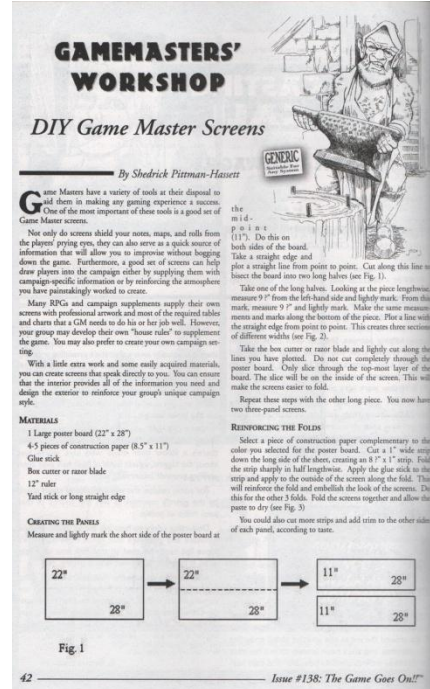
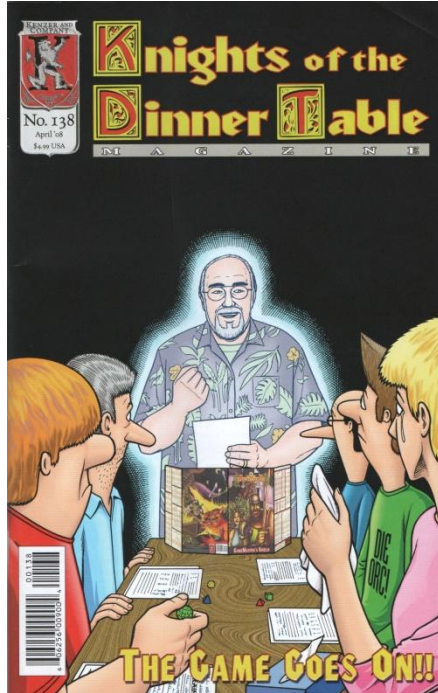


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### “DIY Game Master Screens”

*Knights of the Dinner Table* (No. 138, April 2008)

*This piece guides the game master through the process of creating his own “screens”, a common prop used in tabletop role-playing games. Screens are used by the game master to hide “secret” information and often provide various rules/tables for easy reference during a game session. Game masters can also use their screens to cater specifically to the needs of their players and their campaign. Diagrams regarding the various parts and their placement were provided.*

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Game Masters have a variety of tools at their disposal to aid them in making any gaming experience a success. One of the most important of these tools is a good set of Game Master screens.

Not only do screens shield your notes, maps, and rolls from the players’ prying eyes, they can also serve as a quick source of information that will allow you to improvise without bogging down the game. Furthermore, a good set of screens can help draw players into the campaign either by supplying them with campaign-specific information or by reinforcing the atmosphere you have painstakingly worked to create.

Many RPGs and campaign supplements supply their own screens with professional artwork and most of the required tables and charts that a GM needs to do his or her job well. However, your group may develop their own “house rules” to supplement the game. You may also prefer to create your own campaign setting.

With a little extra work and some easily acquired materials, you can create screens that speak directly to you. You can ensure that the interior provides all of the information you need and design the exterior to reinforce your group’s unique campaign style.

*[After introducing game masters to the basic concept, detailed instructions on constructing the “shell” of the screens are provided. Now comes the fun part...]*

### **The Fun Part**

Once the reinforcements have dried, you can now start applying the information to the interior and exterior panels. This is the part of the process where you create the screens that are unique to you and your campaign.

Decide which tables you need to populate the interior of the screens. What pages are marked in your player’s guide or game master sourcebooks? What rules come into question night after night? Are there any “house rules” that supplement or replace the rules as published? Is there any other information you may need, such as common weights and measures? Think about what campaign-specific information you may need. Do you use “critical hit” or “fumble” tables? What is the local monetary system? What are common titles and ranks used in your campaign society? Consider all of these factors and select the most important information to be included.

The placement of the tables within the interior is also important. Place the tables in a configuration that makes quick reference easy. Make one panel for combat rules, another panel for spell-casting modifiers, another for critical and fumble tables, etc. Consider placing the most frequently used panel (probably combat) in a central location on the screen for easy viewing. Populate the other panels according to frequency of use, moving out from the center....

...The exterior of the screens provide the greatest opportunity for creativity on the part of the GM. You can opt for a completely utilitarian screen, employing numerous tables and rules charts that are essential for the player. You can also strive for a completely artistic look, covering the screens with prints and sketches that evoke the spirit of your campaign. You can also consider a combination of these two options, filling the panels with art, maps, and charts.

Consider the same questions regarding the inclusion of player-based tables as you did for the charts on the screens’ interior. The needed tables would be acquired and applied in the same fashion. Do not forget to include campaign-specific information such as currencies, languages, titles, and major deities. A player in your campaign should have access to as much basic setting information as possible in order to fully realize his or her character...

...Look to your gaming group. Perhaps you have a player with artistic abilities that could be persuaded to compose character portraits. Ask everyone in the group to contribute something for the exterior of the screens. Your screens could be flavored with art, poetry, funny quotes, or maps that make them a unique expression of the campaign and the group as a whole.

### Figures 1, 2, and 3

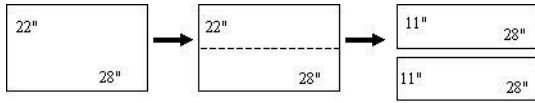


Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3