

Sons of the Singularity Style Guide

This document serves as a roadmap to Sons of the Singularity LLC (“SOS”) expectations for work to be published. Updated January 202

How to

* READ THIS WHOLE DOCUMENT. Every section is important.
* We suggest that you copy this document and rename it to use in your own content. This document has all the paragraph and text styles used by SOS embed within.
* We further suggest that you customize your word processor program to quickly and easily show the paragraph and text styles.

Overview

Diversity and Morality

We want to publish works that are reflective of our open-minded and inclusive values. We welcome material from creative authors with diverse backgrounds and strongly oppose efforts to discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender, sex or sexual orientation.

We would like to see some representation of people from different races, cultures, religions, and sexual orientation in the writing, and we would like to see such representation as meaningful to the character’s identity and the overarching story. When depicting people from various cultures, be respectful of the culture and strive for accurate representation, informed with in-culture experience. If you don’t have in-culture experience, you should not be writing descriptions of that culture. Furthermore, in works focused on stories within a particular culture, there should be an emphasis on the experiences, beliefs, and *voice* peoples native of that culture.

Pre-generated characters and non-player characters should be crafted with sensitivity to avoid perpetuation of harmful stereotypes.

Where appropriate, represent historical facts accurately, without overburdening readers with long history lessons. No content which trivializes real world atrocities should be submitted to SOS. No content should remove moral blame for historical (and modern) atrocities away from those who committed (and are committing) such atrocities. If you think that your story arch or content may have sensitive implications, please talk to us before you commit to creating the content.

Overall Feel

The writing should contribute to “Fun” for a wide range of players and play styles. Better to start a scenario with a “bang” which creates excitement from the start.

No slogs please. Red herrings are minimal and only used as part of an Antagonist Reaction. There should be no punishment of PCs for punishment sake. Investigative scenarios need to maintain a balance between investigation and action.

In each section, most of the content is directly usable and relevant during play. There must be GM instructions for incorporating material which is not directly usable during a game session.

Content should be interesting can produce conversation for both players and GM which extends beyond the table. Themes should try to touch on interesting ideas, issues, and knowledge. The work should embody original ideas.

The work must not infringe on another party’s copyrights or moral rights.

Campaign Structure

When writing a campaign or any part of one, the work must follow the SOS Campaign Structure, which is shown in a separate document. This includes the following:

* Scenarios are organized with a “Rundown”, background information, and separate and distinct scenes. Each section divided using appropriate paragraph styles.
* Themes, campaign settings, and genre need to be clear and identified.
* Information and events which link one scene to the next, and one scenario to another must be explicit and identified.
* Scenarios end with an Emergent Climax: the climax or natural conclusion of the scenario’s story, which has not yet been pre-determined, but will be determined by player decisions and agency during play.

Lore Sheets

Lore Sheets are a core mechanic and “differentiator” of SOS products. In creating your content, please also plan on including Lore Sheets. Wherever possible, we would like you to put “settings” content, including background information and historical details into Lore Sheets.

Lore Sheets for Pre-Gens

Most Lore Sheets should be “generic”, meaning that they can be handed out for any pre-generated characters or player made character. In general, it better to draft the Lore Sheet in such a way that the Lore Sheet can be attached to any player character, regardless of that player character’s race or sex.

Content

* You can be creative in describing quests, connections, resources and experiences related to other characters and places.
* You can and should include background and historical information relevant to the setting and game world.
* Lore Sheets can and should relate to specific characters (PCs or NPCs), but should not call out or require attachment to a specific player character (unless it was written for a Pre-Gen) Note that Lore Sheets are for individual characters; what’s on one sheet does not apply to other player characters.
* Lore Sheets should be longer than 50 words and shorter than 250 words.

Organization

Lore Sheets are written in two parts. The upper part of a Lore Sheet contains background and settings information about a person, place, or thing. You don’t have to create “settings” though; the upper part may focus only on a specific and colorful person, a unique place, or an interesting object. In this section, you add to the game world in some way.

