diplomatic Corps are detailed in the division supplement books.

- **Mission Focus:** This bridges in-character and out-of-character planning. What sort of mission is the ship charged with by Starfleet? Are they supposed to explore? Are they a combat ship set to patrol a certain region of space? The ship focus will inform part of this but plenty of ships are repurposed from their original mission. *Deep Space Nine* was just supposed to be a diplomatic base to oversee the establishment of a provisional government and look how that went.
- **Composition:** If your crew is from Starfleet (and it's not in the earliest stages of the organization) it will likely be a fairly mixed bag. You might want to encourage players to take on certain species ("We're going to be dealing with a lot of Bajoran issues") or to avoid some ("This series will pit Orions as bad guys pretty often so don't pick one if you don't want to deal with that"). If you're not running a Starfleet game, your crew could be a lot more homogenous.

Base of Operations

Where do your player characters call home? A ship? A space station? A planet? Another dimension?

- **Base Type:** The default assumption is a starship, but you could have a space station (like *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*) or even a planet as the base of operations your crew uses. This is strongly related to the Traveling part of Setting but deserves its own attention as well.
- **Remoteness:** Is your crew's base of operations right in the thick of Federation space (like the original series, *The Next Generation*, or *Discovery*) or on the outskirts (like *Deep Space Nine* or *Voyager*)? If they get in trouble, how quickly can they get help?

Adversity

You may or may not share this part of the series profile with the players but put some thought into what you want the main enemy to be. It might be something monolithic (like a hostile species) or it might be something vague (like growing tensions). You might also vary the adversaries from game session to game session, but having something unifying can be a powerful tool in your GM toolbox.

- **Threat and Opposition:** Is there a particular species or organization that is going to be a recurring foil for the crew? For instance, *Deep Space Nine* faced off against the Dominion and the Cardassians fairly regularly while *The Next Generation* met with the Klingons and Romulans in big story arcs.
- **Crisis and Disaster:** Are there any big threats the crew will be facing that aren't particular people or groups? The Dominion War in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* was started by the Founders but war is a force by itself. Likewise, the long struggle to return home was a cornerstone of *Star Trek: Voyager*.

Feel

Think about what feel you want in your series, how you want to convey the *Star Trek* universe to your players. It might be dramatic space opera, like the original *Star Trek* series, or gritty and intense, like *Deep Space Nine*. Some series feels can come from a **phrase** like these, a simple sentence that sums up your aim with the series. Others have a **two- or three-word description** of the plot like "high-stakes diplomacy" or "exploring the bizarre." You can also relate your series to **another series** altogether, either a *Star Trek* series ("the Klingon equivalent of *Star Trek: Enterprise*") or something else entirely ("*Indiana Jones* in the Federation").

Methods of Party Creation

Plots and stories are all well and good but if you have no protagonists to follow them then what's the point? There are a couple of different ways that you can get things going, either in person during a

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Session Zero (character generation session without getting into the actual plot) or by email or one-on-one before the group meets as a whole.

Starting with Characters

The most common way to form a group of characters in a roleplaying game is to start with everyone's ideas. You can either have the players show up with ready-to-go characters, or bounce ideas around as shown in the example below.

Terry, René, Nicole, and Alex are getting ready to start up a new game with Gene as the GM. Terry says that she wants to play a Trill scientist and Nicole immediately says that she was hoping to play a Trill too. The two talk it over and decide that there's room in the series for both characters: Terry wants to play an experienced, joined Trill and Nicole wants to play a younger one whom she decides is not joined yet. Gene suggests that they might know each other before serving together and the two women decide they've "heard of" each other but they weren't friends.

René, meanwhile, wants to try a new alien species that he's been working on. Gene wants to look it over but agrees in principle, checking with the other players to make sure they're OK with it as well. While Gene and René go over the new species, Alex outlines his plan for a cocky, flirtatious doctor for the crew. Terry says that she imagines her Trill as experienced in all parts of life and so probably sees right through the doctor's boyish charm. Alex replies that probably only makes his character try harder, to which Nicole says her character is way too young to see through anything like that. When Gene and René get back they let them know about the interesting love triangle with Alex chasing Terry and Nicole chasing Alex. René laughs hard and Gene grins as he starts to make notes of story ideas.

Starting with the Ship

Instead of starting with characters, you might start with the ship itself. This is probably how series construction goes for actual Star Trek *shows and it makes sense to establish where the crew will be operating before you start in on the details of the crew. Use any of the ship creation modes in the next section or some version of your own.*

Gene has another group aboard the *U.S.S. Falcon*, a science vessel out pushing the boundaries of the Federation. Kate has already called dibs on the captain's seat, Tim on the tactical officer, and Rob on a pilot, but Jen is uncertain about her position. None of the players have ideas beyond these seeds so, with the image of the *Falcon* in their minds, they set out to build the bridge crew from there.

Kate knows she wants to be a commander and, considering the type of ship their own, says that she'll choose the Solves Mysteries focus to give her a scientific bent. Tim wants to have a pretty combat-heavy character but decides that he'll choose Vulcan as his species to gain some ability to help on science missions. Rob is going to concentrate on piloting but makes sure to pick lots of sensor and astronomy skills so that he can use the science vessel's sensors to their highest capacity.

