

# Zero Space : Character Creation

Making up a *ZeroSpace* character should only take about 15 minutes, once you are somewhat familiar with the process. The hardest part is thinking up a character background and choosing what kind of character to play. In this chapter, we offer a few suggestions to help you out, along with a checklist of the steps that you should probably follow. However, just because we list them in this order doesn't mean you must. Jump around if it makes you happy: feel free to fill in what you know, and come back to what you don't.

It is up to you to make up a character who can get along with the other player characters and add to the fun of the game. Realism in *ZeroSpace*, as in most games, takes a back seat to playability. Your character can be the most fascinating, detailed character ever written, but if they undermine the fun of the game you have failed to make up a good character.

Fortunately, making up a character is a fairly simple process, and if at first you don't succeed you can try again. It is possible to make up a fun and interesting character who gets along with the other PCs, and in the long run it is much more fun than making up a character that, despite being a brilliant creation, disrupts the game.

## Before You Start

The goal of *ZeroSpace* is to help you have fun with your friends. If at all possible, try to assemble the players and make up their characters together. That way, you can avoid having two or three players with the same focus. It's usually more fun if each character has their own specialties, and their own role to fill.

It can sometimes be difficult to find a plausible reason for characters to stick together. Why would a brooding loner who likes to brood lonesomely ever join a team of space-faring vagabonds? You might consider establishing a reason before the game even starts, by having some previous connection between characters. The previous connection could be something as simple as, "Hey, you helped me fight those bounty hunters that one time". If every character has a connection to at least one other character, getting them past that awkward "getting to know you" stage will be a lot easier.

# Character Checklist

We have found that it's easiest if you create a character by following these steps. However, it's just a suggestion. Jump around if it makes you happy: feel free to fill in what you know, and come back to what you don't.

- Archetypes: what is the character's core identity?
- Background: what is the character's history and description?
- Motivations: why does the character get out of bed in the morning?
- Complications: what keeps the character from achieving their full potential?

Once you have the important parts of the character worked out, then you can start buying attributes, skills, alien traits, gifts, and esoteric powers which are appropriate to the character concept you have in mind.

- Attributes: what are the character's basic physical and mental traits?
- Skills: what does the character know how to do?
- Aliens: is your character a non-human sentient?
- Gifts: what gives the character an edge over most normal people?
- Esoteric powers: what powers set the character apart from normal people?

# Archetypes

When writing up a character, it can be useful to have an archetype in mind for inspiration. Many popular characters actually combine two or more archetypes ("Scoundrel Pilot", "Mystic Knight", "Alien Warrior Engineer" etc.). Coming up with a good archetype can make the rest of the character creation process much easier, because it gives you a clear goal to work toward.

## Goon

Most of the allies and opponents the player characters encounter will not be captains of their own destinies. For better or for worse, they will live their lives carrying out the will of others. If a character is simply following orders, their archetype is probably the Goon, particularly if the character is part of a group of such individuals.

Would you like to randomly generate an archetype? You can!

Table: Random archetype, Table 1

Roll 1d6	Complexity
1	Roll once on Table 2

2-5	Roll twice on Table 2
6	Roll three times on Table 2

Table: Random archetype, Table 2

Roll 1d6	Roll 1d6	Archetype	Roll 1d6	Roll 1d6	Archetype	Roll 1d6	Roll 1d6	Archetype
1	1	Alien	3	1	Gambler	5	1	Sage
	2	Android		2	Gunslinger		2	Savage
	3	Aristocrat		3	Hacker		3	Scholar
	4	Assassin		4	Investigator		4	Scientist
	5	Barbarian		5	Knight		5	Scoundrel
	6	Bounty Hunter		6	Medic		6	Scout
2	1	Brawler	4	1	Mercenary	6	1	Smuggler
	2	Cyborg		2	Monk		2	Soldier
	3	Diplomat		3	Mystic		3	Spy
	4	Engineer		4	Peacekeeper		4	Trader
	5	Entertainer		5	Philosopher		5	Veteran
	6	Explorer		6	Pilot		6	Warrior

You aren't limited to these archetypes, of course. These common archetypes are just here to offer you a jumping-off point for your character.

