

Chapter One

The Basics

Whether you're a veteran player of live-action role-playing games, or looking at Wildlands West as your first LARP, the process of starting a new game can be confusing. We've prepared this section to walk you through the process of familiarizing yourself with the game and getting the information you need to get through your first event. At any time that you have questions, please feel free to contact the Campaign Committee (cc@onyxhollowlarp.com), or ask both other players and the Campaign Committee on our message board. Ask as many questions as you like. Remember: everyone at NERO was once a new player!

What is a LARP?

LARP stands for Live Action Role-Playing. It is a concept of an interactive game where you, as a player, have the chance to invent another persona, the Player Character (or PC). This PC exists and lives within a fantasy game setting, interacting with many other personalities, including other PCs, and Non-Player Characters (NPCs). These NPCs are portrayed by the volunteers who help to run the game and entertain you. It is unscripted, so that you can determine what you do, based on your character's personality, traits, fears, hopes, and dreams. You may get involved in broad story arcs that define the world (generally referred to out-of-play as plot). You may get taken in on miniature adventures with more specific purposes (generally referred to out-of-play as modules). People can play characters that have a variety of exotic skills, such as weapon play, spellcasting, disarming fiendish traps, and learning secrets from the very stars themselves. And, as you play in more games, and your character becomes more experienced, you have the opportunity to gain new skills and abilities.

Role-playing

Role-playing requires you to create a new persona. You should try to think, feel, move, and act like your character at all times. (Keep in mind as you read this that you are the player; the persona you adopt is the character).

It is up to you to decide what your character will say and how your character will act. Imagine yourself actually being the character you have created, and act as your character would. Wildlands is a fantasy role-playing game, based in a pseudo-medieval era. Your character is living in a world filled with swords, sorcery, monsters, mystery, and magic.

You may design a character that is like yourself, or you can be someone totally unlike yourself and develop a new perspective on the world. You can create a character that does things you would like to do, but can never work up the nerve to try, or is impossible.

Many people are more comfortable creating their first character that is mostly like themselves. Others prefer to play a person who is completely opposite. You can do whatever you want within the scope of the rules, safety, and out-of-game courtesy.

Please remember to be considerate of the other player characters. Abusing other characters can go too far, even if it makes sense within your character concept. Remember that even if an action is “in character” you bear the full responsibility for the effects it has on the other player and must be ready to accept all in game consequences for such behavior. For example, if you would claim that your character is insane or in a blind rage and must murder other player characters, then be prepared to see a lynch mob coming for you, ignoring your excuses of insanity.

The atmosphere of Wildlands demands that you stay in character at all times. This means talking, acting, and thinking like your character would. Avoid having conversations about things that do not relate to the game. You should be respectful of other people attempting to role-play, and you should never create a disturbance that calls attention to yourself out-of-play.

Role-playing notes on combat

Though this will be discussed in more depth later, it is important to note now. When involved in combative situations, always role-play appropriately. Make extra certain you are acting in character. In other words, if another PC swings a sword at you for damage, it is obvious that the boffer weapon will not actually hurt you, as a player. But it certainly hurts you as a PC, getting hit with a “real” sword! You need to react to the hit to acknowledge it. Roll with it, yelp, flinch, shout in pain, or in some way let the other person know you hit. And if the time comes for you to be unconscious, or even dead, role-play it. Drop to the ground, sprawled out (fall safely to avoid real injury of course). Lay there and do not move or look around. Silently and evenly make your needed counts and otherwise pretend to be dead. Nothing can break the atmosphere more than a “dead” person looking around.

The Honor System

Wildlands is inherently demanding of honor when playing the game. You as a character can cheat and lie and steal all to your heart’s desire. However, you as a player may never cheat (the rules to the game), lie (out of play), or steal (anyone else’s out of game property). You must accurately count your own hits, use of your own skills, and accept both the good and the bad when it happens. The Campaign Committee takes a serious frown to cheating, as it compromises the fun of everyone on site at an event. This is not to be taken lightly. At your first event, you will be presented with a statement of honor code, which you must sign before playing the game, and must abide by at all times. If you suspect someone of cheating, find a quiet moment to speak with them out of play about it. It most likely is due to their misunderstanding of a rule, which can be easily explained. If that does not resolve the matter, do not argue about it. Simply find a person on the CC, explain the situation to them, and let them investigate and handle it. Most times, the honor system works and self-corrects when mistakes are made. Never worsen the situation by leading to a disagreement out of character.

Creating a Character

There are four basic components to creating a character, and one all-encompassing aspect: the theme.

Decide on a theme.

If you're reading this, you must be the creative type! That's good because that's most of the battle right there. The most difficult part of creating a character is deciding on a theme. You'll no doubt have several good ideas. Write them all down, and weigh them against what you find in our rules system. Choose the theme that has the best match with the other big four elements of character creation:

1.) Choose a Clan

As the old adage goes; there is safety in numbers. The Wildlands world is a rough place. Read about the clans of the Wildlands in *Wildlands West Rulebook: Campaign Guide* and choose one that supports the theme you like. Remember that some clans have racial restrictions, and the clan you like may not offer your desired skills. You may need to juggle your ideas to make them all fit.

2.) Select Your Character's Race

Your character isn't necessarily human. Wildlands West has 29 races available to Player Characters. Read through *Chapter Three: Races* and note which ones appeal to you and jive with the theme you've chosen.

3.) Give Your Character Skills

What can your character do? What will that fortune teller, historian or mercenary need to do to survive and find fortune and glory? Review some of the skills of the Wildlands system in *Chapter Four: Skills*. Check your skill choices against racial restrictions and your clan teaching list.

4.) Tell Us Your Character's History

How do your character's race, clan and training all work to create the theme you imagined? Did your character's family influence you? Who taught you your skills? What are your hopes and fears? Why is your character coming to find adventure, and possibly peril in Onyx Hollow? Think about the things that make your character tick and why. Might there be some skeletons in your character's closet, or old enemies out to get you in some way? When you're done, you can prepare the form found in *Appendix* and bring it to the event. Characters that submit a detailed character history get additional points that can be used to buy skills. All character histories are reviewed by the campaign committee, and may be changed to fit within the game world. The campaign committee also reserves the right to add and use any or all information in a character history to add to the world, or use in plot. This is one way that we can provide individual entertainment for your particular PC.

