

MONKEY HOUSE GAMES Submission Guidelines for Writers and Artists

Dated: September 3, 2011

-Thank you for your interest in creating material for Monkey Ho use Games. We hope you are excited and inspired about the opportunity to work with us. We eagerly await your submissions. We look at every single submission hoping that it will be one we can accept. These guidelines cover how to submit potential role-playing game materials to be considered for publica ti on. They also cover submitting art samples for the purpose of being contracted to create artwork for our company. These terms and conditions may be subject to change. It might not be a bad idea to check in about few months or so, just to confirm the current state of these guidelines.

-First, here comes all the unpleasant cold harsh reality stuff. Let's get that part out of the way up front. Most of this stuff applies specially to writers but it contains a lot of useful information for artists, too.

-All unsolicited written or artistic material submitted to us with the intent that we publish it must include a signed release form. To clarify: Any material submitted to us without a signed release form will be shredded unexamined upon receipt. This requirement is mandatory and non-negotiable. Monkey House Games is not responsible for any material submitted without a release form. We will not accept any submission if the release form has been filled out only partially, incorrectly, or if it is unsigned. We will not accept any submission if the terms of the release form have been modified or rewritten. We require one release form per submission. We cannot accept release forms sent in advance or sent separately from a submission. We can accept scanned copies of signed release forms if a submission is transmitted by e-mail. You can find a copy of our release form on the Monkey House Games website.

-Please be professional. Please do not submit handwritten materials. Please type submissions neatly. Please try to keep spelling and grammatical errors and typos to a minimum. Please include a succinct cover letter which includes conta ct information. Please do not ever send us the only existing copy of a work being submitted.

-Unless we've specifically asked, please do not send us finished artwork or completed manuscripts. Reading dozens or hundreds of pages worth of unsolicited material from every writer is a majorly time-intensive task. Invariably, this is a task that is deferred to complete the more essential work needed to get projects released and run the company. We also do not have the storage space to maintain a library of art submissions, nor do we have the capability to return artwork sent to us.

-The preferred method for written submissions is a one-page treatment of your idea, followed by a brief outline which is no longer than four additional pages. If an idea can't be successfully expressed in five pages, then it needs more development. If it's good, we'll be able to tell and we'll conta ct the writer to say we want to see more. The text of a written submission may also be accompanied by up to three more pages worth of attached materials such as photographs, diagrams or artwork. Please do not include game character stats in your initial submission. Artists, see the section below for the specifics of how to submit work to us.

-Please allow six months for response time to a submission. Quite often, however, our response time will be quicker. While we do attempt to stay up to date in the review of unsolicited material, as previously stated, it is a secondary task to the operation of the company. Following up regarding unsolicited material will not result in a quicker response. It may take us a while, but if a submitted idea is something that is right for us we promise we will be in touch. Also, we cannot be responsible for the return of any rejected materials.

-The majority of the material we publish is largely produced by the in-house staff of Monkey House Games and a small group of regular freelancers. We perpetually maintain a docket of projects in development. If a written submission is declined, it could be because we have a similar idea already in the works. Likewise, we may like a specific artist's work but do not have a project currently available that suits their particular style. However, we will occasionally create new projects that we assign as freelance work to outside writers and/or artists. It is possible that we may have to reject a submission but at some point come back and offer that writer or artist a freelance assignment at some point in the future.

-If accepted, writers and artists must assign the rights to that material to Monkey House Games in order to for us to publish it. Before we can publish material, we will need the writer or artist to sign a work-for-hire agreement. Artists grant us all rights to reproduce their work in perpetuity without additional compensation, but we make no claim whatsoever to any original artwork. Once a writer signs this agreement, Monkey House Games will own all rights to that submission, which includes all rights to all characters, story and concepts included in that work. If any writer has plans to use or own or control a particular character or story that they create then please do not submit it to us. The V&V™ Universe has hundreds of established characters that can potentially be used. Also, anyone can publish their own V&V™ game material by following the terms of our licensing agreement. Doing so enables the author to keep all the rights to their own characters and stories, while using our game system without having to pay us or provide us with any compensation.

-Still with us? Good.

PART 1: Artist Submission Procedural Guidelines

-Artists interested in creating artwork for the Villains and Vigilantes™ and Living Legends™ role-playing games should contact Monkey House Games. Co-Publisher and Art Director Jeff Dee by e-mail or regular mail:

jeff@monkeyhousegames.com

Monkey House Games Art Submissions Department PO Box 2933 Pflugerville, TX 78691

-Do not send e-mails with files attached, please. We generally do not want to be opening strange email attachments.