Jen is a total blank slate and does a lot of thinking while the others are discussing. After doing some thinking and checking on some *Star Trek* wikis, she says that she wants to play a civilian traveling on the ship with the rest of the crew. Rob asks if she's thinking of Guinan from *The Next Generation* and Jen replies that she had Keiko O'Brien more in mind and is actually thinking of a botanist. The group decides that there can be a hydroponics lab onboard that a civilian specialist runs. They report to the chief science officer (an NPC) but Jen isn't a Starfleet officer so she doesn't have to follow regulations. Gene smiles at the possibilities that this sort of "freedom" might offer for his stories...

Starting with a Story

Sometimes you have a plot in mind for your series, whether a monumental starting point like the opening of the wormhole on Deep Space Nine *or the massively framing sort of plot for* Voyager. *Whatever the case, letting the players know what they can expect will help them make characters and a ship that are well-equipped to succeed in the storyline.*

When Gene gets a new group together for a Session Zero, he tells them that he wants to turn the usual *Star Trek* story on its head. He wants to deal with the junior officers on a ship, the rank-and-file who normally don't get much airtime on a *Star Trek* series. In the back of his mind, he's thinking the plot could wind up with them being elevated and receiving command of their own ship but for now he wants to run a sort of "upstairs, downstairs" story but in space.

Wil, Michelle, and Ashley all decide that they are really going to take this to heart and they decide to make ensign characters in various departments. Wil and Ashley are recent Academy grads (they actually had a thing at Starfleet Academy that may or may not be over) while Michelle wants to play a Bajoran ensign with a chip on her shoulder that keeps her from getting promotions. They pick departments all over the ship but thinking of shows like *Downton Abbey* they decide that their characters are all friends from socializing time between duty shifts. Gene prompts them with some suggestions of what games, topics, or holodeck programs they bond over and the group picks their skills and equipment with these connections in mind.

Methods of Ship Creation

The starship is a shared character for the group and its creation should be as big a part of starting a *Star Trek* series as the creation of any player character. Take a moment to consider how you want to introduce the ship and get things going. Below are three examples of the ship creation process.

Consensus

The most democratic option is to have the players work together and vote on each aspect of the ship. The GM should be involved but is an equal member in the process only.

Patrick, John, Mike, and Brent are starting a game that their friend Gene is GMing. Gene tells them that he wants a nice, powerful ship because he wants a pretty big-scale game with lots of Klingon ambushes and Cardassian standoffs. Patrick is going to play the captain, Jonathan the first officer, Mike the chief of security, and Brent the chief science officer.

They decide not to go by class but pick the Scale first: if Gene is being threatening this early on they want a Scale 5 ship to make sure they've got the staying power and crew for this epic campaign. For the class, though, Patrick suggests an *Excelsior* class and John supports that too. Mike wants an *Akira*, which makes the others smile (Mike has a real aggressive streak) and Brent abstains. They decide majority wins so Mike agrees to an *Excelsior*-class vessel as long as they have good tactical options. Gene marks down **Excelsior** on the ship;s sheet.

Brent, always thinking through details, suggests a backstory. This particular *Excelsior*-Class was refitted after the Dominion War to secure key border systems and the changes mean that the ship's refit increases will go towards making it more combat-ready. This fits well with the group and they set about assigning one point to each of the ship's Systems and then an extra point in Structure and two extra points in Weapons.

For the Mission Profile that their *Excelsior*-class vessel has, they decide to give themselves a little more flexibility so they don't pick Tactical Operations. Instead they decide on Strategic and Diplomatic Operations which gives some combat ability but also some resourcefulness for all sorts of missions. For their Profile Talent they pick **Diplomatic Suite** (to that end) which gives them three Talents altogether. For the last two they pick **Backup EPS Conduits** for damage control (Mike's pick) and **Modular Laboratories** for research (Brent's pick).

Now, all that's left is the name. This time, John's the one who's been doing the thinking: the **U.S.S. Boudicca**. Enthusiastic grins all around and they're ready to go!

GM-Designed

Another option is to have the GM design the entire thing from the beginning. They know what they are envisioning as obstacles and storylines for the players, after all, and they can pick ships that have the right capabilities.

For another campaign, Gene has a very specific storyline in mind with frontiers to push and hardships to meet. He decides on a smaller ship this time for a more intimate feel and decides the missions will mostly be science-oriented. It will need to be a ship that Voyages to ensure they are self-sufficient as well… Looking over the list he picks the **Nova-class** spaceframe with a mission profile of **Scientific and Survey Operations**.

Gene quickly picks out the capabilities for the ship and, at the group's first session, he shows them the sheet to look over. There's no name so Rob, playing the pilot, offers the *U.S.S. Falcon*. If this ship is going to head into the unknown, it's doing it in style. The other players are happy with the name but Gene thinks it's a little too military. Still, he did leave it blank and the players like it so Gene chooses not to veto. The **U.S.S. Falcon** it is.

Kate, meanwhile, is looking over the sheet very thoroughly since she'll be playing the ship's captain. She sees that Gene picked **Extensive Shuttlebays** as one of the *Falcon*'s Talents and wants to change it to **Advanced Shields**. Gene knows that he has a lot of shuttle-based missions in mind and so he specifically choose that Talent and doesn't really want to change it. All he says, though, is that he wants to keep that ability as-is for now. Kate's grumpy but she nods.