“We've All Got Stuff”

We did say those were the big aspects of creating your character; there are a few details left. All characters may begin the game with a limited amount of basic equipment. Your character has equipment too, and you need to “go shopping” for it.

Can Your Character Make Things?

Did you choose Production Skills for your character, such as Alchemy, Armorsmith, Create Potion, Create Scroll, Tinkering or Weaponsmith? If so, you'll

definitely want to read about Wildlands' production skills (*Chapter Five: Crafting*). To produce your wares, you'll need formulas specific to your craft. You start the game with a few of them. Read the instructions concerning Starting Crafting Formulas in *Chapter Nine: Miscellaneous* and then prepare your starting crafting formula request using the form in *Appendix A: Character Creation*. Additionally, you begin the game with some of the finished goods your character produced. Bear that in mind when you submit your request for your character's starting equipment.

Is Your Character a Spellcaster?

If so, you'll want to read about the Magic System in *Chapter Six: Magic*, if you haven't done so yet. Your character gets to start the game knowing how to cast a few spells, and you get to pick which ones from among the available starting formulas. Read the instructions about Starting Spell Formulas and then prepare your starting spell pattern request using the form in *Appendix A: Character Creation*.

Starting Equipment for All New Characters

Everybody gets at least a little stuff to take into game with them. We give you some game currency and we let you "shop" for the materials you want to buy for your character, similar to many table-top role-playing games. Read about Starting Equipment for New Characters in *Chapter Nine: Miscellaneous* and then prepare your starting equipment request using the form in *Appendix A: Character Creation*. If you choose a Production Skill, don't forget to include your choices for that one day of production! All characters begin play with a total of four ivory pieces. Characters with skills such as Profession gain extra money at character creation.

Now Am I Ready for the Event?

Almost! Two little things: First, it makes the Campaign Committee's job much easier if we know in advance that you'll be at the event. We'll even reward you for the courtesy! Submit your list of character skills, your Character History Survey and your registration payment for the event 30 days in advance of your first event and you get 2 more Build Points to help buy skills for your character! We'll leave the door open for this until 30 days before your second event, in case you decide to attend your first one at the last minute.

You already know how to select and submit your character skills. You already learned how to answer the Character History Survey. Pre-registration for events is the final step toward getting that reward, and it's an easy one. Follow the instructions on the Event Registration in *Chapter Nine: Miscellaneous*, and you're all set.

The very last thing you'll want to do is let us know if you're coming to the event with friends, and if you want to stay in the same cabin together. Check out the web site for information about what the cabins are like at particular campsites, and how many people can sleep in each of them. If you're familiar with our campsite, you can request a specific cabin. Otherwise, the Campaign Committee will assign your cabin to you based on your clan and the disposition of your character.

“Help!”

We know that learning a new game system can be confusing. The Campaign Committee is here to help you! At any time you have any questions at all, please contact us at cc@onyxhollowlar.com. Feel free to visit our Message Board to ask questions of Campaign Committee and players like yourself as well.

General Information

Establishing a Character

There are a number of ways to create a new character before your first Wildlands event. It is highly recommended that you create your character and deliver it to the Campaign Committee before your first event. Advance submission of your starting skills will reduce the time you spend in lines at check-in at your first event, and help the WLW Campaign Committee by giving us an idea of what skills the characters will have available to them. That way, storylines which showcase particular skills can be developed for the players' greatest enjoyment of the game.

You have the opportunity to earn 2 additional Build Points to create your character (for a starting total of 22 Build rather than the Wildlands standard of 20) if you meet the three-part requirements 30 days in advance of your starting event. You must submit your starting skills list, Character History Survey and your registration payment 30 days in advance of your first event. If you didn't finish your Character History Survey before your first event, you still have until 30 days before your second Adventure Weekend to complete the process. You must pre-register for the event when you earn the 2 additional Build Points, however. So even if you pre-registered for your first event, if you complete the steps with submission of your Character History Survey at your second event, you must pre-register for it 30 days in advance as well. The Character History Survey is available in *Appendix A: Character Creation*.

Pre-registered players with spells and production skills will have an advantage in the selection of their starting spell patterns and production formulas over those who register at the door for their first event.

When it comes time to create your character, you must first choose a character name and select your character's race, class, and skills. It is not required that you choose a clan for your character, but it is highly recommended. **Selection of starting skills is limited to clan teaching and racial skills at the start of game.** Although a special list is available for clanless characters, characters which start the game without a clan must rely on in-game teachers once they start play. The variety of skills available to them in their early days will be limited.

While you should make every effort to decide on the best course for your character at its creation, you have until your character reaches Level 2, or has been through its first Adventure Weekend to request changes to your character. The Campaign Committee will review requests for minor changes to skills and class. Players wishing to make major changes to race and clan, or overall character redevelopment are encouraged to consider starting a new character (without the use of any Inspiration previously acquired). After you have played your character awhile, the Campaign Committee

strongly discourages requests for changes to your character's race, class and skills in most circumstances, so think carefully on your choices. If there is a medical reason such as an injury which prevents you from wielding a boffer weapon, or you develop a make-up allergy, or other compelling factors, the Campaign Committee will work with you to develop a storyline to explain sudden changes to your character's race or skills. Some changes can be accommodated using only resources found within the game.

Cabin Assignments & Decorations

Only pre-registered players may reserve cabin space prior to their arrival on site. Cabin space may not be reserved more than one event in advance. Players who pay at the door for the event must take their chances with cabin space on a first-come, first-served basis and handle their housing arrangements when they arrive or during the course of the game. Because of the limited amount of space at event sites, players really are encouraged to pre-register for events. Pre-registration is the only way to guarantee that you will have a bed at the site, and the best chance that you and your friends will all be able to stay together in the same cabin or near each other. Players wishing to request lodge space must have a minimum number of players pre-registered for the event in order to secure a lodge. This minimum number is determined by the capacity of the lodge. All unreserved lodges will be used for campaign purposes, and will not be available for housing the clans unless pre-registered at least one week before the event.