-Under no circumstances should artists send original artwork to Monkey House Games. We cannot be held responsible for maintaining or returning original artwork.

-Artists should e-mail links to online portfolios of their work. If you haven't already, consider creating an online display of your artwork at a site such as DeviantART. Both Jeff and Monkey House Games are also on Facebook. TinyURLs can also be tweeted to @OfficialVandV.

-The work that will interest us the most is work that is more than the sum of its influences. The ability to draw superhero characters well is certainly essential. However, we aren't particularly looking for any doppelgangers of popular artists. We understand every artist bears at least some influence from someone else. But please, be yourself.

-Submissions should be an accurate reflection of an artist's current level of ability. Hopefully artists continue to improve the more work they produce. Artists can always submit new work to us even if they have previously sent submissions before. It is also helpful if you can tell us how long it takes you to finish a specific piece.

-Artwork created for Monkey House Games is generally delivered to us in electronic form. If you create artwork on paper you will have to send us scanned images of that artwork. All work submitted for publication should be at 300 dpi. For example, a 3" by 5" illustration should come in at 900 by 1500 pixels. Black and white artwork should be submitted as pure black and white bitmaps. Artwork with grey tones should be converted to a pure black and white bitmap, using a diffusion dither. Color art should be submitted as a 256 color bitmap in Indexed Color.

PART 2: Writer Submission Procedural Guidelines

-Know your subject. A comfortable familiarity with comic books, role-playing games, the superhero genre and Villains and Vigilantes™ in particular is practically indispensable in order to be able to produce the kind of work we want to see.

-Be original. Please avoid characters and storylines that are overly similar to established and familiar comic book superheroes and villains, previously published V&V™ material and the prominent material from other superhero role-playing games. Also, please avoid analog characters, designed to ironically evoke other established characters.

-Strike a classic tone. This may seem to be in contradiction with the last point, but it is not. The game Villains and Vigilantes™ exists first and foremost as a simulation of the genre of comic book superheroes. It features all original characters- usually randomly created- but they exist within the concept of a unique but traditional superhero universe. Someone once referred to the tone of V&V™ as "Silver Age meets Saturday morning." It certainly can- and probably should- be more than just that, but that's a pretty darn good starting point.

-V&V™ adventures are generally considered all-ages appropriate material. At the same time, no attempt should be made to "write down" to a potentially younger audience. Most players are adults, or at least teens. An element of horror is appropriate if called for, but stay away from gore or torture.

Please steer clear of profanity. Also, we don't publish sexually explicit content. We aren't necessarily against pushing the boundaries if the resulting storytelling is worthwhile, but we'd probably prefer if it were more conceptual rather than explicit. We'll look at everything on a case-by-case basis.

-Humorous content is welcome, provided it is the right kind of humor. The superhero genre has been continuously mocked and spoofed for over three-quarters of a century, so we generally don't want superhero parody. Humor should be character-based, situational or absurdist in a way that it is still funny even if separated from a superhero adventure. At the same time, if something is funny but it doesn't have a direct hook to your character or story, it is probably extraneous.

-Political commentary generally has the lifespan of a carton of milk. Comics, superheroes and role-playing games are usually meant to be escapist entertainment. Certainly don't shy away from reflecting modern life and utilizing universal themes of good and evil or right and wrong, but avoid polarizing partisan screeds, please. This is not a soapbox.

-V&V™ is for everyone. No advancement of negative stereotypes, gender identity bashing or hate speech is permitted. Racist ideas and religious intolerance should be avoided, but if they absolutely must be included they should be depicted as abhorrent. Female characters should not be portrayed in a demeaning or exploitive way. This does not mean that everything must be Politically Correct. Far from it. But it does mean that if a writer has an axe to grind about someone, don't bring it here.

PART 3: V&V™ Universe Guidelines

-Villains and Vigilantes™ is a superhero role-playing game. This means it generally involves a conflict in a setting very much like our modern day world between superheroes (who are characters usually operated by the players) and super-villains (who are portrayed by the GM, along with all other non-player characters) that is generally resolved through combat involving the use of various super-powers. If a story cannot be expressed or resolved in those kinds of terms, it probably won't be the right kind of story for us.

