DOMICILES AND DATA STRUCTURES

A Narrativist Homestuck "tabletop" RPG played over a chat client, by Jerry (JMS220#8629)

INTRODUCTION

Why D&DS?

For fun.

Wait, you're asking why *you* should play it? Uh, for fun?

Hi, I'm Jerry. I help write a Homestuck tabletop system with my friends on the internet called RPGStuck, and I hop around various Discord servers where people are making their own games to offer my advice. Unlike some of my colleagues, even though I've been in the Homestuck tabletop "community" for 5 years, I never actually made a system by myself. I do plenty of reading, but I never set my (metaphorical) pen down to create something I can truly call "my own." However, in the process of observing, communicating, cross-pollinating, and offering advice for the past few years, I learned a couple of things.

First of all, in my opinion, Homestuck is a Narrativist mockery of a Gamist mindset. If you're not familiar with GNS theory (consider yourself lucky), Homestuck is an author making fun of typical Japanese RPGs from the 90s. Most systems I have seen instead go the opposite direction and slam full force into a JRPG, often without any consideration for what makes a JRPG fun or meaningful. This leads to a heavy emphasis on stats, number-crunching, and the strict boxes that Homestuck is about trying to break out of. When was a "strife" featured in Homestuck past the few in Acts 1-5.1 and the big callback in [S] Collide? The act of strifing isn't meaningful in and of itself. Rather, it's a JRPG abstraction meant to bring attention to the interpersonal conflict within the comic. Arguably, pesterlogs are much more important. Half the comic is actually text! If there are myriads of lines of chat logs contained within the comic, but the number of actual strifes can be counted on my fingers (which I have 10 of, if an alien is reading this), surely, the chat logs must be more important.

This is the part where I defend my pet system. Second of all, each Homestuck system can only capture a certain couple of people's idea of what Homestuck means. Some like to focus on the early comic where a couple of kids fool around with their cumbersome inventory systems and figure out game mechanics by exploration. Some prefer the spectacle of god-tiering and the wonder of the power a player can achieve through playing the game, solving problems and tearing through hordes of underlings. Some want to be part of the hidden intricacies of dream

moon political intrigue, or relive dramatic makeups and breakups from their teenage years. I think a system can cover *multiple* of these, from one specific angle. I can't speak for other systems, but RPGStuck is a great example of the Act 5 Act 2-style power fantasy some people remember when they imagine the "good ol' days" of Homestuck. More recently, it has also taken a turn toward political intrigue (in a classic example of developer appeal). However, if you really want to mess around with your sylladex, or have mechanics based around your relationships rather than your personal talents, we'd shrug and tell you to homebrew something. A system that covers all of these things will have a hard time melding them together into something coherent. After all, RPGStuck 3e, while still a good system, is already pretty wide in scope! This is called "scope creep," and is a bad thing in all forms of development. You could theoretically play multiple systems at once, but it'd get pretty confusing pretty fast. Homestuck itself is an example of scope creep. Even with constant callbacks to previous pages due to Andrew Hussie's great memory (or more likely, a sheet of notes), it's still the work of a changing man over 7 years.

A system that has a defined scope and setting will be interesting to me. The only thing that makes a system take place in a given setting is flavor. No system is more "objectively Homestuck" than another. Any Homestuck system that claims it is "more objectively Homestuck" because of the addition of buzzwords, portmanteaus, or new ways to roll dice is scamming you. The world is as detailed as the book, the game master, and the players make it. The dice are there for extra psychological effect. Sometimes, this extra psychological effect adds to the feeling, in some people's opinion, that a given system is "more Homestuck" than another. I hope I do that here.

Domiciles and Data Structures is a system about kids doing things, whether it be talking to their friends, figuring out game mechanics, fighting through imp hordes, or finding themselves in an actively hostile world. It is a different angle than RPGStuck, and as such, has different mechanics. Not better, not worse. Just different.

On Roleplaying

This is a roleplaying game. It involves **roleplaying**. If you're in the Homestuck fandom and somehow haven't done that before, this involves getting into the mindset of your character and playing out an imaginary scenario where they interact with the people and world around them.

