

Khitomer Conference 2021

Writing Memorable Characters: Focusing on Weaknesses

Host: Amanda Rose (RPG Writing)

Room One • Session 1

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:00:26 AM

This is the text based version of the presentation that I gave orally on this very subject at Babel Conference (BaCon), last month. I hope you all enjoy it as much as those at BaCon did. With no further ado, I will commence the speech on Writing Memorable Characters.

Why should we focus on character weaknesses?

Anyone? Why should we focus on character weaknesses?

[PF] Amethyst 2/20/2021, 10:02:01 AM

Makes characters more relatable and less Mary Sue.

[PF] CorCordale 2/20/2021, 10:02:05 AM

A weakness allows for character growth

[22] greenfelt 2/20/2021, 10:02:13 AM

It reminds us that no character is perfect.

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:02:25 AM

Because we are equally defined by our conflicts, limitations and drives as our abilities.

[22] Taylor 2/20/2021, 10:02:26 AM

It makes characters relatable to the human brain

Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 10:02:43 AM

Characters without weaknesses are boring

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:02:47 AM

All very good answers.

[OF] Cam 2/20/2021, 10:02:54 AM

it gives the character some rough edges that create subplot opportunities

[SC] Beth 2/20/2021, 10:02:56 AM

Weaknesses help with suspension of disbelief

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:02:59 AM

Here are some of the things that I came up with:

- Focusing on strengths tends to lead to two dimensional characters.
- Tends to avoid "Mary Sue" issues.
- Weaknesses give characters room to grow.
- Weaknesses can be a focal point of plots and subplots.
- Makes characters more realistic and interesting.
- Create characters that are identifiable and are can be empathized with.
- Flaws, weaknesses, and quirks give characters balance.
- Give players that sim counselors something to do!

The problem is that we have encountered people that think weaknesses are something else. So, first, we must discuss the difference between strengths and weaknesses.

What is a strength?

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:04:19 AM

haha that last one... with all the people running around my ships the Counsellors wouldn't be able to take leave for the next 7 years 🙄

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:04:47 AM

@RottenEmu maybe you should meet T'Lul. LOL. DS5 is chock full of characters like that.

A strength is :

- Any added ability that a normal would not have
- Telepathy
- Empathy
- Super Strength
- Extra assets
- Wealth
- Uncommonly good looks

So, what is a weakness?

It is a characteristic, flaw, or trait that stands in your character's way of achieving their desires or goals.

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:06:16 AM

It can be a strength applied at the wrong moment

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:06:21 AM

Anything that gives a character a disadvantage

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:06:36 AM

Can you think of examples?

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:06:44 AM

PTSD

[SC] Beth 2/20/2021, 10:06:47 AM

Pride

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:06:51 AM

Hubris

[OF] Cam 2/20/2021, 10:06:53 AM

Romulan hot temper

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:06:57 AM

Vanity

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:07:00 AM

Impulsivity

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:07:13 AM

Lack of social skills

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:07:15 AM

laziness

[SC] Beth 2/20/2021, 10:07:17 AM

A character's inability to see their own needs (martyr syndrome)

[SC] Bri 2/20/2021, 10:07:23 AM

Inexperience

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:07:29 AM

shyness

[PF] CorCordale 2/20/2021, 10:07:30 AM

A missing or replaced limb

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:07:30 AM

Well, for example: you can be very headstrong in your convictions, as a character, with a high degree of certitude.. and then you can let that lead them into failure.

[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 10:07:30 AM

arrogance

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:07:38 AM

overconfidence

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:07:49 AM

All of these things definitely can be weaknesses.

[OF] Cam 2/20/2021, 10:08:16 AM

some things go both ways

one of my NPCs has this

+/- Xenophile - fascinated by other species/cultures. Generally a plus, but can make him less wary than he should be since he's a quart low on most peoples' inherent fear of outsiders.

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:08:36 AM

Here's some brief examples of things that can create weakness. We will get into more of them later: • Take something that might be a strength and twist it or remove it:

- Non-Betazoid in counseling
- Remove a sense – blind or deaf
- Remove or negate extra assets
- Imagine an Andorian in an EVA suit – how do antennae fit?
- Add insecurities about personal appearance

Why do you think that writers intuitively focus on strengths rather than weaknesses?

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:09:37 AM

Andorian in EVA suit, they fold quite nicely, thank you very much 😊 (it's not so comfortable but it's not like there's any rigorous cartilage in there...

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:09:42 AM

Because we want our characters to be better than ourselves irl

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:09:50 AM

That's Human nature, and somewhat driven by our culture- focus on what you succeed at, rather than acknowledging your weaknesses. Fortunately there is *some* shift away from that.

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:09:52 AM

(I'd also imagine that Starfleet would have species specific EVA suits..)

[SC] Beth 2/20/2021, 10:09:54 AM

People like to be the main character of a story. We always imagine ourselves at the center of our own narrative

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:10:02 AM

@Aiko Heiwa, I think that's a huge one.

