

# CNGH Development and Design Process

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## Summary

This document gives a high-level description of the development and design process we'll utilize to create the Cool Name Goes Here RPG (CNGH).

## Goals

The goal of this process is to achieve the following:

- **Sustainability:** We can sustain this process for the life of the project.
- **Repeatability:** We can repeat this process during each cycle of development.
- **Regular Delivery of Value:** We deliver distinct units of value to stakeholders on a regular cadence.
- **Effective Coordination of Contributors:** We successfully coordinate a large number of independent contributors to ensure their efforts and passion are best utilized to deliver value.
- **Effective Use of Outside Input:** We effectively organize and utilize large amounts of valuable input to benefit the project.
- **Deliver High-Quality Final Product On-Time:** We deliver the product we've defined on-time and with the level of quality the stakeholders expect.

## Agile/Scrum

We are using the Agile/Scrum framework as the basis for our development process. Detailed information about the Scrum framework is available here: <https://www.scrum.org/resources/what-is-scrum>. I will not describe the Scrum framework here specifically, but rather this provides a reference for anyone that wishes to better understand the underlying framework of our process.

## Equipment List

This describes the set of tools we're using to achieve the goals described above.

**Stories:** These are discrete, well-defined, estimated units of work with a clearly defined definition of done. These tasks might require anywhere from a few hours of work to two-weeks to complete.

**Adventure:** This is a 2-week period of time during which the team sets out to create and deliver a previously agreed upon set of Stories.

**Quest Log:** This is a priority ranked list of the Stories from which work is pulled before each two-week Adventure.

**Adventure Board:** This is a virtual board that shows the status of all the Stories committed to for the Adventure. Story statuses are: To-Do, In Progress, In Review, Resolved, and Done.

**Blocker:** Anything that stands in the way of a Story making progress. This could be a puzzle, a lack of resources, a lack of clarity around a Story, missing tools, or even a person.

**Playtest:** This is a blanket term for getting feedback from players on a finished portion of work. This might be discussion, actual play results, or the results of polling.

## Roles

In our version of scrum has a number of roles. A person might hold more than one role on a smaller team (even though it is better if they don't.)

**Players:** Players are the reason we exist! Do not lose sight of their importance! Our goal is to create a deliverable that benefits them. They tell us what it is they are looking for and provide the raw material for our plans.

**Professional Players:** This is a sub-class of Player. These are Players that are going to use what we create to make their own products. In other words, other publishers and game designers.

**Gamemaster:** Gamemasters are key stakeholders on this project. They help set the goals for the team, identify large scale strategy for the project, and work with the Party to determine realistic delivery dates and what the deliverables will be. They make these decisions by serving as the voice of the Players. It is possible to have multiple Gamemasters. When this happens they must coordinate and negotiate their requirements prior to communicating these to the Party. Ideally there will be either one or three Gamemasters. This avoids ties and prevents "too many cooks."

**Torchbearer:** The Torchbearer is deceptively important to this process. They light the way for the Party, ensuring that Stories are well-defined, pushing Gamemasters to provide usable input, and clearing any obstacle that prevents the Party from accomplishing their goals. They ensure that the Party can focus on the Adventure without interruption.

**Adventurers:** These are the individual contributors to the project. The Adventurers make up the Party. These are the individuals who work on the Stories, moving them from the To Do column to the Done column. This might include artists, writers, editors, web designers, or anyone that is working directly on a Story. Torchbearers, Gamemasters, and people in other roles may also join as Adventurers, but it is best to avoid this if it is reasonable and possible.

**Party:** This is a collection of Adventurers who work together to complete the set of Stories they committed to finishing during the Adventure. There may be more than one Party. A Party should consist of no more than around 8 Adventurers. Each Party has a Torchbearer.

## **Artifacts**

Artifacts are regular events that are used to drive the process.

**Adventure:** This is a 2-week period of time during which the team sets out to create and deliver a previously agreed upon set of Stories.