Just then, however, Tim asks if they can pick a different Talent from the ship's mission. Gene asks what he had in mind and Tim says that his character, the ship's tactical officer, would rather have High Resolution Sensors than Modular Laboratories. This seems fine to Gene so he agrees and makes the adjustment on the ship's sheet.

Captain Designed

A final option is probably the one best reserved for a group that knows each other. The captain is the in-game final decision-maker on all matters so having the captain's player be the out-of-game decision-maker for the ship makes sense. However, this player doesn't have a predefined role of authority like the GM so it can get tricky with some groups.

While the party playing the crew of the *U.S.S. Falcon* gets underway, Gene has another group that is getting a brand-new ship. Their old one had some… "difficulties" with Klingon warships and ended up being heavily damage and nearly abandoned. Starfleet offers the bridge crew a new command and the players are all onboard so Gene starts thinking about options. Since they've been playing together, he decides to hand the reins over to Avery, the player of the crew's captain.

At the next session, Avery comes with a ship sheet all filled out for the newly-christened **U.S.S. Lydia** (he's a big fan of Horatio Hornblower). He's chosen a **Saber-class** ship with a **Tactical Operations** mission profile and has tricked it out with plenty of combat options. He's determined to head back out into Klingon space and doesn't want this new ship to suffer the same as the old. The group looks it over and everyone thinks it looks like a great ship.

Alex, playing the group's doctor, asks if Avery would mind getting an **Emergency Medical Hologram** instead of the **Improved Damage Control** Talent that Avery picked out for the ship's third Talent. Avery says he wants to focus on keeping the ship together, though, and the group trusts his judgement. Next, Aron, playing the young security ensign, points out that the **Quantum Torpedoes** are really powerful and maybe they want that as their mission Talent instead of **Ablative Armor**.

Avery says no again but this time Gene chimes in to say that, actually, that ability could be "pretty useful." Avery starts to shake his head but stops as he realizes the GM is providing some important information for upcoming missions. He thinks for a moment, then agrees and changes it on the sheet. Gene asks if anyone else has changes they'd like to make and the players all shake their heads. Time for the *Lydia* to get underway!

Star Trek Atmosphere

The setting of *Star Trek* is really the biggest thing you need to worry about. If your players are portraying Klingons and Vulcans but otherwise it seems like you're playing any old 2d20 game like *Conan* or *Infinity*, then you really aren't playing a *Star Trek* game at all. Here are a few tips for evoking the atmosphere of a *Star Trek* series and drawing your players into the setting.

Captain's Logs

A hallmark of *Star Trek* is the captain's log, the mission details of the ship's commander including what the ship is up to and what difficulties they might encounter. In fact, the original series pilot started with William Shatner saying "captain's log" so it is literally the starting point of *Star Trek*. If your captain is an NPC this is a fun way to introduce the story, using the in-character narration as a means of putting players *in media res*. Logs are usually recorded with the stardate (see below) and they are intended for the captain's superiors in Starfleet Command so they should be official and brief: exactly the way you want to set up a story!

In addition to the captain's logs there are other logs that you can use to introduce a story or to advance the plot through narration.

- **Officer's Log:** The captain isn't the only one keeping a log for their superiors, every officer keeps some sort of log of their activities for review and in case someone needs to check. Since things are dictated to computers in *Star Trek*, they tend to be more colloquial than a written log might be. Consider an admiral's log detailing what they have instructed the PC captain to do, or a medical log by an NPC ship's doctor describing a problem she is bringing to the PCs.
- **Combat Log:** Strictly military vessels such as Klingon ships or battleships from the Mirror Universe keep combat logs detailing military actions rather than more mundane events. While Federation vessels don't use these, it can be an interesting narrative device sometimes to introduce a plotline from another group invested in the story, either the enemy meeting the PCs for a negotiation or a third party happening upon the mission from a different angle.
- **Log Supplemental:** Once a log entry is recorded, it is timestamped and sent on to superior officers for review. If someone needs to add something, they can do so by making a supplemental entry after the fact. In *Star Trek*, supplemental entries to the captain's log often serve as an epilogue to the events of the episode and you can do the same to wrap up a story. On the other hand, you can use a supplemental entry to really skip time, for instance starting a mission after the crew has been in orbit around a planet for several days surveying and the captain has already recorded his thoughts only to have something bizarre happen as they're wrapping up.
- **Personal Log:** Unlike an officer's log or a combat log, a personal log is a private entry that someone keeps on their own. As such, it can be used to introduce things that are not official matters or that aren't a mission at the start of the story. For instance, personal storylines might start off with a personal log entry that then turns into a mystery mission or overwhelming situation. This might also be the way to introduce a story the happens while the crew is on shore leave or otherwise away from the ship, or you can use it as a way to introduce a civilian important to the story in the same way as the combat log described above.

Stardates

In *Star Trek*, the date is measured as a "stardate": a five-digit number followed by a decimal point and one more digit. Example: "41254.7." The first two digits of the stardate are always "41." The 4 stands

for 24th century, the 1 indicates first season of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. The additional three leading digits will progress unevenly during the course of the season from 000 to 999. The digit following the decimal point is generally regarded as a day counter.