[PF] CorCordale 2/20/2021, 10:10:14 AM

As writers, we strive to escape the doldrums of our existence so we project ourselves into exaggerated and iconic avatars of our desires.

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:10:16 AM

but yes, I mean, most people don't want to read stories (or write them!) about people who are weaker than them

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:10:20 AM

@Beth but main characters are often flawed, so I don't buy that one.

[UES][5th] Stephen 2/20/2021, 10:10:41 AM

I think a problem a lot of simmers face too is balancing strengths and weaknesses... They each play off of each other. For one thing that makes us weaker we have something that makes us stronger and vice-versa.

[SC] Bri 2/20/2021, 10:10:42 AM

People are reluctant to create something they don't see as perfect?

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:10:53 AM

So of course you write strong characters. That's often what you want to see, and as a RPger, I would like to pretend I'm good at things

[SC] Beth 2/20/2021, 10:10:56 AM

Fair enough. I more think that strengths feel like an easier way to this. But also I see your point

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:11:07 AM

Here are some of my thoughts on this subject:

- We want control over something in our lives.
- Series of bad breaks in life.
- Life is not easy
- In our lives, we are less than perfect.
- Closely related to the first.
- Real life solutions do not always neatly work out.
- We feel invisible.
- Heroes get noticed, do ordinary people?
- We want to win.

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:11:46 AM

Books and other stories do show characters that are flawed, but writing a character specifically in a Simming setting, people usually start to identify with the characters and they want to be awesome. Gives you a good feeling

Glenn 2/20/2021, 10:12:08 AM

I think too many people want their characters to be flawless.....my opinion, your character/s should have some flaws.

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:12:23 AM

Let's look at some samples of strengths and weaknesses of superheroes and Trek characters to demonstrate what characters might be strong or poor for writing. For these examples we will look at:

- Superman
- Batman
- Deanna Troi
- Reginald Barclay
- Q

What are Superman's strengths?

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:13:24 AM

Super strength ,super hearing, flying (though originally it was just leaping/jumping)

[IDF] Charles Star20/2021, 10:13:34 AM

X-Ray Vision

[PF] CorCordale 2/20/2021, 10:13:35 AM

He always wins, and he's invincible except when the plot demands otherwise

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:13:50 AM

Ooh, a purist @Aiko Heiwa

Glenn 2/20/2021, 10:13:50 AM

can't be harmed except by kryptonite.

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:14:04 AM

Superman is sort of the go-to for describing a power as needed by plot basis.

[IDF] Charles Star20/2021, 10:14:04 AM

inherently good and just

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:14:06 AM

Not really, I just know originally he didn't fly. 😊

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:14:34 AM

You guys have hit most of them. Here's what I came up with:

- Practically omnipotent on Earth
- Can fly
- Not harmed by any normal weapons
- Needs no space suit (as long as not near a red sun)
- Can turn back time
- Super human strength

What are Superman's weaknesses?

Glenn 2/20/2021, 10:14:56 AM

kryptonite

[SC] Bri 2/20/2021, 10:14:59 AM

He can only be in one place at any given time

[PF] CorCordale 2/20/2021, 10:14:59 AM

Lois Lane

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:15:20 AM

@BriWhyte, I'd say that's just about anyone's weakness. @CorCordale, actually that's true!

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:15:39 AM

I think his weaknesses depend on which adaptation you're talking about

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:15:41 AM

He needs Earth's sun, if I remember correctly?

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:15:50 AM

Yes. The sun gave him his abilities

[PF] CorCordale 2/20/2021, 10:15:51 AM

To be fair, we all do

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:15:51 AM

Henchmen, retainers, family, and other attachments most definitely can be weaknesses.

Glenn 2/20/2021, 10:15:51 AM

any yellow sun

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:15:58 AM

Good one @Aiko Heiwa

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:16:00 AM

chuckles. indeed!

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:16:25 AM

the JLA movies give him a bit of an issue where he's prone to direct action when it's not necessary, and incapable of grasping tactics because he doesn't need to

(also, a bit of a blind spot re: Darksied)

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:16:38 AM

Here are some of the things that I came up with, though again, you mostly hit them:

- Kryptonite
- Magic
- Red Sun
- Must protect Lois Lane

- Cares about Humans

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:16:52 AM

Something that might be seen as a strength but can also be a weakness, unwilling to let people suffer so would do things that might be detrimental to himself to avoid that.

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:17:00 AM

the dude would not care for Proxima Centauri...

[PF] AlexM 2/20/2021, 10:17:16 AM

Arguably "Cares about Humans" is not a weakness.

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:17:19 AM

[@Aiko Heiwa](#) correct. Let's look at a different Superhero now. What are Batman's strengths?

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:17:20 AM

His powers limit the ways he can intervene without looking like a dictator (Superman)

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:17:31 AM

but can be used against him

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:17:35 AM

Intense training

Glenn 2/20/2021, 10:17:36 AM

intelligence

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:17:42 AM

gadgets

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:17:45 AM

Money

[PF] AlexM 2/20/2021, 10:17:53 AM

Wonderful toys

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:17:54 AM

Devoted assistant

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:17:55 AM

I heard there was a storyline that addressed this quite well

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:17:56 AM

Wealth and connections.

