



# THE FOUR PILLARS OF GAME HOSTING



HOSTING GAMES FOR LONG LASTING  
ENJOYMENT AND PLAYER INVOLVEMENT.



# THE FOUR PILLARS

At BarHaven, the success of our community-driven gaming experiences hinges on a set of core principles known as the Four Pillars of Game Hosting. These pillars guide our Game Masters (GMs) in providing consistent, high-quality experiences that keep our members engaged and our venues thriving. Each pillar represents a crucial aspect of game hosting that ensures every session is enjoyable, fair, and memorable for all participants.

The Four Pillars are:

**The Leader,**  
**The Arbitrator,**  
**The Performer,**  
**The Parent**

These roles are designed to create a balanced and enriching environment where players can fully immerse themselves in the adventure. The Leader ensures the game runs smoothly and professionally; the Arbitrator maintains fairness and consistency; the Performer captivates and engages the players; and the Parent fosters a welcoming atmosphere while setting boundaries when needed. Together, these pillars form the foundation of what makes BarHaven's game hosting exceptional.

BarHaven was founded to create a welcoming space for adults to make new friends, discover a great hobby, and participate in games in a safe and public setting. Often, when players seek to join a tabletop role-playing game (TTRPG), they encounter uncomfortable situations, such as being invited to a stranger's home, dealing with unknown environments, or experiencing disrespectful storytelling. Scheduling conflicts also frequently disrupt gameplay. To address these issues, BarHaven partners with public venues that offer food and drinks and provides Game Hosts who are carefully vetted. This vetting process, grounded in the Four Pillars, ensures that all players have an equal and enjoyable experience in a professional and welcoming atmosphere.

The Four Pillars directly address the challenges that many players face when seeking a reliable and enjoyable gaming experience.

**The Leader** ensures that every session is organized and runs smoothly, removing the uncertainty and discomfort of playing in an unfamiliar setting. **The Arbitrator** upholds fair play and consistency, guaranteeing that all players feel respected and heard. **The Performer** engages players with captivating storytelling, eliminating the risk of dull or disrespectful narratives. Finally, **The Parent** creates a safe and inclusive environment, setting boundaries that protect all participants from uncomfortable or inappropriate behavior. Together, these pillars form a comprehensive approach to game hosting that solves the common issues players encounter, making BarHaven the trusted choice for TTRPG enthusiasts.



## THE LEADER

The Leader ensures that every game session is organized, professional, and enjoyable. They are the driving force behind the game, keeping the story on track and providing a structured, yet flexible, environment where players can thrive.

**Quick Brief:** Great services with professional game hosting skills that are polite, prepared, and have excellent customer service.

Often referred to as the Paladin as an in-game example, the Leader keeps focus and the story moving. While yes, you are a GM/DM/Game Host, etc. Through BarHaven, you are labeled as a contract worker, getting paid for your specialty services—i.e., running games. Like any contract worker, it is a responsibility to provide those services under company and situational constraints.

This can be a blend of drill sergeant and teacher—keeping an eye on the clock, making sure the venue gets their fair share of food and drink purchases, and even making sure the players have the direction to focus on the story and the game they paid for. The Leader can be firm but more focused on direction—leading and providing the players with an example of a great time rather than derailing the entire plot to the point of dissatisfaction.

The Leader is prepared, polite, and professional. They allow their players to trust them. In an unknown situation, especially with random players during meet-ups, players will look for someone with a cool attitude to lead and provide a way forward. They don't necessarily want a game host to ask every single person what they want to do for every bit of information in a story. Leaders show by example and act with a certain grace and authority, primarily being prepared as much as possible: Do they need extra dice? Should you tell them the type of game you're running beforehand? Are the players stuck not knowing the next step of the game?

Like the previous paragraph mentioning being polite and professional—the Leader embraces connection in their words. They say please, thank you, and you're welcome, etc. While a small gesture, the customer service of the work is heavily noticeable and can be mirrored by the players. Professionalism is endlessly important, especially when running a paid game. In corporate words—we owe paying customers a game/service run by a pro.

