

OPEN DESIGN

"The Kobold...welcomes the best and the brightest of the industry to share their knowledge of game design." Jeff Grubb, FORGOTTEN REALMS designer

by Wolfgang Baur and a Team of Design All-Stars

COMPLETE Kobold Guide to Game Design



Essays by Wolfgang Baur and a Team of Design All-Stars Edited by Janna Silverstein Cover by Jonathan Hodgson

Complete KOBOLD Guide to Game Design

© 2012 Open Design LLC

Edited by Janna Silverstein Cover art by Jonathan Hodgson Designed by Stephen Wark

Portions of this volume previously appeared in: The KOBOLD Guide to Game Design, Volume 1: Adventures The KOBOLD Guide to Game Design, Volume 2: How to Playtest & Publish The KOBOLD Guide to Game Design, Volume 3: Tools & Techniques

All Rights Reserved. Reproduction of this book in any manner without express permission from the publisher is prohibited.

OPEN DESIGN LLC P.O. Box 2811 Kirkland, WA 98083

WWW.KOBOLDQUARTERLY.COM

Most product names are trademarks owned by the companies that publish those products. Use of the name of any product without mention of trademark status should not be construed as a challenge to such status. Open Design, Kobold Quarterly, and the KQ logo are trademarks of Open Design LLC.

Contents

Foreword	
A Stranger in an Oddly Familiar Land	v
Game Design	
1. What is Design?	3
2. Designing RPGs: Computer and Tabletop	15
3. The Process of Creative Thought	20
4. Design that Matters	26
5. Seize the Hook	31
6. The Infinite Onion	43
7. Fortunate Accidents	47
8. Basic Combat Systems for Tabletop Games	49
9. More Empty Rooms	59
10. Fantasy Realism	66
11. Designing Magic Systems	70
12. How NOT to Design a Magic Item	75
13. Location as a Fulcrum for Superior Design	81
14. Worldbuilding	87
Enhancing Adventures	
15. Crafting a Dastardly Plot	99
16. Challenge and Response	106
17. On the Street Where Heroes Live	113
18. City Adventures	119
19. The Underdark	125
20. Maps, Monsters, and Bottom-Up Design	130
21. Monster Hordes	136
22. Hardboiled Adventures	142
23. What Makes a Night Arabian?	148
24. The Mystery of Mysteries	151
25. "The Anvil in the Dwarf's Soup"	157
26. Using and Abusing Misdirection	162
27. Stagecraft	166
0	20

WRITING, PITCHING, PUBLISHING

28. The Three Audiences	173
29. Shorter, Faster, Harder, Less	175
30. Buckets in the Sandbox	180
31. Collaboration and Design	187
32. Myths and Realities of Game Balance	193
33. Pacing	197
34. Playtesting	205
35. Promises, Promises	209
36. Failure and Recovery	215
37. Why Writers Get Paid	219
38. Talent Won't Save You	223
39. The Magic Bullet for Publication	228
40. Creative Mania and Design Despair	232

The Ultimate Resource for Gamers, Game Masters, and Designers

In the three individual volumes of the KOBOLD GUIDE TO GAME DESIGN series, a star-studded line-up of game designers laid out concepts, techniques, and advice for enhancing adventures and designing roleplaying games. This volume brings together those essays in one package—a total of 40 articles—featuring new pieces by popular author and designer Willie Walsh, New York Times bestselling author and game designer Michael A. Stackpole, and award-winning designer Wolfgang Baur.

Between these covers, you'll find practical, thought-provoking essays on worldbuilding, creating magic systems, conflict and compelling stories, what to expect when you work as a design professional, and much more. Concrete examples provide models to help you create well-rounded designs and exciting adventures. Your campaigns will never be the same.

With essays by

Keith Baker, Wolfgang Baur, Monte Cook, Ed Greenwood, Rob Heinsoo, Nicolas Logue, Michael A. Stackpole, and Willie Walsh

Praise for the Kobold Guide to Game Design Vol III: Tools and Techniques:

"If you're an aspiring pro this book is a must. If you're a rules hacker like me, this stuff is solid gold." — Berin Kinsman, UncleBear Media

"If you're a GM, a game designer, or a RPG player interested in getting into the design side of how to create your own games, you can't find a better introduction." — Brian Fitzpatrick, Blog Critics



Open Design is a trademark of Open Design LLC.



\$29.99