[SC] Beth 2/20/2021, 10:18:07 AM

Rugged good looks as Bruce Wayne

[OF] Cam 2/20/2021, 10:18:33 AM

Wealth

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:18:41 AM

@AlexM which comes from @Cam 📺's statement.

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:18:43 AM

Overwhelming willpower and dedication

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:18:53 AM

Good answers. Anything else?

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:19:01 AM

access to tech (goes along with gadgets, but maybe a bit more overarching?)

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:19:02 AM

To a degree, ruthless pragmatism.

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:19:13 AM

I wouldn't say that's a strength @KyleB

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:19:18 AM

That can be a weakness too, as it becomes obsession

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:19:24 AM

In any case, this is what I had:

- Practically unlimited money
- Expert martial artist and weaponsmith
- Genius
- Master detective

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:19:30 AM

Yes. But it's definitely a strength of the character.

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:19:38 AM

What are Batman's weaknesses?

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:19:41 AM

(It's just, you know, a lot of strengths are flipside weaknesses)

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:19:43 AM

Agree mostly, though he accomplishes his goals through it, which *tend* to help him.

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:19:48 AM

In the comics, at least, he could sometimes dwell in his dark emotions.

Glenn 2/20/2021, 10:19:51 AM

he's human...can be killed

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:19:53 AM

Psychological torment

[OF] Cam 2/20/2021, 10:20:03 AM

angsty - some movies he seems almost emo

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:20:22 AM

Often put himself out there as a martyr, willing to sacrifice for others (strength and weakness)

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:20:28 AM

He needs to maintain an alternate identity.

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:20:34 AM

Again, @KyleB we're focusing on the character strengths and weaknesses, not what they might lead a character to do or become. That's part of where the background comes from. 😊

[SC] Beth 2/20/2021, 10:20:48 AM

Human - no actual super powers

Glenn 2/20/2021, 10:20:49 AM

obsessed with his parent's death

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:21:04 AM

To be debated that point

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:21:25 AM

That's one of the reasons he's my favourite Superhero

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:21:26 AM

Definitely hitting some of his weaknesses here. Here's what I have:

- Leads a double life/secret identity
- Psychological trauma from watching parents get killed

- Only as good as his equipment and medical treatment
- Completely reliant on technology
- Relies on allies and protects them.
- Works outside the law
- Anger management problems

[SC] Beth 2/20/2021, 10:21:27 AM

Fair enough

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:21:48 AM

So, which do you think is the more interesting character to write or read?

Superman or Batman?

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:21:56 AM

Batman!

[SC] Beth 2/20/2021, 10:21:58 AM

Batman

Glenn 2/20/2021, 10:22:15 AM

Batman

Kasterborous 2/20/2021, 10:22:28 AM

batman

[SC] Bri 2/20/2021, 10:22:39 AM

Batman

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:22:40 AM

Wonder Woman 🦋

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:22:45 AM

By far, the answer should be Batman. There is no air of omnipotence. There are so many more storylines. Superman is essentially a force of nature.

[OF] Cam 2/20/2021, 10:22:45 AM

^that

Wonder Woman!

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:23:02 AM

You're like my kids @RottenEmu. Wasn't a choice on the board! LOL

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:23:11 AM

I would say this question is unfair, because the characters don't appeal to the same audience anyway. Superman's comics actually take into effect his near omnipotence and use elements to deal with it

unless that was your point

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:23:27 AM

Now let's look at Star Trek, starting with Deanna Troi. What are Deanna's strengths?

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:23:28 AM

now you sound like my gf 🙄 "grow up" 😏

[OF] Sepandiyar2/20/2021, 10:23:41 AM

I could make an argue that it'd be harder to play Superman because you have to grapple with his omnipotence vs his crushing desire to be part of humanity. It's gotta be a head-game of epic proportions

[OF] Cam 2/20/2021, 10:23:58 AM

superman is reverse pinocchio

[OF] Sepandiyar2/20/2021, 10:24:01 AM

Shoot, missed you moved the questions. My bad 😊

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:24:12 AM

@Sepandiyar but you can't read that. So let's get back to Troi.

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:24:26 AM

To make Superman an interesting read or write, you'd have to scale up the adversaries and stakes, whereas Batman is much more "human" and understandable.

[OF] Cam 2/20/2021, 10:24:27 AM

Troi - empath

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:24:28 AM

Deanna? Empathy is the obvious one, but also her training

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:24:47 AM

Kindness

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:24:50 AM

I mean, knowing what people are feeling is very different from knowing what to do about it

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:24:59 AM

Gentleness

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:25:07 AM

Empathy, kindness, morality, fairness, attractiveness.

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:25:27 AM

Patience, self control, truly cared about others, loyal

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:25:39 AM

@Terrie person after my own heart! You should meet T'Lul and Amanda Rose (counselors I write). This is what I have for her strengths:

- Empathic
- Telepathic
- Infinitely patient
- Beautiful
- Kind
- Charismatic

What are Deanna's weaknesses?