# Background

In a tabletop roleplaying game, there is a temptation to pay attention to what the character does rather than who they are and why they do it. There is a good reason for this: what the characters can do is what makes *ZeroSpace* a space fantasy roleplaying game rather than some other kind of roleplaying game. However, what makes a game fun to play over the long term is the growth and exploration of each character's personality, the difficult choices the characters must make, and the interplay between characters.

# Personality

How does your character act around other people? Are they serious but kind, grim and menacing, or wacky and easy-going? It's up to you to bring your character to life. If you have a clear idea of how your character interacts with others, you will have a strong foundation to build on when choosing the character's powers and motivations.

For example, what are the character's interests and hobbies? Are they intellectual, scrutinizing the world around them, or are they passionate and impulsive, doing what feels right without analyzing their motivations? How about the character's family? Do they come from a large, close-knit clan, or is the character an orphan? What is their education and their moral philosophy? Each clue to your character's personality will help you portray them realistically, which will add to your enjoyment and the enjoyment of the other players.

## Description

What a character looks like is not as important as their personality, but it does have an impact on how they interact with others and how the players see the character. Describe the character carefully, starting with easily-noticed things like their height and general build. Hair color and general style of dress help emphasize the character's personality. Does your character wear a special costume or uniform? If your character has a special uniform, do they wear it all the time? Does the character have a wide variety of outfits, or would they stick with one they like?

Appearance takes into account such things as species, gender, age, and any mannerisms or odd quirks. Is your character wealthy, dressing in the most expensive fashions? Do they carry themselves loosely, or with a rigid military posture? What do people notice about the character when they first meet? Is your character attractive, or hideously scarred? The more detail you can add to your description, the easier it will be for you and the other players to imagine them.

You don't need to know all of this at the beginning of the first game, of course. If you aren't sure about the details, start with the broad strokes, and fill in the details as the character develops in play.

## History

Unless your character is an amnesiac or was grown in a vat, they will have had years of life experience before the first game starts. Where did they come from? How were they raised? Have they been in the military? Were their childhood years relatively carefree, adventurous, or marred by tragedy? When did they first realize they had ambitions beyond staying on the same planet doing the same job for the rest of their life? Did this realization come suddenly, perhaps as a result of a trauma, or was it something they had always known on some level?

## Motivations

Leaving home is no easy task. Most people never leave the continent they were born on, much less the planet. Space travel is dangerous!

So why do they do it? What makes an individual leave behind the security of a gravity well and become a space-faring vagabond?

Here are a few motivations to get your creative juices flowing. Mix and match a couple, and think of some new ones, if you like. Take notice of the fact that a few of these are morally questionable, and some of them are incompatible with a star-faring lifestyle.

Would you like to randomly generate the motivations of your character? You can!

Table: Random character motivations, Table 1

Roll 2d6	Complexity
2	Roll twice on Table 2
3-7	Roll three times on Table 2
8-11	Roll four times on Table 2
12	Conflicted: roll on table 1 again, and see the note below

**Conflicted:** The character is torn between two mutually incompatible motivations. Roll on Table 1 again to determine the complexity of the character's motivations. When rolling on Table 2, make a note of the first roll and its opposite. The character's primary motivation is the first motivation rolled (and any successive rolls), but they are also driven by the opposing motivation. For example, the opposing motivation of "adventure" is "security".