### Impact on Player Experience:

The Leader's role is crucial in creating a positive and memorable experience. By setting an example of professionalism and preparedness, they build trust and respect among players, making them eager to return for more sessions. A well-led game not only flows smoothly but also allows players to feel secure in the hands of a competent Game Host. This security fosters creativity and enjoyment, as players are more likely to engage deeply with the story when they trust their Leader to guide them through the narrative.

For BarHaven, this impact is essential. Our reputation is built on delivering consistent, high-quality gaming experiences. When a Leader embodies the Four Pillars, especially the qualities of leadership, it ensures that every game session upholds the standards our community expects. A strong Leader not only enhances the individual session but also contributes to the overall success of BarHaven by encouraging repeat participation and positive word-of-mouth. In essence, the Leader is key to creating the environment where players can feel like the heroes they come to BarHaven to be.



## THE ARBITRATOR

The Arbitrator ensures that the game remains fair, consistent, and enjoyable for all players. They are the final authority on rules and decisions, balancing the need for fairness with the flexibility to adapt the game to the players' creativity.

**Quick Brief:** Knowledgeable, fair, and consistent ruling host.

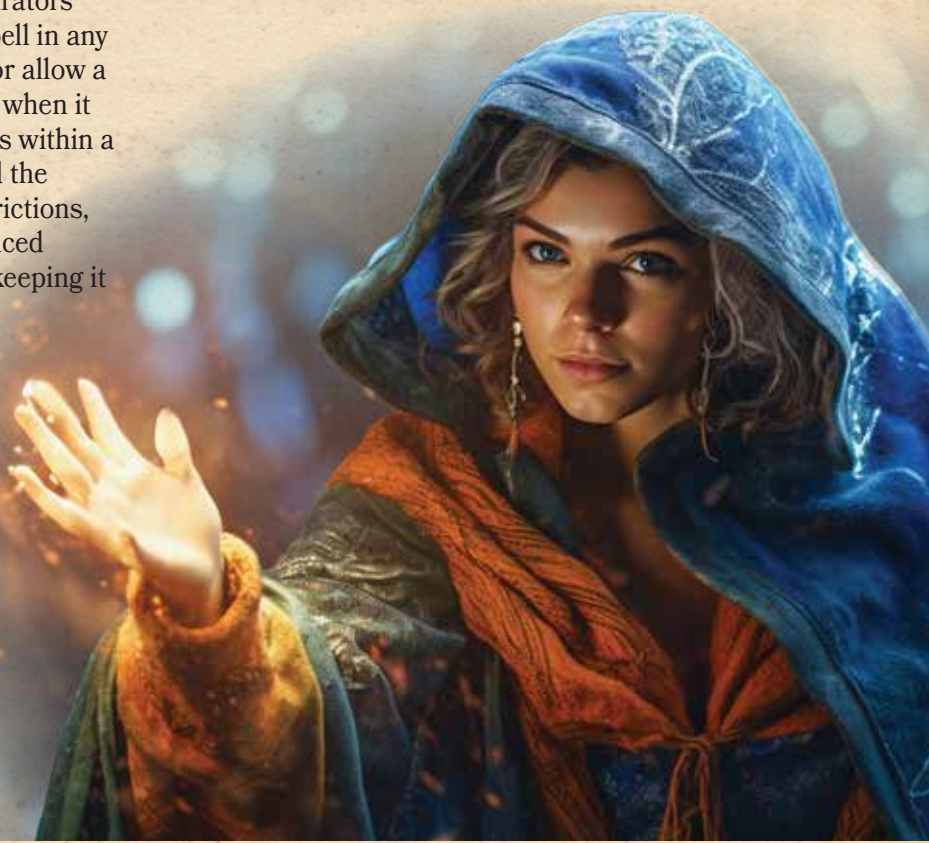
Sometimes compared to the Wizard of the game, the Arbitrator makes the final call at the table, making sure the game is fair for all players. Arbitrators need to be fair and consistent. It is not enough to just make a decision; they must uphold that reasoning and remain consistent throughout their game. When a ruling needs to change, the Game Host knows to communicate that change clearly, ensuring players are comfortable and understand why the change is happening. The goal is always to create an environment where every player feels they are being treated equally, with the rules applied uniformly.