Please be advised that because of the clan system in place in Wildlands, the WLW Campaign Committee will make every effort to see that clan members are placed together in the same cabins, or near one another. If you do not have enough players pre-registered to fill your cabin entirely, characters who share your character's clan (or don't!) may be placed with you. There is a lot to be said for getting your friends to pre-register with you!

Once you get everyone in place in your cabin, decorating its interior and porch is a great way to build atmosphere in the game, and gain some early notoriety for your character. Having a cabin with a cool feel is its own reward, as other players are likely to want to visit you, and your cabin may become quite the central meeting place. (And when merchants and other helpful sorts come to town looking for people, doesn't it make sense that they might try the most popular locations first?) **When there is competition between clans for reservation of lodge space, preference will be given to those clans who decorate and create cool atmosphere for the game with their lodge.** Please keep in mind, however, that at most sites used by Wildlands West, using nails, staples, thumb-tacks, pushpins and duct tape to affix hangings to the walls of your cabin is not allowed. Your Site Marshal, the Official of the Game designated to make sure that all the cabins are left clean and orderly at the end of the event, will be checking the walls for these items. Please help keep our game's relationship with the parks we use a good one. It benefits the entire game.

There are other ways to decorate your cabin, including hanging banners and wind chimes from the rafters using string, bringing rugs, burning incense, etc. Just covering your beds with large pieces of fabric which cover sleeping bags and your luggage underneath your bed adds a lot to the game atmosphere. You may wish to exchange the light bulbs in your cabin for 25-watt amber-colored "flame" lights, available at most grocery stores, but you must return the regular light bulbs to the lamps at the end of the

event. Use of candles is allowed and even encouraged, but please use lanterns, hurricane lamps or other covered candle-holders. **You may never leave open flame unattended at a NERO event!** This is one of the big “no-no’s” of the Safety Rules, and it’s there for a reason. Music is a great way to create some atmosphere in and around your cabin. The Wildlands System brings music into play directly with tinkered and magical items available in-game which allow players to play recorded music (from a disguised boom box or other player-provided source) totally in game. Because music has been brought in-game in Wildlands, however, players are asked not to use electronic sources such as boom boxes, etc., to play music during events without in-game items to support it.

Check-In Procedure

All event participants must check in with Wildlands West Character Logistics at the start of an event before they can go into play.

Check-in procedures for Adventure Days will vary depending on the start time of the event, and the type of event it is. Check-in on Adventure Weekends will begin by 8:00 PM on Friday for those who arrive early. You will always need to go to Logistics and pay for the event or confirm that your payment is already recorded. If you have pre-registered for an Adventure Weekend, you will receive your housing information at that time. If you are paying for the weekend at the door, you will be given information about where space is still available.

You will be asked to complete an Update form if you wish to add or change anything about your character. Once the update procedures are finished, you will be given a current copy of your character’s stats and any in-game monies that are due your character from Profession skills.

Please note that Production Skills (Alchemy, Armorsmithing, Create Potion, Create Scroll, Tinkering, Weaponsmithing) must be used totally in-game at Wildlands. Creating your production items is done at an in-game location, and not at Logistics. (The exception is starting characters, which may begin the game with one day’s worth of their production skill, which will not detract from their Production Points for Friday night.)

Weapon Check-In

Someone should be available to check your weapons and armor for safety during Check-in. Having your weapons checked and safety-approved is mandatory at a NERO event. Any weapons not approved for play and/or not displaying a current Wildlands West Weapon Safety Tag may be pulled from the game by a Wildlands West Campaign Committee member.

Please note that Wildlands West has slightly more strict weapons safety requirements than other NERO chapters. Some boffer weapons which may pass for use in other NERO chapters or LARPs may not pass in Wildlands West without slight modifications. Specifically, Wildlands West does not allow an unpadding space between the crossguard and the “blade” of a weapon. Wildlands also uses a different phys-rep. system for archery which does not allow the use of padded wooden arrows under any circumstances. Details on chapter-specific weapon requirements may be obtained through the Campaign Committee.

Cleaning Up

At the end of all NERO events, players and volunteers are required to clean their cabins, including sweeping and taking out all the trash. The standard number of beds for your cabin will be made known to you, and that number of beds and mattresses should be present at the end of the weekend. Officials of the game designated as Site Marshals will go from cabin to cabin, checking the cleanliness of each cabin and the common areas, such as bathrooms and the surrounding grounds. All players or volunteers who do not check-out with their Site Marshal may call attention from the Wildlands West Disciplinary Committee.

At most sites used by Wildlands West, using nails, staples, thumb-tacks, push-pins and duct tape to affix hangings to the walls is not allowed. Your Site Marshal will be checking the walls for these items. Please help keep our game's relationship with the parks we use a good one. It benefits the entire game.

Volunteers are also responsible to keep their sleeping areas, shared bath houses, the "Monster Palace" and module sites clean. Disregard for these responsibilities may result in a smaller award than normal for volunteering for an event. Conversely, volunteers who go the extra mile to help clean up after an event will receive a larger award of Goblin Points, and may have our children named after them. All trash in and around a cabin must be placed in community trash barrels and dumpsters at the site. Leaving bags on the steps of the cabin is not sufficient. Smoking mess such as cigarette butts, etc., discovered in or around a cabin may be grounds for smoking privileges of all players to be revoked at the site. Please be considerate.

Also, please note that most Wildlands West events run actively until noon on Sundays. Most state parks require that we leave the site by 2:00 PM. Clean-up, packing and check-out must go very quickly and efficiently in order to make this deadline. All game participants are equally responsible for the clean-up of the tavern, shared bath houses, trash collected from all open areas, and the strike and clean-up of volunteer and module areas. We ask clans and teams to volunteer as groups to scout their area for trash, and perform other general volunteer duties. Please plan to go to the tavern and/or other areas which require general assistance immediately after Closing Ceremonies. The game will pay Player Characters in game money to help clean-up and work in the tavern during an event. It is everyone's responsibility to leave the campsite and cabins clean! We thank you for your cooperation in helping us get offsite quickly.

Check-Out Procedure

Because money for Inspiration (Experience Points) must be turned in during the course of the game, check-out is relatively simple. The Site Marshal will collect character sheets and any miscellaneous Inspiration Tags the Campaign Committee may have delivered during the weekend. Players should put their Character Sheet, Inspiration tags, and their registration check for the next event if they wish to include it, in their character envelope, and hand that to their Site Marshal. Please never include cash in your envelope.