Table: Random character motivations, Table 2

Roll 1d6	Roll 1d6	Motivation
1	1	Adventure
	2	Asceticism
	3	Audacity
	4	Community
	5	Compassion
	6	Courage
2	1	Curiosity
	2	Detachment
	3	Enlightenment
	4	Exploration
	5	Freedom
	6	Idealism
3	1	Justice
	2	Mercy
	3	Nobility
	4	Passion
	5	Pride
	6	Rebellion

Roll 1d6	Roll 1d6	Motivation
4	1	Security
	2	Materialism
	3	Subtlety
	4	Individualism
	5	Wrath
	6	Fear
5	1	Faith
	2	Responsibility
	3	Secrecy
	4	Isolation
	5	Control
	6	Pragmatism
6	1	Vengeance
	2	Ruthlessness
	3	Fellowship
	4	Serenity
	5	Humility
	6	Traditionalism

# Adventure

Your character has an adventurous spirit and rarely turns down the opportunity for a bold quest or a daunting challenge, as long as the task is noteworthy, risky, and exciting. They tend to carry out any endeavour with a swashbuckling flair. This can be a good or a bad instinct depending on the circumstances.

*In opposition to:* Security

# Asceticism

Your character practices severe self-discipline and avoids all forms of indulgence, typically for spiritual reasons. They may regard those who partake in earthly pleasures with good humour and

patience, or they might look down on such hedonism as a moral weakness.

*In opposition to:* Materialism

## Audacity

Your character is an adrenaline junkie driven by a desire to experience thrills and glory. They crave action, speed, and attention, and often leap before looking. On the positive side, this sort of person often deals well with chaotic situations that require quick reflexes and spur-of-the-moment decisions.

*In opposition to:* Subtlety

## Community

Your character believes that the greatest measure of an individual is in their value to the society in which they exist. They seek to be dependable and helpful to those around them, and they encourage these traits in others. A character motivated by community might choose to work in isolation, but they would do so with the greater good in mind.

*In opposition to:* Individualism

## Compassion

Your character wants to protect others and alleviate their suffering, particularly the innocent and the helpless. Seeing people in danger or in pain brings out the character's strongest instincts to act. By the same token, the character will tend to be quite careful when using violence in public places.

*In opposition to:* Wrath

## Control

Your character detests the chaos of society, and seeks to impose order and discipline. They conduct their own affairs with precision, and they impose that same order on others when possible. If they are truly ambitious, the character might seek to control events on a grand scale as a kind of benevolent dictator or as a mastermind pulling strings behind the scenes for the benefit of the masses, who aren't competent to lead themselves.

*In opposition to:* Freedom

# Courage

Your character chooses and is willing to confront agony, danger, and uncertainty. They seek to face physical pain, hardship, and death with equanimity, and they embrace the opportunity to act rightly in the face of popular opposition, scandal, and personal loss. They will be remembered either as a great hero or as a fool.

*In opposition to: Fear*

# Curiosity

Your character lives and breathes to solve the mysteries of the universe. Their focus might be on cracking the puzzles of the natural world or on unraveling the enigmas of the heart and mind, but whatever their obsession, ignoring a riddle requires great effort. The expression "curiosity killed the cat" comes to mind.

*In opposition to: Faith*

# Detachment

Your character seeks to avoid any emotional entanglements on a personal or professional level. They may feel that such connections would limit their freedom of action, and they may fear the obligation such a commitment entails. If offered the choice between maintaining their detachment or assisting with a cause that supports their other motivations, the character may have a crisis of conscience.

*In opposition to: Responsibility*

# Enlightenment

Your character's true calling is education and enlightenment, both their own and others'. Nurturing talent and preserving or establishing a legacy are key goals in their life. They may seek to provide a moral compass to those in their company, or they may be prone to probe and test others' abilities.

*In opposition to: Secrecy*

# Exploration



Your character lives to seek out new places and new ideas, to "boldly go where no one has gone before." The same old routine is not stimulating enough, and though proper planning is important, cautionary tales are often ignored in favor of seeking the new.

*In opposition to:* Isolation

## Faith

The character believes in something which is not supported by empirical evidence, and this belief gives meaning to their life. They may feel compelled to adhere to a code of conduct inspired by their faith, or they may strive to spread their beliefs to others. Depending on how militant the character is about their faith, their beliefs may cause friction with those who require objective evidence for extraordinary claims, or those whose beliefs conflict with the beliefs of the character.