-The official Villains and Vigilantes™ Universe is a fictional setting featuring characters, locations and concepts from the specific V&V™ related works and the intellectual property of the creators of V&V™, Jeff Dee and Jack Herman, and supplemental materials published by Monkey House games. Here is a list of those materials: the various published editions of the Villains and Vigilantes™ role-playing game (the 1979 edition, 1982 Revised Edition and the latest Version 2.1 published in 2010 from Monkey House games), the role-playing game adventure "Crisis At Crusader Citadel", the role-playing game character book "Most Wanted, Volume 1", the Villains and Vigilantes™ comic book mini-series published in 1987 by Eclipse Comics, the superhero role-playing game Living Legends™ published by Monkey House games, the line of role-playing game miniature figures for Villains and Vigilantes™ and Living Legends™ created by Lance and Laser and sold by Team Frog, the role-playing game adventures "Intercrime: Hostile Takeover™", "Blood Ties™", "Oil Pressure™", "In Broad Daylight™", "Infinity Lounge™", "Ancient Evil™" and the "Crusader Citadel Foe Files™" published by Monkey House games, as well as all other remaining materials created by Jeff Dee and Jack Herman for V&V that were published either as magazine articles or online. (All other works previously created for the role-playing game

Villains and Vigilantes™ are the property of their respective authors or owners and therefore are not actually considered an “official” part of the V&V™ Universe.) A character guide for writers is being developed. Until then writers will just have to rely upon their own research. Check the links section of our website to find the best V&V™ websites on the Internet. Please feel free to consult us, as well as other V&V players, at the Monkey House games forum or email us with any questions.

-Monkey House games exists to develop the characters and concepts of the Villains and Vigilantes™ Universe. As a rule, we are not interested in a new superhero universe or alternate campaign setting unless it is potentially developing a specific aspect of or in addition to the V&V™ Universe.

-Have fun exploring the V&V™ Universe. Writers are more than welcome to play in our sandbox. Curious about what some obscure region of the world is like? Intrigued by some character off in the background of that drawing? Read about an organization or a nation or a planet or a dimension and have the perfect idea for it? Think some period of history (or far future) that V&V has referenced would be an interesting place for players to visit? Have at it. But please remember, it is possible that we may already have plans in the works for something you would like to use. Also, be prepared to accept editorial guidance from us so that everything fits together properly within our continuity.

-In the world of V&V™ pretty much anything can happen. We aren't interested in material where superheroes never existed until right this very moment, superheroes are limited to “real world” tech, “magic” doesn't exist because science has explained what it is, all super-powers are the result of alien technology, etc. Such generalized pronouncements directly contradict how the V&V™ Universe has been established, or how any particular GM might want to run their campaign.

-The setting of V&V™ is a stylized version of the world we live in. Developments that would irreparably alter the world as we know it into something unrecognizable from our contemporary world can't generally occur in material we are likely to accept for publication. (Examples of this sort of thing you might see in a comic book superhero universe include, but are not limited to: an atomic war that destroys human civilization, an alien race enslaves humanity, everyone on Earth has been replaced by robots, the dead all rise from their graves with cannibalistic hunger, a new species becomes the dominant lifeform on the planet, people everywhere all develop super powers or use magic or get access to fantastically advanced technology, etc.) That is, unless a writer has an extremely unique, clever and seamlessly effective way to potentially reverse it all- that is not a cheat or a deus ex machina. This is not to say that such a change might not potentially result as the consequence of the players failing their mission, especially if the result is calamitous- but even then it would be a good idea to provide some sort of escape clause for the GM to use. There are plenty of parallel Earths and alternate dimensions in the V&V™ Universe where worlds that appear very different from our own do exist, so there are always possibilities. However, we would tend to be more interested in things that were actually centrally involved with the V&V Universe as presently established.

-Playtesting material prior to submission is strongly recommended. Unless a writer is an experienced game designer, we will probably be able to tell if this was not done. While we love playtesting, writers

are responsible for creating game materials that are properly playable. If we are going to allow something to become canon in the V&V™ Universe, we have to know that it works.

PART 4: Product Guidelines

-At Monkey Ho use games our line of products for Villains and Vigilantes™ is presently divided into three separate types of products: Adventures, Character Books, and Action Packs™.

-Adventures are the prepared information that a GM needs to run at least one gaming session for a group of players. The contents of an adventure would include game stats for all significant characters in the adventure, maps of all locations where combat may occur or where the players may have to explore, the plot of what is happening (what the characters are doing and how the players become involved) and rough timetable establishing a sequence of events. What follows, just for the sake of example, is the outline for a fairly traditional sort of superhero role-playing game adventure:

EXAMPLE SUPERHERO ROLE-PLAYING GAME ADVENTURE OUTLINE

1. MYSTERIOUS GOINGS-ON:

This could be a rash of crimes, a natural disaster, some dangerous criminals making a jailbreak, a good old-fashioned 'whodunit' or a group of weird, seemingly-unrelated events, etc.