If your character sheet is not delivered to your Site Marshal at Check-out, your character may not receive an Experience Point Blanket for the event. Repeated disregard

for check-out procedures may result in action by the Wildlands West Disciplinary Committee.

WLW will not accept any check-out materials from Player Characters until the tavern, main bathhouse, module areas, volunteer housing area, and other general areas are clean and ready to go. If you finish packing and clean-up early, please ask your Site Marshal how you can help the rest of the camp get ready to go. If you depart before the main areas are clean and do not make arrangements to make your contribution to the clean-up effort at another time, your Experience Point blanket or volunteer reward may not be delivered to you.

Volunteering

Wildlands West invites all interested persons to investigate volunteering for Wildlands West. Please see *Chapter Eight: Volunteers & Non-Player Characters (NPCs)* and/or email the Campaign Committee for further info.

Smoking

Smoking at all Wildlands West events is prohibited except in designated smoking areas. Smoking areas will be announced at the start of each game. All players may smoke on the front porch of their own cabins if all occupants of the cabin agree. For safety reasons, we do not allow players to smoke inside cabins. All smoking areas are considered to be totally in-game, and players are expected to remain in-character while there. Please be considerate of the game atmosphere, and hold all out-of-game conversations until after the event ends. Smoke only where permitted, and dispose of your butts and other debris. Smoking in areas other than designated smoking areas, not policing your butts, or creating an out-of-game disturbance to other players while smoking, may result in action from the Wildlands West Disciplinary Committee.

Lost and Found

Wildlands West is not responsible for anything left behind at a Wildlands West event. All unclaimed property will be held for one month, and then will either be thrown out or used as campaign props by the Campaign Committee.

This strict policy evolved because of the huge amount of material left behind after each event: weapons, clothing, and props. We simply do not have the room to store all this stuff. Please watch where you leave your materials.

Food

All participants are encouraged to bring food for themselves, and Player Characters are welcome to bring extra to give or sell to others at any Wildlands event. Wildlands West does not provide food at Adventure Days for Player Characters under most circumstances. Drinks and snacks may be provided for volunteers.

On Adventure Weekends, there is an in-game tavern most weekends that sells drinks, snacks and hot dinner on Saturday nights for reasonable prices. The tavern will serve only during advertised hours. It is advised that you bring other food to munch on

during the event. Avoid food that needs preparation or refrigeration, though you will be allowed to bring small grills or hibachis (attended at all times) to events. Some food suggestions: cold subs, precooked cold chicken, beef sticks, cheese, apples, crackers, etc. Full-time volunteers at Adventure Weekends will be fed throughout the event, except for Saturday dinner. Because of the high cost of supplying a good hot meal, the game cannot afford to front the cost of feeding volunteers dinner on Saturday. Volunteers are responsible for that cost individually. Water and occasionally more interesting drinks with some actual flavor will be available in the Monster Palace in the volunteer housing area. We are in constant evaluation of our system of feeding volunteers and keeping them happy. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

As a courtesy to the campaign, we ask players to consider joining us for dinner on Saturday night. It is served buffet style, and usually consists of a choice of a vegetarian dish, and a variety of hot, simple meals such as turkey, chicken, ham, etc. and usually mashed potatoes and another vegetable, bread and some wholly decadent homemade deserts such as cheesecake or pie. Dinner usually costs around \$6.00. Because the game has to buy enough food for dinner in case everyone wishes to eat, we sometimes end up losing money when players decide to leave game for a few hours to go to Pizza Hut, or bring their own dinner, etc. Please support the game financially and atmospherically by eating dinner in the tavern whenever possible. It makes us happy.

Of course, bringing all this food does you absolutely no good if you don't take the time to eat it! Too often, players have been so engrossed by the game that they don't stop to eat (or sleep) and by the last day are stumbling around hungry and sleepy.

Camping Advice

Try to pack only what you need. Pack those items which will be used less frequently first, as it will make everything easier. If you're traveling to a Wildlands West event from outside of Kentucky, check the weather reports for the local area before packing. The Ohio Valley has notoriously unpredictable weather with sudden cold snaps, warm spells and rain during the months that we will be holding events. Events held in the fall can sometimes be chilly enough to warrant bringing long winter underwear and a warm cloak just in case. A waterproofed cloak is a very nice addition to your wardrobe as well. Don't forget items like bottled water for drinking, toilet paper and bug repellent. Assume that you're totally on your own for the weekend. Many parks do not provide mirrors in bath areas or in the cabins. You may wish to bring your own mirror, particularly if you play a character with racial makeup. (This includes volunteers, who will need to make many make-up changes. Although we have a few mirrors in the Monster Palace, it never seems to be enough when we all want to use them at once.) The camp does not provide toilet tissue, and players should bring their own. (WLW will provide it in the volunteer housing area.)

At any time, if you have questions about Wildlands West, please post them to the Wildlands West Message Board or contact us at cc@onyxhollowlarp.com.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the four most important rules of NERO? The NERO rules system has many rules and requirements and for new players, it can sometimes be overwhelming.

There are some rules that are much more important than others. The rules listed below are required for NERO to continue to be a safe game, and there are no exceptions to these rules—they apply to all players, including staff, NPCs and other volunteers. Breaking these rules may require your removal from the game.

1.) The Body Contact Rule

NERO prohibits all body contact during combat. All combat must take place with NERO approved safe weapons. Certain parts of the body (head, groin, hands) are not allowable targets.

2.) The Alcohol Rule

NERO absolutely forbids alcohol and illegal drugs at its events. You may not use these offsite and then come to the game drunk or high.

3.) The Hold Rule

If you hear someone yell “**Hold!**” stop everything you are doing and drop to one knee. Holds should only be called if there is a significant need, and usually only for safety reasons.

4.) The Sneaking Rule

If you wish to sneak into a building or tent, you must have a Campaign Committee member present. There are strong limitations on doing this on your own.

There are other important rules, but to include too many here would de-emphasize these top four. These particular rules have to be emphasized for safety and legal reasons. Please follow these rules completely and report anyone who does not to a NERO staff member.

What is Wildlands?