*In opposition to:* Curiosity

## Fear

Your character makes every effort to avoid injury, danger, and uncertainty. Threats of physical pain, hardship, or death will compel the character to take preventative or palliative action, and they are likely to shift their position when faced with popular opposition, scandal, or personal loss. He who runs away may live to see another day.

*In opposition to:* Courage

## Fellowship

Your character seeks to eliminate artificial barriers between individuals, such as socioeconomic status or political influence. They attempt to treat all sentients as equal in fundamental worth and social status. This may cause friction with those who do not share the character's egalitarian views.

*In opposition to:* Nobility

## Freedom

Your character detests the rigid structure of society, and seeks to escape any imposed order and discipline. They conduct their own affairs with wild abandon, and they disrupt the carefully-laid plans of others when possible. If they are truly ambitious, the character might seek to disrupt events on a grand scale as a kind of "agent of chaos", for the benefit of the masses who are too complacent to free themselves.

*In opposition to: Control*

# Humility

Your character strives to maintain a healthy perspective regarding their own importance in the universe, for in a vast and uncaring universe, what does a single sentient life matter? They are likely to decline honors and rewards, no matter how well-earned, and they are usually polite and respectful even in the face of abuse and deliberate malice. At the same time, since their sense of self-worth is internal, they pay little heed to rude or disrespectful behaviour. In the cosmic scale, such things simply do not matter.

*In opposition to: Pride*

# Idealism

Your character believes in some cause or ideology so strongly that they would willingly die to protect it or uphold it. For example, your character might believe that their worth as a person is tied to their adherence to a code of honor, including such tenets as keeping one's word, appropriate use of force, and respect for rank. Any challenge to these ideals is sure to provoke a strong response.

*In opposition to: Pragmatism*

# Individualism

Your character believes that the rights of the individual hold the highest moral value, above any society or philosophy. The character seeks to be self-reliant and independent, and encourages these traits in others. A character motivated by individualism might work with a team, but their reasons for doing so would be personal, rather than out of any sense of obligation.

*In opposition to: Community*

# Isolation

Your character seeks to avoid exposure to new places and new ideas, preferring the comfort and safety of the known. It may be that they are frightened of what lies beyond the horizon, or it may simply be that they like the world as they know it and feel no desire to discover anything else. In extreme cases, the character may wish to avoid being contaminated, either physically or culturally, by strangers and their uncouth customs.

*In opposition to: Exploration*

# Justice

Your character seeks to ensure that misdeeds are met with appropriate punishment. If the structure of society is such that the judicial system usually works as intended, then the character would seek to deliver criminals to the appropriate authorities (along with evidence of their crimes, if possible). However, if the system is corrupt (or if the character believes it to be so), then the character may decide that the cause of justice would be best served by taking the law into their own hands.

*In opposition to:* Vengeance

# Materialism

Your character wants to amass great wealth. Whether they spend it freely or even pursue philanthropy on a large scale is likely based on other personality traits, but the accumulation of riches is an end in itself for this character. Some might even call them greedy.

*In opposition to:* Asceticism

# Mercy

Your character practices benevolence, forgiveness, and kindness. They make a point of doing so particularly when the recipient is, by any objective measure, undeserving of such consideration. They might do this for any number of reasons, from the purely selfish (e.g., it makes them happy) to the pragmatic (e.g., they believe that by showing mercy, the person unworthy of forgiveness may change their ways) to the altruistic (e.g., they believe that each small act of kindness makes the universe a better place).

*In opposition to:* Ruthlessness

# Nobility

Your character was born to rule and command the respect of their lessers. They may look out for the little people based on a sense of *noblesse oblige*, but they take action because they feel it is necessary and proper to do so, not because someone else demands that they act. At best, a slight condescension is apparent in most interactions with others not of exalted lineage.