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:25:58 AM

Her mother

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:26:13 AM

Her empathy *can* curtail her. LOL her mother, yep.

Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 10:26:14 AM

lack of ambition when she was younger

[PF] CorCordale 2/20/2021, 10:26:15 AM

The writers don't know how to properly write her

Glenn 2/20/2021, 10:26:17 AM

can't decide between Worf and Riker.

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:26:17 AM

Susceptible to telepathic assault.

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:26:23 AM

Lack of technical skill.

Allison 2/20/2021, 10:26:25 AM

She was naive

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:26:32 AM

But, really, her kindness can be a weakness, as we saw when she tested for command

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:26:42 AM

Yes. She didn't want to send someone to his death

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:26:48 AM

Agree @CorCordale but that's part of the point here. This is what we saw of her "weaknesses," in Trek:

- Can be overly passionate
- Can have difficulty separating personal and professional life
- Chocolate

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:26:54 AM

oh yes, Chocolate!!

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:26:59 AM

Not really convincing weaknesses, are they? She's "too perfect." Terrible writing.

On the other hand, let's talk about Reginald Barclay. What are his strengths?

[OF] Cam 2/20/2021, 10:27:16 AM

starship driving lol

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:27:18 AM

Genius

[SC] Beth 2/20/2021, 10:27:21 AM

He's very intelligent

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:27:22 AM

Technical knowledge, passion.

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:27:28 AM

Skillful

Creative

[SC] Bri 2/20/2021, 10:27:50 AM

Perseverance

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:27:56 AM

Definitely got him down here. I had the same things:

- Innovative in engineering
- Enthusiastic
- Brilliant

[OF] Cam 2/20/2021, 10:27:56 AM

Barkley was basically Sheldon

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:28:06 AM

What are his weaknesses?

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:28:07 AM

Barclay was one of my favorite characters, because he tried, despite being a total mess

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:28:11 AM

socially awkward, lacked confidence

Glenn 2/20/2021, 10:28:13 AM

Holodecks

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:28:14 AM

Crippling anxiety, holoaddiction

[SC] Beth 2/20/2021, 10:28:16 AM

Anxiety

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:28:21 AM

hypochondria

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:28:24 AM

Imposter Syndrome

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:28:26 AM

@Terrie sim with me some day. You obviously have similar tastes. 😊

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:28:39 AM

yes, definitely anxiety. WORried about what others thought about him...which would be imposter syndrome like Kyle said. 😊

Rich 2/20/2021, 10:28:46 AM

social awkwardness

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:28:49 AM

Missing one....

[SC] Bri 2/20/2021, 10:28:50 AM

obsessive

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:29:05 AM

Here's what I had:

- Stutter
- Social Anxiety
- Holodeck Addiction
- Socially Awkward
- Self Conscious

In my mind, this is the sort of character that we all should aspire towards writing. He is a growth character. Look at how we first met him compared to where he ended up on Voyager.

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:29:30 AM

yes.

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:29:36 AM

Be more like Broccoli.

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:29:39 AM

And just for fun, let's do Q's strengths and weaknesses. What are Q's strengths?

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:29:44 AM

Yes

Rich 2/20/2021, 10:29:56 AM

sense of humor

Glenn 2/20/2021, 10:30:02 AM

I'll pass on Q...never liked the character.

Rich 2/20/2021, 10:30:09 AM

a certain wisdom

[SC] Bri 2/20/2021, 10:30:16 AM

Timing

Allison 2/20/2021, 10:30:25 AM

his powers

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:30:26 AM

phenomenal cosmic power, minus the itty bitty living space

[OF] Cam 2/20/2021, 10:30:31 AM

lol

[PF] CorCordale 2/20/2021, 10:30:41 AM

A sense of fairness. He'd never just give someone the answer

[OF] Cam 2/20/2021, 10:30:42 AM

semi-omnipotent

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:30:52 AM

Q is a very good character, IMO. @Terrie love the Aladdin reference! Here's his strengths, as I see them:

- Omnipotent
- Impossibly high IQ
- Teleportation
- Invisibility
- Omnipresent
- Some sense of honor (though dubious)

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:30:55 AM

weakness: no real sense of morality. Didn't care who he hurt

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:31:07 AM

Petulant, cruel, vindictive

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:31:08 AM

Hang on [@Aiko Heiwa](#), we'll get to weaknesses

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:31:12 AM

oh, sorry!

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:31:16 AM

oops

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:31:17 AM

What are Q's weakness?

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:31:26 AM

points up 😊

Rich 2/20/2021, 10:31:27 AM

morality

[PF] CorCordale 2/20/2021, 10:31:28 AM

Love the enthusiasm. And go!