Wildlands is a live-action fantasy roleplaying game. A common explanation you’ll hear is that going to a “LARP” (Live-Action RolePlaying) event is like going to a Renaissance festival, but one where you take a much more active role than just shopping and chowing down on turkey legs!

Most Wildlands West events last an entire weekend, from Friday night to Sunday afternoon. While at events, players pretend that they’re in the mythical land of the Wildlands. Participants dress in vaguely medieval costumes and make believe that they’re someone else, someone who grew up in the world of the Wildlands. When players speak to each other during games, they speak “in character,” say the things their character would say and talking about things that exist in the Wildlands world. Game play does not stop during mealtimes or at night. Players eat their meals in character, and even if you can’t play your character while you sleep, the game goes on without you as others may still be awake and acting in character.

What can my character do?

There are areas in life where you excel. It may be what you do for a living, a hobby, or some other knowledge or talent. The things you can do are collectively your “skills.” Your Wildlands character has skills, too. They may not be things that you can really do. For instance, you might be a computer programmer, but you can decide that your character is a blacksmith, a fortune teller, an apothecary, or a cat burglar! When you design your character for the Onyx Hollow campaign, you select skills from the Wildlands game system for her. Many skills are designed to interact with NERO’s combat system and allow your character to wield boffer weapons or cast magical spells. Skills of vision such as *Dreamer* and *Precognition* can give your character insight and information into the workings of the Wildlands world. Production skills allow characters to produce goods used in the Wildlands, like weapons, magical scrolls and simple mechanical devices such as wind-up toys and padlocks. For those with daydreams of a character who lurks in the shadows and finds her way by guile and cunning, there is an array of Stealth skills to please. For the merchants at heart, there are Profession skills which do not actually produce goods within the game, but provide the character an income simulating craft and trade between events.

So your characters have more to chat about than how nice you all look in your nifty costumes, a group of people volunteers to write storylines to spice things up. That’s the Wildlands West Campaign Committee. Like a play or an episode of a television program, each Wildlands West event has a theme and one or more central storyline threads. Usually, there is some kind of conflict, a problem that needs to be solved. You and other characters are free to decide how to try to solve the problem. Sometimes, you can just talk it all out, arrive at a decision, and it’s done. Most of the time, this is where the “story” turns into the “game.”

It’s up to you how to proceed. You choose skills from the Wildlands game system for your character, and those skills are among the tools you’ll use to solve the conflicts and problems the storylines offer. Most people play the same character at each Wildlands event they attend. Those characters improve their skills through experience and acquire new ones as they go along. They also meet other characters, form alliances and make enemies.

Is there magic in Wildlands?

The world of the Wildlands is infused with magic. Magic powers most everything, and although it’s not practiced in some areas of the world, everyone believes in it. Like the laws of physics or science in the real world, the people of the Wildlands may debate how magic works and how to improve it, or master it, but they all know it works and that it is “real.” Some people in the Wildlands can cast magical spells. NERO represents this with small beanbags filled with birdseed. To simulate casting a spell, you speak a short phrase that’s listed in the rulebook (such as “*I call forth a magic missile 5*” or “*I call upon the earth to cure light wounds 5*”), and throw the packet at your target. If you say the words correctly and hit your target, the spell works. If you miss with the packet, or flub the words, the spell fails.

What about religion?

NERO sponsors fantasy role-playing games that borrow flavor from history. Although religion has always played a large role in the real world, we do not wish to offend anyone's beliefs. There is no religion in any NERO game. There are no fantasy gods or demons, and players are not allowed to create their own. Although Wildlands uses the word "cult" to describe some groups, that word is used to imply fanatical dedication to the group's cause, not religious or occult affiliation.

Do I have to play a human character?

Humans aren't the only ones who walk and talk in the Wildlands world. There are other "races" like elves and orc-kin. Race in Wildlands never refers to your actual ancestry and appearance. It refers to whether your character is human, elven, orcish, etc. All players are welcome to play all races. If you're 6'4", you can still play a dwarf or a hobling. If you're 4'11" and weigh only 100 pounds, you can still play a gruff ogre-kin! Use your imagination to design your character, not your reflection.

There are 29 different races in Wildlands West, each with a distinct appearance. The Makeup section of each race description gives you an idea of what the races look like. Players use make-up and costuming to signify their character races. The make-up and different accoutrements used to represent racial appearance can be purchased at most costume shops. The Tips & Resources section of the Web site has information that will help you locate the supplies you need. Also, take a look at the photographs throughout this book for an idea of what to expect.

Your character's race determines some of the skills you can select for your character. Some races have abilities that others don't.

I heard Wildlands allows undead player characters. Is that true?

Wildlands has a race called cursed ones who exist in an unfortunate state of half-life, and half-undead. See *Chapter Three: The Races* for further information.

What are the clans and how do they function?

The Wildlands world is a rough place. The people who live there have banded together for mutual protection, and these groups are called "clans." Wildlands clansmen are not necessarily related to each other by blood or binding familial relationships. Members of a clan will generally look out for one another, however. Player Characters are not required to declare membership in any clan, but most will probably want to. Clans offer a modicum of protection and guidance, but their most precious gifts are knowledge and training. Only those who have learned the rare and coveted skill of *Instruction* can pass their knowledge on to others in the Wildlands. Most clans have a variety of instructors who teach the most basic knowledge of weapons, magic, craft, dexterity and vision and some clans are known as masters of one or more realms of knowledge. Declaring membership in a clan is also a good way to meet other players at the game and form friendships and alliances for your character. The clans of the Wildlands are like "pre-made teams" at events. Although it is by no means required, most clansmen will want to stay with or near their allies.

Can my friends and I make our own clan?

The Campaign Committee strongly encourages you to mesh your team concept with one of the clans listed in the Campaign Book. Although we are happy to review and discuss any new clan proposal you make, the committee has not yet approved any custom clans.

Are there sword fights?

Using NERO-approved padded weapons made from PVC pipe or plastic kite poles and foam pipe insulation covered with duct tape, you will test your swashbuckling skills against those both swift and clever. Perhaps you will come to the aid of a wounded friend outnumbered by the dreaded Gorki Mob, or maybe you will learn the true value of having a sword in-hand only when you have none and must outwit your opponents or outrun them!