*In opposition to:* Fellowship

# Passion

Your character has a visceral, perhaps even savage, nature that they may have to struggle to control. At the same time, they may have a strong sense of loyalty or compassion. In general, your character is ruled by emotions and has to work to fit into a rational world, but they may also have insights that logical people overlook.

*In opposition to: Serenity*

## Pragmatism

Your character believes that practical accomplishments are more important than ideas and philosophies. Honor and ideologies are of little value if they do not produce the desired real-world result. This approach is likely to become controversial when the pragmatic approach violates the ethical tenets of the culture at large.

*In opposition to: Idealism*

## Pride

Your character seeks to personify the ideal of something, whether a culture, species, social class, or profession. They hold to an exacting standard of behavior and expect to be in the public eye, commanding respect for what they represent. They are not likely to appreciate scandals or public slights.

*In opposition to: Humility*

## Rebellion

Your character doesn't fit into the larger society, living as a loner due to prejudice or personal choice. The rebel scoffs at popular trends and pays little heed to public mores. They may seek out other iconoclasts who follow their own drummer or they may just want to be left alone.

*In opposition to: Traditionalism*

## Responsibility

Your character feels that they have abilities or burdens that limit their freedom of action. They have a duty to someone or something outside of themselves, and they feel that casting this duty aside would be selfish or irresponsible. If offered the chance to cast aside this burden, the character may have a crisis of conscience.

*In opposition to: Detachment*

# Ruthlessness

Your character will allow no personal feelings or squeamishness to cloud their judgment. The feelings and well-being of others are irrelevant to the achievement of your character's ambitions. If this means that some must suffer while you claw your way to your objective, so be it: it matters not whether those in your character's way deserve such treatment. Perhaps your character's goals are so lofty that the ends justify the means; perhaps your character is just a heartless bastard.

*In opposition to:* Mercy

# Secrecy

Your character strives to hide information from those who are unworthy of it, or from those who are unready to hear it. Knowledge is power, and power must be kept in the hands of those most fit to wield it. They may attempt to conceal or destroy information in order to prevent its dissemination, or they may seek to discredit those who attempt reveal that which should remain hidden.

*In opposition to:* Enlightenment

# Security

Your character strives to minimize risk, despite the potential reward or excitement. Even the most extraordinary task is carried out with an eye toward avoiding or eliminating anything which might be potentially interesting (and thus, dangerous). Ideally, this will lead to a long life, albeit a dull one.

*In opposition to:* Adventure

# Serenity

Your character seeks to maintain a spiritual, mental, and emotional balance. This may be for spiritual reasons, or it may be a mechanism for coping with the character's inner demons. It's probable that they try to avoid situations that might trigger bad memories or unhealthy behaviors, but learning to face these challenges with equanimity is an important step toward recovery.

*In opposition to:* Passion

# Subtlety

Your character seeks to achieve their goals without attracting attention. Careful planning is usually high on their list of priorities, but success alone is not enough. From your character's point of view, the greatest achievement is one that no one else ever knows about. The most powerful hand is the one that no one sees.

*In opposition to:* Audacity

## Traditionalism

Your character believes in structure, tradition, and the chain of command. They appreciate the value of respecting authority, and of following and giving orders. They thrive on stability, structure, and clear objectives. This can potentially create a crisis of conscience if those orders conflict with their personal morals.

*In opposition to:* Rebellion

## Vengeance

Your character seeks revenge for some past wrong done to them or their loved ones. Any personal sacrifice is worthwhile. Depending upon the character's other motivations, sacrificing others might be worth the cost as well.

*In opposition to:* Justice

## Wrath

Your character exults in causing death and destruction, particularly when the target is guilty or despicable. Seeing people abuse their power or behave in an offensive manner brings out the character's strongest instincts to act. The character will tend to be careless when using violence in public places.

