

Tips for Designing Online Role Play

Design

Design with a team! You'll need design, technical and moderation skills to achieve a successful outcome. One person rarely has the required level of all three skills.

Marie Jasinski, DMIT

Design with attitude! Improvise and use your creativity! Role plays don't always have to be planned affairs. If you use forums and believe in emergence, it's amazing what can evolve.

Marie Jasinski, DMIT

Generating the role-play in the first instance is complex and difficult. Scribble your main ideas down and do a visual mind-map of the framework before you get the details.

Simon O'Mallon, DMIT

Scenario

Keep the scenario succinct. People are used to short stories from advertisements. Practise focusing the field of play.

Simon O'Mallon, DMIT

The role-play does not have to be believable, it just needs to be credible. Your brain loves to play games, let it.

Simon O'Mallon, DMIT

If you are using meeting or chat rooms in your role-play, name/make them venues, e.g. office, laboratory, laneway, etc., to give the game better feel.

Simon O'Mallon, DMIT

You can reference children's stories, scenarios and characters (with minor changes [to protect the innocent] {the wolf didn't do it}) to build a faster and stronger overview. We (adults) all have these stories in us already.

Simon O'Mallon, DMIT

Remember 'life is stranger than fiction'. Don't hesitate to make your role-play vivid.

Simon O'Mallon, DMIT

Consider what your outcomes should be, then think laterally for a pathway to get there and make this your scenario. (During the pre-brief and debrief you can connect the scenario to the real-needs application.) [Remember people love to play games, especially if the games are relevant to people's needs.] e.g. I need to teach a courier company's staff about communication and team work. My scenario will be: a young couple have bought a house and need a pool built in the front yard. All the characters (courier staff and management) are given special agendas to serve themselves and the job reflects high cost and lack of cooperation. [The pool delivery truck goes to the wrong suburb]. The prebrief relates the task to the players' personal lives (from a different, [not work related] viewpoint). The debrief brings the experience back into the workplace.

Simon O'Mallon, DMIT

After you have created a rough framework, bring the story together by telling a story to yourself. Exaggerate, double back, overlay. The scenario will build itself.

Simon O'Mallon, DMIT

Role

Sometimes it's advantageous to have a role up your sleeve. A good moderator can interact as a participant without compromising the role-play. You can use this when the game is moving too slowly or inefficiently

towards the outcomes.
Simon O'Mallon, DMIT

Create roles with diverse backgrounds, emotional/physical/economic/cultural, etc. Keeping these details confidential to each player will encourage realism in the role-playing.
Simon O'Mallon, DMIT

Not all roles are positive. If the play calls for it don't hesitate to include the baddies.
Simon O'Mallon, DMIT

Consider the use of gender-neutral names for the players.
Elizabeth Devonshire, USyd

As you tell your story (scenario) give your characters names, (remember it can't get weird enough) and after you have given them names invent their life history so far. (This gives the characters credibility, in your role-play world).
Simon O'Mallon, DMIT

Kick-Start Episode

Initiation. Play an uncomplicated role-play just to feel the structure you will use in the real role-play.
Simon O'Mallon, DMIT

When considering how to start your role-play with the players, use a pre-brief to connect the scenario with people's lives. (If it gets personal it gets relevant, it becomes useful.)
Simon O'Mallon, DMIT

Assessment

Prepare a journal to log/assess student participation during simulation activity. This may be as simple as a note pad on which to write comments, or as complicated as a word document in table format with columns labelled with various assessment criteria.
Michael Fardon, UWA

Nest the assessment criteria outcomes into the tasks/activities of the role-play.
Simon O'Mallon, DMIT