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pfs2guide._.Table Variation and Creative Solutions

While the goal of the Pathfinder Society is to provide an even, balanced experience that is fair to all players, every table is different, every character is different, and each GM has their own strengths and weaknesses. We understand that sometimes a Game Master has to make rules adjudications on the fly, deal with unexpected player choices, or even cope with extremely unlucky (or lucky) dice on both sides of the screen.

As a Pathfinder Society GM, you have the right and responsibility to make whatever judgments, within the rules, that you feel are necessary at your table to ensure everyone has a fair and fun experience. This does not mean you can contradict rules or restrictions outlined in this document, a published Pathfinder source, errata document, or official FAQ on paizo.com. What it does mean is that only you can judge what is right for your table during cases not covered in these sources.

A GM can (and should) alter aspects of the scenario's description and story as appropriate for the players at the table. The A Welcoming Environment section on pages 485–486 of the *Core Rulebook* provides general guidance about how to make your game inviting and inclusive. A few of these sections benefit from additional clarification and examples in the context of Organized Play.

Unlike in long-term campaigns, players and GMs in Organized Play are likely to have limited time in which to set parameters for objectionable content at the beginning of the game. Furthermore, since Organized Play tables often include people who have never met each other before the game, players might not feel comfortable opening up about what they'd rather avoid right from the beginning. This means that it's all the more important to start with a common ground

for the campaign, to respect what players do share at the beginning of the session, and be adaptable when it comes to modifying content when problems arise in the course of the session. Pathfinder Society games use the Pathfinder Baseline (*Core Rulebook* 486) as a starting point when determining what content is appropriate, both for what is present in the published adventures and what is appropriate for player behavior at your table. Add to the Pathfinder Baseline any additional adjustments that are apparent from the situation, such as if you are running a table with children or if you are in a venue with stronger policies about what is appropriate, such as a school.

GMs are empowered to make descriptive adjustments to avoid topics or situations that would cause discomfort for one or more players at the table, such as phobias or other triggering material. For example, a GM could describe a group of spiders as a group of web-shooting lizards or beetles for the comfort of a player with arachnophobia. Mechanically, if a player had an ability that granted benefits against spiders, it would also grant benefits against these other web-shooting creatures during that scenario. Players might not tell you up-front about everything that could cause them trouble; you might learn partway through the session. If this happens, you can “rewind” the description and start over, tweaking the background context of the encounter, or work with the players to create an alternative solution to get around the troublesome aspect of a particular challenge (see [Creative Solutions](#) below).

As is the case in general when GMing a table, it is also the GM's responsibility to ensure that all of the players at the table are respecting each other's boundaries. If a player refuses to follow along with the adjustment, pushes boundaries, asks insensitive questions, or makes fun of a player voicing discomfort with an aspect of the scenario, the GM should intervene. This intervention might just involve giving the player a warning about their inappropriate behavior, but in egregious or continued cases, the GM can remove the offending player from their table (see [Community Standards](#)).

Whatever changes the GM makes, they should remain true to the fundamental mechanical structure and challenge of the encounter. See the Creative Solutions section below for guidance on how to adjudicate solutions that are not explicitly accounted for in the text of the adventure.

Creative Solutions

Sometimes during the course of a scenario, your players might surprise you with a creative solution to an encounter (or the entire scenario) that you didn't see coming and that isn't expressly covered in the scenario. If, for example, your players manage to roleplay their way through a combat and successfully accomplish the goal of that encounter without killing the antagonist, give the PCs the same reward they would have gained had they defeated their opponent in combat. If that scene specifically calls for the PCs to receive gold piece rewards based on the gear collected from the defeated combatants, instead allow the PCs to find a chest of gold (or something similar) that gives them the same rewards. Additionally, if the PCs miss an NPC who carries a specific potion or scroll that the PCs might be granted access to on the scenario's Chronicle, don't cross that item off—instead, allow the PCs to find the item elsewhere as a reward for creatively resolving the encounter without resorting to combat.

The Pathfinder Society never wants to give the impression that the only way to solve a problem is to kill it. Rewarding the creative use of skills and roleplaying not only make Society games more fun for the players, but it also gives the GM a level of flexibility in ensuring players receive the rewards they are due.

But what if your players accidentally or intentionally kill an important NPC who was supposed to give them a crucial piece of information that's needed for the scenario to progress? This is a tough problem for the GM and requires improvisation. Don't decide the scenario is over just because the old man with the letter was caught in a magical crossfire and roasted

alive, destroying both him and the important letter. Reveal that the letter survived by some twist of fate (it was in a fire-proof pouch in his pocket) or perhaps that the old man had a lackey who was watching from a nearby alley and knows everything the old man did, or another similar explanation. Improvisation will keep your scenario moving forward and help you work around unforeseen obstacles. For more guidance on handling the PCs' treasure and rewards when they use creative solutions, see the Treasure Bundles section.