A. Player Involvement: Whether this comes from the mysterious blonde in trouble asking for the heroes' assistance, a phone call from the President of the United States or having the players just happening to be sitting in a plane that is about to crash, something must happen to get the players interested in the story and make them interested in what's going on. Never underestimate the effect of someone calling for 'Help!'

B. The Basic Facts: As the players begin to interact with the situation they will receive some sort of information that should indicate to them a course of action. This could be their briefing from superiors before they are sent out on a mission, a clue (the old steel-tipped arrow coated with an obscure lethal poison used only by a certain South American tribe), or just an ordinary guy telling his story...

C. Following Leads: Here the GM sits back and dishes out the results of the players playing detective. Very often they will go off in the wrong direction and chase red herrings (especially if the author of an adventure gives the players one to choose). But this is par for the course as it is up to the players, with an occasional push from the GM, to come up with the answers on their own.

2. PRELIMINARY CONFLICT:

This could be anything from catching a gang of hoods unaware as they plan their next crime to being ambushed by the super-powered flunkies of the master villain. It is even possible to have a series of minor conflicts the players have to win. Have fun coming up with these and be creative.

A. Mystery Unresolved As Yet: This point can't be stressed too highly, but by the same token, the players should by now feel that they are on the right track or at least that they have the opportunity to find some answers.

B. Conflict is Challenging But Winnable: This preliminary conflict is very much a testing of the players' mettle, and its outcome will very likely set the tone for the rest of the adventure. If they win, will they be cocky and rush headlong into everything else with bravado, or if they lose, will they gun shy, or be out to prove themselves? With emphasis, this preliminary conflict should be challenging but winnable.

C. Resolving Conflict Provides More Info: Upon winning or losing the preliminary conflict the players are at the crossroads of the adventure. They have committed themselves and are firmly a part of whatever situation fate (and the GM) has put them in, but at the same time they are far from solving their problems and indeed might not have the slightest idea what is going on. Here, some major clue or piece of information should be presented to draw the players into the rest of the story.

3. THE CLIMACTIC CONFLICT:

Here is where everything starts to come together. The good guys have located the bad guys (or vice versa) and the Battle Royale begins.

A. Exotic Locale: This could be the villains' headquarters, an abandoned warehouse, a national landmark, outer space, another dimension, a subterranean labyrinth, a city under the sea, or anywhere. The author should make sure the GM has a detailed description of it and be careful that he does not duplicate one that appears in an already published V&V adventure.

B. Against All Odds: While the preliminary conflict was designed to test the players' mettle, the climactic conflict could very well bend it past the breaking point. It is a conflict that the players should not be able to win with muscle alone (although they will need plenty of that). It requires intelligence, skill, resourcefulness, out-and-out luck and above all teamwork to overcome. This is, assuming the players have what it takes to overcome it at all.

C. Resolving Conflict or Mystery's Solution: Whether the players have enough information to figure it out by the time they reach this stage or the master villain has to boast of his plan as his side gets the drop on the players, things should start becoming clear at this point.

4. THE CONTINGENCY PLAN:

It is very possible the players might run into a bit of bad luck, get their signals crossed or just find themselves out-gunned. If this happens and the players are defeated, the GM will need a contingency plan. It need not be nearly as long as the other sections, but it should be there.

A. Fate of the Players: In comics, when the heroes are defeated, the villain (traditionally) places them in what is known as the 'Death Trap.' This could be a set of stasis tubes which will keep the players trapped in suspended animation forever, the players might find themselves strapped to an atomic bomb set for detonation in seconds or being lowered into a pool of hungry sharks, in a rocket on a course for the sun, or any combination of the above. But, as in comics, this is not automatically fatal. The players have a chance to escape and if they can figure out the proper method of escape (or invent a clever enough one on their own) they just might make it..

B. Coming Back For Round Two: Assuming there are players left that have lived through the preliminary conflict, the climactic conflict, escaped the death-trap, and still want to go teach those villains a lesson, the GM should have another shred of information to provide that sends them back in the right direction, gluttons for punishment though they may be.

C. Results of First Failure: At this point the players might encounter another superhero who offers to help the players out, if the GM thinks they need it. Also, in the players' absence the villains might be on the verge of carrying out their master plan (if they haven't done so already!) The players now have a last chance to set things right but now the kid gloves are off. This is a 'do or die' situation. This is a wide open field and you, the author, must supply a guideline for what will (or very well might) happen.