This is not adversarial to the “rule of cool.” The Arbitrator understands the boundaries of the game and knows how to bend and flow with the rules they set in place. This flexibility allows players to come up with creative solutions that are unique, fun, and memorable. However, the key is maintaining fairness. For example, Arbitrators shouldn't allow a cantrip or base-level spell in any TTRPG to do more than base damage, or allow a mending spell to fix something instantly when it traditionally takes a minute. Most actions within a game have some sort of restrictions, and the Arbitrator's job is to research those restrictions, apply them consistently, and make balanced decisions that enhance the game while keeping it fair for everyone.

### Impact on Player Experience:

The Arbitrator plays a critical role in ensuring that every player feels respected and engaged. By being knowledgeable and consistent, the Arbitrator builds trust among the players, who can rely on their decisions to be fair and impartial. This trust is essential for maintaining a positive atmosphere, as players are more likely to fully immerse themselves in the game when they believe that the rules are applied equally to everyone.

For BarHaven, the role of the Arbitrator is vital in upholding the quality of the gaming experience we promise. A fair and consistent Arbitrator not only prevents potential conflicts but also enhances the overall enjoyment of the game, making players feel that their time and investment are valued. This fairness and consistency are key to ensuring that players return to BarHaven for more games, confident that they will always receive a balanced and enjoyable experience. In essence, the Arbitrator ensures that the game is not just fun but also equitable, which is crucial for sustaining the long-term success of our community.



## THE PERFORMER

The Performer captivates and engages players through dynamic storytelling and immersive experiences. They bring the game to life, making every session an unforgettable adventure that keeps players coming back for more.

**Quick Brief:** Entertaining and engaging storytelling, having people wanting to come back for more.

Like a Bard, BarHaven Game Hosts should make it a performance! Players come to BarHaven to be engaged, have fun, and embark on an adventure. While voices and acting aren't requirements, there are countless storytelling elements that can keep players active and immersed in the game—such as intriguing story details, careful word choice, puzzles, improvisation, maps, miniatures, and even hand gestures that draw players into the fantasy world. The key is communication and interaction. A Game Host who pays attention to their players will notice if someone isn't having fun and can adapt to bring them back into the story.

### Active Engagement Over Performance:

You don't have to be theater-level good at voices or dress up to excel at the Performer pillar. The focus is on active engagement with players, not theatrical prowess. A Game Host can prepare in many ways to engage players, from using eye contact and paying attention to their characters' participation, to employing descriptive and fun storytelling, and utilizing physical game resources like maps and miniatures. While voices and costumes can enhance the experience, the most crucial aspect is making sure each player feels involved and valued in the game.

For instance, simple examples of engaging and interactive entertainment include asking players about their character's actions, observing their body language and posture, and making eye contact to gauge their interest. If a player seems disengaged, the Performer might direct a scene towards them, asking what their character is doing while another character takes action. The goal is to involve every player, making them feel as though they are a part of the unfolding narrative, ensuring their character's story is interwoven with the game's plot.

### Impact on Player Experience:

The Performer's ability to engage and entertain is vital to the overall success of the game. A Game Host who excels in this role makes the experience immersive and memorable, encouraging players to invest emotionally in the story. This emotional investment is what transforms a game session from a simple pastime into an unforgettable journey, where players feel they are part of something special.

For BarHaven, the role of the Performer is crucial in distinguishing our games from others. When a Game Host excels as a Performer, it ensures that players leave each session not just satisfied, but eager to return. The energy and creativity that the Performer brings to the table are infectious, spreading to the players and elevating the entire experience. This creates a loyal community of players who look forward to every session, knowing they will be entertained, engaged, and fully immersed in the game. In essence, the Performer is key to making each game session a unique and thrilling experience, which is essential for building and maintaining BarHaven's reputation as a premier gaming community.