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:31:32 AM

Petulant, cruel, vindictive

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:31:34 AM

[@Aiko Heiwa](#) lol

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:31:35 AM

He can't relate to humanity. He's too alien

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:31:38 AM

Controlling

[PF] CorCordale 2/20/2021, 10:31:54 AM

Boredom

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:31:58 AM

Ennui

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:32:06 AM

This is what I had:

- Unpredictable
- Volatile
- Uses Humans as Lab rats
- Low EQ which he attempts to obtain from humans

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:32:08 AM

Looks at others like their pawns/things to play with

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:32:27 AM

You finally got there @Aiko Heiwa LOL! 😊 I love the lab rat thing.

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:32:46 AM



[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:33:19 AM

So, now that we have seen this through other characters, perhaps another way to look at weaknesses and find them is to look at ourselves. I won't ask you to write your strengths and weaknesses here, but I will share mine as I perceive them

Rich 2/20/2021, 10:33:27 AM

childish too for Q

[22] Taylor 2/20/2021, 10:33:41 AM

He's basically a 5 year old observing ants

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:33:41 AM

What are my strengths?

- Intelligent
- Logical
- Means well – good heart
- Loyal to friends and family
- Hard worker
- Self-sacrificing
- Youthful appearance

What are my weaknesses?

- Arrogant

- Blindly rages when feels wronged, especially if lied to or called a liar
- Several allergies
- Finicky eating habits
- Procrastinator
- Can be self righteous

And again, this is a good way of trying to find ways to create weaknesses in characters. Because if you can see your own flaws, you can start seeing them in the characters that you're creating/writing.

So, where should we start when creating character weaknesses?

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:35:04 AM

Are any of you familiar with the 16personalities website?

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:35:11 AM

@Amanda Rose I wonder if the blindly rages is an Amanda thing. 😊

[SC] Beth 2/20/2021, 10:35:14 AM

I am!

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:35:21 AM

Yeah, i've used that to create characters, @KyleB.

[SC] Beth 2/20/2021, 10:35:28 AM

Love 16 personalities. It's super helpful

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:35:32 AM

That's a good place, if you're so inspired.

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:35:44 AM

Its fairly awesome as it helps identify some strengths and weaknesses, in fairly even ratios.

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:35:49 AM

Quite more in depth for characters.

[PF] CorCordale 2/20/2021, 10:35:56 AM

Could start with the character's back story

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:35:57 AM

Spock, Data, Odo, and the Doctor all had a similar character arch of trying to discover their own identity and how they fit into the world, which really highlights the importance of character growth

[PF] CorCordale 2/20/2021, 10:36:07 AM

Events in their history that shape them

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:36:09 AM

I used it recently, actually, when creating a Caitian over on SB118.

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:36:32 AM

For me, these are some of the things that I think you need to look at before starting to create a character:

- Must know your world
- Know your character's background, including race and limitations
- What significant events affected your character?
- In Trek, what is the character's job and why did the character choose it?

[SC] Beth 2/20/2021, 10:36:35 AM

I like to start with conflict when thinking about character weaknesses. Where has there been conflict because of something the character has done/said/thought, etc.

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:37:05 AM

I usually just don't generate any weaknesses, since I prefer they flow from their strengths. (Or, well, events that may happen in sim, variantly.)

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:37:21 AM

But here's a big one for me:

- Make sure that the weakness is a true weakness or flaw. Weaknesses must be relevant and show up in plots to be a true weakness.

For example, this is from an application that I received from a sim:

- Someone that is a not a great polymath in a race of polymaths is not a weakness.

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:37:52 AM

This is also a bit the responsibility of the GMs, that's why we write our bios after all

[PF] CIPHER 2/20/2021, 10:37:57 AM

So not "Tastes bad to dragons" lol

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:38:08 AM

lol @CIPHERhornet18

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:38:09 AM

I dunno. I'd consider that a weakness if the player is committed to playing the 'chip on the shoulder' from that

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:38:11 AM

I would have a field day with that one 🤪

[PF] CorCordale 2/20/2021, 10:38:12 AM

Indeed. A flaw that doesn't hinder you isn't really a flaw

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:38:13 AM

I like how this blog entry highlights how the same traits can be both strengths and weakness:

<https://nathanbransford.com/blog/2019/06/list-of-character-strengths-and-weaknesses>

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:38:27 AM

Stop anticipating me @Terrie 😊

@CorCordale EXACTLY!

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:39:11 AM

I'm working on a character where listed under both strength and weakness is "Does not give up" because there are times when you really, really should

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:39:14 AM

One of Alora's strengths is the ability to do a lot of things. It's also a weakness, especially as she's had to deal with trauma. She doesn't stop and process, which has led to some interesting consequences.

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:39:20 AM

I do want to stop for a moment here and talk about some things that I perceive get us stuck when we write Trek

- Races/species are simplified
- Klingons are honorable
- Ferengi are opportunistic/greedy

- Vulcans are logical, almost "human computers"
- Betazoids are counselors
- Faux utopia
- Money was the root of all evil
- People are all into self-betterment/benevolent motives

[OF] Cam 2/20/2021, 10:40:04 AM

leading right into my panel there

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:40:29 AM

So again, let's look at how we create weaknesses? (Glad I could help @Cam 📄)

- Take a strength and find the problems associated with it:

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:40:33 AM

Lot's of monolithic "planet of hats" type species

[PF] Cipher 2/20/2021, 10:40:54 AM

Have a crisis of faith for that idealism in the utopia

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:40:57 AM

Examples:

- Data – super powered Android that could do anything but understand how to be human
- Amanda Rose sample character – T'Lul - <https://ds5.sim-metry.net/index.php/personnel/character/177> - a Vulcan's logic that tells her that logic might not be all Vulcans are cracked up to be.