Stardates in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* began with 46379.1, corresponding to the sixth season of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* which was also set in the year 2369. *Star Trek: Voyager* began with stardate 48315.6 (2371), one season after TNG had finished its seventh and final season. As in *TNG*, the second digit would increase by one every season, while the initial two digits eventually rolled over from 49 to 50, despite the year 2373 still being in the 24th century. *Star Trek: Nemesis* was set around stardate 56844.9, which is so far the highest stardate to have been mentioned in the *Star Trek* canon.

Space Phenomena

There's a lot out there in space and don't let uncertainty hold you back from describing things in evocative terms. As far as geometry goes, the galaxy is divided into four **quadrants** (Alpha and Beta as well as the more remote Delta and Gamma), which are further divided into **sectors** (volumes of space dozens of light years on a side). Within a sector are individual **systems**, one or a pair of stars with planets and (potentially) space stations around it.

Out in space crews might encounter **nebulae** (gaseous clouds that form new stars), **supernovas** or **supernovae** (catastrophically collapsing stars that eventually explode), **novas** or **novae**(the usual fate for most stars as they swell and slowly collapse), **black holes** (the compressed cores of stars that are infinitely dense), **neutron stars** (incredibly dense stars that have enormous gravity pulls), **Dyson spheres** (massive hollow constructs surrounding a star with diameters the size of Earth's orbit), **rogue Jupiters** (gas giants that have flown free of their parent stars to sail between stars), etc.

Some important science fiction features that come up frequently in *Star Trek* are quantum realities and alternate timelines. According to Quantum Theory, there are an infinite number of **quantum realities**, different versions of the universe where history took a different turn from what your characters are used to. The Mirror Universe is a well-known example but multiple episodes introduce other realities that differ from the norm. A similar concept is **alternate timelines** like the one from the reboot films, always a danger considering how often characters in *Star Trek* travel through time. A story arc in *Star Trek: Enterprise*, for instance, dealt with a future Temporal Cold War that showed the dangers and consequences of messing with timelines but also its prevalence.

Pulling Rank

Starfleet is not a military organization. It's mandate is to explore the unknown and seek out new life and new civilizations. When it is pushed into war it can defend itself but its vessels, even escorts, are intended to be homes for crews and possibly families rather than battleships. That said, it definitely shares a lot of military features and people are expected to follow disciplined, regulated sets of rules. This was especially evident on *Star Trek: Voyager* when the Maquis crew members had to integrate into the Starfleet hierarchy and the clashes often proved intense.

All *Star Trek* series have moments where rank and regulation come into play and yours should be no exception. Don't make the players feel like they are cogs in a machine (they are player characters, after all, which means that fate shines upon them) but as the gamemaster you have superior officers, duty schedules, Starfleet regulations, and official policy to use as motivating factors or plot devices in your stories. Every once in a while, remind the players that they have sworn oaths to uphold their duties to the best of their abilities, even when that means making a hard call or obeying a jerk of a commanding officer. Sometimes, the conflict in the story might even be forcing them to decide between following orders and following their moral compass.

New Life

When a starship heads out into the unknown, they are bound to find strange worlds different from Earth that will excite and astound geologists, astrophysicists, and artists. What really excites *players*, though, is when those strange worlds are filled with strange aliens and doubly so when they are dangerous foes or otherworldly mysteries. If an alien creature is going to be a major part of a story you should put some serious thought into it, either reusing the stats from a creature in a published *Star Trek Adventures* book or using the guidelines in the *Star Trek Adventures* core rulebook to design something memorable. If your creature is just a throwaway bit of background color or a minor plot point, use the following suggestions to make them up on the fly.

Tweak the Familiar

To create a very quick creature, you can take something familiar and give it some bizarre behavior. Squirrel-like creatures that dive into the water and swim like otters to gather floating nuts are a new and different take. An away team might also encounter a snake-like creature that can change colors like a chameleon. This won't win any Hugo awards for imaginative science-fiction writing and some of your more scientifically-minded players might balk but *Star Trek* has a long tradition of using generally recognizable Earth animals with slight modifications. The boar-like *targ*, the Cardassian vole, the bear-like *sehlat*, and the Tarkalean hawk are just a few examples from the series of animals that are easily imagined for human players.

Describe the Totally Bizarre

One reason animals in *Star Trek* series were so familiar is that the show didn't want to have to create strange alien creatures and (until pretty late in the shows) the special effects made them look dumb anyways. You are not constrained by such thing, however, nor the need to even show an image of what you are describing. Since your players' away teams are headed into the Theater of the Mind, describe the completely bizarre and let them imagine what that might look like. The dikironium cloud creature and the tri-nucleic fungus used to make ketracel white are two examples of organisms from *Star Trek* that are just names without much in the way of visuals. You can do the same by describing a "hazy creature like a combination of jellyfish and bird" or "large, six-footed slime molds with shells like a turtle," creating something truly alien and you don't need to go into detail.