## THE PARENT

The Parent ensures a safe, welcoming, and comfortable environment for all players. They nurture positive behavior and step in to discipline when necessary, maintaining the harmony and enjoyment of the game.

**Quick Brief:** Being welcoming, but disciplining when necessary; making sure everyone at the table is comfortable and having a good time.

Like a Cleric or a Knight from the Round Table, the Parent knows when to discipline and when to nurture. They celebrate players' successes and guide them toward making good decisions, setting them up for a great game experience. However, they also understand the importance of setting boundaries and addressing behaviors that disrupt the game or make others uncomfortable. The Parent ensures that the game environment reflects BarHaven's standards of respect and enjoyment for everyone involved.

### Welcoming and Disciplinary Roles:

The Parent's role is not just about being welcoming; it's about creating a space where all players feel comfortable and respected. This doesn't mean giving free rein to any behavior. Just as a homeowner expects guests to respect their space, the Parent maintains a similar standard at the gaming table. They watch for signs of discomfort, intervene when someone is causing issues, and adjust the game's atmosphere or content as needed to ensure everyone is having a good time. This might include addressing "Main Character Syndrome," where one player dominates the session, or mediating conflicts between players.

### Active Mediation and Environment:

You don't have to be a mediator by profession to excel at the Parent pillar, but you do need to be attentive and willing to step in when necessary. The focus is on creating a positive environment through proactive engagement and gentle guidance. Whether it's making sure everyone is heard, addressing uncomfortable content before it escalates, or simply encouraging players to respect each other's space and role in the game, the Parent's job is to ensure that the game remains enjoyable and inclusive for everyone. It's not just about knowing when to say no; it's about fostering a sense of community and mutual respect.

### Using the Parent Pillar in Practice:

To effectively use the Parent Pillar, a Game Host should be ready to step in with both encouragement and boundaries. For example, if a player is shy or hesitant to participate, the Parent can gently prompt them with questions about their character's actions or provide opportunities for them to shine in the story. Conversely, if a player is interrupting others or monopolizing the spotlight, the Parent might pause the game to remind everyone of the importance of shared space and taking turns. Watching body language is just as important as hearing players discuss the game; sometimes, a player may feel uncomfortable with another PC's actions but might not voice their concerns. If someone is repeatedly making others uncomfortable or being inconsiderate or irresponsible with their gameplay, the Parent needs to step in and address the issue. By being proactive and attentive, the Parent can manage these situations effectively, ensuring that all players feel respected and included.

### Impact on Player Experience:

The Parent's role in maintaining a welcoming and disciplined environment is crucial for player comfort and satisfaction. When players know that the Game Host will ensure their safety and enjoyment, they can fully immerse themselves in the game without fear of discomfort or conflict. This trust is vital for creating a positive gaming experience where players feel valued and respected.

At BarHaven, the Parent pillar is key to sustaining a community of players who feel safe and welcome at every session. By nurturing a respectful and inclusive atmosphere, the Parent ensures that all players can focus on the fun and adventure of the game. This level of care and attention to the players' experience is what helps build long-term loyalty and trust within the BarHaven community. It's not just about running a game; it's about creating a space where everyone can enjoy the adventure together.



## EXAMPLE ONE

— You're running a one-shot game at a busy partner venue. The players are a mix of experienced and new gamers, and right from the start, one player—let's call them Alex—begins to dominate the session. Alex interrupts others, talks over quieter players, and constantly pushes for their character to take center stage. The other players seem hesitant to speak up, and you notice some uncomfortable glances around the table.

### The Leader:

You step in by setting the tone with a firm but friendly reminder about the importance of everyone having a chance to contribute. You outline that the game is collaborative and encourage players to support each other's characters. By leading with clear direction, you ensure the game remains focused and that everyone feels included.

### The Arbitrator:

When Alex tries to bend the rules in their favor, you make a fair and consistent ruling that keeps the game balanced. You explain your decision clearly to maintain transparency and ensure that all players understand why the ruling was made. This upholds the integrity of the game and prevents one player from overshadowing the others.