The lower part of the Lore Sheet focuses on a player character’s experience or relationship with what was described in the upper part of the Lore Sheet. The lower part of the Lore Sheet should be written in 1st person. This can and should contain at least 1 of the following (and may contain all of these):

1. A resource that is limited and exploitable for benefit, including for example a valuable possession, money, a relationship with an informant, or knowledge of a rival’s fencing habits. This resource should be tied to the upper part of the Lore Sheet.
2. Secret information that is relevant to the campaign and tied to the upper part of the Lore Sheet.
3. A description of a quest or a conflict that can be resolved. For level 1 Lore Sheets, this can be as simple as “make a report” or “establish a relationship”, which may be easily achievable in one game session while pursuing other goals. For level 2 Lore Sheets, the conditions for resolution should be more advanced.

Here is an example of a Lore Sheet. It is annotated for the purposes of highlighting the elements of a Lore Sheet.

My Lover’s Body. [Note that the Lore Sheet starts with a Lore Sheet title which is in BOLD character style] Cade Laurious served as a special investigator for the City Watch. [describe related NPC] He was investigating a growing and politically active cult called the “First Voyagers”. The First Voyagers adhere to a reactionary belief that sentient life is but one stage in a longer journey, and as such, should not be prolonged with resurrection magic. [create a settings element] Laurious believed that the First Voyagers mainted a sinister relationship and a Merchant on the Alderman’s Council; Denetar Choi. [Create plot hook and another NPC] Denetar Choi was killed under mysterious circumstances. Choi was resurrected, yet does not have any memories about how he died. Internal investigators with the City Watch found evidence implicating Cade Laurious with the murder of Denetar Choi. A judge sentenced Laurious to soul-wiping.

My lover, Cade Laurious, was innocent [describe relationship]. I believe my lover was convicted and soul-wiped because his body was beautiful. During the trial, I spoke with many public advocates and administrators, as well as his friends on the Watch [describe relationship that can yield wealth, equipment, information, etc]. They may be able to help me. Laurious’s soul is currently preserved in the Soul Stone vault and someone else is walking around town with his body. I must somehow bring back my Lover, which also means taking back my lover’s body [describe a quest to resolve].

Writing Style Basics

Although none of us at SOS profess to be experts in grammar and writing style, we do strive to write in clear, concise and understandable sentences, and you should too. These guidelines are applicable in most fiction or non-fiction writing, including RPG publications, and should generally be honoured by our writers.

Passive Voice

To the extent possible, avoid the passive voice. By de-emphasizing the person or monster performing the action, you weaken your sentence’s impact.

Weak Verbs

To the extent possible, replace “to be” verbs (“is”, “are”, “was”, “were”, and “am”) with stronger, more descriptive verbs. For example, “the zombies were eating soldiers’ brains” should be changed to something like, “the zombies feasted upon soldier brains”. Critics often accuse amateur writers of overusing “to be” verbs. If you replace “to be” verbs whenever possible, you will develop a repertoire of stronger, more accurate verbs.

Appearance

Formatting Basics rules are used for giving instructions to layout for formatting and appearance. This includes art recommendations.

Pictures

At this time, stock art selection and general placement is handled by the layout specialist. If you want to suggest inclusion of an image you may embed it in the document for reference, but only images delivered separately from the document can be included in layout.

If you suggest or provide an image, you also need to put a META comment with the name of the image.

For SOS to use an image, it must be at least 150 px / inch resolution if the image is an old black-and-white photo, and at least 300 px/inch resolution if the image is a drawing or modern photo. All images must be attributable and either commissioned by SOS or in the public domain (or Creative Commons with Attribution - CCBY).

Boxed Text / Side Bars

Decisions on where to place boxed text, including Lore Sheets and stat blocks, are made by the SOS layout specialist. If you want to suggest placement of boxed text, do so by selecting the proper Paragraph Style (see below). Please do not use / insert tables into the document.

Lore Sheets must be have a Lore Sheet Paragraph Style.