WHAT APPEARS ABOVE SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED A STRICT FORMULA. It is more of a guideline. (Examples: There could be a series of missions that can be done in whatever order the players decide to pursue them in. There can be a series of encounters that can be successfully won through various means such as combat, negotiation, stealth, or investigation, etc.) Strive to come up with some aspect of a new adventure that makes it unique.

The specific length of a role-playing game adventure can vary greatly, but it should be precisely as long as its needs to be to tell its story, and preferably no longer. This outline is by no means to be considered a formula to follow. It is included simply because it addresses many of the concerns authors (and GMs) have when writing or running an adventure. An adventure written following the outline above would most likely be a standard book-length adventure. But the size of the adventure is not important- it is the quality of the content. What Monkey House Games refers to editorially as a "Mini-Adventure" may be no longer than a substantial magazine article, and only outline a couple of potential battles. A "Micro-Adventure" featuring only the details of, perhaps, little more than a single encounter might be only as long as a video game instruction book.

-Character Books are collections of game characters for the GM to use for his campaign. The characters in these books are usually villains for a GM's players to fight. They might also include some other superheroes to assist the players or possibly for players to operate themselves when playing the game. (As a general rule, though, we aren't interested in books of superhero characters.) When describing a character, the first place to start is by providing that character's game stats. Monkey House games publishes character stats for both of its role-playing game systems, Villains and Vigilantes™ and Living Legends™. Writers will need to submit character stats for at least one (but preferably both) of these systems. Apart from that, the description of a character should be broken down into several specific sections.

Besides game stats, every character in every Adventure, Character Book or Action Pack™ should have at least something written about them under the next four sections.

Origin/Background: Here is where the origin story of character gets told, along with a description of their background and skills that may prove useful in the game. A good indication of what a character may do in the recent future is what they have done in the recent past. This is also a good place to shed some light on recent events leading up to the situation that plays out in the adventure itself. It can also help "set the stage" by describing what the character has been up to recently to help the GM get a better grasp of the events of the story.

Combat Tactics: When running a gaming session, the GM has a lot of characters to run. It is helpful to provide specific combat tactics for each specific character. It makes each character a little more unique and prevents non-player characters in a game from all falling into a familiar set of similar tactics.

Personality & Character Traits: Is a character treacherous or loyal? Are they methodical planners or do they make up their strategies as they go along? Are they courageous or prone to panic? Is a particular character mentally stable or psychotic? Do they have personal relationships with other characters that might influence their actions? Development in this area is another way to keep characters from seeming to come from the same cookie cutter.

Quotes: Part of the GM's job is to come up with all of the non-player character dialogue in a session, and virtually all of it has to be improvised as needed. Any help a writer can provide in this area can only make the non-player characters of the game seem more real and believable.

There may be some unifying theme to a Character Book, or some aspect to these characters to explain why they have grouped together- or possibly not. As Villains and Vigilantes™ is a superhero role-playing game, and any series of superhero adventures is going to require a wellspring of super-villains characters. It may be that the only theme you need is that a given collection of characters describes a series of super-villains in the same way a police mug shot book gives you a look at a collection of criminals. Some books will establish a connection between all of its characters (they might all belong to

the same organization, or they all have a similar origin, etc.) and will include notes on how to use those characters in a GM's campaign.

-Action Packs™ are small but heavily loaded collections of game material. This material is usually all related to a central theme such as a location, an organization, or subject matter. An Action Pack™ might include one simple map to a location, a character or two, some creature stats, equipment, vehicles and super power suggestions, and some background notes that would give the GM some ideas on how to incorporate them all into a Villains and Vigilantes™ campaign. Basically, an Action Pack™ is all the game-related material necessary for an adventure (or series of adventures) but without all the plot and connective story tissue. The point is to inspire GMs to come up with their own storylines and introduce this material into their own campaigns however they choose. They should usually be no more than 6 or 8 pages worth of material. Think of Action Packs™ as the role-playing game equivalent of an accessory collection filled with cool stuff to use for your favorite action figures!

-Don't shy away from the personal touch. If things get to that stage, it is always a nice touch to see a list of a writer's playtesters included with a finished manuscript. Brief playtesting notes indicating how the original group to play an adventure or encounter various characters did are also enjoyable.

-Monkey House Games will accept written submissions by e-mail or regular mail.

-Please e-mail all writing submissions to: jack@monkeyhousegames.com

Or send them by regular mail to:

**Monkey House Games
Editorial Submissions Department
PO Box 121
Crystal Lake, IL 60039**

-Again, thank you for your interest in creating material for Monkey House Games.

**-Jack Herman,
Monkey House games**