**Tavern Time:** This is a daily meeting, limited to 15 minutes, during which the members of the team describe what they worked on, what they are working on next, and what they need input on. It is also a time to identify blockers preventing a Story from moving forward. The goal is not to get into in-depth conversations. This is not a time to “report to the boss.” This is a moment for the team to collaborate on the work they are doing.

**Sidebar:** This is a larger conversation about a specific topic that is generated by the Tavern Time.

**Quest Log Breakdown:** This is a bi-weekly event during which the key stakeholders review the Quest Log to re-prioritize the list of Stories to ensure the most important work will get done first.

**Adventure Review:** This is a bi-weekly presentation held at the end of the Adventure where the Adventurers describe and/or demonstrate what they created to complete each Story.

**Adventure Retrospective:** This is a bi-weekly meeting of the Party that takes place after the Adventure Review to where the Party discusses the last Adventure to determine what went well, what could be done better, and what the Party should learn more about before their next Adventure.

**Adventure Planning:** This is a bi-weekly meeting of the Party that takes place after the Adventure Retrospective where the Party looks at the priority ranked Quest Log and commits to a set of Stories they will complete during the next 2-week Adventure.

## **Classes**

Adventurers have classes. It is acceptable for an Adventurer to multi-class. I don't have cool heroic names for these because it would just get confusing to stretch the theme to these – but if everyone wants to give themselves class names down the road, fine with me. The following are a list of the most common classes, but there may be other roles that come up during the development process.

**Contributing Designer:** Contributing designers are experts who provide feedback and advice to the Party on how to best complete Stories. They also review the work done for Stories and help to determine if the solution works. Finally, they provide advice to the Gamemasters as goals are set and strategies are developed. A contributing designer does not, typically, work directly to complete a Story.

**Designers:** Designers work primarily on game mechanics, both designing and writing the instructions for the use of those mechanics. Designers work directly on Stories, doing the actual work that completes the described Story goal.

**Writers:** Writers do not design mechanics, but they may assist with writing up instructions for the use of those mechanics. They also write “color text,” that is text that doesn’t directly describe the use of a game mechanic.

**Editors:** Editors review written work and provide feedback to Designers and Writers on how to improve that work. Depending on the timing of the edit, they may simply make the necessary changes without talking to Designers and Writers.

**Copyeditors:** Copyeditors review the final edited documents for grammar, spelling, consistency, accuracy, and clarity.

**Illustrators:** They draw kick-ass pictures.

**Art Director:** This person is like an editor for Illustrators. They also help with writing Stories for illustrators (which in most cases is an art order).

**Support:** The support Adventurers do all the stuff that keeps the gears turning. They collate survey data, manage back end systems, and generally ensure the Adventurers can keep working.

**Promotion:** These Players handle things like ads, social media presence, and anything involving making us look good in public.

## **Working with the Players**

The Players are the most important people in this project. If we forget about them or fail to satisfy them, there is no point to what we’re doing.

*We will never satisfy every Player. That isn’t the point. The point is we need to always remember the wants and needs of our customers.*

In this section we describe when and how we interact with Players and what we do with the information they provide. This section doesn’t deal with things like social media interaction or that sort of thing. Note that the process is the same for both Players and Professional Players, even if the information we are collecting is different.

*We aren’t building by vote. The input we receive from Players represent guidance to help ensure we don’t stray too far from the wants and needs of the Players.*

## **Initial Input**

Before we set out to create our requirements, we will poll Players to get their thoughts. Examples include surveys for things like what dice mechanics they like best, how they like to see damage tracked, and what sort of advancement process they enjoy the most. Most of this input will be general feedback

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We will collect this data using surveys constructed and posted by the support team and marketed. At the end of a survey, the support team will collate this data, summarize it, and present it to the Gamemasters to use as guidance when determining strategy.

