TACKY, TAWDRY AND TASTELESS

THE REALITY SHOW RPG

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IntroDuCtion

Tacky. Tawdry. Tasteless. All of these words accurately sum up the "reality show" genre. Yet people continue to flock to their televisions in droves to tune in on the exploits of their favorite dysfunctional celebrities, outlandish "Guidos", child pageant debutantes, or whatever other personalities are being shoved down our collective throats by the networks on any given day. Love it or hate it, this brand of trash TV has captured the imaginations of millions and continues to thrive despite all the negativity of the critics and late-night TV show hosts during their monologues.

This roleplaying game allows us to celebrate these train wrecks that have seemingly entranced the world with their flamboyance, sleaziness and willingness to blatantly wallow in their own debauchery. You and your friends will create your own "show" and play it out, trying desperately to get ratings! Will your show find its way to the top of the dung heap or will it get lost in the muck with the rest of the drivel? Only time will tell.

What You Need

In order to participate in this game, you'll need three six-sided dice, some paper and a pencil. Also helpful: a personality that lends itself well to satire.

getting ThinGs StraiGht

For the sake of saving a bit of space, we will assume that you're familiar with how roleplaying games work. If not, the Internet is full of information for you. *Tacky, Tawdry and Tasteless* (or *TT&T*). One participant is called the Director; he or she is what is known in most RPGs as "the Game Master", but we wanted to be clever and go with "Director" instead. Humor us. The other participants are stuck with the horrifically uninspired title of "players".

There are two types of characters in the game; primary characters and secondary characters. The primary characters are the ones played by the players (could that title be any more hum-drum?); they are the main stars of the show. The Director (yeah, definitely a better title than "players") takes on the roles of the secondary characters; they are the characters that fill out the ranks of the show – the host, the other competitors, etc.).

CreatinG Your Show

Show creation is something that must be hammered out by all the participants. Follow these steps to devise the trashiest show on TV. Scoff if you want, but "trashy" puts butts in seats and that's your goal.

Step One: Elements
Each element defines a particular aspect of the show. They are essentially building blocks that you can use to flesh out your show's concept.

Day-in-the-Life: This is a common element in reality shows. In this type of show, the cameras follow the characters' daily lives, putting it all -- or at least heavily edited portions of it -- on the air for the viewers at home to watch (or mock).

Competition: This series is a competition of some sort and one character or team (depending on how you set it up) will emerge victorious over the others.

Elimination: This element is usually only present in series that also have the "Competition" element. The idea here is that participants are gradually "voted off" or otherwise dismissed from the show at set intervals (every episode, for example) until only one remains. Many of these shows allow characters to gain temporary "Immunity" from being eliminated by winning certain contests/tasks.

Dating: This element is usually only present in series that also have the "Competition" element. In this show, the characters are vying for position as the mate of a suitor (male or female).

Random Roommates: In this series, the characters are all forced to live in a special living environment (usually a house, but who are we to discriminate?).

Celebrities: There's only one thing TV viewers enjoy more than watching people make fools of themselves… and that's watching famous people make fools of themselves. The characters in this show will all be celebrities (made-up or otherwise).

Profession-Based: The focal point of this show is a particular profession (bounty hunting, pawn-broking, etc.). The characters are all involved in a business venture in most cases.

Fish Out of Water: This show involves taking characters from one walk of life and transplanting them into another walk of life (e.g., spoiled rich people having to live on a tight budget).

Step Two: Premise
Now that you have the elements you and your fellow participants would like to have in the show, you need to take it all and form it into a cohesive whole. This involves simple discussion.

If your series has the "Competition" element, the details of how it works must be determined. How do contestants win? What kinds of tasks must be taken? How often are they taken? How are contestants eliminated (if indeed they are)?

Step Three: Popularity
Roll two dice and add them together. This is how many points of Popularity your show starts with. This number will fluctuate as the series progresses. Increasing the Popularity signifies that TV viewers are tuning in, whereas a decrease indicates that the viewers are shunning your show in favor of "Trailer Park Housewives on Meth" or some other equally awful-rific show. If a show's Popularity drops to zero or below, it will be canceled immediately.

