



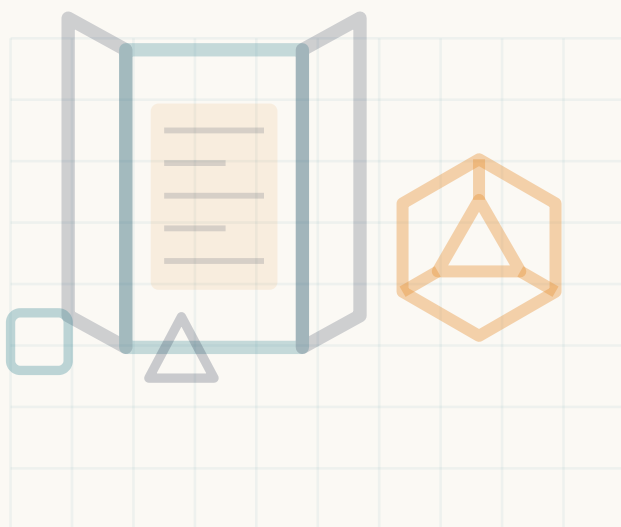
ARDENT WORKSHOP

AN ARDENT WORKSHOP PRODUCT

One-Page Session Prep

Five boxes, forty-five minutes, and a night that survives the party ignoring it.

Free from Ardent Workshop · print at 100%



This is two sheets of a ten-sheet kit — the one you print every week, and its natural back page, the place you write down everything you improvise. Both are free, ungated, and yours to print as often as you like.

THE ONE IDEA THE SHEET IS BUILT ON

Prep situations, not plots. A plot is a sequence of events the party is supposed to move through, and it breaks the first time they do something you did not think of — usually inside twenty minutes. A situation is a set of people who want things, in a place, with a clock running. It cannot break, because there is nothing to get wrong: whatever the party does, it responds. That is why this sheet asks for a strong start, three likely scenes rather than an order of play, one secret attached to a person, and the world's move this week — and why it still works when they go somewhere else.

How to use it. Fill box 5 first — what the world does this week whether or not the party turns up — because everything else gets easier once you know it. Then the three likely scenes, then box 1, the strong start: something already happening when you say “we begin”, so nobody has to ask what they are doing. Then the secret and the two rolls, with the price of failing decided calmly now rather than at speed with four people watching. Forty-five minutes the first time; about thirty once it is a habit.

Print pages 5 and 6, double-sided, at 100%. Page 5 is the prep sheet and page 6 is the threads page, so one sheet of paper gives you both — the pages before them are the worked example and this note, which you only need to read once.

Why the threads page belongs on the back. Your players remember every name you improvised and every door you explained away. You remember none of it, and that gap is the most common reason a long campaign quietly starts to feel thin. Ten seconds in pencil, mid-session, fixes it.

What it looks like filled in

One session of an invented campaign — every name, place and event here is fictional. Read it for the **level of detail**, not the content. “The villain continues his plan” against “the levy finish moving the crates on Thursday night, and after that the evidence is gone” is fifteen seconds of extra writing and the whole value of the sheet. Lines that start with a small » are this game master's answers.

SHEET 1 OF 10

THE ONE YOU PRINT EVERY WEEK

Session Prep — The Five Boxes — filled-in example

One sheet, forty-five minutes, and you can run a night that survives the party ignoring all of it. Fill the boxes in the order they are numbered.

THE RULE THIS SHEET IS BUILT ON

Prep situations, not plots. Everything on this page is true when the session begins — a pressure, a person, a fact waiting to be found — not a sequence the party has to walk through. That is why it still works when they go somewhere else: the situation goes with them.

Session number and date

» Session 11 — Thursday

Last week ended with — the hook you left them on

» Marta got the ledger page out of the Cold Kitchen. Nobody saw her. She hasn't told the others.

1 • Strong start

The first sixty seconds — something already happening when you say "we begin". Steal one from The Improv Tables if the page is blank.

» You're halfway through breakfast at the Fourth Bell when Nella Fisk sits down uninvited, puts her hands flat on the table, and says: "The crossing's shut from noon. That's not me. That's them."

2 • Three likely scenes

Not a plan and not an order — three things that could plausibly happen tonight. Two will; one will be replaced by something a player invents, and that is a good night.

SCENE

who, where, what's at stake

» The ferry, before noon. Nella wants a witness to say the closure was ordered. Aldous wants her to sign it was her decision. At stake: whether the town believes the levy or the Fisks.

SCENE

who, where, what's at stake

» The Cold Kitchen, if they go back. The crates are gone; the packed bag isn't. Ordworld's man is there ahead of them, looking for the same bag. At stake: the bag, and being seen.

SCENE

who, where, what's at stake

» Brother Aldous's study, any time. He'll trade the collector's route for a promise not to name the church. At stake: the route, and the first real lie the party has to tell.

3 • THE SECRET THEY CAN LEARN TONIGHT

one fact that changes what they know — attach it to a person, not a place, so it can walk to them

» The tax collector left willingly, and took the ledger with him. He was not taken. Nella knows — she rowed him across at night and has said nothing for six weeks.