In any given game of Domiciles and Data Structures, there are multiple **players** and (usually) one **narrator**. The players interact with the world around them using roleplaying and the tools of the game they are given. The narrator's job is to define the world around the players in the first place, give them an objective, and arbitrate any conflicts between the world and the players' wills using game mechanics.

This'll be a bit unusual. If you want to replicate Homestuck exactly as is, you'll have to understand that Homestuck is about **prompts** and **reactions**. The player gives a context to the

prompt and the prompt itself, which usually takes the form of a character name and the action the character takes. Afterwards, the narrator gives the reaction, or what happens as the result of the player's action. Below is an example of play using prompts and reactions. Prompts are bolded.

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EXAMPLE OF PLAY
PLAYER: John: Captchalogue fake arms again.
NARRATOR: What did you just say?? You don't want to clog up your… oh,
Jesus. In a momentary lapse of concentration, you accidentally
captchalogue the arms again.
PLAYER: John: Set Pesterchum status to "bully". You don't think the
situation is quite dire enough to go all the way to "RANCOROUS", but
you still feel the PESTERCHUM client should reflect your mood change
in some way. "BULLY" will have to do. You guess.
NARRATOR: This unsurprisingly does nothing whatsoever. Oh, right, you
forgot your chum is still pestering you.
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When you have a large goal to work towards in a short span of time, this is called a **super-prompt**. A super-prompt is usually given by the narrator rather than the player. They are marked by [S], which clearly stands for Super-prompt. A goal given by a super-prompt is usually very general, such as "[S] Enter" or "[S] Descend." In the middle of a super-prompt, new prompts are not given by the player. A super-prompt ends when the narrator and player agree it ends, and is usually rewarded by echeladder rungs.

Basic Principles of D&DS

"Twenty-sided die" will be shortened to "d20." Similarly, "six-sided die" will be shortened to "d6." "Twenty six-sided dice" will be shortened to "20d6." The arithmetic symbols +, -, and * will be used to represent addition, subtraction, and multiplication respectively.

Domiciles and Data Structures is based on a d20 roll for everything, plus **Boons** and **Busts**. Boons are bonuses added to the d20 in the form of a pool of d6 dice. Each boon is worth one extra d6 in a roll. If a roll has two boons total, the player will roll 1d20+2d6. A bust is the opposite of a boon. A bust represents the subtraction of one boon from the dice pool. Boons and busts are added together before a roll. If a player has five boons and two busts, the player will roll 1d20+3d6. If the player has one boon and two busts, the player will roll 1d20-1d6.

CHARACTER CREATION

Basics

First of all, give your character a name. It can be a human, troll, or any other species. Mechanically, it makes no difference.

Before you begin making the rest of the character, think of a backstory and personality for them. There is space on the character sheet for both. These can vary from simple to highly unusual, but make sure to keep them engrossing, coherent, and plausible for their given situation. For example, don't give a 13-year-old access to nuclear launch codes.

Your narrator will decide if you get to pick your class, aspect, dream moon, and land, or if they will pick for you and reveal it. Just in case, don't get too excited about a specific class or aspect. If you do pick a specific class and aspect, make sure you are playing a real character and not what you think that class and aspect would act like. Decide your character's Title after you have written their full backstory and personality as a reflection of what you have written.

Stats

There are 10 **stats** in Domiciles and Data Structures. All stats start at 0. Each stat represents an attribute about your character. The stats are listed below.
- Vim [VIM]: Feats of strength. Think weightlifting, wall-breaking, and telling someone to screw off. Pesterlogs using this are about acting tough.
- Rascality [RAS]: Feats of mischievousness. Think pranking people, vandalism, and setting shaving cream on fire. Pesterlogs using this are about more hair-brained schemes, or just general off-the-wall topics.
- Dexterity [DEX]: Feats of flexibility. Think sleight of hand, squeezing into a vent, and advanced scheduling. Pesterlogs using this are about dealing with changes to a plan, relationship, or something else.
- Imagination [IMG]: Feats of creativity. Think drawing, word-association, and making sick rhymes. Pesterlogs using this are about coming up with plans, or may just involve lots of puns.
- Grace [GRC]: Feats of acting well. Think musical performance, stealthy maneuvers, and youth rolls. Pesterlogs using this are about talent and showing off.
- Pulchritude [PLC]: Feats of looking good. Think public speaking, modeling, and persuasion by very charming smile. Pesterlogs using this are about convincing someone to join your side.

