

# NCC-1701D — THE RPG

## Gaming in the New Galaxy

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The *Star Trek Role-Playing Game* has been around for several years now, and many of those who have played it in the past have had at least the opportunity to use characters, equipment, situations, etc. from the original series of shows and books that are out on the market, as well as an enormous amount of background information that has been published. As with the first series, *Star Trek: The Next Generation* also comes with a unique assortment of personalities, situations, and background data, but can it be incorporated into a role-playing game as easily as the originals?

Let's consider the all new Galaxy-class Enterprise for a moment. Veterans of the *Star Fleet Battles* boardgame will no doubt recognize this vessel as an X-class Command Cruiser, able to do twice what an ordinary starship could do, faster, more efficiently, and with better special effects. This "new" ship is, according to the writers' guide for the series, is nearly twice as large as the older starship of that name. That's eight times the old living space, filled with a crew of over one thousand people, including officers, crewmen, and their families and children. With a ship that huge, a cunning GM could literally place anything in the path of a group of players, and have a decent chance of pulling it off with little difficulty.

The Federation has changed both a lot and a little in the past century or so, which can be a good or bad thing. Though the Enterprise is still seeking out new life forms and civilizations, the feel of the Next Generation setting is undeniably not one of a military nature. As an example of this, some of the bridge crew seem able to handle several different positions simultaneously. For example, Data is able to deal with the positions of helmsman, engineer, and science officer. Worf, the Klingon bridge officer, is adept at either being a security officer or a communications technician. One big change is the relationship between the Federation and the Klingon Empire. In fact, it was learned in during a particular episode that Worf was orphaned by a Romulan attack on a Klingon colony planet,

and was found by a Star Fleet officer. To honor his foster parents, Worf enlisted in the Academy and is now a member of Star Fleet.

Thus, the Klingons are no longer useful as villains. However, their replacement came easily enough through the introduction of two new alien races: the "Q," and the Ferengi; the former, an annoying super-being (or race thereof), the latter, just plain annoying.

We as viewers of the show have little to go on where the Q are concerned; the only one that we've ever seen seems to be attracted to humans because we don't seem to fit into the scheme of things. We have potential, they say, but we can't use it. Why not, they ask? And then, they try to find out the hard way, i.e., by making the lives of the Enterprise crew miserable.

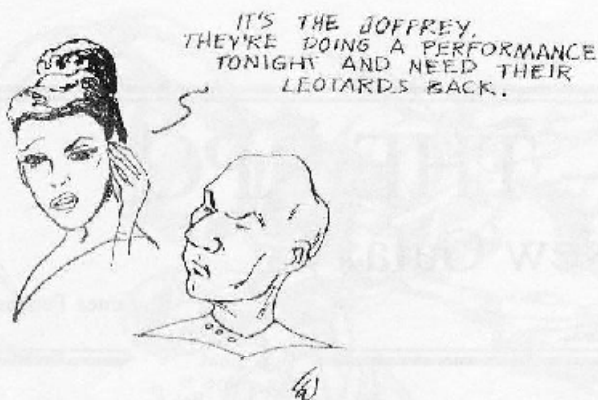
The Ferengi are, on the other hand, nothing less than capitalism itself flung loose onto the galaxy. Any encounter with them is an excuse for them to get something out of it, and I love them because of this. They're not evil, just greedy beyond belief. As such, the Ferengi are perfect encounters where players are concerned. They're not out to conquer the universe; to their way of thinking, it just wouldn't be cost effective.

We didn't get a chance to see the Federation's old enemies, the Romulans until the final episode of the season, but it was worth it. They are exactly the same as the "original" Romulans, meaning, they are out to take over the galaxy, and feel that it's just a matter of time before they do so. Since Romulans look (but don't act) a great deal like Vulcans, they have excellent spy potential in any game situation.



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SPECIAL...





That is the Star Trek: Next Generation universe in a nutshell. How should players deal with it? Well, that is another story, because it is difficult to pinpoint exactly how one should go about role-playing a television show character. One thing is clear, though; the players are best advised to roll up and design their own characters, not using the ones presented on the tube. The characters that we see from week to week are much better used as NPCs, being there during critical moments in a game session to offer advice or guidance, or even to take charge of an event that the players themselves may not be able to handle. The other option is that the players try to take up the mantles of only the "smaller than life," characters, if only because they are easier to role-play. Captain Jean-Luc Picard, for example, makes an excellent NPC because he has a fantastically rich background that the GM can draw upon from time to time. He also has over thirty years of Star Fleet duty under his belt, which few if any gamers would be able to seriously emulate in a game session. Commander William Riker, on the oth-

er hand, presents a much more playable character; he has less experience to deal with, has to keep himself appraised of both what the Captain thinks should be done, and how his orders are implemented. In this manner, Riker makes the perfect away team leader, by providing leadership ability without the player having to memorize tons of information.

Worf should be a delight for any player to take on. His combat skills are nothing less than superb, and he shows great speed and agility. The fact that he is a bridge officer displays that he is intelligent and capable, and yet is very quick to anger, having a strong inclination to initiate violence. On a personal level, he normally acts very reserved, showing great respect to his superiors. Still, you get the idea that all of this is just a cover to hide some very intense emotions buried deep within him, and the mask doesn't always stay up, either.

So there you have it. The newest TV series incarnation of Star Trek has opened up new vistas for role-playing in the Star Trek universe for gamers who remember both the old and the new. With a little work on the part of the GM and the players, a campaign set in such a milieu would provide all involved with much fun and enjoyment, to be shared by all. Until the next time, "live long and prosper", and may things never get "a lot more complicated". Because Star Trek — is back.