

The word "FUSION" is rendered in a bold, stylized font. The letters are white with a thick black outline and a grey-to-white gradient fill. The letter 'O' is replaced by a white four-pointed star. The text is set against a background of diagonal grey stripes that fade into a white center.

FUSION

An RPG of Friendship, Feelings, and Space Rocks

by Lauren Bond

CONTENTS

WHAT'S THIS GAME ABOUT?

What Is Fusion?	3
RPGs As A Conversation	3
The Agenda	4
Make The Main Characters' Lives Interesting	4
Play To Find Out What Changes	4
Let The Rules Be Your Guide	4
Make The Characters' Choices Meaningful	4

GETTING STARTED

What Are The Gems?	5
Creating A Gem	5
Creating The Setting	6

HOW DO YOU PLAY?

The Basics	7
The Parts of a Gemsona	7
Stats	7
Sync	7
Tags	7
Character Tags	7
Environment Tags	8
Conditions	9
Experience	9
Moves and Rolling	9
The Moves	9
Moves and The Narrator	10
Scenes and Sessions	11
Scenes	11
Sessions	11
End of Session	11

FUSING

What is Fusing?	12
Fusion Creation	12
Fusion In Play	12
Tags	12
Conditions	12
Experience	12
The Conversation	12

Ending a Fusion	13
If a Fusion Fuses	13
Long-Term Fusions	13
NPC Fusions	13
Fusion Notes and Cautions	13

THE GEMSONAS

The Quartz	14
The Sapphire	14
The Ruby	15
The Pearl	15
The Peridot	15
The Lapis Lazuli	16
The Human	16
The Hybrid	17
Creating a Gemsona	17

THE NARRATOR

The Role of the Narrator	18
Principles	18
Reactions	18
NPCs	20
Creating NPCs	20
Example NPCs	20

ONE-SHOT PLAY

Optional Settings	21
Quarry On River	21
San Elroy	21

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WHAT'S THIS GAME ABOUT?

WHAT IS FUSION?

Fusion, based on the framework of *Apocalypse World* that enables stories of friendship, feelings, and space rocks. One of the major inspirations for this RPG is *Steven Universe*, an American animated television series created by Rebecca Sugar for Cartoon Network. This game is not associated with *Steven Universe*, but the show does provide an excellent touchstone for the tone, style, and pacing of *Fusion*. In this game, players explore the themes of friendship, compassion, and emotional growth.

RPGs AS A CONVERSATION

Fusion is built on the framework of another game: *Apocalypse World* by D. Vincent Baker and Meguey Baker.

In *Apocalypse World*, the Bakers introduce the idea of RPGs as a conversation:

“You probably know this already: roleplaying is a conversation. You and the other players go back and forth, talking about these fictional characters in their fictional circumstances doing whatever it is that they do. Like any conversation, you take turns, but it's not like taking turns, right? Sometimes you talk over each other, interrupt, build on each other's ideas, monopolize. All fine. All these rules do is mediate the conversation. They kick in when someone says some particular things, and they impose constraints on what everyone should say after. Makes sense, right?”

In *Fusion*, the whole group – players and narrator – will work collaboratively to build a world and a story. Sometimes this might mean letting go of an idea. Other times it might mean taking the spotlight. No matter what, the experience of *Fusion* is not created by any single person.

THE AGENDA

The agenda establishes your overall goals for play. It is the reason you are all sitting down and playing *Fusion*. Everyone participating in the game shares in the agenda.

- ✧ **Make The Main Characters' Lives Interesting**
- ✧ **Play To Find Out What Changes**
- ✧ **Let The Rules Be Your Guide**
- ✧ **Make The Characters' Choices Meaningful**

✧ **Make The Main Characters' Lives Interesting**

As a player, you're responsible not just for making your character's life interesting, but also making the lives of the other main characters interesting. As players, be aware of all the characters at the table, not just your own. Work with one another to weave all your stories together. Be collaborative, even when your characters might be at odds with each other.

As the narrator, follow the fiction. Focus on the story of the main characters, not the side characters, unless the story demands such. Have positive and negative consequences for character actions and choices. Apply those consequences when the die rolls and story demand.

Interesting lives are often messy. Characters are encouraged to make mistakes and risky choices. Characters should attempt things they might not be good at so they can learn from their failures and unlikely successes. As players, focus more on taking action and making choices and focus less on how perfect those choices are. As a group, find a way to make it work or choose to adjust the story to fit the action.

✧ **Play To Find Out What Changes**

The world and characters in *Fusion* should not be stagnant. Allow your characters, and the world around them, to change as the story drives it. If nothing changes, there isn't much point in telling a story.

As the narrator, don't become too attached to what you think the story should be. As you play, the story will grow and change. The players may follow different plot threads or invest in characters you did not anticipate. Go with this flow. Be open to your side characters changing in attitudes, status, role, and much more; they are as malleable as the main characters.

As a player, allow your character to change over the course of the story. Let them be affected by the events occurring around them. Their attitudes and perspectives can, and should, shift.