- Grit [GRT]: Feats of endurance. Think withstanding pain, walking five hundred miles, and breaking up with someone. Pesterlogs using this are about taking and delivering bad news.
- Appetite [APP]: Feats of active motivation. Think hunger, applying for interviews, and resisting cravings. Pesterlogs using this are about trying to accumulate power, or just asking for things.
- Leverage [LVG]: Feats of social power. Think blackmail, manipulation, and other threats. Pesterlogs using this are about who holds power over whom.
- Hubris [HUB]: Feats of pride/self-confidence. Think flexing (literally), flexing (metaphorically), and writing a resume. Pesterlogs using this are about one-upmanship and blatant bragging.

After you pick your interests, pick three stats that are still at 0, and drop them to -1. Stats have a maximum of value of 5, and any stat can be brought up to a maximum of 2 at character creation.

Your character has three other miscellaneous stats on their character sheet. **Gel Viscosity** is a measure of your character's physical health. If it drops to 0, your character is dead. **Grist Cache** is a measure of your character's grist. Every time you defeat a new tier of enemy, you get an extra tier of grist. This can be used for alchemy to upgrade items and add more boons to them. **Rung** is the rung your character is on their echeladder. Different rungs can be named based on significant events that happened to get your character to their current rung.

Interests

At character creation, give your character five **interests**. Interests are specific topics your character is interested in. Each interest is associated with a stat. For each interest linked to a given stat, your character gets one bonus point in that stat, for a maximum of two interests in any stat.

One of these five interests is your character's **primary interest**. This is what other people immediately think of when your character comes to mind. It could be anything, such as terrible movies, obscure literature, sick beats, or good dogs. This interest gets 3 bonus points.

The next one is your character's **secondary interest**. This is something your character wants to develop in the future and have made active progress towards. It could be anything, such as doing magic tricks, psychoanalyzing people, drawing webcomics, or learning science. This interest gets 2 bonus points.

The last three are your character's **tertiary interests**. These are things your character is interested in, but not that interested, or just never really got the chance to learn more about. These could be anything, such as computer programming, knitting, preserving dead things, or playing the flute.

You can level up your interests by participating in gambits with them.

Below are a couple examples of characters and their interests.

EXAMPLE 1: You have a passion for **REALLY TERRIBLE MOVIES.** [*Primary*] You like to **program computers** [*Tertiary*] but you are NOT VERY GOOD AT IT. You have a fondness for **PARANORMAL LORE** [*Tertiary*], and are an aspiring **AMATEUR MAGICIAN** [*Secondary*]. You also like to play **GAMES** sometimes. [*Tertiary*]

EXAMPLE 2: You have a variety of INTERESTS. You have a passion for **RATHER OBSCURE LITERATURE** [*Primary*]. You enjoy creative writing and are SOMEWHAT SECRETIVE ABOUT IT. You have a fondness for the **BESTIALLY STRANGE AND FICTITIOUS,** [*Tertiary*] and sometimes dabble in **PSYCHOANALYSIS** [*Secondary*]. You also like to **KNIT** [*Tertiary*], and your room is a BIT OF A MESS. And on occasion, if just the right one strikes your fancy, you like to play **VIDEO GAMES** with your friends. [*Tertiary*]

Sylladex and Items

Every player character has a **sylladex**. A sylladex serves the same function an "inventory" would in other games. You keep items inside of it. Every sylladex has a **modus** (pl. modi), or a method of retrieval for items. Modi are often based on various data structures from computer science, such as stacks, queues, arrays, binary trees, and hash maps. Some are based on popular board games.

Items are things your character can pick up. These could be anything, such as smoke pellets, bottles, swords, or assorted fruits. Every item has a stat attached to it. You can select any type of item to be your character's **strife specibus**, or the type of weapon you use. If your character can figure out how to fight with it, it can be your character's strife specibus. Just like items, every strife specibus uses one stat. This grants boons in gambits related to attacking with your weapon. You can upgrade your strife specibus in Sburb through **alchemy**, which grants you additional boons related to your item's **tier**. There is no maximum tier, but grist cost for future tiers increases exponentially.