Side-Boxes should be in event style

GM Notes should refer to specific “meta” issues for GMs, such as how to run the game session, how a scene was resolved during play tests, or instructions for connecting to a campaign plot point. Please use GM notes style simply to emphasize an important point or clue.

Lead Ins Block

Every scene of a scenario should start with the following:

Location:

Lead Ins: The scenes which lead into the scene. Notice that Lead Ins is always plural.

Lead Outs: The scenes which follow the scene. Notice that Lead Outs is always plural.

Purpose: 1-3 scentences about the meta-purpose of the scenario. This is not about what the PCs will do; this is about what the scene is trying to accomplish.

The above is in [Basic Paragraph] style, but the Lead Ins, Lead Outs, and Purpose words are in BOLD character style.

Paragraph & Character Styles

Please use the below paragraphs styles, which may not be applied to words within the same paragraph separately. Paragraph styles are a software function in Word and LibreOffice, not just a “look and feel”. We use the below styles:

[Basic Paragraph] = This is the body text. You should probably put a button or tie this style into your toolbar in your word processor. 99% of your text will be in this style.

Header 1 = Chapter / Scene title, used at the beginning of section.

Rules Head 2 = Small section title. This is not used frequently.

Rules Head 3 = sub-section title. This is used frequently to separate descriptions of rooms, characters, events, and different geographic areas within one scene.

Rules Head 4 = **for sub-sub sections. This is not used frequently. Very often used for describing areas within one room (ex. Laboratory desk)**

* Bullets = bullet points. This style should automatically be a “bullet point” in Word. Whether it is or is not, please use this style for bullet points but do not add bullet points in any other way (ex by using ‘\*’ or ‘-’)

image-caption = used for image captions only. Use META to explain where images should be placed.

Stat Box = highly structured content for NPC statboxs

stat box header = first line of a stat box section

military stat box = used for weapons / equipment stats

Rules Box = used for pop-up box emphasizing rules. This should ONLY be used in RPG rulebooks.

GM-Notes = red text for the GM that is a separate paragraph.

Event style = Any text besides GM-Notes, rules box and Lore Sheet that should be in a pop-out or side box.

EVENT BOX HEADER = first line of side box / event style sectioon

narrate = section that is inline but will have a background color, usually used for narration text

META = messages to each other or for layout artist that will be deleted.

Note that you can write with any font, as long as the style is set properly. This paragraph is in the META style, but Special Elite font.

Character Styles

Character styles are used to ensure that proper character style gets to layout. The layout program used (inDesign or Affinity Publisher) can import bolded and italicized text. There are situations where this does not work, such as if a font face does not have a bold version. Furthermore, during layout, we frequently need to replace or change paragraph styles; this overwrites “bold” and italic text which is not part of a pre-defined style. Therefore, use character styles to show bold and italics and all other uses described here.

Bold

Italics

japanese = 日本语 character style for Japanese text. When using any language other than English, you need to create a character style for it, otherwise it will not appear when imported into layout programs.

System B = use this style to show text meant for alternative systems within the same paragraph.

NOTE: This document contains the above styles. In MS Word, LibreOffice, and other programs, Styles can be “loaded” into the new document. You can also filer style by “all that are applied” and “custom.”

Other General Rules

* Insert only one spaces after periods.
* Do not indent paragraph starts.
* Never use spaces in order to align your paragraphs. Spaces should only be used to separate words, numbers, and symbols.
* “Terms of Art” always are capitalized and in bold in the first use.
* Skills should be written with capitals: e.g. Drive Auto.
* When a sentence ends with a quotation of more than one word, the period should be inserted before the end quotation mark, “…was done.”
* Handouts: number each in consecutive order with a signifier relevant to the scenario name, e.g. in a scenario called “Strange Gates, Hidden Demons” the handout would be referenced as: Handout Strange Gate 1: Letter from Demon.
* Foreign language words should be italicized (using the Italics character style).
* “Roleplaying” is treated as one word, no dash.
* When writing for Call of Cthulhu licensed products, the work should also meet Chaosium’s guidelines. This includes using upper-case ‘D’ to denote dice.