5 • WHAT HAPPENS ANYWAY

the world's move this week, whether or not the party turns up

» The levy finish moving the crates on Thursday night. After that the evidence is out of the district and Nella stops being useful to anybody, including them.

4 • Two rolls I'll actually need

Deciding the price of failure in advance, calmly, is what stops a failed roll from stopping the session.

What's being attempted	How hard	What failing costs — instead of just stopping them
Getting Nella to say it in front of Aldous	Hard	She says it, then denies it publicly — and now they know she'll fold under pressure
Crossing the river below the ford, unseen, before noon	Middling	They get across and are seen doing it; the crossing closes behind them and stays closed

FIVE NAMES ON HAND

pre-picked, said out loud once, so you never freeze

» Ordwold (levy captain) · Marek Fisk (her brother) ·
Brother Aldous · Widow Teel · "the tall one" (name him if
asked — Cattle Gate boy)

THIS PLACE, IN THREE SENSES

sight · sound · smell

» Sight: the ferry rope, newly spliced in two places. Sound:
the far bank's bell answering ours a beat late. Smell: river
silt and hot pitch.

The one question I want answered by the end of tonight

» Do they protect Nella, or use her? Everything after session 12 hangs on which.

SHEET 1 OF 10

THE ONE YOU PRINT EVERY WEEK

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THIS PLACE, IN THREE SENSES

sight · sound · smell

The one question I want answered by the end of tonight

Dangling Threads

Everything you improvised, promised, or hinted at and have not resolved. The players remember all of it and you remember none of it — that asymmetry is the single most common way a good campaign starts to feel thin.

WRITE IT DOWN THE MOMENT YOU INVENT IT
The most important rows on this page are the ones you made up on the spot: the name you gave a shopkeeper, the reason you invented for a locked door, the cousin somebody mentioned. **An improvised detail that gets written down becomes plot; one that doesn't becomes a plot hole.** Ten seconds, mid-session, in pencil.

Open threads

The thread	Raised in session	Who cares about it	What would resolve it	Open

Things I invented on the spot that must now be made real

Threads the players clearly want followed — in their words

One table, so you can see what they are like

The kit's other file is twenty of these. This is the one the prep sheet leans on hardest: a stranger with a want is a scene, and a stranger without one is scenery. Roll before you decide who they are — a want tells you how they talk, what they will trade, and what they will do if you say no.

D20 What this person wants from you

Roll before you decide who they are. A want tells you how they talk, what they will trade, and what they will do if you say no — the rest follows.

1	To be told they were right about something everyone dismissed.
2	To get one specific person out of a place they should not be.
3	To stop paying somebody, without that somebody noticing for a month.
4	To be seen leaving with you, by a particular pair of eyes.
5	To have a debt witnessed and written down where it cannot be denied.
6	To keep a job they are no longer good enough to do.
7	To be given permission to do a thing they have already done.
8	To find out whether a rumor about their own family is true.
9	To move an object out of town tonight without touching it themselves.
10	To be introduced to someone who will not take their letters.
11	To make an apology land, after two earlier attempts failed.
12	To be replaced — to hand the whole thing to somebody and walk away.
13	To learn who else was asking the same questions you are asking.
14	To have a boundary enforced by someone frightening, so they don't have to be.
15	To buy time — a week, at any price they can currently afford.
16	To be the one who reports the news, before the news arrives another way.
17	To have an old decision reversed while it can still be reversed quietly.
18	To protect a reputation belonging to someone already dead.
19	To be talked out of something they have committed to publicly.
20	To have someone competent confirm that the danger is not imagined.

What the full kit adds

You have two of the ten sheets and one of the 20 tables. The **Tabletop RPG Game-Master Session Prep & Campaign Kit** adds the party and character reference (including the column nobody else puts on it — what each player came for), a session-zero questionnaire, a lines-and-veils sheet built to be filled in alone and collected face down, the campaign arc and its clock, a faction board that gets one move a week, a loot, rewards and downtime log, a recap page written to be read aloud, and a between-sessions checklist with a ten-minute fallback. [See the full kit >](#)

AND THE PART YOU CANNOT DO WITHOUT AT THE TABLE

20 improv tables, 472 entries — names, mannerisms you can play in one breath, voices you can hold all night, what a person knows and what would make them run, complications, rumors, what is there when the party goes somewhere you did not prep, faction moves, what a failure costs when damage is the boring answer, what the enemy does instead of dying, rewards that are not treasure, strong starts and endings. Plus NPC, location and initiative cards already imposed with cut marks, and every one of the ten sheets shown filled in.

More Trackers for the Things You Love at ardentworkshop.com. Free to use — please don't resell or redistribute it.

A note on what this is. A game master's working sheet — your campaign, organized on paper. It is system-neutral and contains no rules, statistics, or setting material from any published game; it is not affiliated with, licensed by, or endorsed by any game publisher, and the worked example is invented.