Each type of weapon (dagger, longsword, axe, club, mace, etc.) is assigned a numerical code to represent the damage the weapon can inflict. This number and a one-word description of the type of weapon (normal, silver-coated, or magical) are collectively referred to as a “tagline.” Meanwhile, each character has a sum of points that represent how many times he can be struck and still survive. Those characters who dedicate themselves to a life of fighting will usually have more points than those who have pursued a more scholarly, less physically rigorous path. Race and armor as well as protective magical spells may contribute to the number of hit points a character has. As an attacker swings a boffer weapon, she calls the tagline when the weapon strikes (“2 normal” for instance). When hit with damage, the defender subtracts the damage amount from his total of points. When a character’s point total reaches 0, he falls unconscious. There are healing spells and skills like *First Aid* which can be used to aid wounded characters. (Now you see the benefits of joining a clan and making some friends for your character! It’s easier to avoid trouble when you’re not alone.)

Do women fight, too?

Yes. NERO sponsors fantasy role-playing games, not historical reenactments. In the Wildlands world, there is no sexual discrimination. Some of NERO’s best fighters are women!

How safe is NERO?

No one has ever been seriously injured using our padded weapons. The worst injuries in NERO history involved people tripping over tree stumps in the dark. Wildlands West events are usually conducted at campsites inside state parks, and even walking in the woods presents the need for caution. Be smart, take your time and mind your step. Evading that angry goblin isn’t worth risking a turned ankle if you’re unsure of your environment. The Ohio Valley, while generally moderate in temperate can get very hot. Sadly, an all too common occurrence is for players to get so caught up in the fun of events that they forget to drink water, eat, and break for sleep! We know you don’t want to miss the game. We don’t want you to miss it, either. We’d much rather see

your character relaxing in the tavern, having a glass of water or juice, or eating dinner with friends, than see you take time out for the “Drink More Water” lecture from a concerned EMT or Campaign Committee member! Wildlands West does not guarantee the presence of medical personnel at events, although there are often Emergency Medical Technicians who arrive as players. We ask players who are either national or Kentucky licensed EMTs to check-in with us at the start of events. It’s nice to know where to find the EMTs for the occasional sprain or bee sting.

How good does my costume/make-up need to be?

We aren’t sticklers for historical accuracy with costuming in our fantasy role-playing games. Nice costumes that enhance the Renaissance fantasy atmosphere make the game more enjoyable for everyone. You’ll see some costumes that are truly spectacular, on which the players spent a great deal of time and money. You’ll see clans and teams of players with fancy, matching tabards — some even hand painted or embroidered! You’ll also see costumes based on a simple piece of cloth two feet wide and six feet long with a hole cut in the center, or frilly dresses from a catalog. All we ask is that you make an attempt at a costume and keep the atmosphere of the game in mind. Fancy leather boots look great, and many players choose to wear them. NERO recognizes that comfort is important, however, and you’ll see many other players wearing sneakers, hiking boots or combat boots. Don’t wear neon colors, printed T-shirts, sunglasses, baseball caps, football helmets or padding, or other unnecessary modern trappings. (Your prescription glasses with or without chromatic lenses are certainly alright.) Bear in mind that you’ll be at a state park in Kentucky without heat or air conditioning for the whole weekend. For most events, light, cottony fabrics are probably best. If you get easily over-heated, a full make-up race may not be for you. You may want to bring warm hoods or cloaks for the *Oathbreaker’s Night* event in the fall. There are no strict requirements for make-up, except any race which mentions a particular skin color (such as “green skin”) requires that all visible skin be that color. Check out the website for costuming and make-up tips.

May I play a nobleman, knight, Lord or lady?

The world of the Wildlands does not have much of a feudal structure. Character histories that include such titles will usually be declined.

May I transfer my existing NERO character into Wildlands?

No. The world of Wildlands is completely separate from the Tyrra campaign run by most NERO chapters (e.g., Tyrangel, Baddira, Hawthorn Bluff, Ravenholt). Character, information, and item transfer between Wildlands and non-Wildlands worlds is not possible.

Can I play my character from previous Wildlands campaigns?

Not at the time of this writing. The lands of the Western Wildlands are very far removed from all previous campaign settings. There is no travel between the lands to

facilitate your character's arrival. We are not saying that this may never happen, but at the time of this writing there is no contact with Wildlands North or South. We do encourage you to create a new character who originates from the Western Wildlands and play in the Onyx Hollow campaign regardless. Try out another race, class, or style of character for a while. When the time comes that crossover characters are allowed, you would then have the option of bringing your previous character back into play.

I've heard Wildlands West is a "low level/low power" campaign. Do I have to start over?

All Player Characters start play at Level 1, with no more than 22 Build Points. The Wildlands system does not offer Experience Point blankets in exchange for Goblin Points. The only way to advance your character is to play the game. Wildlands uses a different Experience Point system than core NERO and the Tyrra campaign. Wildlands West also runs an average of four adventure weekends each year. Because of these factors, character progression in Wildlands is slower than Tyrra. Many players who are accustomed to the higher power levels of the Tyrra campaign world find the "on paper" power level of their new Wildlands characters a bit disorienting at first. In a new campaign world, a certain amount of readjustment to something different is to be expected.

The truth is, Player Characters in the Wildlands are very powerful within their environment, despite their comparatively lower level than the average Tyrran PC. Power is in perception. The Wildlands system offers a campaign storyline explanation of why Player Characters are more powerful than the average "offstage" farmers and barrel makers. The whole of the Wildlands world is no more capable than its Player Characters, and considerably less powerful on average.

The Wildlands campaign world is a fluid one, and it responds to the actions of the PCs, usually immediately. Every single character in the Wildlands world has tremendous capacity to affect events around her. There is no greater power Player Characters can wield in any campaign world than the ability to affect and shape the world around them. Wildlands is designed to give Player Characters that power.

What are the main differences between Tyrra and Wildlands?