Take the Middle Path

You can do something that evokes animals your players are familiar with while still creating the bizarre by smashing animals together. The Regulan eel-bird, Klingon glob-fly, Hanonian land eel, and Kavarian tiger-bat are all examples from *Star Trek* canon but you can pick pretty much any two animals and make a combination that is instantly workable. Be careful not to go too far and reach comedic levels unless that's what you want: a frog-elephant or a cricket-parrot conjure images that are sure to break any feelings of tension around your table. Still, sometimes an away team needs to find something that's hard to take seriously, either as a break from deadly tar monsters killing their friends or to lull them into a false sense of security.

New Civilizations

Civilizations on *Star Trek* tend to follow a certain trajectory: they are introduced as a one-dimensional metaphor for something bigger and then become more complicated as they are introduced further. When the original series started, Spock's character as a Vulcan was all about logic and rationality. The philosophy, the torment of *Pon Farr*, even the Vulcan salute and saying "live long and prosper" came later to flesh out the species with more detail. Likewise, Ferengi were comedically stupid misers, Klingons were vicious sociopaths, Cardassians were intolerant warmongers, Bajorans were an oppressed religious group, etc. All of them transcended their flat depiction in time, as plots with them advanced.

When you create new civilizations in your game it should follow the same trajectory. When you introduce your creation, give them a clear and simple statement to establish them in the campaign. Even if you have big plans for them later on, your players will appreciate a simple introduction so that it doesn't make the plot grind to a halt. Below are a few examples of things that you could use to build a new civilization from.

Philosophy

A philosophy is a classic aspect to build a *Star Trek* civilization around. You might start with a philosophical principle such as Stoicism (the inspiration for the Vulcan sense of self-control), a social theory like capitalism (the concept that the Ferengi took to absurd lengths), or even something farther afield like an artistic style (arguably Risa was originally conceived as a world of Caribbean cabanas). This is also the way that heavily religious groups like the Bajorans begin, with a religious concept that dominates their culture.

Prejudice

Both the counterpart and the complement to philosophy-based civilizations, prejudice is a great motivating factor. Your new species might be characterized with how they look down on another species, or on all other species. The Romulans entered the scene as a species that hated the Vulcans, for example, while the Klingons are dismissive of everyone. If your group is comfortable with it, you might have a civilization that takes discrimination to an extreme, imprisoning one of the sexes, enslaving an ethnic group, or even revering blue-haired people as gods.

Ability

Many species evolve with a particular ability that comes to define them (at least at first). The cold-adaptation of Andorians, the natural telepathy of Betazoids, the shapechanging ability of the Founders, the pheromone output of the Deltans... All of these things are dramatically different from what humans experience and it means their societies would be dramatically different by default. Go to a Betazoid wedding if you don't believe me.

Technology

Having a specific technology can come to define a species entirely. The most extreme example is the Borg but there are other examples like the Bynar's hive mind implants, the Vortas' Jem'Hadar warriors, the Tholians' energy webs, and Species-8472's biotechnology. When you create an impressive new technology, though, be sure to think about why it hasn't spread to other civilization's yet. Maybe the species is private about it, maybe it's dangerous or distasteful, or maybe they are hostile to everyone who comes near. It might be as simple, though, as the species being unknown until the crew makes first contact. If that's the case, you have another decision to make: can the technology spread now or is it contained for some reason? If it does spread, players will expect it to affect the Federation in some way, which can be exciting or disruptive depending on your own plans for the campaign.

CREATING MISSIONS

Types of Missions

There are lot of different types of stories in *Star Trek* and you can certainly develop whatever story you like. If you're stuck, though, here are a few themes that come up regularly and could definitely make a good plot for your group.

Diplomacy

Something that separates *Star Trek* from a lot of other science fiction series is its emphasis on peace and cooperation. Enemies always become complicated with legitimate reasons and personal lives. Wars are always forces that spiral out of control rather than the programmed nature of the enemy. That's not to say that combat isn't a big part of the setting and some of the other mission types in this list provide some great combat experiences. For that matter, a diplomacy gone wrong could turn into combat as well!

Examples of Diplomacy Stories: *Journey to Babel* (TOS 2x15), *Journey's End* (TNG 7x20), *Crossfire* (DS9 4x13), *Distant Origin* (3x23), *Cease Fire* (ENT 2x15).

Diplomacy Mission Plot Hooks:
1. The crew is assigned as mediators between two warring aspects of an alien society. They must deal with generations-long feuds while curbing violent extremists willing to kill for their ideals.
2. At an annual summit, the crew is assigned to represent Starfleet in a routine exchange of information. When they receive the other side's, however, it seems like their data is falsified.
3. A Federation ambassador is traveling to a hostile government to negotiate for peace. The crew must protect them during the mission, even when the ambassador is cavalier in their views on security.
4. During first contact with an alien species, the crew inadvertently does something insulting. Now they have to resolve the situation before things turn ugly.

Mystery

When part of the conflict is figuring out what's really going on, you've got a mystery story. The answer to the conflict might be simple but it takes the entire mission to figure out just what's happening. If this is a detective-style investigation, be sure to put in clues that all of the player characters can find: it's just as frustrating to watch the science officer pursue all the threads of the story while the combat characters sit on the sidelines as it is for the combat characters to blast their way through enemies while the science characters watch.