✧ **Let The Rules Be Your Guide**

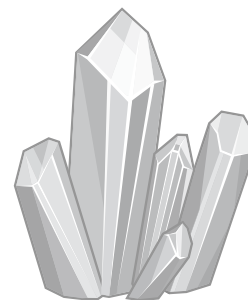
The rules of *Fusion* exist to help you tell a story of friendship, feelings and emotional growth. They provide constraints to foster creativity, a shared base of knowledge to collaborate within, and an element of randomness to keep the story alive and unexpected.

As players when you're uncertain of what actions you can take, look to the rules for inspiration. As narrator, use the rules to determine outcomes, both good and bad, for characters actions. When you use a move and pick up the dice you invite the story to change, often in unanticipated ways. The rules are there to support and guide, to help you build an exciting story but not necessarily the one you imagined from the start.

✧ **Make The Characters' Choices Meaningful**

Characters have the ability to change the world around them. When they make a choice to do or not do something, let this impact the story. Action and inaction should have all kinds of consequences, good and bad. The things the characters do in the world are important – they are the main characters after all – and have great power to drive the story.

There is little reason to tell a story where nothing happens, but it is also important to remember that small, personal events matter, too. Not everything needs to be life and death, even small choices have meaning in the story.



GETTING STARTED

Many thousands of years ago, a technologically advanced species of aliens, called *Gems*, came to Earth. They stripped the planet of its resources, with no care for the life that existed on the planet. Some of the *Gems* didn't agree with this and rebelled. After a long period of fighting with many casualties on both sides, the colonizing *Gems* abandoned their plans on Earth and returned to Homeworld. In their wake they left many corrupted *Gems* that had been damaged in the fighting and now have monstrous forms and animal instincts. There are also many remnants of the *Gem* technology scattered throughout the planet.

The game of *Fusion* takes place in a modern day small coastal town, long after the colonizing *Gems* have left the planet. The town contains about 1,000 people and has the kinds of things you would expect to find in a beach town: school, library, donut shop, pier, etc. It's located on the beach, near some woodland and hills, and isn't all that far from a much larger bustling metropolis. It's the sort of town where most everyone knows everyone, and citizens tend to look the other way when it comes to the weird and unexplained.

WHAT ARE THE GEMS?

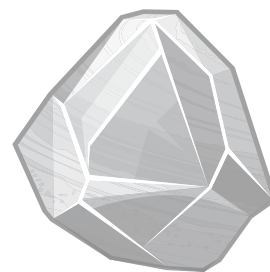
Gems are an alien species composed of a single large gemstone. They have the ability to create and project bodies of hard light from their gem, which they use to interact with the world much like a human. Gems have advanced, often magic-like technology, and strange and special powers. Gems are grown in the ground, in places called Kindergartens, and emerge fully formed as adults. Each type of *Gem* was originally designed and intended for a specific role in *Gem* society.

The players take on the roles of the non-corrupted *Gems* that are left on Earth. They may have participated in the rebellion, or have appeared on this planet later on. Perhaps they were coming back to investigate what happened and their ship crashed. Maybe they were born in a *Gem* kindergarten on Earth long after the war was over.

The *Gemsona* playbooks represent many different kinds of *Gems*. While *Gems* have skills and abilities that help them excel at their designated roles, players should feel free to have their *Gem* take on new skills from different playbooks with their advances.

CREATING A GEM

1. First players select a *Gemsona* playbook (p. 14). Each player should choose a different playbook.
2. Fill in the details for the *Gemsona*:
 - a. **Look:** This includes their overall coloration, hair, skin and eye colors, as well as clothing.
 - b. **Weapon:** All *Gems* have a weapon stored in their *Gem* that they can materialize at any time. The type of weapon has no direct mechanical benefit or impact, instead it changes how players will narrate their moves. The weapons should reflect the tone of the story, for example, guns would not be appropriate in a children's show. Players should not feel restricted to offensive weapons, shields or armor would be equally appropriate.
 - i. In place of a weapon stored in their *gem*, players playing the human have one piece of important or significant equipment, such as a car or a conspiracy blog.
 - c. **Gem:** Where is their *gem* located on their body? What is the cut and coloration of their *gem*?
 - d. **Dance Style:** What dance style best expresses their personality? Ballet? Hip-hop? Interpretive? This is also the dance a *Gem* will perform when they form their fusion.
3. **Stats:** All *Gemsonas* start with a specific stat array. At character creation players add +1 to any one stat of their choice.
4. **Moves:** Players select one or two moves as detailed in their chosen playbook.
5. **Starting Sync:** All *Gems* start with a sync of 1 with each other. Each playbook has specific questions to answer in order to increase starting sync with the other characters.



CREATING THE SETTING

The details about the setting have been left intentionally vague. It is up to the whole group to fill in the missing information before and during play, creating a setting that is unique to your game and its main characters. While the narrator may create a number of the NPC denizens and locations within the town and the galaxy at large, the players have an equal stake in the setting and should work together with the narrator to create details about the city.

