

ALTERNITY

Science Fiction Roleplaying Game

Player's Handbook



by Bill Slavicsek and Richard Baker

INTRODUCTION



Tomorrow is out there. It can be as close as the next dawn or as distant as humanity's twilight, when the Earth expends its last, dying gasp. What tomorrow waits beyond the dawn? The possibilities are as limitless as your imagination.

Can you picture brave new worlds or imagine desperate times? Can you see a bright utopia around the bend, or do you see dark civilizations ahead? Will tomorrow be made up of miraculous discoveries—or will it be wracked by apocalyptic wars?

Depending on the alternate tomorrow you envision, the future can be mysterious or deadly, astounding or bizarre. It can consist of exploration or conquest, discovery or coverup.

In short, the future can be anything or everything—whatever you can imagine.

Fantastic spacecraft soar through the void of space in one tomorrow, while in another humanity emerges from the rubble of a ruined world to start over again. In the tomorrow you envision, a hero might wield a sword of glowing energy or carry a pistol capable of spitting mass destruction. A

hero might work with a computer keyboard or plug his mind into a cyberdeck, develop amazing mental abilities or mutate into a being that's one step beyond human. It all depends on the alternate tomorrow that most excites you and spurs your creative thoughts. In other words, it's up to you.

So, which future do you want to play? Read on.

WHAT'S THE GAME ABOUT?

The **ALTERNITY**® game is TSR's role-playing game of modern action to far-future adventure. It's science fiction, in so much that it draws upon the speculative storytelling style that deals with the future, space, and scientific breakthroughs yet to be made. It's a game of "what ifs."

What if . . . humanity develops a means to travel among the stars? What if . . . we aren't alone in the universe? What if . . . we can link directly into our computers and let our minds wander on electronic streams of data? What if . . . the world we know ends tomorrow? What if . . . alien entities invade our world?

No matter what supposition or speculative leap of imagination you come up with, as long as it's founded in a scientific (or quasiscientific) theory that's internally consistent, you're in the realm of science fiction. From a modern world that looks like today but features a technological twist that makes it a very different place (like a new weapon, computer, or other device), to a far-future era where humanity has moved to other worlds, any setting and level of technology is easily adaptable for play.

The **ALTERNITY** game, then, is a game of unlimited possibilities, exciting potentials, and imaginative "what ifs." The game system allows for many styles of play, though it never lets you lose sight of the fun of roleplaying. The rules are presented in the time-tested format that has made the **ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS**® game the best-selling role-

playing game of all time—two hard-cover rules books, one for players and one for game referees (called Gamemasters in the **ALTERNITY** game), that combine to create a complete and dynamic roleplaying game.

What Is Roleplaying?

If you're familiar with other roleplaying games (like the **AD&D**® game), you might want to skip to the next section, "Roleplaying Alternate Tomorrows," because we're about to provide a quick overview of what a roleplaying game is. If you're new to the hobby, get ready to enter an exciting new world.

Remember when you used to play **Make Believe**, when you pretended to be "Cops and Robbers" or "Cowboys and Indians"? For a few hours on a summer afternoon, you played the role of a police officer or a cowboy or some other hero from comic books or television. You created props and settings from your imagination, and you and your friends made up stories that everyone contributed to. It was lots of fun, but it was also totally free-form—there were no rules to speak of, and sometimes disagreements cropped up that ended a game before a full story could be told.

Make Believe has come a long way. It has matured and developed into modern roleplaying games such as this one. In a roleplaying game, every player takes on the role of an imaginary character. These player characters are the heroes of the story the group is collectively going to tell.

One member of the group acts as the referee, or *Gamemaster*. This person uses the rules of the game along with his judgment to decide the outcome of every hero's actions, usually by applying the results of dice rolls or by gauging the heroes' reactions to specific situations.

The Gamemaster sets up the overall plot of each story, also called an *adventure*. This includes creating the background, developing the characters who make up the supporting cast and villains, planning key events that propel the story forward, and establishing the opening scene that gets the action moving. From that point on, the Gamemaster acts much as the director of a movie or the narrator in a novel, showing the heroes the world around them and describing the action as it unfolds.

The Gamemaster is the person in charge of the game. He gets it started and keeps it going. When a simple game of **Make Believe** comes to a halt, it's usually because the players couldn't agree on what just happened or what was going to happen next. That disagreement doesn't occur in a roleplaying game, because the Gamemaster has the final say in any situation that isn't covered by the rules.

However, the Gamemaster doesn't dictate everything that happens. Unlike the characters in a novel or a movie, the players' heroes don't just do what an author decides they will do. The players take an active role, describing how their heroes react to the events going on around them.

When players, characters, plots, rules, and imaginations get together,

ALTERNITY[®]

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You're an explorer commanding the newest starship in the fleet, or . . . a brilliant scientist seeking a cure for a deadly alien virus, or . . . a battle-weary space marine fighting to protect the galaxy, or . . . any other SF hero you can imagine!

EXPERIENCE THE FUTURE—ONE ADVENTURE AT A TIME!

This roleplaying game provides a framework for all kinds of contemporary to far-future science fiction adventures. The *Player's Handbook*, the companion volume to the *ALTERNITY Gamemaster Guide*, contains everything players need to create SF heroes and play the *ALTERNITY* game, including:

- ▶ An easy-to-learn game system designed around a unique dice mechanic.
- ▶ A "Fast-Play" chapter that teaches the basics and quickly gets you into the action.
- ▶ Rules for generating a wide variety of unique heroes—including five alien hero species.
- ▶ Many distinct character professions and careers that allow you to further refine and define your character—from bounty hunters to computer hackers, starship pilots to interplanetary traders.
- ▶ Simple yet wide-ranging rules presented in a format that lets you add levels of complexity as desired.
- ▶ Optional rules for mutants, psionics, and cybernetics.
- ▶ Plenty of equipment covering a variety of technological levels—computers, vehicles, starships, armor, weapons, and assorted gear.
- ▶ A compilation of tables and forms that players need, plus a comprehensive index.

The Future Has No Limits.

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