## **Decision Points**

We may occasionally reach a decision point about a specific issue that we aren't sure how to address. In this case we will create a decision-point poll. This offers specific options for the Players to choose from and will help us to choose one specific solution over another. An example might be "low light vision or darkvision for dwarves?" Normally decision point polls will go to the Kickstarter backers only since the broader Player base will have already weighed in on the overall strategy.

The support team will create and post the poll, collate the results, and send these to the Gamemasters.

## **Playtest Feedback**

Every two-weeks we release the content we've created. We will use polls to gather feedback from Players on the success of this work. In addition, we will likely make use of Discord, Forums, or similar tools to communicate directly with Players about their thoughts and concerns.

As with other types of feedback, it will be the job of the support team to call for this input, collate it, summarize it, and return the results to the Gamemasters.

## **Definition of Done**

Every Story will have a clear definition of done. This is a vital part of this process. This helps to ensure that the Party is delivering the right thing and accomplishing the right goals. Many Stories may have a similar or the same definition of done. A definition of done might read like this:

### ***Story: Final Rules Entry for the Fighter Class***

*This Story's definition of done is as follows:*

1. *All sub-tasks for this Story are checked as complete.*
2. *The entry has been reviewed and approved by the editor.*
3. *The entry has been reviewed and approved by the copyeditor.*
4. *The document is saved to the final version folder.*
5. *The draft documents are saved to the archives folder.*
6. *As a Player, I could take this entry and play a Fighter using these rules in my game tonight.*

THIS IS A FROM THE HIP SIMPLIFIED EXAMPLE – but I think it helps to make clear what we're doing. This protects us from situations where we think something is finished but it is not and it delays the project, helps prevent errors, and helps to ensure the Party delivered what the Gamemasters SAID they wanted.

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## **Process Example**

The following provides a step-by-step example of what the process MIGHT look like.

1. Guided in part by the result of early Player polls, the Gamemasters determine CNGH should have dwarves as a playable species.
2. The Gamemasters add this to the official design plan along with a set of decision points related to dwarves.
  - a. The Gamemasters may turn to the Consulting Designers at this stage for feedback and advice.
3. The Gamemasters craft a Story that describes what they want to know. It is placed in the Quest Log and the Gamemasters rank it by priority.
4. The Story reaches the top of the Quest Log and during Adventure Planning, one of the Parties pulls this story in to complete it during their 2-week Adventure.
5. The Torchbearer reviews the Story and works to fill in any blanks or answer any questions the Party has about it before work begins.
6. During the Adventure, a Support Adventurer grabs the Story to work on it. They create and post a series of polls to gather Player input on how dwarves should be presented in the game in terms of game mechanics.
7. The Players offer their thoughts in the polls.
8. The Support Adventurers collate and summarize this data. These results become the finished deliverable for this Story.
9. The Gamemasters take the data and craft a final design plan for dwarves.
  - a. The Gamemasters may turn to the Consulting Designers at this stage to get feedback on the final design plan.
10. The Gamemasters turn the design plan into a set of discrete stories which, collectively, will finish work on the dwarves. They place these Stories in the Quest Log and prioritize them against all other work.
11. When the Stories reach the top of the Quest Log, the Adventurers bring the Stories into their Adventure and complete them over the course of the Adventure.
12. At the Adventure Review they present the final result which meets the Definition of Done.
13. The Gamemasters sign-off and confirm they approve of the result. If they don't approve it, the Story goes back to the Quest Log for additional work.

- a. The results may be sent to Consulting Designers for review and feedback. If they feel changes are necessary and the Gamemasters agree, the Story goes back to the Quest Log for additional work.
14. Once approved the Story is delivered to the Players for Playtest.
15. Support Adventurers collect Playtest feedback, collate and summarize, and send it back to the Gamemasters for review.
16. The Gamemasters review the results and determine if any additional action is required.
  - a. The Gamemasters may choose to send this feedback to Consulting Designers for review and input.
17. If everything looks good, the content is put into the Release Candidate document. If there is a problem it goes back to the Quest Log.