Here's another way to do it:

- Create a backstory that negatively and greatly affected/changed a character.

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:41:37 AM

(Um, I'm getting a log in prompt for DS5 site?)

Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 10:42:08 AM

you've linked to the old site

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:42:12 AM

(Yes, I'm showing an example character for the types of weaknesses. I'll be doing this a lot.)

Oh, bloody hell @Beautiful Night, I thought I fixed that.

Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 10:42:28 AM

<https://ds5.org.uk/index.php/personnel/character/177>

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:42:36 AM

(Thank you!)

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:42:57 AM

I just went and got the same thing. Darn you @Beautiful Night 😊

back to the backstory that negatively and greatly affected/changed a character....

Here's some examples:

- Amanda Rose sample character – Liam McCarthy – <https://usskumari.rpgsimming.co.uk/index.php/personnel/character/72> was about to propose to his girlfriend and caught her in the act. Mr.-women-friendly becomes misogynistic/distrustful of women.
- Amanda Rose sample character – Lieutenant Jolani Kohnar - <https://traveller.messier4sims.com/index.php/personnel/character/31> - Halanan's biological mate for life. When one mate dies, the other usually does shortly after. She survived and lives with survivor guilt.

Here's another way to create weaknesses:

- Play off a character's unchangeable features
- Amanda Rose sample character – Captain Cynthia Lynette Jackson – <http://usslegacy.rpgwriting.com/index.php/personnel/character/1> - beautiful, friendly, and book smart – wants to be friends with everyone, discarding rank, and does not recognize when someone is attracted to her

UncleBirdy2/20/2021, 10:45:06 AM

For character backstop darkness, I touch on my own life.

Reminder 2/20/2021, 10:45:06 AM

This is your 15-minute warning

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:45:10 AM

- Amanda Rose sample character – Captain Kelly Jean O'Connor - <http://ussamerica.rpgwriting.com/index.php/personnel/character/2> - so short that her feet do not hit the floor of the Captain's chair – tries to be extra tough

(My preference on this point is O'Connor)

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:45:16 AM

Wanting everyone to like you can be a weakness indeed!

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:45:50 AM

Yep. Usually seen in counselors @Aiko Heiwa but I put it into a Captain in the Kelvin universe. I'm a sick puppy. 😊

Here's another thing you can do for weaknesses:

- Find a vice, flaw, or trait and double down

Examples:

- Captain Kirk – womanizer and let's passions control him when women are involved
- Amanda Rose sample character – Captain Gary Alexander - <http://usshorizon.rpgwriting.com/index.php/personnel/character/2> - you thought that Kirk would bed any woman that moved? Try Gary

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:46:56 AM

LOL

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:47:01 AM

- Amanda Rose sample character – M'Mira - <http://faltan.rpgwriting.com/index.php/personnel/character/21> - prima donna and vain, loves her cat naps and red nail polish

How about trying this for creating a weakness?

- Find another character in a sim and be that character's complete opposite! It is certain to build conflict and character growth (if you both don't kill each other first).

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:47:38 AM

Ahh good ol' Faltan Station. 😊

glad to see its still in there somewhere.

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:48:13 AM

Faltan is still alive and kicking. Just could use a little more TLC @KyleB 😊

But the best way to create weaknesses?

- Combine some or all of these techniques!

If you cannot think of a character weakness through plot or one of the prior devices, try these things:

- Figure out what makes your character angry
Figure out what makes your character afraid
- Google "character flaws" or "character weaknesses" and you will get numerous lists

[OF] Paul - CO USS Athena20/2021, 10:50:08 AM

Interesting that some folks obsess over character weaknesses. I don't like writers that need to remind me every five minutes that this character is 'weak' in a certain area just to give the impression they're three-dimensional. Weaknesses should be written more subtly. Show me, don't tell.

[PF] Amethyst 2/20/2021, 10:50:27 AM

^^^ That is a great point!

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:50:38 AM

Absolutely- show, do not tell.

[OF] Paul - CO USS Athena20/2021, 10:51:03 AM

Just like in real life I won't go around telling everyone I'm socially awkward. If anything, human nature is to avoid showing it! 😊

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:51:04 AM

Depends on the weakness and depends on the situation @Paul. Characters should be complete. Strengths and weaknesses. Too often weaknesses are ignored, which leads me to the biggest point of all:

ALWAYS REMEMBER IF THE FLAW OR WEAKNESS DOES NOT GET WRITTEN INTO POSTS, IT RENDERS IT NOT A WEAKNESS OR FLAW!