Step Four: Name
Every show has to have a name; yours is no exception; the more exploitative, the better. In fact, if it's a racy, raunchy, controversial or cheesy name, the series starts off with an extra point of Popularity. Hey, people aren't exactly watching this stuff to satisfy their intellectual cravings!

Creating the Cast
In most cases, each player will be required to create one primary character, while the Director will need to create at least a few and preferably more than a few. Luckily, creating characters is ridiculously simple and takes virtually no time at all.

Step One: Name and Stereotype
Name your character and devise a short blurb that describes his or her basic stereotype. Here are some examples: "Hypocrite Bounty Hunter", "Creepy Young Beauty Contestant", "Egotistic Jock", "Sassy Chick", "Girl Next Door", "College Bro", "Pouty Emo", etc.

Step Two: Stats
Every character in the game is defined by five stats: Conflict, Allure, Brightness, Athleticism and Controversy.

• **Conflict** measures the character's ability to come out on top during verbal altercations. Such confrontations are a staple of reality television, which makes this the most important stat in the game.

• **Allure** measures the character's ability to get what he or she wants through manipulation, charm, appearance or charisma. Given the reliance upon this kind of thing in contest-based reality shows, this is obviously the most important stat in the game.

• **Brightness** measures the character's intelligence, perception and ability to quickly adapt to situations (such as adjusting to the new TV schedule each fall). While not every reality show star is known for

their Brains, this is still the most important stat in the game.

• **Athleticism** measures the character's adeptness at all things physical, extending to strength, endurance, agility and fighting ability. Catfights, fisticuffs, physical challenges – all these things are commonplace. As a result, this is absolutely the most important stat in the game.

• **Controversy** measures the character's knack for doing anything outrageous or shocking. Hey, it's all about the ratings, right? And, let's face it, controversy sells, which is why this is the most important stat in the game!

Each stat has a score that determines how good the character is in that area. The score is a number with a plus sign next to it. The lower the score, the better the character is. This may sound ass-backward, but trust us – it will make sense momentarily.

> **6+:** Terrible
> **5+:** Decent
> **4+:** Average
> **3+:** Good
> **2+:** Great

To determine your character's scores, roll six dice and discard the highest-rolling die, giving you five scores. If any of the remaining rolls are 1s, treat them as 4s instead. Take these numbers and assign them to your character's stats as you see fit.

For example, let's say I roll a 1, 2, 4, 4, 6 and 6. I discard one of the 6s and the 1 becomes a 4. I assign them as follows: Conflict 4+, Allure 4+, Brightness 2+, Athleticism 6+ and Controversy 4+.

If you'd rather avoid randomness, you can opt to give each stat a 4+. You can then improve one rating to worsen another rating on a one-for-one basis.

Step Three: Positive Qualities

Characters are always more than just a handful of numbers scrawled on a piece of paper. They are a handful of numbers scrawled on a piece of paper with a few qualities thrown in for good measure. Positive qualities represent skills, knacks, interests or perks that might prove to be of assistance to the character. There's no all-encompassing list of positive qualities; instead, you simply make them up yourself. Here are some examples: "Scrappy Bitch", "Deceptive Nature", "Excellent Guitar Player", "Knows a Lot About Cars", "Tracking", "Beauty Queen", "Computers", etc.

You can give your character up to three positive qualities.

Step Four: Negative Qualities

Just as positive qualities help your character out, negative qualities can royally screw him or her up under the right (or wrong) circumstances. They represent various weaknesses, fears, personality flaws, physical problems or any other kind of hang-ups you can concoct. If you choose one that barely limits your character, though, the Director will probably force you to choose a new one. After all, when casting reality TV shows, the "Powers That Be" prefer truly flawed individuals because they make for more entertaining viewing. Here are some examples: "Diminutive Runt", "Disconcertingly Orange Skin", "Fear of the Dark", "Pushy", "Can't Use Legs", "Pervert", "Out of Shape", "Slow-Witted", etc.