In Domiciles and Data Structures, every modus has a stat tied to it. Retrieving an item from your modus is a **Retrieval** Gambit with a score of 10, plus boons based on the stat your modus is. Failing this gambit will result in getting a different item than the one you intended. You may eject an item to add one boon to a round of Strife. If an item is ejected in the middle of a Strife, it cannot be retrieved until after the Strife is over.

Echeladder

The **Echeladder** is the method in which your character progresses in Homestuck. In Domiciles and Data Structures, it's less important. The Echeladder has 150 **rungs** and no gaps between them. Every time you finish a pesterlog or strife, solve a problem at a point of interest, do something of significant story importance, or find personal growth, you will be rewarded with rungs on your echeladder. This mostly exists for a narrator to say "you rocket up your echeladder!" and give you a funny rung name.

GAMEPLAY

Gambits

Overview

Every significant task in Domiciles and Data Structures is accomplished by a **Gambit**. A Gambit represents progress made toward a task, or how well your character did something. A Gambit can be declared by either player in the midst of an interpersonal conflict, or by either the player or the narrator in the course of regular gameplay. Each gambit can be named in a manner vaguely relevant to what it represents, such as Prankster's Gambit, or the Snarky Horseshitometer.

When representing a conflict between players, or a player and a non-player character (NPC), gambits are represented by bars called **Gambit Bars**. An example of a gambit bar is displayed on the left. Each Gambit has a score, which is the number a player attempts to hit in a gambit. After a gambit is initiated, a player counts their boons for their round. Boons may come from the stat they are using, any relevant interests, and any other circumstances that may be in their favor such as item Ejection or weaponization. Then, a player rolls 1d20 plus the amount of boons they have for that round in the form of a d6 dice pool.

Players each take turns attempting to roll above the Gambit score, decided by the SM beforehand. Whichever character rolls over the score number first wins the gambit and gets
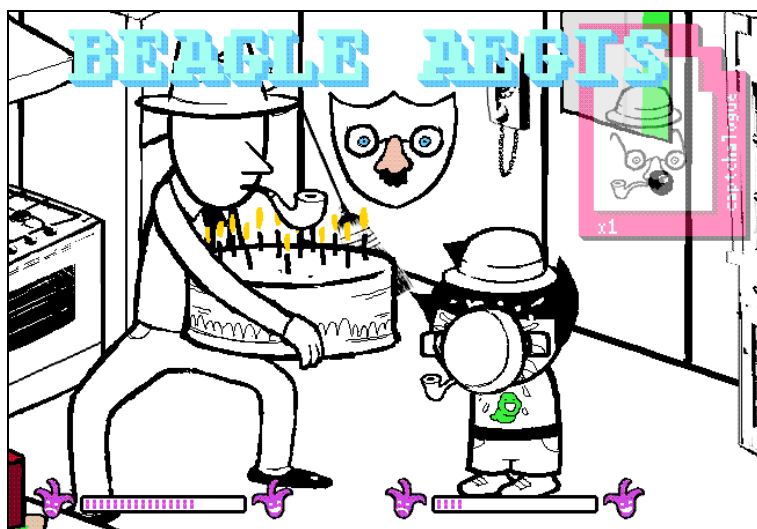
rewarded proportional to the difficulty of the gambit. This is represented in character by the character succeeding at what they set out to do.

Every time you win a gambit involving a given interest, mark it on your character sheet. For every 6 gambits that you win with a given interest, increase that interest's bonus by 1. If an interest reaches a total bonus of 5, increase its relevant skill by 1.

Pesterlogs

Characters in Domiciles and Data Structures use a chat program called Pesterchum to talk to each other. Talking about what you are doing to your friends will be just as significant as actually doing it. A conversation is called a **pesterlog** in hindsight, because it is a log of being "pestered" through the chat client. **Pestering** is a special type of gambit.

The Gambit Bar starts at 0, in the center. When a player is done writing their response to the other person in the chat, they send it and roll 1d20 with one relevant stat they are using that they choose, and one relevant stat the SM chooses afterwards. Then, the opposing player in the conversation does the same thing. Players can accumulate boons by redirecting the conversation towards their interests and using them in the conversation. Boons will only be granted through interests if they manage to redirect the conversation in a logical manner, as decided by the narrator.

