

Roaring Rockets Introduction

VERSION 3.1 (BOOSTER). COPYRIGHT KEN YOUNG 2017-2025. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. <http://www.roaringrockets.org/>

ROARING ROCKETS IS A FAST-MOVING, RETRO/pulp SCIENCE FICTION ROLE-PLAYING GAME BASED ON THE pulp/golden ERA OF SCIENCE FICTION (1890s-1950s). POPULAR WORKS WERE BUCK ROGERS, FLASH GORDON, AND JOHN CARTER. STREAMLINED RULES ALLOW EASY PLAY AND SHORT SET-UP TIME. OPTIONAL SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS CAN PROVIDE A RICHER GAMEPLAY.

The people reading the genre (literally a hundred years ago)

PEOPLE IN THE 1890s-1950s WERE SELF-RELIANT AND MORALLY STRICT. THEIR DIVORCE RATE WAS 10%. POLITE SOCIETY DIDN'T CURSE. THEIR FICTION WAS PG RATED. THEY HAD STRONGLY DEFINED GENDER ROLES. WOMEN LACED CORSETS TIGHT, WHICH CAUSED FAINTING UNDER ADVERSE CONDITIONS. CORSETS CAME OFF IN THE 1920s, BUT THE FAINTING STEREOTYPE PERSISTED IN PULP FICTION FOR A WHILE.

THE WOMEN READING EARLY PULP SCIENCE FICTION WERE NOT LIBERATED. THEY COULD NOT VOTE AND WERE EXPECTED TO DO AS THEY WERE TOLD. THE GENRE HAD INDEPENDENT AND CAPABLE WOMEN. MEN FOUND THIS PERFECTLY ACCEPTABLE IN SCIENCE FICTION, AND WOMEN LIKED SEEING THIS. PULP SCIENCE FICTION WAS ALSO PROGRESSIVELY FREE FROM OVERT RACISM.

The Genre

THIS GENRE CAN BE A LITTLE DIFFERENT:

- SPACE SHIPS DO NOT USE FUEL, BUT SHOOT SPARKS & SMOKE OUT THE BACK
- THEY HAVE FASTER-THAN-LIGHT TRAVEL BUT STILL USE VACUUM TUBES. THEIR COMPUTERS ARE MECHANICAL DEVICES THAT PERFORM ONE SPECIFIC COMPUTATION.
- THEY HAVE RAY GUNS, BUT STILL FIGHT WITH SWORDS. STUNGUNS ARE REALLY EFFECTIVE; THEY ARE RAY GUNS THAT HIT LIKE A TAZER.
- THEY DO NOT HAVE NUCLEAR WEAPONS, BUT ORBITAL BATTLESHIPS ARE JUST AS EFFECTIVE
- MEN ARE TAUGHT HOW TO FIGHT BUT NOT HOW TO COOK
- GOOD LOOKS FOR STEREOTYPE WOMEN ARE THEIR SUPERPOWER. THE OFFICIAL WILL SAY YES INSTEAD OF NO, THE MONSTER WILL KIDNAP HER INSTEAD OF EATING HER, ETC.
- FAINTING IS KRYPTONITE FOR STEREOTYPE WOMEN. THIS USUALLY IS NOT A PROBLEM DURING THE GAME. SLEEPING AND FAINTED WOMEN GET +1 LOOKS. YOU CAN FAINT VOLUNTARILY. YOU CAN BE A GENERIC (NON-STEREOTYPE) WOMAN.
- MEN AND WOMEN ARE EQUAL IN PULP SCIENCE FICTION, BUT STILL HAVE GENDER-SPECIFIC JOBS AND STRONG ROLES.
- MEN ARE EXPECTED TO PROTECT WOMEN, AND SACRIFICE TO KEEP THEM SAFE AND COMFORTABLE. WOMEN HATE GETTING THEIR HAIR, CLOTHES, AND MAKEUP RUINED; MEN ARE EXPECTED TO BE PROACTIVE ABOUT THAT.
- NOBODY SWORE IN PULP SCIENCE FICTION BOOKS, MOVIES, OR COMICS. NOT EVEN SURROGATE SWEAR WORDS. THERE WAS NO OFF-COLOR SPEECH OR INNUENDO, EITHER.

- A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MORE people WERE CULTURALLY AVERSE TO killing, AND THEIR MEDIA REFLECTED THAT. This is NOT A PROBLEM FOR CHARACTERS BECAUSE STUNGUNS ARE SO GOOD.