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:51:22 AM

The same goes for strengths. Don't tell me your character is likable or whatever, show me

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 10:51:52 AM

yeah, show in writing *why* he is likable, don't artificially tell me I should like him

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:52:26 AM

But to your point, like @Terrie said, this should all be shown. I'm not writing, "OMG! I'm SO INSECURE!" every five seconds. Writing is about making people see, be, and feel invested in the story and characters. If you can't relate, the character is not real enough.

And as someone who plays several counselors, remember that weaknesses are super important for us because it gives us something to do/work on!

Does anyone have any questions about writing weaknesses?

[SC] Beth 2/20/2021, 10:53:42 AM

I think a lot can be told, as well, more specifically by character actions. It's tempting to write a bit of internal monologue to highlight a weakness. Not necessarily coming right out and commenting on being self conscious, for example, but thinking "Wow, that's not how I wanted that to go." But you can be really effective by thinking about a physical reaction or a way it manifests.

[OF] Paul - CO USS Athena20/2021, 10:53:53 AM

As a CO I like characters that have a clear strength, too. Because I want to write a bit of the story where someone can truly excel - everyone loves to get a moment where their character can shine, it's the heroic moment that everyone should be allowed.

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:54:24 AM

Everyone loves their moment in the spotlight 😊

Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 10:54:29 AM

if one of your weakness is being an arsehole, make sure that any and all arsehole actions are prenegotiated

the characters an arsehole, not you

at least, that's how it should be

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:54:51 AM

Yep. Lord knows that Liam on Kumari is a complete schmuck and he shows it all the time.

[SC] Reece 2/20/2021, 10:55:01 AM

or at least we hope that's the case 😊

Reminder 2/20/2021, 10:55:09 AM

This is your 5-minute warning. Consider moving the conversation to the appropriate overflow room.

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:55:43 AM

Or at least put a warning at the beginning of the sim. 😊

Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 10:56:03 AM

there;s also an art to not using IC actions as a cover for being an OC troll

which is mostly communicate, and add OC apologies for saying shitty things.

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:56:25 AM

And that leads to another big point @Beautiful Night. Remember, characters are characters and people are people. We're not the same. I actually had someone ask me to change my characters because they didn't like how the character behaved. That's

just lazy writing. If you're offended, in many cases, that's good writing and you need to deal with it in character!

[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 10:56:39 AM

it's communication. I may have an asshole of a character (jury's out on OOC) but if you're communicating with them about it, it should go over ok.

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:56:41 AM

To this point, if you do want to write a character that is completely opposite of someone else as previously suggested by @Amanda Rose , you need to talk to them beforehand as well. Not everyone might appreciate a 'combative' environment on what they consider carefree time

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:56:50 AM

Absolutely true @RottenEmu

Don't ever do that without talking to the other player/character.

Zhanyt Lafizatar 2/20/2021, 10:57:27 AM

To be fair: in some cases, you may just not want to deal with certain IC characters because it stresses you out OOCly

[OF] Sepandiyar 2/20/2021, 10:57:40 AM

part of the communication

and totally fair

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:57:52 AM

Since I like small scale sims, this can be problematic

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:57:55 AM

I find the trick is that, instead of always wanting to be the shining hero, embrace the Drama. I don't care if my character dies. I just want the moving death scene that everyone remembers

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:57:56 AM

And that's fair @Kylindra but don't ask someone to change their character. Go to another sim or don't interact with that character as much as possible.

Amen @Terrie! You're allowed in my D&D groups now! 😊

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:58:30 AM

I'm 100% on board with that. My character can die, if it makes sense, and if it leaves a lasting impression

[OF] Sepandiyar2/20/2021, 10:59:00 AM

Two minutes guys, let's move on to overflow.

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:59:02 AM

Well, we're nearing the end of my time here, so I'd like to thank you everyone for your time and attention!

[OF] Paul - CO USS Athena20/2021, 10:59:09 AM

Yes! You'll rarely find my characters (especially COs) doing the Kirk thing. Instead I want to set up my crewmember to get to do something awesome.

Alora/Peri 2/20/2021, 10:59:11 AM

@Amanda Rose Thank you very much!

Terrie 2/20/2021, 10:59:19 AM

Thank you. Great panel!

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 10:59:19 AM

I'll see you all in overflow one if you wish. 😊

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 10:59:42 AM

See everyone in [#overflow-one](#) to continue the conversation! 😊

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 11:00:30 AM

Here I be for overflow on weaknesses!

[OF] Sepandiyar2/20/2021, 11:00:54 AM

round two, FIIIGHT!

lol

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 11:01:20 AM

for longer lived characters (from a player perspective, not talking El Aurians or joined trill or something, though that might also be interesting), how do you prevent them growing stale? You can only 'fix' so many weaknesses...

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 11:02:47 AM

El Aurians and long lived characters are a challenge. they should have many more experiences. However, remember, these characters are rare! They shouldn't be all over the place. They were scattered over the universe. I see way too many of these in Trek sims.

Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 11:03:29 AM

I think we as a group could do more to recognise that some PCs stories have an end point, and when that happens, its time to retire the PC

that said, the alternative is once the story goal is achieved, things might not be wine and roses. E.g. Data wanted emotions. he got them, end of arc one

[22] Taylor 2/20/2021, 11:04:13 AM

You're right

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 11:04:17 AM

Yes, that's the truth. Sometimes a character has met their goal....

[22] Taylor 2/20/2021, 11:04:20 AM

Some of my best characters lived for a single mission

Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 11:04:26 AM

next time we see him, his emotions are making things a mess.

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 11:04:39 AM

Don't tell Darrell that I almost feel that way with Auronella on Gemini. LOL

Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 11:04:47 AM

now the films botched a perfectly good arc or him coming to grips with it. but that would have made a good arc too

Terrie 2/20/2021, 11:06:49 AM

As someone who has been looking at a LOT of sims this week, I think a lot of people want their character to be "exceptions" to give them a hook and make them interesting. Crazy mish-mashes of species, rare species, unusual abilities.... Look, Picard, Riker, O'Brien, McCoy, Dr. Crusher, Paris, these are all very "ordinary" people who were still perfectly good characters

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 11:07:21 AM

Don't get me started on my pet peeve of Betazoids or part Betazoids.

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 11:07:31 AM

to be fair, some of that is production limitations (couldn't have 10 different species back in the 90s)

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 11:07:37 AM

And do we, as GMs and players as well, accidentally promote that, because we want our sims to stand out?

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 11:07:54 AM

When people mix species, they wrongfully always take all of the strengths of both races. Sometimes that can happen but what about taking all the weaknesses? Or only one strength?

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 11:07:56 AM

You see a lot more nowadays, in Discovery, since it's much easier and cheaper to create them

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 11:07:57 AM

I admit I generally cringe *most of the time* at hybrids.

[OF] Paul - CO USS Athena20/2021, 11:08:25 AM

All three of my main PCs are human.

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 11:08:37 AM

I have an Orion, a Betazoid and a Human.

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 11:08:46 AM

I mean, I really get upset with Romulan hybrids. How many times did Romulans and anyone else mix? I mean, they were the enemy for how long? Better have a good back story if you want to be on my sim.

[OF] Nikki 2/20/2021, 11:08:52 AM

half my characters are hybrids. maybe more. adore them.

[OF] Paul - CO USS Athena20/2021, 11:08:56 AM

Although I like to use alien races more for NPCs. Andorians and Bajorans are fun to write.

Terrie 2/20/2021, 11:09:23 AM

But there are plenty of species who don't have funky abilities, just interesting cultures. Bajorans, for instance. (You know, I don't think I've run across a Bajoran/human hybrid yet, which suggest people want the "powers" without the culture)

[OF] Sepandiyar2/20/2021, 11:09:23 AM

For sure, Andorian antennae, done properly, are like another character in the scene

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 11:10:00 AM

And really, their primary form of body language. The face is stoic, but the antennae speak.

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 11:10:25 AM

I've seen Bajoran - humans but only one or two.

[OF] Paul - CO USS Athena20/2021, 11:10:31 AM

My Bajoran NPC is fun because she totally leans on the spiritual element as a crutch despite not really understanding the 'faith' element

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 11:10:37 AM

I sometimes feel silly for continuously writing about my character's antennae

[OF] Sepandiyar2/20/2021, 11:10:56 AM

bites tongue

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 11:10:56 AM

@KyleB yep. No facial expressions for Andorians. You have antennae for that. If you've met Zuub, you would see how I write them.

I wrote Andorians before ENT destroyed them.

[SC] KyleB 2/20/2021, 11:11:21 AM

Embrace them! They are awesome!

Terrie 2/20/2021, 11:11:25 AM

I get why there's a lot of vulcan/human hybrids. Everyone loves Spock

[OF] Paul - CO USS Athena20/2021, 11:11:31 AM

Not sure I agree with that sentiment. If anything Shran showed us what Andorians should be like done properly.

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 11:11:34 AM

I don't see how ENT destroyed Andorians. I loved ENT Andorians

Storming Norman 2/20/2021, 11:11:44 AM

Surely though you should make sure your characters race fits in with the time line is the sim

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 11:12:36 AM

We'll agree to disagree on the Androian thing. I would encourage those who only know ENT and after Androians to look at Leslie Fish's creation which was pre-TNG and what I mostly abide by.

But back to the point regarding all the hybrids, I think a lot of that goes to people wanting only to write about strengths and what I discussed in my presentation.

[OF] Emu - Fawkes/Loki/Acad 2/20/2021, 11:15:15 AM

100% hybrids are abused to ignore any weaknesses

Beautiful Night 2/20/2021, 11:15:16 AM

the best andorians were in the sourcebook

[RPGW] Amanda Rose 2/20/2021, 11:15:19 AM

I would strongly encourage everyone to go to [@NinjaDuck](#)'s presentation on Betazoids/telepathy/empathy. I really like how she handles things in Theta Fleet and it makes sense!