Examples of Mystery Stories: *Miri* (TOS 1x8), *Conspiracy* (TNG 1x25), *Parallels* (TNG 7x11), *Babel* (DS9 1x5), *Displaced* (VOY 3x24), *Strange New World* (ENT 1x4).

Mystery Mission Plot Hooks:

1. Tools and other loose objects begin disappearing around the ship, never when anyone is looking but they definitely aren't being misplaced.
2. The crew shows up to resupply a Federation colony only to find the colony empty of life. The only clue is a large metal column in the middle of the colony that resists all scans.

3. Upon returning from an alien planet, the away team reappears on two different transporter pads. What caused the malfunction and are the clone characters really who they say they are?
4. The ship drops out of warp to survey a red giant star but immediately notice that it is 24 hours *before* they left their last location. Are they stuck in a time loop or is there some anomaly near the star?

The Unknown

In many ways, this is the opposite of the mystery story type described above: the characters know from the beginning exactly *what* they are up against but figuring out what it's doing can take the whole episode. *Star Trek* is filled with spatial anomalies and alien artifacts that wreak havoc once they're encountered. Missions of this type wind up being black box situations where the players are given something to poke and prod until the answer presents itself. It's also a reminder that there are things out there that defy explanation even in the far future of *Star Trek*.

Examples of Stories About the Unknown: *Where No Man Has Gone Before* (TOS 1x3), *Identity Crisis* (TNG 4x18), *Whispers* (DS9 2x14), *Cathexis* (VOY 1x13), *Doctor's Orders* (ENT 3x16).

Unknown Mission Plot Hooks:

1. On a routine survey of a planetary system, the ship is fired on by an unknown vessel. After the first volley, the powerful ship demands the crew return "their sovereign property"... whatever that is.
2. Responding to a distress signal, the crew witnesses a Borg cube being ripped apart by a ship-sized silver sphere. Afterwards it goes dormant, but what is this thing and could it attack Earth next?
3. In a first contact situation, the crew partakes of their host's traditional beverage. Soon afterwards, they begin to transform to look like the new species and have thoughts that are not their own.
4. Something on an alien planet starts rapidly aging all members of an away team. Whether it's a virus, an alien device, or a temporal anomaly remains unknown as the crew scours the planet from orbit.

Alien Lifeform

Usually when alien species are part of the story it's because they are the antagonists instigating the conflict or the victims it is happening to. Missions dealing with "alien lifeforms" here, however, means aliens that are not sentient or simply not aware of what they are doing. They are an environmental danger but one that will pursue and destroy the crew if they aren't careful. The classic example of tribbles shows that there can be malicious intent somewhere in the equation, but it is the interesting and unique quality of the alien that creates the problem. You might present the lifeform as helpless, raising moral questions of whether it's right to just kill it, or make it clear that it can't be destroyed and so the crew must figure out what it's like to find out how to stop it.

Examples of Stories About Alien Lifeforms: *The Trouble with Tribbles* (TOS 2x15), *Galaxy's Child* (TNG 4x16), *The Storyteller* (DS9 1x14), *Alice* (VOY 6x5), *Galaxy's Child* (4x16), *Twilight* (ENT 3x8).

Alien Lifeform Mission Plot Hooks:

1. Cargo taken on at the last planet contained some sort of fungus that is spreading and degrading ship systems. The internal sensors were the first to go offline so the crew needs another way to find it all.
2. An alien traveler staying onboard tries exotic "human food" and eats something that drives him into an insane rage. The crew needs figure out what he ate to cure him.

3. As the small group of player characters returns from a conference in a runabout they suddenly lose all power. The crew needs to stop the aliens devouring the ship systems with limited resources.
4. Visiting a remote research station, an ion storm disrupts transporters and communications just as a pack of dangerous alien predators surrounds the facility.

Overwhelming Situation

Some situations are just so impossible that there doesn't seem to be any way out of it. The crew needs to investigate possible solutions but in the meantime just continuing on can be challenge enough. A major subtype of this would be stories set in the Mirror Universe, something that nearly every *Star Trek* television series did after a while (what was *Star Trek: Voyager*'s problem?), with the characters being drawn into the alternate reality and struggling to get back.

Examples of Emergency Situation Stories: *The Return of the Archons* (TOS 1x21), *Rascals* (TNG 6x07), *Playing God* (DS9 2x17), *Demon* (VOY 4x24), *Catwalk* (ENT 2x12).

Overwhelming Situation Mission Plot Hooks:

1. After an encounter with an alien artifact slowly starts turning the captain's body insubstantial, the crew needs to track down a reclusive archeologist to find out how to reverse it.
2. After a player character is killed in a freak accident, the crew finds itself in a time loop where they try over and over again to stop the accident while simultaneously trying to break free.
3. The crew is visited by Q who puts them all into a reality that resembles the Ninth World of *Numenera* where they have to explore the Violet Vale, or convince Q to release them.
4. The impending collapse of an unstable wormhole threatens to destroy a Federation colony. The crew needs to evacuate the population even as they search desperately for a way to avert the disaster.

