

AMP

march 2023 | volume 19 | issue 6 | ampatutd.com



TOP SECRET

DATE: MARCH 1ST, 2023

TO: [REDACTED]

FROM: [REDACTED]

SUBJECT: CLASSIFIED INFORMATION

WE ARE WRITING TO CONFIRM THE INQUIRY YOU MADE
CONCERNING [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

CAN CONFIRM THE FOLLOWING:

UTD profits off

war, destruction, and death.

NO ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN YET REGARDING [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] PLEASE RESPOND WITHIN THE
FOLLOWING TIME FRAME PROVIDED [REDACTED]

Can mutual **HATRED** bring us
together?

How a **BASEBALL HORROR** simulation
turned me **TRANS**

The absolute **CORRECT** way to
play D&D

AMP

Editors' Desk Spring is Here!

Happy Spring, Comets! The weather is always changing here in Texas, but March is known for being the start of spring so we're going to celebrate it.

Changing weather has us thinking about our climate, which unfortunately is suffering from a lot of environmental damage. UT Dallas has taken quite a few measures to be a more environmentally conscious university. There's composting available for food in the dining hall and recycling options all over campus. Our classroom and administrative buildings are "green buildings" that are energy efficient, and the Office of Sustainability assists in making UTD more and more eco-conscious.

Since we attend such an environmentally conscious school, it's important that we Comets also do what we can to be green. If you live on campus, you can get recycling bins and use the trash stationed near your dorm/apartment. All members of our community can also reuse as much as they can. Glass product bottles purchased don't need to be thrown away once they're finished, they can be repurposed

as flower vases, cups, and much more. Dallas may not be the best city for public transportation, however, we're also not the worst, and it's a better option for the environment than driving a car. The DART buses and trains are great ways to get around the city. Especially if you're intending on going downtown, the train is a great alternative to driving. It also helps that UT Dallas provides DART passes for students currently enrolled in the semester. Not only will you be reducing your own personal carbon footprint, but you'll also be saving tons of money by avoiding using gas and Ubers.

It's important to note our individual decisions to recycle and use eco-friendly transportation will never outweigh the damage done by large corporations. The oil and gas industry has few regulations that prevent them from creating irreversible damage. However, that's just one more thing we can fight to have.



Bethel Bekele - Editor-in-Chief



Sebyul Paik - Managing Editor



Victoria Bruno - Asst. Art Director



Ally Duong - Web and Copy Editor



Gavin Arriaga - Marketing Director



Danny Torres - Asst. Art Director



Ethan Wu - Asst. Marketing Director



Sneha Raghavan - Asst. Copy Editor



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Contributors

Meghana Bommaredy, Sneha Raghavan, Nico Chuck, Willow Teaney, Noorziyan Rabudi, Sophie Chau, Nidaa Lafi, Ethan Wu, Mickey Dolphin, Akie Kasie, Ally Duong, Gavin Arriaga

Designers

Sinclair King, Izkra Chavez, Susan Zhang, Sean Sepdham, Lyssa Copeland, Brianna Bitar, Michelle Le, Lenox Smiley, Victoria Bruno, Cherissa Banag, Danny Torres

Media Advisor

Jonathan Stewart



Editor-in-Chief

Bethel Bekele

Managing Editor

Sebyul Paik

Assistant Art Director

Danny Torres

Assistant Art Director

Victoria Bruno

Web/Copy Editor

Ally Duong

Assistant Copy Editor

Sneha Raghavan

Marketing Director

Gavin Arriaga

Assistant Marketing Director

Ethan Wu

Disclaimer

Opinions expressed in AMP are those of the editor or of the writer of the article and are not necessarily those of the university administration, the board of Regents of the University of Texas System, or of the operating board of the magazine.

Have an opinion?

Think you're funny?

Write for AMP! Contact us at ampatutd@gmail.com and follow us on social media @AMPatUTD for more information.



AMP HOROSCOPES

• p i s c e s •

2/19 - 3/20

Aries: Report that professor. Through Title IX. For realsies.

Taurus: You should listen to people. That idea everyone says sucks? It sucks.

Gemini: Still haven't tried antidepressants yet, huh?

Cancer: Cut that person out of your life. Like, seriously this time. You know who I'm talking about.

Leo: Make money before you spend it. Y'know...basic financial responsibility.

Virgo: Yeah, you can wear 5 layers when you go out. That's fine I guess.

Libra: Check your emails. Please... I'm begging you.

Scorpio: See page 8.

Sagittarius: You can ask for help. It's okay. I promise.

Capricorn: Have you tried, like... making a choice? Do that probably.