Secret Checks

In Pathfinder Second Edition, some checks, such as checks to Recall Knowledge, have the secret trait. Secret checks fall into two broad categories. The first category includes checks that characters do not know exist, such as a check against a hidden threat that the PCs did not notice. The second category includes checks for which players would gain significant extra information that their characters would not have if they knew how well they rolled. Recall Knowledge checks are the broadest type of checks that fall into this category. Characters that critically fail a Recall Knowledge check gain false information, so if players know that they rolled very low, they might have trouble avoiding metagaming. Similarly, if the players all rolled low on a check to Seek, they might find themselves tempted to metagame and have everyone roll again because they know that there is likely something that they didn't find.

The secret trait is a tool to help separate character knowledge and player knowledge, but, as listed in the secret check rules on page 450 of the *Core Rulebook*, GMs can at any time allow their players to roll their own results on secret checks. Some scenarios will make recommendations, such as directing GMs to keep a particularly pivotal check's results hidden or to let players roll a string of checks in the open to keep gameplay moving. Unless a scenario says otherwise, GMs are free to choose how to handle secret checks on a check-by-check basis. GMs can keep all secret checks secret, have players roll all secret checks, or

adapt on the fly based on the mood and pacing of the table. If players rolling their own secret checks do metagame—that is, use information that their characters would not have to determine their actions—then inform them that their characters would not have that information and try to steer them away from using it. In general, it can be useful to have players roll their own checks if there are many secret rolls in one section, and useful to roll for the players if you suspect that there will be a strong temptation to metagame or that the extra information of the result could negatively impact the experience for players at the table.

Treasure Bundles

In the course of completing a scenario, characters are likely to encounter, if not acquire, all 10 Treasure Bundles as part of overcoming challenges and inspecting their surroundings. That said, a non-linear adventure might include encounter areas (and treasure) the PCs miss entirely, and there might be small portions of treasure that a group would overlook entirely (such as hidden in a concealed room). As a result, even a capable party might not secure all 10 Treasure Bundles. Taking into account the free consumable items granted to PCs at the beginning of adventures, the wealth earned by Pathfinder Society characters is slightly higher than the standard provided in the *Core Rulebook*. That means that although missing a Treasure Bundle stings, it's accounted for in the campaign.

However, awarding fewer than the maximum Treasure Bundles shouldn't be a punitive tool. Unless recovering a Treasure Bundle is tied to succeeding at key skill checks or making key choices, PCs who overcome an encounter with creative solutions should earn the same reward they would have earned by defeating that foe in combat. Adventures call out special exceptions, such as treasure only accessible if the PCs investigate a particular secret door or agree to an NPC's proposal. If the PCs' actions allow them to bypass the area or encounter where they would have the chance to recover the treasure, it's okay to

relocate the opportunity to a later point with similar requirements to recover the treasure.

Example: The PCs are supposed to attack a keep, and they successfully trick the guards into escorting the PCs to the final encounter with the evil warlord rather than fighting their way in. By tricking the guards, the PC not only skip the guards fight (which has 2 Treasure Bundles associated with it) and never have a chance to pick up the easily-discovered magic wand in the guardroom (1 additional Treasure Bundle), but they also skip a fight with a minotaur (who guards coins representing 2 Treasure Bundles). The PCs should receive credit for these rewards anyway; they overcame the guards encounter, bypassed the minotaur, and would have easily recovered the treasure afterward.

However, escorting the PCs through the keep also means the PCs neither explore the side rooms nor have a chance to find the secret vault where a golden chalice is hidden (1 Treasure Bundle). Finding this vault would have required a PC Searching during exploration and succeeding at a DC 20 Perception check, and the room's rewards cite that the PCs should only receive this reward if they find the room and recover the chalice. In this case the PCs should have a fair opportunity to find the chalice anyway, such as the secret door and room being relocated to the warlord's throne room with the same Perception check DC.

Edicts and Anathema in Society Play

To allow a wide variety of characters in Society play, the rules around edicts and anathema are slightly relaxed. All characters can participate in Pathfinder Society adventures without running afoul of their deity or classes anathema. Assume that the society has taken whatever steps are necessary such that attempting to perform the primary objective of an official Pathfinder Society mission by itself will not cause a character to fall out of favor with their deity.

Likewise, while edicts are valorous actions praised by a deity, a character does not need to perform their deity's edicts to the exclusion of other activities, or if doing so would prevent the smooth progression of play at the table.

Anathema in pathfinder society are always personal. The actions of one PC at a table can never cause another PC at the table to fall. (Though players are

welcome to express their disapproval provided it does not interfere with the progress of the game.)

Remember that edicts and anathema exist to create roleplaying opportunities at the table for your character, and should not be used by the GM to pressure PCs, or by PCs to pressure other members of the table toward specific styles of play.

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