The Wildlands system is based on core NERO rules, but has added over 20 new races, over 30 new spells and many new skill sets and abilities. Many Logistics functions and other matters handled outside Tyrra storylines are incorporated within the Wildlands game. The conversion of money to Experience Points and then Build Points is an in-game process of magic in Wildlands. Your unspent Experience Points are the measure of your "Inspiration." Learning takes time, after all, but magic can inspire the spirit to learn quickly, even immediately. Game monies must be delivered to magical junctures during the course of games, and skills can be updated on-the-spot. Magical "junctures" are in-game areas, and if characters can't get to them during events, they can't turn in money, can't buy Inspiration, and can't update skills! Most differences between Tyrra and the post-cataclysmic, lawless Wildlands are in the campaign settings and storylines.

What are the differences between the previous Wildlands campaigns and Onyx Hollow?

Onyx Hollow uses a more recent edition of the Wildlands rules than all previous Wildlands campaigns. There are also certain setting and culture changes which distinguish the campaigns. All previous Wildlands players are encouraged to read the Wildlands West Campaign Book prior to coming to an Onyx Hollow event. Some of the most noticeable differences are:

Changes in Logistics procedures for the Carrion Scar campaign and for Wildlands West may seem unusual in comparison to NERO Massachusetts/Harkenwood, and NERO Atlanta/Wildlands South policies. Please be careful to read through the instructions for attending events. Many players familiar with Harkenwood are surprised to learn that Onyx Hollow characters are restricted to clan teaching for their starting skills, Dexterity Armor is not available as a starting skill and teaching for some skills is rare in the Western Wildlands.

Wildlands West is set in a completely different part of the world than all previous campaigns. Onyx Hollow lies at the center of this area and is surrounded by vast new lands with entirely different inhabitants and clans. Characters in this world do not know of any lands outside of this continent. There are 10 new Player Character races, gnimari, spitters, and gremlins are new to players who have only played the Harkenwood or Everhold campaign. In addition the dark elves of the west have had noticeably different interests than previous Wildlands dark elves. Hobblings are not a restricted race in Wildlands West, although Fire Elves are. You must have permission from the Wildlands West Campaign Committee to play a Fire Elf. Many of the races previously available for PC's in Wildlands campaigns are not available in Wildlands West. If and when characters from previous campaigns are allowed to transfer over, they will not be forced to change race and their original race rules will apply. Of note are the Mechanans of the Harkenwood campaign. The tinkered items that they require are not available in the western Wildlands.

Some Lost Arts and other specialty skills may function differently than Wildlands players have come to expect. Mechanics and costs for some production skills have changed. Please review your skill descriptions in the Campaign Book with care. Wildlands West has different safety requirements for weapons and fighting than NERO Massachusetts. Weapons may not have an unpadded section between the "blade" and crossguard. Staves must be wielded as per the core NERO rules and may not be used with both hands placed at one far end.

The skill Natural Weaponry has been renamed to Claws. Its build point purchase price has increased. The uses for Claws have changed. Please review the description in **Chapter Seven: Combat**. Resist Necromancy can be used to negate the effects of casting necromantic spells in the Western Wildlands. There are also a variety of rules changes that have been made. It is each player's responsibility to make sure that they download and review the available rulebook, and in particular memorize the current rules for at least the type of character they have chosen to play.

Do I need the rulebook?

The NERO 8th Edition Rulebook has many different rules than the Wildlands West campaign. All necessary rules will be contained within the combination of the **Wildlands West: Rulebook** and the **Wildlands West: Campaign Book**. As such, it is not necessary to refer to the NERO rule book, as the information there may be inaccurate for our campaign. If you still desire the official NERO rulebook, the CC will be happy to direct you in how to obtain it.

What about NERO International?

NERO International is best reached at their registered website, which is <http://www.nerolarp.com>

How much do Wildlands West events cost?

Adventure weekends usually cost \$45. You can earn discounts on event pricing in a number of ways, such as for bringing new players with you and for volunteering for the organization in some way. For a full list of the current discounts and a price list for season passes, please see *Chapter Nine: Miscellaneous*. Event fees do not include food. Wildlands West does not maintain a full cafeteria/tavern service. However, limited service is available. A full dinner is generally available on Saturday nights for about \$6 - \$7. Light snacks and a variety of drinks are available at other times at reasonable prices. Players are encouraged to bring their own food supply.

Do NPCs and other volunteers have to pay for events?

No. Wildlands West does not charge its volunteers for supporting our game. We feed our volunteers and do our best to see each of them housed comfortably and with friends. We guarantee a mattress for every volunteer and do our best to find a bed frame for everyone as well. Bed frames are in shorter supply, and if you arrive late, you may have to settle for a mattress on a cabin floor. More information about the rewards for volunteering for Wildlands West can be found in *Chapter Eight: Volunteers & Non-Player Characters (NPCs)*.

I'm not sure about this yet. May I come watch a game first?

Like a poker game, watching Wildlands isn't nearly as fun as playing it! While we are more than happy to give observers a tour through one of our events, we caution you that you'd only see a small part of the big picture, and experience little of the fun. The real joy in live-action role-playing is jumping right in and participating. You will quickly find that no prior experience with role-playing games, renaissance festivals, fencing, or theatre is quite like live-action role-playing! Everyone who plays was new to it once, too, and likely just as confused and unsure of what to expect. Wildlands players tend to be very helpful to new players, and are usually willing to "take you under their wing," so to speak, and show you the ropes. You'll be surprised how little time it takes to feel comfortable with the game.

Some first time players choose to volunteer for the game before creating Player Characters of their own. The volunteer experience allows you to see many facets of the

game and give you an opportunity to make friends within the organization. The Campaign Committee is happy to show you the basics of NERO combat and spellcasting. We'll make sure you get the opportunity to try your hand at different skills and playing different races from the Wildlands world. We have costumes and boffer weapons available for volunteers (although bringing your own is always helpful and usually a little more comfortable for you).

To make arrangements to volunteer, observe a game, or just ask some questions and meet other Wildlands players face to face, contact the Wildlands West Campaign Committee.

Who plays Wildlands anyway?

People like you! People from age 14 and up participate at Wildlands West events. The average age of Wildlands participants is about 26. Wildlands' gritty atmosphere, challenging combats, cerebral storylines and emphasis on characterization and role-playing give the game a more mature feel than some campaigns of comparable size and player composition. All participants at Wildlands West events are required to read and sign the campaign's honor code. This promotes fair and fun play and tends to discourage players with unfriendly, competitive, destructive or just plain bad attitudes from coming to Wildlands.