You must give your character one negative quality. You have the option of selecting up to two more negative qualities as well, with each one allowing you to choose another positive quality.

Stat Checks

When a character attempts an action in which success or failure is dramatically interesting, the Director can ask for the player to make a check (or make one him/herself in the case of the involvement of secondary characters).

Once a stat check has been asked for, the Director will announce what stat is being tested. The player (or, again, the Director if a secondary character is

involved) rolls a die. If the die comes up equal to or higher than the relevant stat score, the character is successful.

That's the basics of how checks work. Now, let's look at some of the wrinkles, so to speak.

Qualities

If one (and only one) of a character's positive qualities would help him or her out in the task at hand, the character's controller rolls a *bonus die* in addition to the die normally rolled and uses the highest-rolling die for the check result.

If, however, one (and only one) of the character's negative qualities would hinder him or her, the character's controller rolls a *bonus die* in addition to the die normally rolled and uses the lowest-rolling die for the check result.

Should a situation arise in which both a positive quality and negative quality would affect the character, they cancel each other out and the character's controller rolls only one die as normal.

Opposed Stat Checks

Many actions will be opposed by another character (primary or secondary). Seeing as how these shows are all about confrontations and tension, this will probably be the case most of the time.

Both characters roll (well, both participants, but let's not get nitpicky!).

• If one character succeeds while the other fails, the character that succeeds is **triumphant**. This generally means that the losing character is out of the scene and cannot participate in the game until the next scene (see "Structure" on page XX). He or she storms off, is unconscious, or is so stymied that they can't even put any words together. The details are up to the Director.

• If both characters succeed, it's a **stalemate**.

• If neither character succeeds, nobody comes out on top and they both **blunder**!

Dramatic Checks

It's a known fact that fans of reality TV love it when the stars go head to head in a dramatic fashion, be it a contest, a shoving match, a test of wits, a battle of insults or simply a good old-fashioned knock-down drag-out! This is the stuff that viewers salivate over -- waiting and watching in hopes of one of these moments to break out.

Before an opposed stat check is made, the Director can declare the check to be *dramatic*. A dramatic check is handled just like a regular opposed check, except that the results may affect the show's Popularity.

• If the result is **triumphant** and the winning character's check result was 6, the show gains a point of Popularity.

• If the result was a **stalemate**, the Director rolls a die. The show loses an amount of Popularity equal to half of the die roll (rounded up). Stalemates are boring for TV viewers. They want to see tremendous success or laughable failure, not inconclusive results.

• If the result was a **blunder**, the show gains a point of Popularity, because audiences like to see people make fools of themselves.

EDit Tokens

Okay, let's cut to the chase. The term "reality show" is something of a misnomer in most cases. The majority of the shows are anything but real life. They are heavily edited -- sometimes-scripted -- chunks of pseudo-reality, packaged into easily consumable products for the masses. That's why we allow the players to… ermm… adjust the show a bit. How do we do this? With Edit Tokens, of course.

Earning Edit Tokens

Edit Tokens are earned throughout the course of an episode. Players can earn them via certain results during a dramatic opposed check (see "Opposed Stat Checks") or during Commercial Breaks (see "Commercial Breaks"). Another way to earn them is to play to the tropes of the reality show genre (see below).

It's important to note that Edit Tokens are given to the player, not individual characters. This means that if a player is controlling more than one character and earns an Edit Token, he or she can spend it to help any of his or her characters.

Playing to the Genre

Whenever a primary character acts in a way that embraces the reality show genre, the Director should award the player with an Edit Token. Below, we'll list some examples of such behavior:

• Confessionals (declare that you want to do a confessional and gab a bit!)

• Backstabbing another character (there's little room for loyalty in reality TV)

• Forming an alliance with another character (competition-style reality shows only)

• Doing something that will inevitably lead to conflict

These are just examples, mind you. It's not a definitive list, as such things are very situational.

