

How to Do Literate Roleplay

Literate roleplaying means that your roleplaying is written like you're telling a story--long paragraphs, and no chatspeak, abbreviations, or slang. Literate roleplaying is a great way to sharpen your writing skills, explore your...

Part 1 of 3:

Planning Your Character



1.

Choose a setting. Every roleplaying game has a setting, and which one you pick depends entirely on what you'd like to roleplay. RPGs usually take place in an established fictional universe, like World of Warcraft, Star Trek, or Harry Potter, but you aren't limited to existing franchises. You can use historical places like medieval Europe, try a crossover RPG combining different franchises and places, or even make up your own imaginary setting!^[1]

2.



Pick a character. Choosing a character is also totally up to you! Some people prefer to use an existing character, like Han Solo from Star Wars. Other people like to make up their own character. If you want to make up a character, it's often easier to roleplay realistically if you give it personality traits that you already have. For example, you could invent a wizard character that shares your sense of justice and interest in sports.^[2]

3.



Choose its abilities and appearance. If you chose a character that already exists, you can use its pre-existing attributes. You don't have to do this, of course--you can write a great RPG that argues that Captain Kirk from Star Trek was actually very shy, for example! If you're writing an original character, choose skills and looks that you relate to in some way. They can be attributes that you have, that you wish you had, or that people you admire have.^[3]

4.



List your character's main motivation. Every character in every RPG has a primary motivation. Thinking of yours early will help you develop the character realistically. Some motivations will involve fulfilling a quest, but characters can also be motivated by revenge, fear, justice, or love.^[4]

1. If you're working with existing characters in their original setting, they may already have a motivation. For example, you don't need to add a second motivation to a Fellowship of the Rings roleplay--destroying the One Ring is enough!

5.



Write your character's three biggest personality traits. You can add as many characteristics as you want as you roleplay, but take a moment to list the three biggest personality traits you want your character to have. Having them written down will help you stay on track while you roleplay and make your character more realistic.^[5]

1. You can use any traits you want, especially for an original character. If you're having trouble, think of how their personality traits might help them or prevent them from achieving their primary

motivation. For example, if your character's goal is to travel across a strange land to rescue their true love, bravery might help them get there--but unfriendliness might hinder them.



Give your character a backstory. This is a chance to be creative! Even well-established fictional characters won't usually have a full backstory. A background can add some depth to your character and explain their motivations and personality traits. For example, Harry Potter doesn't talk about what Hermione did before she went to Hogwarts, but you could give her a wise mentor who died prematurely, giving her a lifelong need to prove herself.^[6]

Part 2 of 3:

Improving Your Writing



Keep a thesaurus and a dictionary nearby. Literate roleplay requires lots of descriptions, and you don't want to use the same words over and over again! Get a dictionary and thesaurus in book or internet form and keep them on hand. Use them every time you get stuck or find yourself using a word too much. For example, if you are roleplaying a scene in the rain, instead of saying 'rain' every sentence, you can use words like 'deluge,' 'downpour,' and 'torrent.'^[7]



Practice grammar and spelling. You'll need to have very good grammar and spelling if you want to be a literate roleplayer. It's okay to make mistakes sometimes, but practice your grammar and spelling if you have trouble with it. Try asking friends for help, searching online for grammar rules, and reading more often. Also, don't forget to turn spellcheck on!^[8]



Write some practice roleplaying scenes. Before you start or enter an RPG, spend some time writing a few practice scenes. You can borrow real scenes from the existing canon, or make up your own. Think about how your character would react when you write the scenes. For example, if you're written a brave,

headstrong, arrogant warrior, they wouldn't run away if they were confronted with a dragon.^[9]



Ask your friends to critique your writing. If you're new to literate roleplaying, it's a good idea to have a second person take a look at your writing before you actually start playing. Ask a friend who roleplays or loves to write to read over your practice scenes and critique them.^[10]

Part 3 of 3:

Roleplaying as a Literate Player



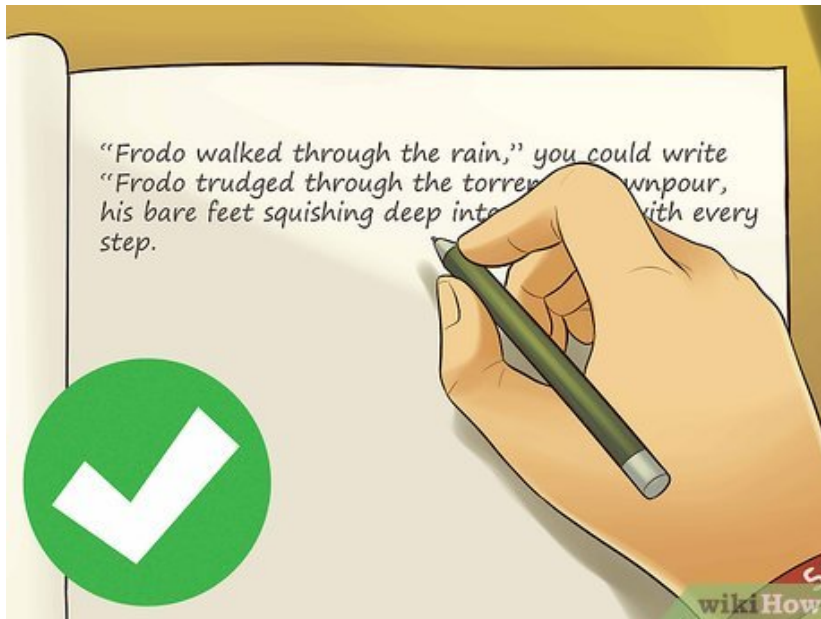
Keep a description of your character handy. When you write your roleplaying scenes, read over your character description to make sure you're staying in character. It's okay for characters to grow and change over time, but you don't want them to completely reverse major personality traits!^[11]

2.



Write out your posts in complete sentences. Literate roleplayers don't use abbreviations or chatspeak, so make sure your posts are written out in complete sentences! Each post should be at least one paragraph long to start, but as you improve your posts should each be at least two or three paragraphs long.^[12]

3.



Use descriptive words and phrases. A big part of literate roleplaying is using long, detailed descriptions instead of short phrases. Go into as much detail as possible. For example, instead of writing 'Frodo walked through the rain,' you could write 'Frodo trudged through the torrential downpour, his bare feet squishing deep into the mud with every step.'^[13]

4.



Write about your character's feelings and reactions. Don't just limit yourself to actions--write about how your character feels and reacts to situations. This will give your characters depth and growth over the course of the game. For example, if your character is punched, don't just write about how they fought back. Write about how the punch made them feel and what it reminded them of from their past.^[14]

5.



Stay on topic. A big part of literate roleplaying is keeping your characters and settings on topic--this isn't the place to suddenly transport your characters to outer space! Keep your characters and settings in mind the entire time while you roleplay, and try to make each response as realistic as possible in the context of your setting.^[15]

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