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# Finding Your Party

— Volunteer-led TTRPG Programs  
in Public Libraries —

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# Land Acknowledgement

The Cedar Mill and Beaverton City libraries stand on the ancestral lands of the Kalapuya Indians. The Kalapuya are not a single entity but a diverse group smaller bands and tribes residing in and around the Willamette Valley and speaking languages in the Kalapuyan language family.

The Kalapuya were forcibly removed from their land by the United States government in the mid-1850s. Most were relocated to the Grand Ronde and Siletz reservations, which were later reduced to fractions of their original size when the US government violated its treaties with both confederations. A century later, the US would revoke tribal status for both groups, removing with it the recognition and rights held by federally-recognized tribes.

The Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians fought and succeeded in restoring their tribal status in 1988 and 1977 respectively. These confederated tribes today are actively working to build community, fund services for members, and restore traditionally-practiced hunting, fishing, and stewardship of their land.

## Further Reading

You can see the [virtual exhibit on Kalapuyan peoples](#), created by artist Steph Littlebird Fogel in partnership with historian David G. Lewis Phd., on the Five Oaks Museum website.

You can read more about the history of the [Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians](#) and the [Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde](#), as well as the ways they continue to work towards the restoration of their lands and rights on their websites.

If you want to lend your voice to helping the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde regain hunting and fishing rights that were lost in the Consent Decree of 1985, you can sign an online petition on [their website](#).

# What Are Tabletop RPGs?

- [Game to Grow](#) defines TTRPG gaming as “a fun and structured cooperative activity with predictable rules and unpredictable outcomes...”
- A game master (GM) leads the adventure with a table of players.
- Each player creates an alter ego to play using a character sheet.
- Players develop motivations and goals for their characters and describe what they are doing.
- Dice are used to determine the success or failure of an action.
- The goal is collaborative storytelling; improvisation is rewarded (or punished, depending).



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# What Are the Benefits of Tabletop RPGs?

- Encourages the use of imagination.
- Builds storytelling and problem solving skills.
- Builds teamwork.
- Has a social element.
- Encourages players to be present.
- Promotes social & emotional learning - see [whitepaper](#) from Foundry10 for more info.



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# Typical Tabletop RPG Gaming Session



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1. Character creation - it helps if you can have the characters created before the session. Newbies may need more help creating their character.  
Typical elements in the character creation process, which will vary depending on the game you play:
  - a. Choose a race
  - b. Devise a backstory
  - c. Choose a class
  - d. Assign ability scores
  - e. Choose starting adventuring equipment
  - f. Add in race and class bonuses
2. The adventure begins - the GM will help set the scene and provide players with an introductory location.
3. Players take turns saying their moves and the GM responds. Dice rolls determine success or failure at the action the player was trying. The GM narrates the outcome and consequences.
4. A good stopping point for the day's session can be after a consequential battle or event.

# Beaverton City Library's Program

- Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition - 2 hour & 45 minute game session once per month.
- Our players have been high school-aged.
- We started with too many people, but it is now a steady group of 8-10 teens who come to each session.
- The adventures are run by a teen Dungeon Master from the group. A couple of the teens have taken turns running the game.
- We use [D&D Beyond](#) to manage characters and campaigns. The site makes character creation and leveling up easier.



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# Cedar Mill & Bethany Community Libraries' Program

- Dungeons & Dragons 5th edition - 2 hour game sessions once per month.
- 6 volunteer Dungeon Masters (plus backups) run games for 18 teens (ages 11-18) and 12 adults (ages 19+).
  - Registration required!
- Teen attendees are middle schoolers; most attendees are new or inexperienced with D&D.
  - About half of our players are regulars who come every month.
  - The other half are new to the program or dip in and out.
- Some game modifications and limits so as not to overwhelm our newbie players.
- Always recruiting and training volunteers.



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# Why Use Volunteers?

- You don't need to run the games yourself!
  - You can run a TTRPG program, even if you aren't familiar with TTRPGs.
  - No need to invest time and effort into learning about rules and gameplay or preparing for sessions.
  - Allows more time to focus on program logistics.
- Greater program capacity: more volunteers = more spaces for players.
- Connect with a new part of your community.
- Provide non-traditional volunteer opportunities for gamers.
  - Allows volunteers to share their expertise and passions.
  - Boosts volunteer confidence and leadership skills - very important for teens!
- Social benefit - volunteers have a chance to meet fellow players.



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# Recruiting Volunteers

- Recruit from the Teen Library Council/advisory board or current volunteer pool.
- Post flyers in the library.
- Conversations with patrons.
- Check at game shops to see if they have existing gaming groups you may be able to recruit from.
- Reach out to D&D clubs at local schools.
- Write a newsletter feature.
- Post on social media.



