



# The Angry GM's Deep Dives

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## How to Build and Run Better Social Challenges

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Part 1: The Mechanics of a Social Challenge

# Part I

## What Are Social Interaction Challenges?

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And Why Do You Suck At Them?

# What Are Social Interaction Challenges?

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Let's cut the crap...

- Myth #1: A Social Interaction Challenge is a roleplaying encounter.
- Myth #2: A Social Interaction Challenge is won by saying "please" really hard.
- Myth #3: A Social Interaction Challenge is won by getting the non-player character to like you enough.

# What Are Social Interaction Challenges?

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A Social Interaction Challenge is a **gameplay challenge** in which the players attempt help a non-player character **resolve an internal conflict** in the party's favor **primarily through social interaction.**

# What Are Social Interaction Challenges?

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In other words...

- You build a gameplay challenge.
- The players take actions that involve talking.
- You resolve those actions using game mechanics and describe the results by portraying the non-player character's responses.
- The outcome of the challenge is determined by game mechanics.

# Part II

## Social Interaction Challenge Mechanics

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It's Basically a Not-A-Skill-Challenge. Remember Those?

# Social Interaction Challenge Mechanics

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The core mechanics...

- The conflict is defined by **Objections** and **Motives**.
  - To win, **Objections net of Motivations must be 0 or less.**
  - If there are no **Motives**, assume **Basic Human Decency** or **Self Interest**.
- The difficulty comes from **Disposition**.
- The timer is the non-player character's **Patience**.
  - **Every action reduces Patience.**
  - When **Patience is reduced to 0, the challenge fails.**

# Social Interaction Challenge Mechanics

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Setting the numbers...

- **Objections** and **Motivations** are **Stats**.
  - Set them from 0 to 3.
- **Disposition** is whatever your system says to do for Difficulty Classes or Target Numbers.
- **Patience** is... the topic of the next slide.

# Social Interaction Challenge Mechanics

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How to set **Patience**...

- Add up all the **Objections**.
- Subtract all the **Motives**.
- In *Dungeons & Dragons*, multiply by...
  - 2 for an Easy Challenge.
  - 1.5 for a Moderate Challenge.
  - 1.3 for a Hard Challenge.
- ... then add 3 (*or maybe 2*).
- If you're not running *Dungeons & Dragons*... sigh...

# Social Interaction Challenge Mechanics

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The logic behind patience...

- Patience is the total number of successes needed plus a buffer to account for failures.
- Moderate difficulty is based on the system's general assumption about success rates.
- Easy and Hard are, you know, easier and harder than that.
- Adding 3 gives the players two extra actions to use for things like feeling out, building rapport, and negotiation.

# Social Interaction Challenge Mechanics

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How about an example...

## **Objections**

- Fear 2
- Lack of Trust 1

## **Motivations**

- Concern 0
- Curiosity 1

## **Patience...?**

# Social Interaction Challenge Mechanics

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How about an example...

## **Objections**

- Fear 2
- Lack of Trust 1

## **Motivations**

- Concern 0
- Curiosity 1

## **Patience**

- Easy 6
- Moderate 5
- Hard 4

# Social Interaction Challenge Mechanics

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Some additional mechanics...

- Modify **Disposition** based on **Approaches**
- Build in **Leverage** to exploit and **Offenses** to avoid.
- Add a **Block** to overcome, either a **Starting Block** or a **Triggered Block**.
- Add **Traits** to help you portray responses or to evaluate actions.

# Social Interaction Challenge Mechanics

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Above all...

**KEEP IT SIMPLE STUPID!**

This shit is way more complicated to play than it is to design. If you aren't saying, "Man, this doesn't seem deep enough to be a good challenge," you made it too complicated.