Before creating characters the group should start with a brief discussion to get a general sense for the town and the setting at large. This can include determining if the group wants to use the standard setting, or create their own entirely. There are sample starting settings on page 21. The initial discussion should be about broader questions about the town, and the larger social-political context of the city. At some point in this discussion, the group should create a name for the town.

The following are suggested questions to answer before character creation, as a group feel free to add additional questions as you need:

- How does the town feel about the Gems?
 - How are they treated by the locals?
 - What sort of interactions do they have?
 - How does the town feel about the strange events that occur?
 - Do they know the Gems are involved?
- Does the rest of the world know about the Gems in any way?
- How do the Gems fit into the cannon of Steven Universe?
 - How did the Gems get to Earth?
 - Were they part of the rebellion?
 - Do the rest of the crystal Gems exist? Do these Gems know or interact with them?
- What is the local geography and climate?

- What is the Gem base, and where is it located? It could be most anything, such as an abandoned ruin, a crashed spaceship or a warehouse.
 - What sort of technology do the Gems have access to?
 - Do all the characters live at the base?
- What is the socio-political context of the town? Consider how your group wants to handle race, gender, and sexuality.

After character creation every member of the group, including the narrator, establishes one location within the city. This can be a location of any size or scale. It could be the local high school, a specific store, or even a single bench on the boardwalk. These locations should be of some importance to the characters, and the player needs to state why; perhaps it's where they like to relax, or where they work.

After each person has made a location, every member of the group will establish one NPC. This NPC can be any person, or creature if that seems relevant, and should be connected to one of the previously established locations. This will connect that NPC to the character associated with the location. For example, it could be 'Earl Smith' who runs their favorite restaurant.

When creating the NPC, the players should answer the same questions as the narrator when creating NPCs: What are they? What do they want? What are they known to do? They should also define the relationship between their character and the NPC they have created. More details such as qualities or other information can be added to the NPCs by the narrator if needed during play.

After NPC creation the group will have a number of significant locations and NPCs for their town, as well as a starting picture of what the town is like. This is a starting point. All of these items will grow and develop as the story progresses, and both the players and the narrator should continue adding to the details as the fiction demands.



HOW DO YOU PLAY?

THE BASICS

The rules in *Fusion* are designed to support telling a story inspired by the world and setting of Steven Universe, focusing on the feelings and relationships of the characters, with a good dose of action on the side. In *Fusion*, play breaks down into scenes where the action happens, players will narrate their actions, and when it makes sense that will lead into rolling moves to determine the outcome of the action, which will then be narrated by the players. Moves and narration are a back and forth, each informing the other, and helping you craft your story.

In this section we'll go over the parts of a Gemsona, their stats, special abilities and how to track their relationships and feelings. You'll also learn about the basic moves that all players have access to and the overall structure of play.

THE PARTS OF A GEMSONA

As players, you will take on a Gemsona, creating a character for whose actions and decisions you control. Every Gemsona has various mechanical parts to them, outlined in this section.

Stats

Every Gemsona (except The Human) has 4 stats. These represent their overall areas of strength and weakness. Moves will call for a player to roll +stat. In this case the players add their stat to the number rolled on the dice, to determine their final result. Stats can be a maximum of +3. The stats are:

Cut	This represents the Gem's overall proficiency at fighting and other physical actions
Clarity	This represents the Gem's overall proficiency with critical thinking, puzzling, and problem solving
Facet	This represents the Gem's overall proficiency with feelings, emotions, and ability to connect with others
Luster	This represents the Gem's overall proficiency at using strange abilities and things akin to magic

Sync

Sync is a Gem's measurement of closeness with people and other Gems. Sync is a mutual measurement between two Gems, meaning both Gems in the pair must increase and decrease Sync by the same amount whenever called to change their Sync Level.

As a result two Gems cannot have different levels of Sync with each other. As Sync is a mutual stat both players must always agree when an opportunity comes to raise their Sync level. They do not have to agree to lower their Sync level, but if one player lowers the Sync level, it lowers for both players.

All Gemsonas start at 1 Sync with each other, representing that they have known each other for a little while. Other characters, such as NPCs, typically start at 0 Sync, though the narrator may decide otherwise. Various moves increase and decrease Sync. It never goes below 0 and has a maximum of 12.

This list is intended to give an idea of the meaning of a given Sync level. Sync represents both platonic and romantic feelings, and each Sync pair relationship is unique. Feel free to generate your own meanings and ideas. This list is merely a starting place.

Sync Level	Relationship
0	Strangers
1	Associates
2	Acquaintance
3	Colleagues
4	Casual friends
5	Allies
6	Close friends
7	Companions
8	Intimate partners
9	Significant others
10	Life partners
11	Kindred souls
12	Soulmates

Tags

Tags are descriptive phrases that are applied to both characters and the environment around them. Tags can be manipulated by players to their advantage or can impose narrative complications upon characters. There are two kinds of tags: character tags and environment tags.

Character Tags

It's dangerous to be a gem, however, there is no direct system for physical harm or injury in *Fusion*. Instead players can accumulate tags. Most Gemsonas and NPCs have room for