*In opposition to:* Compassion

## Complications

All of the most interesting characters have complicated lives. They may have physical or mental impairments, old enemies that never seem to give up on their quest for vengeance, or plain old social awkwardness. Think of one or two complications for your character. This will add depth to your character's background, and provide an easy way for the GM to come up with stories that are uniquely suited to your character. Additionally, when one of their character's complications causes

a serious problem for them during the game, the player may gain a plot point. Plot points are spent to alter the game world, gain a bonus die, or gain an advantage in combat. See the [Actions](#) chapter for more information.

## Dependence

The character depends upon an environment unlike that of most sentients. They may be distressed by an otherwise harmless environment or substance, such as water or bright light. Alternately, they may need an unusual atmosphere or temperature in order to operate comfortably. If the character is in an incompatible environment without the appropriate breathing gear or protective equipment, they will incur a defense penalty when attacked. While painful and debilitating, a dependence of this sort will not directly kill the character.

See the [Actions](#) chapter for more information.

## Enemy

The character is an outlaw, hated and/or hunted by people more powerful than they are. Perhaps the character is on the run from a government agency, or perhaps one of the character's childhood friends blames them for some tragedy. Maybe the enemy is obsessed with the character, and won't stop pursuing the character until the character falls in love with the enemy or converts to the enemy's world view.

## Gruesome

Sometimes being an adventurer isn't pretty. Perhaps an accident or genetic manipulation has twisted or changed them in some startlingly horrific way. Perhaps the character is from another world or plane of existence and is considered handsome among their own people, but hideous among humans. Whatever the reason, the sight of the character horrifies adults and makes children cry. They may have difficulty in social situations, particularly when meeting someone for the first time.

## Obligation

The character has a duty to a person or organization beyond themselves, which may conflict with their own immediate desires or best interests. For example, the character might be a member of an [esoteric order](#), and called upon from time to time to perform specific tasks. Such an obligation is typically one that the character desires to maintain, despite its occasional inconvenience.

# Character Points

Once you have the the important parts of the character sketched out, you can start writing up the character's abilities. Characters in *ZeroSpace* are created using "character points". The player begins with 30 of these character points, and then spends them to buy attributes, skills, gifts, and so on. (Characters in *ZeroSpace* are extraordinary: relatively normal people would be created with 20 character points.)

## Improving Your Character

Unlike most roleplaying games, *ZeroSpace* assumes that the player characters are relatively complete when they are created. In the books and films which *ZeroSpace* seeks to emulate, characters don't grow ever more powerful as time goes on, as is common in some roleplaying games. However, part of the fun of a roleplaying game is developing new skills and abilities, so *ZeroSpace* uses the concept of "experience points", but the increase in power over time is relatively slow compared to most other games.

At the end of each story arc (every half-dozen game sessions or so), the GM determines how many experience points to grant each player, and each player adds that amount to the "Unspent Experience" on the character sheet of the character they played during that story. If they played more than one character (due to plot requirements, death or incapacitation of the first character, or any other reason), the player can pick which character receives the experience points. If the player receives more than one experience point and played more than one character over the course of the story arc, they can distribute those experience points among the eligible characters as the player sees fit.

Experience points may be spent at any time to improve or modify a character's attributes, skills, alien traits, gifts, or esoteric powers. Each experience point is used just like the character points used to create a character: improving an attribute, buying a skill or expertise in that skill, buying a new gift, and so on. The GM should keep a close eye on any new abilities the character gains, as well as on any increases in the character's attributes that might make the character unsuitable for the game being run. It's never a bad idea for the players and the GM to discuss how the players plan to spend their experience points.

The GM should award experience points to players who role-played exceptionally well and made the game more fun for everyone. Here are a few suggestions.

Table: Awarding experience points

Activity	Award
Showed up for the game	+0 pts



Played the game enthusiastically	+1 pts
Concluded a lengthy series of games	+1 pts
Has the lowest quantity of experience points in the group	+1 pts

Remember that the purpose of the game is to have fun playing, not to rack up the highest score. If it rubs your players the wrong way to receive different amounts of experience points, it may be easier to just give each player two experience points at the end of each story arc and be done with it.

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