Ultimately, the Director is the one who decides what is worthy of an Edit Token and what isn't. Sucking up to him or her may be in the player's best interest.

> ### Edit Token Limits
> Players shouldn't be given too many Edit Tokens for acting in accordance to the genre. While there's no hard and fast limit, we recommend cutting a player off at two Edit Tokens per segment. This is in addition to Edit Tokens earned from dramatic opposed checks and Commercial Breaks.

Spending Edit Tokens

You can spend Edit Tokens in the following ways:

Oh No You Dit'unt! You can spend an Edit Token to force a character to re-roll a successful check they just made. The second result must be kept, even if it's better than the original check. This option can't be used to force yet another re-roll of the same check.

Try Harder! You can spend an Edit Token to re-roll a check one of your characters just made. The second result must be kept, even if it's worse than the original check. This option can't be used to allow yet another re-roll of the same check.

Re-Write! You can spend an Edit Token to change something about a scene. The Director can veto your change if he or she feels it's detrimental to the show, though you'll keep the Edit Token.

I Ain't Goin' Nowhere! You can spend two Edit Tokens when one of your characters is ejected from a scene due to losing a non-dramatic opposed check. In return, your character is still on the losing end of the check, but can continue to participate in the scene.

Left-Over Edit Tokens

Once an episode ends, all Edit Tokens go bye-bye, so don't hold back! Spend them like it's your last day on the island (or in the house, or whatever)... because it very well may be.

Structure

There are four terms that you need to become familiar with. These are terms that help define the game session (and even game sessions to come).

An *episode* generally lasts for an entire game session. The Director determines when an episode is over, which is often at either a cliffhanger or after some goal/storyline is concluded.

During the course of an episode, there will be four *segments*, with each segment being separated by a *commercial break*. Thus, it will go like this:

- Segment 1
- Commercial Break
- Segment 2
- Commercial Break
- Segment 3
- Commercial Break
- Segment 4

As with ending an episode, it's up to the Director to determine when a segment ends. Usually, it's at a relatively dramatic moment. As a rule of thumb, each segment should last roughly 30 minutes of game time.

Scenes are much more difficult to quantify, as they are more fluid. Any time the show would cut to another place or time, a new scene begins. This is usually the case, anyway. It's perfectly acceptable for the Director to cut back and forth between continuing scenes. Cutting back and forth does not end a scene.

Using Segments to Organize Your Episode

Segments are useful tools for orchestrating what happens.

Segment 1: Generally speaking, Segment 1 should introduce the problems or obstacles the characters will face later in the episode.

EXAMPLE: It is discovered that money is missing from the pawnshop's cash register drawer.

Segment 2: During this segment, further information about the problems come up as the characters attempt to deal with them.

EXAMPLE: As the primary characters start looking into the missing cash situation, they learn that a female employee has been going on a spending spree recently.

Segment 3: It is during this segment that things really start to move along. Tensions are high as the problems are confronted directly or indirectly.

EXAMPLE: The primary characters confront the spend-happy employee, only to find out that she received the money from one of the other employees, who has been trying to woo her for some time now. They decide to set up a trap to catch him red-handed.

Segment 4: This segment represents the wrap-up. Most or maybe all of the problems faced during the episode are concluded (at least to some degree). Sometimes, these problems are left lingering so they can be resolved later in the series.

EXAMPLE: The trap goes off without a hitch and the male employee is caught swiping money from the drawer while nobody was around. There is a nasty altercation and he is fired from the store.

Commercial Breaks

Each segment of the show (aside from Segment 4) ends with a commercial break. During this commercial break, the Director rolls two dice and consults the Commercial Break Table.

Product Placement

Sponsors pay the bills. Reality stars collect a paycheck for playing versions of themselves and it is the sponsors who give this money to the networks. Frankly, reality show participants have to play nice and endorse whatever products the network wants them to endorse. So, having a sponsored episode wherein the players go out to a particular restaurant or have to make something with tools from a big box home supply store or even if a racy lingerie company has the players put on a fashion show, it gets their company name out there! Having players push a certain product by using it again and again is also a great way for endorsement money to roll in. Perhaps a struggling soft drink company has bought up significant ad time, so the players must be seen enjoying that product time and again in as many scenes as possible, even referring to the product by name.