EARTH IS UNITED BECAUSE IT IS SURROUNDED BY HOSTILE ALIEN EMPIRES. IT NOW ADMINISTRATES A BENEVOLENT DE-FACTO EMPIRE, PROVIDING INTERPLANETARY SECURITY. KNOWN SPACE IS MOST THINGS WITHIN 75 LIGHT YEARS OF EARTH (A 75-day trip). IT ENCOMPASSES 3500 STAR-SYSTEMS, MANY CONTAINING AN INHABITABLE PLANET. THE STAR SCOUTS ARE SLOWLY PUSHING BACK THE BOUNDARIES OF KNOWN SPACE.

Characters

THIS GOES MUCH BETTER IF YOUR CHARACTER IS THE SAME GENDER AS YOU ARE.

CHARACTERS HAVE STATISTICS LIKE STRENGTH, INTELLIGENCE, DEXTERITY, AND SO FORTH. STATS CANNOT BE IMPROVED. Skills like piloting AND SHOOTING CAN BE IMPROVED AS YOU PLAY THE GAME.

STEREOTYPE WOMEN HAVE AN EXTRA STAT: looks. Looks=0 IS AVERAGE. YOUR CHARACTER HAS ABOVE AVERAGE looks. STEREOTYPE WOMEN ALSO HAVE SOME SPECIAL skills, like RUNNING IN HEELS.

MEN CANNOT COOK, SO THEY START WITH ONE food preparation skill AT LEVEL 1. MEN TRYING TO COOK WAS COMEDY GOLD BACK IN THE DAY.

REX FAILED HIS sandwich making skill DURING playtest, AND IT WENT LIKE THIS:

I NEED BREAD. FROZEN waffles ARE BREAD, AND I CAN THAW THEM WITH THE WELDING TORCH. VIOLA MAKES REALLY GOOD fish sandwiches AND AMAZING PEANUT BUTTER AND jelly; I CAN DO THAT. HERE IS A CAN OF SARDINES AND A JAR OF MINT jelly. LUNCHTIME!

THE RESULTS WERE UNSATISFACTORY.

HIGH NUMBERS ARE GOOD ON CHARACTER SHEETS. LOW die ROLLS ARE good. ANYTHING THAT ADDS TO YOUR skill IS good.



Role playing

THIS IS A FORM OF IMPROVISATIONAL ACTING. SO ACT FROM THE CHARACTERS PERSPECTIVE AND TAKE ON THEIR ROLE. BE THE HERO AND HAVE FUN.

BEING IN CHARACTER MEANS ACTING LIKE THE PERSON YOU ARE PLAYING:

- YOUR CHARACTER HAS DIFFERENT VALUES AND ATTITUDES THAN YOU DO
- YOUR CHARACTER HAS DIFFERENT GOALS THAN YOU DO
- YOUR CHARACTER THINKS DIFFERENTLY THAN YOU DO
- YOUR CHARACTER HAS DIFFERENT MOTIVATION THAN YOU DO
- YOUR CHARACTER MAY HAVE AN ACCENT OR USE CERTAIN FIGURES OF SPEECH

FOR EXAMPLE, YOUR CHARACTER DOES NOT LIKE KILLING PEOPLE, BUT YOU WANT THAT TIGERMAN TAKEN OUT.

OUT OF CHARACTER: *"My character stabs the Tigerman with his sword."*

IN CHARACTER: *"Tigerman, does your grandmother know you are doing this?"*

Cast of Bad Guys

BUG-EYED MONSTER (BEM): BIG, UGLY, HUNGRY.

CLOUDWORM: BIG FLYING DRAGON-LIKE MONSTER, CAN DAMAGE VEHICLES. LIVES IN CLOUDS, MISTS, & VAPORS. THEY ARE SLOW, BUT HARD TO SEE IN A CLOUD. HARD TO KILL BUT EASY TO FLEE.

DINOSAURS OF ONE KIND OR ANOTHER ARE ON LOTS OF PLANETS.

HUMANOID: MORE THAN HALF OF INTELLIGENT LIFE IS HUMANOID. MOST OF THEM STAY ON THEIR OWN PLANET.

INSECTOID: THEY ARE ALWAYS TRYING TO CONQUER SOME HAPLESS COMMUNITY, TAKE THE LAND, AND ENSLAVE THE INHABITANTS. THERE ARE A LOT OF THEM, AND THEY WOULD BE A MAJOR THREAT IF THEY DID NOT SPEND MOST OF THEIR EFFORTS FIGHTING OTHER INSECTOIDS. THEY USE A MIX OF HIGH AND LOW-TECH EQUIPMENT; THEY HAVE HIGH TECH BUT MOSTLY PRODUCE ARCHAIC EQUIPMENT. INSECTOIDS FOLLOW ORDERS WITHOUT FEAR OR QUESTIONS. THEY HAVE MANY CASTES: WORKER, SOLDIER, LEADER, ETC.