Whoever rolls higher after each round, which consists of both players talking, wins the round. The margin of difference (the higher roll minus the lower roll) decides how far the bar moves in either direction. If the bar moves in a certain player's direction by a given score from the SM, that player is rewarded. If after 10 rounds, the bar did not break that score, the player that has the bar pointing toward them wins a partial victory. They are rewarded at a lower rate. More detail for the narrator is available in the narrator's guide.

Strifes

Strifes, or fights, are another type of Gambit. They are the main method of getting Grist for Alchemy.

Strifes are decided by **actions**, which all start with A. You get to pick more actions as you gain rungs on your Echeladder and progress. There is a list of example actions in the narrator's guide. Actions are different things you can do in a strife that give your character bonuses.

In a strife, you roll 1d20 plus any applicable boons from the stat your weapon uses, sylladex weaponization, and any relevant interests (which can often be invoked with Alchemy). The opponent subtracts that number by any applicable boons they have. The remaining number, if greater than 0, is the damage done to the opponent. This number is subtracted from the opponent's Vitality Gel bar.

If you roll a 1 on the 1d20 roll, your weapon loses 1 durability. A weapon has durability equal to its Tier + 2. If a weapon has 0 durability, the weapon is broken and changed to a random stat that is not the same stat the original weapon had.

Turn order is decided by who initiated the fight. If there are multiple participants in a strife, anyone can attack anyone else. The last person or team remaining wins the strife. If underlings were defeated, your character gets Grist. Grist is split evenly among multiple player participants in a strife.

Grit

Grit is a one-sided gambit roll. It is also a meter that accumulates by 1 for every past Gambit roll victory in a given stat, but resets upon a single failure. You may expend 3 Grit points for a bonus in the same stat.

SBURB

Introduction

Sburb (stylized as SBURB) is an alternate-reality science-fiction fantasy political simulator, building sandbox, and JRPG designed to take 4 to 12 teenagers and groom them to be gods of a new universe at the cost of their old lives. It is also forced therapy and personal growth. The general consensus across Paradox Space about it is "hey, it's worked this long, it can't hurt." The other general consensus across Paradox Space is that everyone's traumatized from it and probably has Stockholm syndrome. This game-within-a-game is the setting that most if not all games in Domiciles and Data Structures will be centered on.

The Game

You already lost it.

Entry

This is the process of entering the game. Every player gets a **server** and a **client**, which are both used to connect to other players. If someone is the client in a client-server connection, they are the other person's **client**. Likewise, the other person is that person's **server**. The server player has the job of placing down Sburb machines for the game to start and for alchemization, and to build up the client player's house to Skaia through the Seven Gates. The client player has the job of using these machines to enter Sburb and collect grist for their server player to use.

Entry involves taking the cap off a **Cruxtruder**, which is a square machine with a wheel and a tube in the center. When the cap is first opened, a timer visible on the Cruxtruder begins counting down. When this timer runs out, a meteor will strike the player's home. The player has until then to complete their entry. An unprototyped kernelsprite will eject from the tube on the Cruxtruder. This glowing orb with a spirograph in the center must be **prototyped** once before entry. A kernelsprite gets prototyped by touching an item.

The final item that comes from the Cruxtruder is a Cruxite Dowel. This must be taken to the next machine, the **Totem Lathe**, which is an oblong device that can carve Cruxite Dowels with the data encoded on a punched captchalogue card. There is a pre-punched card that can be deployed in entry along with the other machines. When carved, this Cruxite Dowel must be taken to the final machine, the **Alchemiter**. This is a large machine with a flat surface and a separate pedestal that scans Cruxite Dowels. When the Cruxite Dowel is placed on the pedestal, a **Cruxite Artifact** will be created. This is a short puzzle to be solved by the player. When the player interacts with the Artifact successfully, the player's home along with anyone currently in it will be teleported into the game of Sburb.

To make things more difficult, players often face additional hazards on entering Sburb. These include, but are not limited to, their house being on fire, a crazy older brother chasing them with swords, smaller meteors hitting them before entry is over, or being blindfolded throughout the entire process.