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# Preparing Your Volunteers

- Qualifications
  - Very firm grasp of game rules.
  - Comfortable with teaching new players.
  - Table management skills.
  - Communication skills.
- Setting boundaries for campaigns
  - One-shot adventures.
  - Keep it beginner-friendly.
- Support for prepping and gameplay
  - Ask your volunteers what they need.
  - Behavior problems are your job, not theirs.



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# Equipment

- Players
  - Dice- buy them in bulk on Amazon.
  - Both blank and pre-generated character sheets (we use [these dyslexia-friendly ones for D&D](#))
  - Pencils/Pens/Markers
  - Nametags (we use dry erase name tents)
- Game Masters
  - Maps and/or grids (printed or dry erase)
  - Rulebooks/quick reference sheets
  - [GM Screen](#)
  - Pen and paper for notes
  - Preferences vary. Volunteers may bring their own equipment.

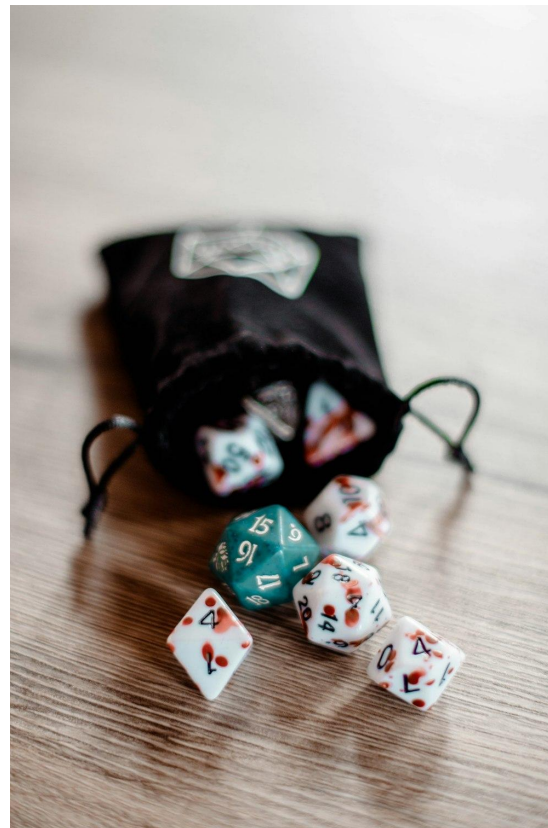
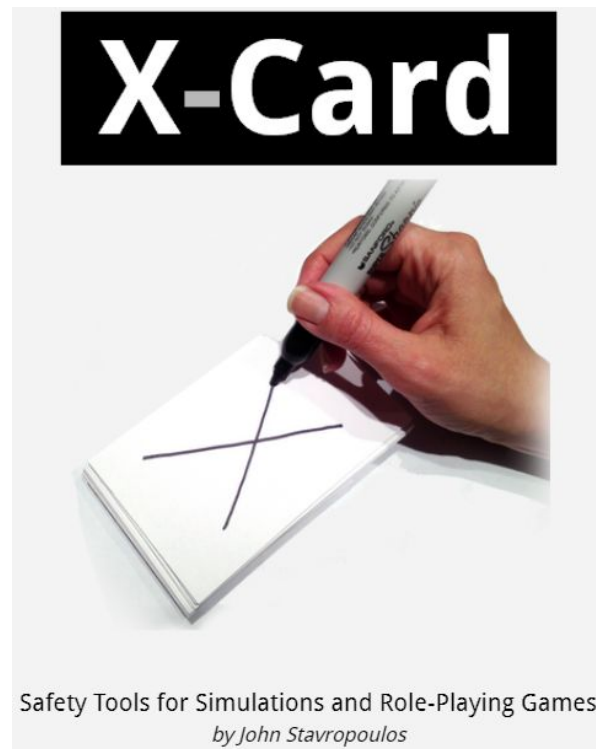


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# Safety and Accessibility

- [TTRPG Safety Toolkit](#)
  - Session 0
  - Lines and veils
  - Consent checklists
  - X-cards
- Name and pronoun placards
- Color-coded, large print, or dyslexia-friendly character sheets
- Magnifying glass or sheets
- Braille dice via the [DOTS RPG Project](#) or large-font, high contrast dice
- Dice rollers
- Rubber finger grips for minis
- Fidget toys
- Open table policy and quiet break spaces



Safety Tools for Simulations and Role-Playing Games

by John Stavropoulos

Image © John Stavropoulos on

[Wikimedia](#)

# Get the Word Out!

- Volunteer recruiting and marketing to patrons are often happening simultaneously.
- Build your audience with info sessions.
  - Use surveys with a contact info question to let patrons opt-in to email lists.
- Game shops are your friends.
- School clubs
  - Most middle and high schools have a TTRPG or D&D club.
  - Try colleges in your area, too.
- Social media
  - Reddit can offer access to very specific audiences.
- Word of mouth



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# Roadblocks and Lessons Learned

- Volunteers are higher risk/higher reward
  - Managing volunteers is a job all its own.
  - Communication problems are (usually) worth it for the connection and community building.
- Communication
  - Offer multiple methods.
  - What volunteers ask for isn't always what they'll use.
  - Adapting to life changes.
- What to do when your volunteers no-show?
  - Do it yourself.
  - Ask your patrons if they want to do it!
  - Board games ([Our board game selector recommends these!](#)).