People come from all walks and stages of life, occupations, educational backgrounds and areas of the country to play Wildlands West. WLW players even come from outside Kentucky for events! College students and families, bankers, IS professionals, artists, writers, wrestling fans, improvisational comedians, clergy and military personnel all come to play. Get to know your fellow players! Chances are good you share a profession, alma mater, hobby, or favorite books and movies with many of them.

Count me in! How do I join?

Event Registration information is available on the web site. You should also feel free to contact the CC. The mailing address for all checks, payable to Onyx Hollow, LLC, is: Onyx Hollow, LLC PO Box 202 Sellersburg, IN 47172. Please include a note with your full name, mailing address, telephone number, email address, and a short explanation for what your money has been designated (e.g., "Pre-registration for October '05 event.) If time does not permit this, just show up at our announced event location at the designated time. Anyone involved in the game will be happy to guide you where to register and receive information.

Alcohol and Drugs

Alcohol and drugs are prohibited from any Wildlands event. The only exceptions to this rule are prescription medications, which must be reported to any medic that is on site. Anyone caught with alcohol or any other controlled substance (or under the influence) will be subjected to severe disciplinary action including expulsion from the game and possible prosecution.

Anachronisms

Some anachronisms cannot be avoided, such as glasses, modern shoes, medical bracelets, etc. However you should make every possible attempt to avoid modern anachronisms whenever possible. This includes design of clothing, armor, and weapons, modern humor, and containers for food and drink.

Counted actions

Some actions cannot actually be performed for reasons of safety, reality, or courtesy, but must be considered as taking some time to complete. Such actions will have a specific count. Usually, the counted action will indicate what is happening to observers. For example, to simulate a monster breaking down the wall, the NPC playing the monster could say “I break the wall one, I break the wall two, I break the wall three. Such counted actions must be made in clear voice of volume appropriate to the activity. (Breaking a wall should be done in a loud voice, while coming out of the woods may be done softly) During the time in which the player saying this, he or she is completely vulnerable to attack, and cannot use any game skills except for defenses. Any character wishing to interrupt a count of action must merely state their intention to interrupt. This is followed by either striking the target who's counting (with a NERO safe weapon or packet), or point a finger at them (if unarmed, although you must have been close enough to the target to have touched them). To interrupt is immediate, and any counted action must start completely over to succeed. Some actions do take longer and will take a 60 count, such as refitting armor or using Magical Control. If you are in any doubt, count to 60 instead of 3. If you witness an NPC using a count, (such as coming out of the woods), then you do not actually see or hear them until the count is complete. However, you are aware that some type of unusual or extraordinary event is happening, and to be on your guard is considered acceptable role play.

Disguises

You are never allowed to disguise yourself to appear to be a member of another race. If you wear a mask or otherwise obscure your features, you must also wear all appropriate racial makeup underneath of the mask. For example, an elf with long hair may not “claim” their hair simply obscures the required elf ears. You would be required to wear elf ears, though your hair could actually obscure them from ordinary view. You may disguise yourself with clothing but only if your race is properly represented underneath. You may not use makeup to make yourself appear to be another race. Even in disguise, if a player asks “What do I see?” about your appearance, then you must reply that they see you as your actual race, and not the race you are trying to mimic. If you are completely and appropriately costumed and made up as your race, then you may reply “Mask” or “You see what you see”.

Tagged items

Many in play items are marked with a series of colored tags. These tags represent the fact that an item is considered in play, and not simply someone's out of game possessions. There is a simple color coding scheme to be used here, and it is as follows:

Red tags-Red tags are used to represent items that are not movable, not stealable, and not destroyable. You may freely examine a red tagged item, but you may not move it or take it.

Yellow tags-Yellow tags are used to represent items that are in fact stealable, or movable, but are property of the game owners. They may or may not be destroyable in play, but are never destroyable out of play. Your character may freely take possession of these items. However, they are still property of the game, and must be returned to a marshal at the event check out procedure. This marshal will take your name and the item and return it to you upon the attendance of your next event.

Green tags-Green tags are used to represent items that are stealable, movable, and destroyable. Generally text props will be green tagged items. You may freely take these items, keep them, use them, take them home forever, or destroy them as you wish

Blue tags-Blue tags are represent items that are of more personal nature, but otherwise are treated exactly as yellow tagged items. Generally you will be given a blue tag for a specific item by a marshal any additional rules will be explained to you at that time. Only a marshal may modify remove or change a tag. The actual tag is for out of game convenience, and is never actually part of the item, so in play you must pretend it is not there.

Languages

There are many languages in our fantasy game. It is assumed that there are no specific spoken racial languages. All players of all races speak the common tongue of normal English. You may read any item in English, but only if you have the skill Read/Write. There are certain written ancient languages, and you may read them if you have the skill Read/Write, and can actually figure out how to read them. If you encounter an ancient language that you do not know how to read, you must figure out how to read it on your own, or find an in game reference to explain to you how to read them. Merely possessing the skill Read/Write does not grant you the knowledge you to understand an ancient language that you do not understand how to read.

Physical size

All player characters, regardless of race, are as large as they actually are. For example, a very large person who plays a hobling is a very large hobling. A small slender woman who plays and orc-kin is a very small orc-kin. Likewise, all monsters are the size of the NPC playing the monster unless otherwise described by the encounter.

Physical Representations

Physical representations, or phys-reps, are physical out of play items that represent in game items. For example you may have a potion tag to represent actually having a magical potion, but you need to provide a small bottle in which to represent the

potion for drinking. You should try to make every effort to obtain and carry a phys-rep of every item that you have. In the case of weapons, the item tag should be applied to the phys-rep of the weapon. If you drink a potion or read a scroll, then you should pull out your potion bottle or scrap of text and mimic reading the text or drinking the potion.

Clocks and Watches

In the Wildlands world, clocks and watches are represented by in game items. No one is permitted to wear a watch or to use a clock unless they have a valid tag for the device. Characters with astrology know how to tell time from the stars. For these characters, it is permissible for you to use a small watch. However if you do not have a tag for a watch (which is a tinkered item) then you should keep your watch in a pocket or obscured so that it is not visible by others.