

Primary Setting

Where does the setting take place? Does it take place on a particular planet? A region of a planet? Or does it take place all across the cosmos? Perhaps an underground world? How about Earth itself?

The primary setting doesn't have to be the *only* setting in a series. The action could drift over into other locales, dimensions or even historical eras.

Step 3: Dials

By this point, you should have a good handle on what your series is about. Now, you have to take that knowledge and turn it into something concrete; something that firmly dictates how the series will "feel."

There are four factors, each with its own dial. The dial may be set to any of the listed numbers. Both the GM and the players should decide upon the numbers as they see fit. The GM has the final word on the matter in case of a disagreement.

Seriousness

Seriousness measure how much or how little comedic elements exist in the series.

- 1** The series is somewhat lighthearted with lots of levity, but the focus is still mostly on action and adventure. The comedic elements are just a bit stronger than in other series. **EXAMPLES:** Gummi Bears, The Ewoks, Hero High, Dragon's Lair, The Real Ghostbusters, Hulk Hogan's Rock 'N' Wrestling, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- 2** The series is mostly serious, though comedic elements are present at times (often via "goofy" comic relief characters). Most retro-toons fall into this category. **EXAMPLES:** Thundarr the Barbarian, GI Joe, Transformers, He-Man and the Masters of the Universe
- 3** Comedic elements may occasionally creep into the series, but things are mostly played straight. **EXAMPLES:** Inhumanoids, Sectaurs, Visionaries, Spiral Zone

★ Dials and Published Series ★

In the official series books published by Spectrum Games, you'll see that each series has the dials listed. These are considered the default dial settings for the series, but the GM can alter them to better fit the group's play style.

The series seeds published here and elsewhere forego dials altogether, allowing the GM to set them at whatever levels she desires.

Realism

Realism dictates how grounded in reality (or faux reality) the series' tone and setting are. It must be noted that it's entirely possible for a series to take place in, say, a fantasy realm while still maintaining a realistic tone.

- 1** The series completely throws realism out the window in favor of the surreal, the nonsensical or the improbable. The setting likely has little in common with our known reality and may even be on the outer fringes of what constitutes being an action cartoon. **EXAMPLES:** Captain N: the Game Master, Pac-Man, Madballs
- 2** The series takes place in a reality that more or less resembles our own, albeit with some unrealistic elements (especially in terms of liberties taken with the laws of physics). This is the default level for the retro-toons. **EXAMPLES:** Thundercats, Centurions, MASK
- 3** The series adheres pretty closely to reality, despite a handful of indiscretions. By and large, though, it cuts out some of the more unrealistic elements that pervade most retro-toons. This is the least common level of realism for the genre. **EXAMPLES:** Spiral Zone



Violence

None of the cartoons of the 1980s were particularly blood-soaked, but some had more violence than others. Typically, the syndicated series were afforded more leeway than network shows.

- 1** The series either avoids physical conflicts like the plague or goes for a slapstick type of violence. It is clearly intended for younger audiences than the majority of the action cartoons. Death simply doesn't exist in the series. **EXAMPLES:** The Littles, any of the Scooby Doo series that aired in the '80s.
- 2** The series allows for some physical violence (punches and kicks can actually hit!), but weapons – especially bladed weapons or guns – only succeed indirectly against organic foes. Death only happens as poignant, non-violent sequences (like Jaga's death in ThunderCats) and even then, it's truly rare. **EXAMPLES:** Visionaries, Bravestarr, Silverhawks
- 3** While certainly still within the realms of the retro-toon genre, this series has a slightly darker edge to it in certain respects. Direct physical attacks are more common. The threat of death is real, though bloodshed is still a no-no. "The Movie" rule is in effect for this series (see page XX). **EXAMPLES:** RoboCop: the Animated Series, Transformers: the Movie

Continuity

While most retro-toons were episodic in nature, there was often a sense of history as the show progressed. Some series, though, were comprised of solely stand-alone in nature, while a few went the opposite route and offered episodes that were intrinsically tied together into one encompassing storyline.

- 1** The series is entirely episodic. Episodes never reference events that came before, making it very easy for the GM to write plotlines. After all, she needn't concern herself with maintaining any sense of continuity. **EXAMPLES:** Thundarr the Barbarian, Dungeons and Dragons
- 2** The series is mostly episodic, but past events can affect later episodes. The episodes are usually islands unto themselves, though multi-episode storylines happen from time to time. Most retro-toons belonged to this category. **EXAMPLES:** GI Joe, C.O.P.S., Transformers, He-Man and the Masters of the Universe
- 3** The series is completely serialized. That is, one episode flows directly into the next, creating one epic storyline that spans the entire season or even series. This level also accounts for one-shot mini-series as well. **EXAMPLES:** Robotix, Sectaurs