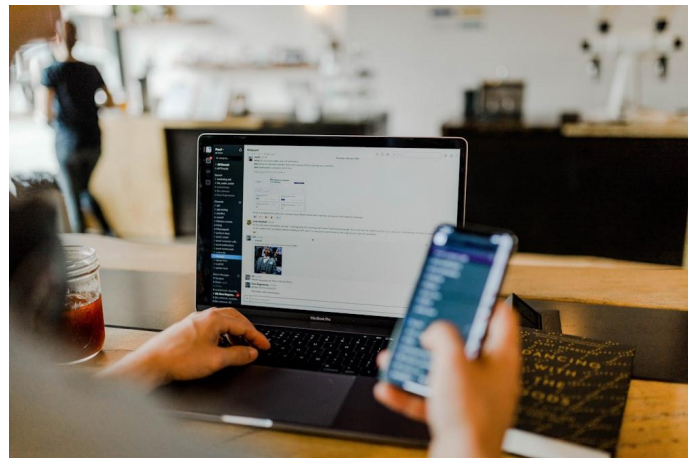


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# Finding Games for Library Programs

- Play the games your volunteers or community are passionate about.
- Lots of TTRPGs are tied to existing media franchises, i.e. Doctor Who, Dune, Marvel, Star Trek, Star Wars, etc.
- Look for games that are easy to learn, have few rules and simple character sheets, and come with pre-written adventures.
- You can always expand to games with more complicated rules later.
- Trying a game for the first time? Use starter sets and quickstart guides!

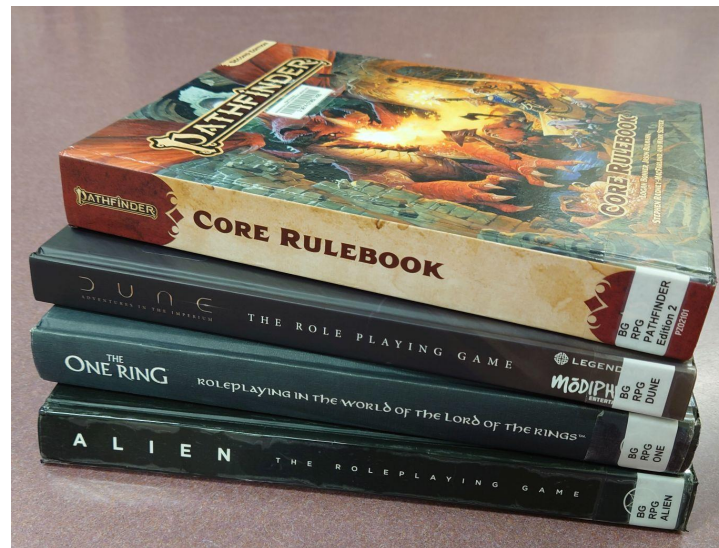


Image © Christine Wong



# Recommended Roleplaying Games for Library Programs

- **Dungeons & Dragons** - A perennial favorite. See Wizards of the Coast's [educator resources](#) for freebies.
- **Animal Adventures** - Like D&D, but with dogs and cats. Specifically designed to be beginner-friendly and kid-friendly.
- **Pathfinder** - Like D&D with more advanced rules. All of the source material is free online via the [Archives of Nethys](#).
- **Dungeon World** - Like D&D, but with more defined actions and narrower character options. Basic play kit is free on the [official website](#).



Image © Nicole Hill on [Wikimedia](#)

# Recommended Roleplaying Games for Library Programs

- **Tails of Equestria** - My Little Pony RPG. Low-stakes and cooperative, little to no combat. Excellent choice for younger players and beginners.
- **Masks** - Teen superhero adventures. Focuses on characters, relationships, and storytelling. For the Marvel crowd and players who love teen drama.
- **Monster of the Week** - Monster hunting horror mystery. Emphasizes collaboration and narrative. For fans of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Supernatural*, and *The X-Files*.
- **Fiasco** - Make your own Coen brothers movie. No preparation or Game Master required; for players who love improvising.



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# Questions?

Contact us!

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**Thank You!**