Running Quests: A Guide for DMs

Thinking of running a quest? Wonderful! DMs are what keep Macguffins, Ltd. adventuring, and we want the process to be as straightforward as possible.

Whether you're planning a quick mystery around Luna Pine or a longer journey into the unknown, this guide explains how to get your quest ready, keep it moving, and wrap things up.

If you've been on the server for at least 30 days, completed a quest, and are interested in DMing, speak to an Admin or the Quest Master.

Planning your quest

Before you submit a quest, have a rough idea of its story, the level of characters it suits, how long it might run, and how often you can post. Quests normally appear on the 1st and 15th of the month. If you're unsure whether your idea fits the setting or an existing storyline, have a chat with a Helper, Quest Master, Edgelord or Admin.

When the updated Null quest tools are available on the main server, `/quest submit` will walk you through the application. Until then, use the current DM application process in Discord. The form asks for:

- Length: Fast (1 - 2 weeks), Medium (2 - 4 weeks), or Long (4+ weeks).
- Difficulty: Easy, Normal, Hard, or Dead (character death is possible).
- Level range: Choose the range that best suits your adventure.
- Posting speed: From a few posts per week to several per day.
- Practical details: Your time zone, active hours, quest room, intended release and number of players.
- Quest description and rewards: Give players a clear idea of the adventure and propose XP, gold and any Motes or magic items.

The description is what players will see, so give them something to get excited about without revealing all your surprises! A Helper or authorised staff member will review the application. Once approved, the quest can be published for players to express interest.

The DM and staff choose the party; expressing interest is not a first-come-first-served reservation.

Choosing rewards

Quest rewards are meant to be consistent across DMs without forcing every adventure into the same mould. Use the guide below as a starting point, then consider the actual difficulty, length and loot.

Character level	Typical XP for four weeks
3 - 4	900 - 1,400
5 - 7	1,600 - 2,100
8 - 10	2,300 - 2,900
11 - 13	3,100 - 3,700
14 - 16	3,800 - 4,400
17 - 20	4,500 - 5,500

As a rough guide, a two-week quest earns about half the four-week amount, while a six-week quest earns about one and a half times as much.

For longer quests, scale in proportion to the planned duration. Gold normally starts at around one quarter of the XP, with the value of gold and loot found during the quest taken into account. A common expectation for Motes is around one per week, or an approved equivalent magic item.

These figures are guidelines, not a promise that every quest earns the maximum. If your proposal differs significantly, explain why in a sentence or two. An unusually challenging quest, an adventure that grew well beyond its original scope, or a generous item reward can all be good reasons. Admins and the Quest Master can help with unusual cases.

The application's current reward hints are approximate as they do not calculate or approve rewards for you.

Keeping a play-by-post quest moving

Play-by-post gives everyone time to write and think, but a quest can quickly lose momentum if the party doesn't know what happens next.

Before starting, tell your players what posting speed you expect and ask them to let you know about absences. **Our usual starting point is a response within about 24 hours.** If a player hasn't responded and hasn't mentioned an absence, you may move the scene forward rather than leaving everyone waiting. In most situations their character can be assumed to follow the party. During combat, Dodge is the usual default when their turn must be passed.

Use your judgement if the circumstances call for a different approach and be considerate of absences that have been communicated.

A few habits help enormously:

- Finish posts with a clear question, choice or opportunity to act. If the group needs to decide something, give a sensible deadline and suggest what happens if nobody objects.
- Use emoji reactions for simple OOC votes.
- Consider block initiative so players don't have to wait for one another in a strict queue.
- If someone is away, agree on a practical way to keep their character with the party.

Remember that players are writing together. Leave room for their choices, keep IC and OOC separate, and respect the server's rules on consent and PvP.

Keep Combat Information Together

For complicated encounters, consider maintaining one edited combat-status post.

For example:

```
Round 4
Orpheus — 166/230 HP | Aura of Protection
Ezra — 88/157 HP | Unfailing Inspiration (d10)
Erik — 76/230 HP | Raging | Grappled — DC 16

Party Reminder
+5 to saves while within 10 ft. of Orpheus
```

Update the same post as the encounter changes.

This can keep HP, conditions, ongoing effects, initiative blocks and important reminders visible without players having to search through several days of posts.

Use whatever tools make this easiest for you. Some DMs keep this information manually, while others use tools such as 5e.tools or Avrae.

Finishing your quest

When the adventure ends, confirm the players who participated and the final rewards. When your adventure ends:

1. Confirm which characters participated.
2. Confirm the final XP, gold, Motes and items.
3. Record the appropriate rewards.
4. Let players know what they need to update themselves.
5. Record any lasting changes to the world that another DM may need to know.

On the updated Null quest tools, `/quest finish` will show you a preview and ask you to confirm before posting the closing messages. This command is currently in testing, so follow the existing server closeout process until it is released.

The finish process prepares the OOC thank-you and relevant reward-log posts. It does not automatically update character XP, Motes, gold or roles. Players should continue to follow the usual character and currency instructions.

If the final rewards differ from those approved, include a short explanation. Changes are sometimes perfectly reasonable; the important part is making them clear.

Leaving your mark on Luna Pine

Did the party save a village, make an enemy of a local faction, discover a dangerous ruin or change something other DMs should know about? Please leave a short account of what happened, where, and what changed. A future DM may want to build on it!

A searchable `/world` log is being tested as part of Null's next improvements. It will allow authorised DMs and Helpers to record important outcomes after the quest has been finished. Until that is released, use the existing DM/Helper handover route for persistent changes.

For current server rules and rulings, check The Rules and Common DM Rulings. If you're ever uncertain, ask the Quest Master, an Edgelord or an Admin.

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