### The Parent:

Noticing the discomfort among the other players, you keep an eye on their body language. During a break, you check in with them individually to make sure they're comfortable and enjoying the game. When the session resumes, you actively engage the quieter players, giving them opportunities to shine. If Alex continues to dominate, you politely but firmly intervene, reminding them of the table's collaborative spirit. This creates a more balanced and enjoyable experience for everyone.

## EXAMPLE TWO

— You're running a campaign where the story has taken a dark turn, with the players exploring a haunted forest that hints at tragic backstories. One of the players, Jamie, seems increasingly uneasy with the direction the story is taking. While they haven't said anything, their body language suggests discomfort—they're fidgeting, avoiding eye contact, and their contributions have become minimal.

### The Leader:

Sensing the shift in the group's mood, you guide the session to a point where the story can take a lighter or more hopeful turn. You remind the players that they have the power to influence the story's direction, encouraging them to pursue a course of action that aligns with the group's comfort level. By doing this, you keep the game enjoyable and prevent anyone from feeling alienated.

### The Parent:

You take Jamie's unease seriously. During a brief pause in the game, you ask the group—without singling anyone out—if the content is okay for everyone and if they'd prefer to explore different themes. You also observe Jamie's reaction closely, adjusting the game's tone if necessary. If Jamie continues to seem uncomfortable, you might offer them a way to steer their character into a subplot that suits them better, ensuring they feel safe and engaged.

### The Performer:

To lighten the mood, you shift your storytelling approach—using humor or bringing in a whimsical NPC to guide the players through a lighter encounter. Your focus on descriptive storytelling and character interaction helps re-engage Jamie and the rest of the group, making the game feel less intense and more enjoyable. By adapting your performance, you ensure the game remains a fun and positive experience for everyone.



## SUMMARY

The Four Pillars of Game Hosting are the cornerstone of BarHaven's mission to provide exceptional tabletop experiences. They help us create an environment where players feel valued, supported, and excited to return. By focusing on leadership, fairness, engagement, and care, these pillars enable Game Hosts to build trust and rapport with their players, transforming each session into a shared adventure where everyone's voice matters.

These principles extend beyond individual sessions—they foster a culture of respect, creativity, and collaboration that enriches the entire gaming community. When Game Hosts consistently apply the Four Pillars, they not only enhance the experience for their players but also contribute to a more inclusive and welcoming gaming environment overall. This approach encourages new players to join, helps retain long-term participants, and builds a reputation for excellence that extends beyond BarHaven.

Importantly, the Four Pillars can be applied to any tabletop role-playing game system, whether you're hosting a private game with friends, running an ongoing campaign you've created, or facilitating a paid session with new players. These pillars provide a flexible framework that ensures a positive experience across different settings and styles of play, making them a valuable tool for any Game Host, regardless of the game or the group.

Moreover, the Four Pillars remind us that being a Game Host is about more than just running a game. It's about creating a space where people can connect, explore new ideas, and have fun together. By committing to these principles, you're not only improving your own skills but also contributing to the growth and health of the tabletop role-playing community as a whole.

If anything from this mass of text, try to take the following away from each pillar:

- **The Leader** - Lead the way with polite and professional services, being an example for others and setting the tone for the game.
- **The Arbitrator** - Be consistent with your game play and ruling, making sure it is fair for all players.
- **The Performer** - This is entertainment and an adventure worth going on; engage with the players and keep them coming back for more.
- **The Parent** - Know when to say no. Stand up and discipline as needed and nurture those who make a great party.

As a Game Host, you're already passionate about creating enjoyable experiences for others. The Four Pillars offer a framework to enhance your skills and ensure every player leaves the table feeling satisfied and eager to return. Whether you're leading a session, making tough calls, engaging players, or ensuring a safe space, these pillars are there to support you in delivering the best possible game.

If you see yourself in this philosophy and want to take your game hosting to the next level, consider how the Four Pillars can be a part of your approach. By focusing on these core principles, you'll not only grow as a host but also contribute to a broader community that values fun, fairness, and friendship in every game.