Story Arc

The long-term stories in a *Star Trek* series are called story arcs and they can be an excellent addition to your game as well. These are not the same as campaign-length stories in other roleplaying games, they tend to drop in and out of the action. Some game sessions might involve the story arc and others might be interludes between. Even when the story arc is being advanced it might not be related directly to the last time it appeared, or it might involve a constant enemy with many different threats.

In a game where Cardassian spies are a story arc, the party might uncover an Obsidian Order saboteur on their ship and then several sessions later a different spy from Central Command assassinates a diplomat at a summit. A series where Borg advancement is a major story arc might have the Borg in every mission but with all sorts of different objectives and stories.

Examples of Story Arcs: The Borg threat (TNG Seasons 2 and 3), the Dominion War (DS9 Seasons 3 to 7), confrontations with the Kazon (VOY Seasons 1 and 2), the Xindi War (ENT Season 3).

Multiple Mission Types

Missions are hardly ever one type alone, although they are often predominantly one sort. A diplomacy mission where an ambassador is killed probably has some mystery aspects to it and might deal with a wider story arc. If you want to, however, you can purposely give two different mission types the spotlight in your story. For instance, you might have your player's ship and a Romulan warbird become stranded in a remote system as some strange energy signature drains their ship's power. Now they have to negotiate their cease fire in tense conditions (Diplomacy) while they figure out how to get their vessels free (The Unknown).

Mission Objectives

Once you know what the tone of the challenge will be for your players, think about what conditions they need to meet to successfully overcome that challenge. In some cases they might be aware of this, such as missions that are given to the characters by Starfleet Command, but in others they might need to discover the objectives as part of the mission. You can find a lot of mission types and some great design tips in the division supplements for *Star Trek Adventures.* The following list is an expansion of those mission types and is adapted from the *Star Trek Roleplaying Game*'s *Narrator's Guide.*

MISSION OBJECTIVE	EXAMPLES	MISSION OBJECTIVES	EXAMPLES
Defense	Convoy Escort Planetary Defense Sector Patrol Base Security	Intelligence Gathering	Criminal Investigation Infiltration Revolution Spying
Diplomacy	First Contact Government Envoy Law Enforcement Political Arbitration	Military	Invasion Reconnaissance Threat Alert Tactical Operations
Emergency Response	Aid and Relief Evacuation Quarantine Rescue	Scientific Study	Archaeology Anthropology Charting and Survey Prototype Testing
Exploration	Deep Space Exploration Planetary Exploration	Spirituality	Inquisition Missionary Work Pilgrimage Quest
Illicit Activities	Assassination Black Market Trading Piracy or Theft Smuggling	Trade	Free Trading Exploring New Markets Industrial Espionage Supply and Logistics

Acts

As described in the *Narrator's Guide* of the *Star Trek Roleplaying Game*, most *Star Trek* episodes follow a three-act structure. Go through episode descriptions on Memory Alpha or some other fan site and you'll find every episode of every series broken down this way. You can use this three-act model in building your missions as well, both to give you guidance and to evoke the tone of the show.

Act One: Introduction

You lay out the start of the central conflict in the mission and why the crew is interested in them. You can hook them into the plot by giving them a mystery to poke at right away ("You arrive at the planet to find a Romulan warbird already in orbit") or you can start in the middle of things with a captain's log describing how they've already started ("The *Enterprise* has taken on two diplomats from Betazed who are due on *Deep Space Nine* for a conference").

Either way, you should introduce both the setup and the first major twist to the story in order to get the action going. For example, if your crew started out this Act responding to a distress signal in a remote system then you should immediately spring the rest of the plot on them when they show up: the signal is a trap and now their warp drive is shutting down, or the ship turns out to be a long-lost Federation vessel!

Like the first act in an episode of *Star Trek*, this should be pretty quick to get to the heart of things and then move on to the next act. You can skip the commercial break in your game.

Act Two: Confrontation

After the initial hook to the story and then the twist to make it interesting, the characters get a chance to set about confronting it. If you initially pitted them against a renegade Starfleet captain, this is where they find out about his demands, dissenters among his crew, and the threat he poses to the greater Federation. If you had the crew negotiating between feuding groups and the negotiations took an unexpected turn, this is where they figure out how to keep the situation from escalating and who their allies might be.

You don't have to make a plot that's going to spiral and spiral until it's a complex labyrinth, but remember that introducing a problem with a clear solution that solves it neatly in a few quick actions is just as problematic as introducing a conflict with no clear direction. Your job is to offer paths for your players to take but to make them work enough that the experience is entertaining.

Act Three: Resolution

This is the part of the story where everything comes together into one final climax. If the situation has been straightforward (a Jem'Hadar position that needs to be attacked or a murderer to catch) then this is when the players' plans are launched and it's a race to the finish. If they've been seeking out options, finding dead ends, and regrouping then this is the time when the fog clears and the end is in sight. Either way, you should take your cue from your series feel as to how the ending should come across: triumphant, exhausted, painful, etc.

If you are moving on to a new plot with the next mission, wrap everything up neatly. You can always come back and unwrap it to use later but you want your players to feel like matters are settled or they will keep pushing and the story will grind to a halt as things become unclear. On the other hand, you might use this mission to propel things into the next. In that case, some of the conflict is overcome but there's one or two elements that they should obviously start in on next time. You can also use a mixture of these if you have main plots that are finishing ("the Cardassian commander is in prison!") and subplots that are continuing ("the Bajoran Kai is still missing!").