What do they get for their troubles? A well-placed (note, the word "tasteful" does not appear here in any way) product endorsement can earn a player more editorial power, because the sponsors are the Illuminati of reality TV pulling the strings from their thrones way up high. If one player refuses to accept SavLots Cola as their preferred drink for breakfast, lunch and dinner, well, that player will get less screen time. And, as long as players do not dismiss or talk ill of the product, advertisers are happy. A wet t-shirt contest using the cola in question is certain to be ratings gold. After all, these advertisers knew what business they were getting into, and in this age of viral videos, driving sales of their product is what it is all about, and advertisers are even savvy enough to hold their own promotions, so, if an episode has this wet t-shirt contest, a savvy advertiser will set up wet t-shirt events across the country that following weekend.

Now, let's talk about how product placement affects the show in game terms. If, during an episode, some manner of significant product placement comes into play, you can re-roll a result on the Commercial Break Table. This can only be done once per episode and the second roll must be kept, even if it's a worse result than the first one.

Commercial Break Table	
Roll:	**Effect:**
2	**Terrible Commercials!** The ads placed during this break are all wrong for this show's audience! *Roll a die. The show loses an amount of Popularity equal to half of the roll (rounded up).*
3	**Too Much Spotlight!** One of the characters has been focused on too much and the fans have noticed! *The player with the most Edit Tokens loses half of them (rounding up). If no player has at least one Edit Token to relinquish, the show loses a point of Popularity. This player randomly selects on of his or her characters; the selected character cannot have Edit Tokens spent to help him or her out for the entirety of the next segment.*
4-5	**Viewership Drop-Off!** For whatever reason, people are tuning out! *Each player loses an Edit Token. For each player that doesn't have an Edit Token to relinquish, the show loses a point of Popularity.*
6-7	**Steady Viewership!** While not exactly drawing in new viewers by the masses, more people are watching the show during the last segment. *The show's Popularity is increased by one.*
8-9	**Fan Favorite!** The fans are enjoying the actions and presence of one particular character. *One random player gains an Edit Token.*
10-11	**Ensemble Boost!** The show's fans really dig the interaction between all of the characters. *Each player gains an Edit Token.*
12	**Viewership Surge!** Something that happened has drawn in a lot of new viewers! *Each player gains an Edit Token and the show's Popularity is increased by 2.*

ADvice for the director

The Director is very much responsible for taking hundreds of hours of taped footage and coming up with thirteen 1-hour episodes, each more shocking than the last! And as much as people can create their drama, the Director is encouraged to help push things along by manufacturing some drama of their own, whether it is sending all the players to a wet t-shirt contest, replacing their birth control with placebos, or sending a group of private investigators to find a long lost relative.

Mechanically, the Director should try to bring out the best (worst) in the players, playing on their strongest and weakest traits and hoping for the greatest conflicts. If one player has a hair trigger temper and is prone to R-rated outbursts, this should be capitalized on. Or if a character hates foreign cars, that also must be brought to the forefront. It is the Director's job to get the characters out of their comfort zones and force them to confront their own shortcomings, because, after all, isn't it wonderful when reality television can teach us something about ourselves?

Representing Edit Tokens

This is just the beginning of the *TT&T* game line! Within months, we'll release a massive 425-page core rulebook that expands upon these rules exponentially. We also have plans for no less than eight series books, including "Trailer Park Housewives on Meth", "Arizona Shore", "Survival Island From Hell", "Chef Porky's All-American Cooking Show" and more!

Also... **April Fools!**

The truth is that *TT&T* is a perfectly playable game and can be a great deal of fun for a group of players looking to lampoon the reality show genre. But this document is *it*... unless, of course, our fans demand more, in which case, who knows?

At any rate, we hope you enjoy this game for what it is -- a satirical look inside the strange world of reality television.