Co-Creation Limits and Liberties: Session 0 Checklist

Co-creation allows players to fill in the blanks in their mindscape left by the GM's narration. Through their characters' actions, they can introduce elements that fit the tone, setting, and context of the campaign. This is not a tool to give themselves an advantage or shortcut to solving a situation — it's a way to engage more fully with the world without relying on constant questions to the GM.

The boundaries of co-creation should be established during Session 0. They may vary from one campaign to another, depending on the tone, setting, and the preferences of the GM and players. This document presents different types of co-creation, grouped into categories and levels, to help your group clearly mark what's always allowed (✅), what should be used with moderation (⚠️), and what's off-limits (❌).

Items

Type	Description	✅	⚠️	❌	Notes
Contextually Implied Items	Objects that are obviously present based on the environment (e.g., scissors in a sewing room, tankard in a tavern).	☐	☐	☐	
Standard Personal Gear	Mundane items a character could reasonably be assumed to carry based on setting and archetype (e.g., lighter in a modern setting, belt knife in a medieval one).	☐	☐	☐	
Context-Appropriate but Specific Items	Items that *could* logically exist in the scene but are more defined or particular in nature (e.g., a ledger in a merchant's desk, a mourning veil in an old chest).	☐	☐	☐	

NPCs

Type	Description	✅	⚠️	❌	Notes
Undefined presence	A non-descript NPC in a context already implying the presence of other people (e.g., someone in a bar, a crowded street, a train station).	☐	☐	☐	
Functional NPC	An unnamed, undefined NPC introduced with a specific role or function that fits the context (e.g., a stable hand in the stables, a bouncer in a bar).	☐	☐	☐	
Named NPC	A fully introduced NPC with a name and function, created by the player in the moment (e.g., "I know the blacksmith, his name is William").	☐	☐	☐	
Absentee contact	A named NPC not present in the scene from the character's backstory (e.g., "My old commanding officer, Captain Harlan, might know about this").	☐	☐	☐	

Cultural Elements

Type	Description	✅	⚠️	❌	Notes
Aligned with tradition	A cultural element, past or future, that logically fits with what has already been established (e.g., a feast day for a known saint, traditional cuisine).	☐	☐	☐	
Contextual twist	A cultural feature, past or future, that adds surprise or local flavor without contradicting existing lore (e.g., a festival where rules are temporarily suspended).	☐	☐	☐	
Complicating custom	A cultural detail that introduces a potential faux pas, tension, or misunderstanding (e.g., a local taboo or unusual greeting custom).	☐	☐	☐	

Locations

Type	Description	✅	⚠️	❌	Notes
Implied Structure	A necessary structure or locale implied by the context (e.g., a stable in a castle, a well in a village, a janitorial closet in a school).	☐	☐	☐	
Context-Fitting Locale	A specific but mundane structure or locale that fits the setting (e.g., a cobbler in a medieval village, a mall food court, a water tower near a town).	☐	☐	☐	
Distinct Site	A more specific or evocative location that could logically exist in the area (e.g., a ruined tower, a roadside shrine, an abandoned gas station).	☐	☐	☐	

Potential Plot Hooks

Type	Description	✅	⚠️	❌	Notes
Unsurprising Rumours	Hearsay or whispers that fit the tone and established world. May or may not be true (e.g., "They say the prince is a bastard", "There's treasure on that island").	☐	☐	☐	
Claimed Personal Knowledge	Similar to a rumour, but the character presents it as fact based on personal experience (e.g., "I helped bury the treasure, I just don't know where exactly").	☐	☐	☐	
Tone-Shifting Implications	A rumour or statement that nudges the setting's tone or metaphysics (e.g., implying the existence of magic, non-humans, supernatural elements, etc).	☐	☐	☐	

Dealing with Overreach

If a player oversteps the agreed-upon bounds of co-creation, the GM should counter-co-create: the item materialized is defective, the revealed NPC is unhelpful or hostile, the stated fact is an old folk tale, long debunked. This doesn't have to be immediate — the character might only realize the truth when attempting to act on the information.

If a player consistently oversteps those bounds, the issue should be addressed outside the session. Co-creation is meant to improve immersion and keep the game moving, not to be twisted for personal advantage. Honest mistakes are fine — they should not derail the game. But if the mistakes are not honest, the player is simply incompatible with co-creation. High-level roleplay demands high-trust gaming, and not everyone is cut out for it.