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Making the Crew

One big aspect of *Star Trek Adventures* which involves NPCs is the crew of the player character's ship. The party, even if it's fairly big as far as PC parties go, will only be a very small part of the crew. A small starship like *Voyager* has about 150 crew members while a large ship like the *Enterprise*-D has over a thousand. In either case, the bulk of the crew (as in more than 95%) will be NPCs. Should you stat out all of these characters and figure out their capabilities? Not at all. Should you have some ready? Yes, that will help you in the future.

There are three good approaches to crew NPCs presented here to help the GM and players alike find a middle ground between faceless thousands and overly-intricate population.

Design Important Supporting Characters

Some characters you should write up ahead of time. These would be the major characters on the ship besides the player characters, the ones receiving a "Guest Starring" credit in a *Star Trek* series. Guinan was an important part of the crew in *The Next Generation* but there were many episodes from which she was entirely absent. The same can be said of Gul Dukat on *Deep Space Nine* and Seska on *Voyager*, though mostly as villains instead of protagonists. Others were colorful additions who came up now and again like Reginald Barclay, Naomi Wildman, and Keiko O'Brien.

It's a good idea to stat important people out ahead of time considering their connections and functions in the story. Major opponents, rivals, and NPC bridge officers all are easier to work out ahead of time. Just because they are important characters, though, doesn't mean that their statistics are any more complicated than the average NPC's. While important characters might have unique abilities that other NPCs don't have, their mechanics serve to show how they interact with the player characters, nothing more or less.

Build As You Go

This is a great option for the bulk of the crew and one that is well-supported by Chapter 5.4 of the *Star Trek Adventures* core rulebook. You don't need to know who works in Astrometrics until the captain calls down for a report. When that happens, pick a species and name, give them a rank, and use the premade NPCs to give them some stats to start with. After a few missions, you will have a small part of the crew mapped out and it will grow as different specialties are required.

The Build As You Go approach works for the crew as a whole and also for individual crew members. This is how characters often work on a TV series, in fact: the character gets introduced and they get expanded a little every time they show up. You can take the same approach as TV writers as well, relying on audience surveys (i.e. your players' reactions) to see which crew members are resonating and work to give them more airtime. If Lt. Ramos (randomly determined when the captain made that first call to Astrometrics) ends up being a memorable NPC, then it just might wind up that he happens to be on duty whenever someone is needed in Astrometrics. He might start out as a standard stat block, but he'll gain different abilities as he goes so that his uniqueness matches his growing depth.

Have the Players Take Control

There's another tool the GM has for keeping track of the crew: delegation. The GM has a lot on their plate already so why not farm this bit out? When a junior officer in Engineering is needed, the GM can turn to the Chief Engineer and ask who they have on duty at the moment. The GM keeps track of the departments that PCs don't oversee as well as any NPCs who aren't part of the crew, but having

players keep their own duty rosters can be immersive (it's what their characters are doing, after all), helpful (one less thing for the GM to worry about), and empowering (they really feel like they control what happens in their department). The captain and first officer, if they are PCs, can pick an unattached department if they want and keep track of the bridge officer in charge as well as their subordinates.

RANDOM SHIP NAMES

When you need a new Federation ship name quickly, or if you just want to pick a random name to help with your mission-planning, roll 1d20 on the following tables. The **Strong** names below are generally famous explorers and ships of the Royal and United States Navies. The **Escort** names are deities, heroes, and monsters of world mythology. The **Science** names are scientists, astronomers, humanists, and political theorists. If you don't want to pick between those names, roll a d6 before you roll your d20. The **Shuttlecraft and Runabout** names are named for mountain ranges, rivers, and other geographical features. These are not official rules, though, so feel free to name your ships whatever you like.

D20	1-2 STRONG NAMES	3-4 ESCORT NAMES	5-6 SCIENCE NAMES	SHUTTLECRAFT & RUNABOUTS
1	Abraham	Apollo	Abélard	Aconcagua
2	Brahmam	Chiron	al-Khwarizmi	Amazon
3	Dyson	Diomedes	Appleton	Elasah
4	Empress	Epona	Bigourdan	Everest
5	Estella	Geryon	Calderone	Gobi
6	Fortitude	Heqet	Ehrlich	Huang He
7	Garcia	Hestia	Fischer	Irtysh
8	Katerina	Intarabus	Franklin	Joash
9	Ling Zhen	Janus	Gorgani	Kalahari
10	Maquoketa	Mamlambo	Grünberg	Kilimanjaro
11	Marguerite	Nokhubulwane	Habermas	Kosciuszko
12	Nachtigal	Nonhelema	Maslow	Nile
13	de Orellana	Nzinga	Ohsumi	Ophir
14	Quoshnet	Poseidon	Russell	Patagonian
15	Reina	Thalassa	Shunkai	Qogir
16	Republic	Tiberinus	Spinoza	Rezon
17	Teixeira	Tlaloc	Tyson	Sonoran
18	Uther	Typhon	Whitman	Taklamakan
19	Vries	Wadjet	Ziegel	Vaniah
20	Waikato	Xipe-Totec	Zinn	Yenesei