PSYREN: SINISTER GREEN HAired FEMALE. THEY CAN SING A BEAUTIFUL PSYCHO-SONIC SONG THAT STUPTIFIES MEN (BUT NOT WOMEN). VICTIMS ARE ADDICTED MAN-SLAVES AFTER A MONTH OR SO OF REPEATED EXPOSURE. AFTER A FEW YEARS THEIR INTELLIGENCE HAS BEEN SO DAMAGED THE MEN DIE. THE DEFENSE IS EARPLUGS OR LOUD MUSIC. BECAUSE THE SONG IS 50% MENTAL POWERS, IT DOES NOT WORK IF RECORDED, AMPLIFIED, BROADCAST, ETC. PSYRENS ARE CATTY AND DO NOT COOPERATE WELL. LOOKS DO NOT WORK ON THEM. SOMEONE WITH SINGING SKILL CAN SING LOUD TO PROTECT MEN.

SALAMANDER: THE SALAMANDERS WANT TO BE CONQUERORS. THEIR ONLY PROBLEMS ARE PRIDE, POOR PLANNING, COMICALLY UNRELIABLE TECHNOLOGY, AND THE FACT THEY SPEND MOST OF THEIR TIME TRYING TO CONQUER EACH OTHER. THEY LOOK LIKE A BIG WHITE 6-LEGGED SALAMANDER. THEY BREATHE AIR AND WATER. THEY EAT PRISONERS, EXCEPT FOR BEAUTIFUL STEREOTYPE WOMEN, WHO THEY ENSLAVE.

SHEIK: EVIL WANNABE CONQUERORS. THEY LOOK LIKE BIG SPIDERS WITH FANGED HUMANOID HEADS, 8 SPIDER-LEGS THAT LOOK LIKE FINGERS, AND A PAIR OF SMALL HUMANOID ARMS TUCKED UNDER THE HEAD. THEY ENSLAVE VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES, FORCING THEM TO WORK AND SLOWLY SLAUGHTERING THE VICTIMS TO FEED ON BLOOD. LOOKS DO NOT WORK ON THEM.

SPACE PIRATES: HIJACKERS, SLAVERS, THIEVES AND KIDNAPPERS. SOME ARE MULTI-SPECIES GROUPS, OFTEN LED BY AN EVIL EARTHMAN.

TENTACLE MONSTER: YOU CANNOT MOVE ONCE GRABBED. TENTACLE MONSTERS USUALLY HAVE FANGS FOR EATING YOU (THE FANGS CANNOT MISS ONCE YOU ARE HELD).

THARK: 4-ARMED GREEN BARBARIAN HUMANOID. THEY ACQUIRE TECHNOLOGY WHEN THEY CAN AND BECOME RAIDERS. THEY GET TWO ATTACKS PER TURN IF USING FISTS, BATONS, OR SWORDS. THEY SOMETIMES WORK AS MERCENARIES.

TIGERMAN: GENETICALLY ENGINEERED HUMANOID WARRIORS MADE BY AN EXTINCT PEOPLE. PURPOSELESS, THEY ATTEMPT TO CONQUER AND ENSLAVE VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES. THEY ARE NOT GOOD AT GOVERNING OR EMPIRE BUILDING. THEY SOMETIMES WORK AS MERCENARIES.

Void shark: THESE HUGE CRITTERS LIVE IN SPACE AND OCCASIONALLY TEAR OPEN SPACE SHIPS TO EAT A CREWMAN OR TWO. YOU CANNOT OUTFRAN IT, BUT CAN DRIVE IT OFF BY SHOOTING AT IT OR JETTISONING ALL THE FOOD. VOID SHARK ATTACKS ARE TERRIFYING BUT UNCOMMON.

Equipment You Can Use

- **SPACE SUITS** HAVE bubble helmets AND CAN BE USED AS diving suits.
- YOU WILL NOT USE **ARMOR** MUCH. IT IS HEAVY, UNCOMFORTABLE, AND BY THE TIME YOU PUT IT ON YOU WILL NOT NEED IT ANY MORE.
- WOMEN CAN GET SPACE SUITS AND ARMOR THAT DOES NOT REDUCE THEIR LOOKS AS MUCH, BUT IT IS MORE EXPENSIVE. THEY CAN BUY BETTER LOOKING CLOTHES & UNIFORMS, TOO.
- A **2-WAY RADIO** IS LIKE A COMBINED cell phone AND walkie-talkie. IT USES VACUUM TUBES AND IS THE SIZE OF A QUART OF MILK.
- **BULLET GUNS, MAGNETIC GAUSS GUNS, ROCKET GUNS, RAY GUNS, STUN GUNS, ETC.**
- **BATONS, SWORDS, & SPEARS** ARE EFFECTIVE, TOO.

