

A stylized teal rocket bird logo with wings spread and a flame-like tail, positioned in the upper right corner of the slide.

ROCKET

Facilitating ROCKET Educational RPGs

An Erasmus+ Higher Education Cooperation Partnership
Göttingen University, Uppsala University, Groningen University

What is RPG Facilitation?

- **Design** is the stage before the game is run
- **Facilitation** occurs when the game is run by an organizer (Bowman, Diakolambrianou, and Brind eds. 2024)
- In particular, it refers to player-facing facilitation rather than e.g., logistics
- In ROCKET, the teachers running the critical virtual exchange will likely be facilitators
 - Although sometimes we ask other experienced facilitators to join, e.g., Transformative Game Design students from Uppsala University's Master's programme

Teaching vs. RPG Facilitation

- **Facilitation** uses many of the same skills as teaching
 - Presenting key subject matter
 - Listening
 - Guiding group work
 - Empathy
 - Asking reflective questions
 - Encouraging participation
 - Teaching key skills related to the curriculum
 - Debriefing after a learning exercise



Teaching vs. RPG Facilitation

- **However, facilitating ROCKET RPGs also involves other skill sets**
 - Modeling role-playing for the participants
 - Feeling into the scene
 - Helping players get into character, e.g., with the Hot Seat
 - Knowing when to use meta-techniques, e.g., *Monologue*, *Last Line*
 - Cutting at the height of drama
 - Learning how to distinguish between character distress and player distress (not always possible!)
 - Using safety techniques as needed

Teaching vs. RPG Facilitation

- Some facilitation guidance may go against other teaching practices, e.g., cutting someone off to let another person in, encouraging players to escalate conflict in the scene
- We can give you guidance, but ultimately practice makes competent
 - There is no such thing as perfection in teacher or role-playing game facilitation
 - Just as we want our students to engage in embodied practice, we also need to practice

RPG Scenario Meta-techniques

- ROCKET has several meta-techniques you will use to guide play, sometimes called mechanics
- These techniques are directed at the player, not the character, meaning they are a form of meta-communication the character does not hear
- Some techniques focus on psychological safety, e.g., X-Card (Stavropoulos 2013), Softer, Pause Check-In
 - See ROCKET's "Safety in Educational Role-playing Games" video for more information (Bowman 2025)

RPG Scenario Meta-techniques

- Others focus on narrative techniques and methods for helping the player connect with their character
 - Choosing names and pronouns
 - This practice helps the player differentiate themselves from the character
 - **Hot Seat:** This technique involves asking the player questions before the scene begins
 - In **ROCKET**, these questions refer to how their character relates to the current conflict, their positions, interests, feelings, needs, etc.
 - The player answers the questions in character
 - The other characters do not hear these replies, only the players, which can inform their play

RPG Scenario Meta-techniques

- **Start phrase:** In ROCKET scenarios, the facilitator plays an extra character briefly, saying a start phrase then leaving the scene to help frame the scene, e.g.,
 - Administrative Assistant: “The department head will see you now...”
- **Monologue:** When the scene has started, the facilitator can call for a monologue. This technique involves the character revealing their inner thoughts in the moment.
 - Again, the players hear, but the characters do not
 - Can be helpful when inviting quiet players to participate in the scene

RPG Scenario Meta-techniques

- **Escalate:** The facilitator may ask players to escalate the intensity of the conflict, especially if characters are being too polite or resolving the situation too easily
- **Last Line:** The facilitator can ask one character to have the “last word” in the scene, signaling to everyone we are wrapping up
- **Cut (or Scene):** The facilitator indicates the scene is over
 - In ROCKET facilitation, it’s important to jump right into the immediate debriefing questions to capture the player’s emotional responses from the scene



References

Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind, eds. 2024. Transformative Role-playing Game Design. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Transformative Play Research 1. Uppsala University Publications.

Stavropoulos, John. 2013. "X-Card: Safety Tools for Simulations and Role-Playing Games by John Stavropoulos." Google Docs, accessed January 13, 2019.



Thank you!

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