Land Quest

When you get to your Land immediately after entry, your Land name and Mythological Title will be revealed to you by your **Sprite**, which is a double-prototyped kernelsprite, now taking the form of a ghostly sentient being and your guide through Sburb. Your Land name will take the form of "Land of X and Y," X and Y both being nouns. Your **land quest** will be based on your character and their development, but it will always involve ascending the Seven Gates to Skaia, making The Choice with your Denizen, and exploring the Land around you. Your first step will be to build to your First Gate.

After passing through your First Gate, your character will find themselves near a town or other point of interest. Towns are filled with **consorts**, reptile or amphibian-like creatures that inhabit your Land. They do not usually offer intelligent conversation, but will repeat the same couple of lines much like in a JRPG or make animal noises. You cannot have a pesterlog gambit with consorts. However, they will give you **Lore**, which will flesh out the background of a land. If you collect enough Lore, you can find new towns and expand your map of points of interest. They can also give you **Sidequests**, or ways to help around town. These are useful for climbing a couple of rungs on your echeladder each, and may teach you more about the lore of your land.

Each town or point of interest has a distance between them. The narrator will roll on a hazards table, and you may have to fight underlings along the way.

Underlings serve the **Denizen**, which resides beyond the Land's Seventh Gate. Meeting your Denizen is a culmination of your Land Quest, in which you prove your personal growth through making a **Choice** given to you by your Denizen. This is often in the form of choosing between two equally good or bad options, giving you permanent boons or busts. Alternatively, you may fight your Denizen in a strife and avoid the Choice. Upon defeating the Denizen, you will have access to near-infinite Grist, enough to take a single weapon to Tier 10.

Dream Moons

Within the Medium are two **moons**. One is a golden moon called **Prospit** that orbits Skaia. The other is a violet moon called **Derse** that floats behind the **Veil** of meteors surrounding the game. Players are assigned to one of these two, and have all their dreams in a separate body on their moon. The process of being chosen for a moon is unknown. It may have something to do with whether you make your bed.

Dream moons have a similar exploration structure to Lands, except they're less linear and more centralized. Narrators may set up districts within each of the moons, each with their own NPCs, points of interest, and possible Gambits. If enough Gambits are completed to strengthen Prospit's authority and undermine Derse's royalty, the final battle with the Black King may have his maximum Vitality Gel reduced by up to 20%.

Skaia

In the center of the Incipisphere is **Skaia**, a multi-dimensional chess board granted near-infinite complexity by the prototypes of the players. Players will not spend much of their time on Skaia until the Black King of Derse initiates the **Reckoning**, which is when meteors will be summoned and flung toward Skaia until it is destroyed. The Black King functions as the final boss of Sburb. All players will fight the Black King as a team. If the players win the fight, the Reckoning stops and the players win Sburb.

The Ultimate Reward

The Ultimate Reward is granted when the Black King is defeated and the Space player successfully completes their land quest, creating the **Genesis Tadpole**. When the Genesis Tadpole is deployed into Skaia after the Black King is defeated, it grows into a Genesis Frog, representing the birth of a new universe. A victory door appears on a platform below Skaia, where the players can gather and have their final conversations before stepping into their new universe. Gameplay of Domiciles and Data Structures ends when one of the characters opens the door after all final conversations and reflections are finished.

The Lore

Classes and Aspects

Every player in Sburb is assigned a Class and an Aspect. The general consensus is that their Class is how they have affected reality, and their Aspect is the section or element of reality they have affected. Their complete Mythological Title is a shorthand for their ultimate quest of personal growth assigned to them by Sburb.

Classes and Aspects both take the form of nouns. Examples of Classes include Bard, Heir, Knight, Mage, Maid, Page, Prince, Rogue, Seer, Sylph, Thief, and Witch. They are the roles the players act as in their personal quest. Examples of Aspects include Blood, Breath, Doom, Heart, Hope, Life, Light, Mind, Rage, Space, Time, and Void. They are usually immaterial concepts, and the elements of reality the players' actions affect the strongest.

Many other Homestuck systems make the mistake of spending half their document elaborating on the intricacies of what the original author of Homestuck probably intended for his method of character arc categorization. Some add a disclaimer claiming that it's all just the views of the author of the system. Some provide a half-hearted explanation for each class and aspect and still manage to spark arguments. This system assumes you have access to the internet and can type "Homestuck classpect theories" into your preferred search engine. Good luck, and have fun!

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