Aquarius: We're entering the age of Aquarius! Change your life or die.

Pisces: You're the main character now! Yeah! YOU! Don't get used to it.

SEBYUL PAIK

senior | literature
Capricorn sun, Leo
moon, Capricorn rising

ETHAN WUU

freshman | ATEC
Libra sun, Aquarius
moon, Virgo rising

UTD EATS

Reverie Bakeshop

Reverie Bakeshop is a vegan bakery that is a 7-minute drive from campus. You should know that they sell out items as the day goes on, which means you have to get there as early as possible for the best possible selection — and they open at 7am.

But once you get there, whatever time that might be, everything that remains is worth trying. The crowd favorite was easily the breakfast biscuit (\$5.50), which consists of vegan egg, cheese, and sausage sandwiched in between two fluffy biscuits — a bit too fluffy, in my opinion. I would have preferred less carbs and some more filling, but I would still absolutely get this again.

There's not much to say about the chocolate fried donut (\$3); it tasted like a standard donut — that is to say, delicious. The chocolate chip cookie (\$2.65), which is also gluten-free, was similarly delightful. It was chewy, with the perfect combination of dough and chocolate chips.

The current seasonal brownie (\$3.50) was Valentine Day's themed, with a cute heart-shaped fondant and tasty strawberry jam. But the brownie itself was a little too cake-y; I would have preferred a more fudge-y brownie. Still, Reverie Bakeshop ticks off all the boxes: delicious, affordable, welcoming, and good for animals and the environment. Get over here ASAP.



Cinnaholic

Richardson's other vegan bakery is one of over 70 locations across the U.S. This particular Cinnaholic has beautiful purple walls with cozy seating and friendly staff. The most important thing you should know is that you can customize pretty much anything: for example, the cinnamon rolls start at \$5.50 and you can add whatever toppings you wish at \$0.50 each. Each frosting flavor is an additional \$0.25 — I recommend cream cheese frosting with chocolate chips, chocolate sauce, and powdered sugar.

But on this visit, when faced with menu anxiety, we opted for a specialty “very berry roll” (\$7.25), which is topped with cake batter, strawberries, blueberries, raspberry jam, and powdered sugar. The fruits were fresh and the warm, tasty roll had a strong cinnamon flavor and just the right amount of sweetness.

But my favorite item from this visit was easily the s'mores cookie (\$2.50), which is limited edition — so get it while you still can! The vegan marshmallow is surprisingly stretchy despite lacking gelatin, and the chocolate was gooey and delicious.

Another highlight was the soft serve (\$4), which comes in three flavors — we opted for pineapple.

It was refreshing and had such concentrated flavor; you could feel it in every bite. You can also order a scoop of cookie dough (\$3.99, either chocolate chip or snickerdoodle) by itself and add one topping. Not wanting to suffer a heart attack from sugar overdose, we opted for strawberries. I will definitely come back again... and again... and again as I try out menu combinations from the endless possibilities.



DJ Showcase:

Sai Vaddavalli

All successful ships need a captain - and, in this case, a particularly enjoyable adventure soundtrack. At Radio UTD, this responsibility falls to senior math major and station manager Sai Vaddavalli. On a typical day at Radio, he can be found keeping tabs on every aspect of the station's operations, from hiring and training new DJs to planning and marketing events, all the while keeping a steady stream of music playing in his cubicle as he overlooks the day's programming.

Each Wednesday night, Vaddavalli swaps his management to-do list for a seat at the Radio table as one of the hosts of *Royal Donuts*. So named, he explains, as a reference to J. Dilla's album *Donuts*, which Vaddavalli considers one of the best produced albums, and as an homage to his previous Radio show titled *Hear the Kings*. Preceding his co-hosts Hilwna and Zahra, Vaddavalli kicks the show off at 9 PM and introduces his audience to a variety of genres each week, ranging across hip-hop, R&B, electronic, world, and others, all presented with his goal to aim this show at everybody and anybody that enjoys music in the slightest.

"The main draw for *Royal Donuts*, in my opinion, has to be its variety," Vaddavalli said. "I can guarantee that every listener will walk away with at least one song that they thoroughly enjoy each show."

Over the course of three hours, *Royal Donuts* allows its hosts to bring a diverse collection of music to the audience, intertwined with lively interactions between Vaddavalli, his co-hosts, and active listeners as they tune in together. The hosts have all worked together previously, with Vaddavalli and Hilwna co-hosting *Hear the Kings* in the past and spending time on air with Zahra as guests. This, Vaddavalli explained, allowed their co-hosting trio to naturally fall into place; their combined music tastes are similar enough that they can share love for their favorite artists on air, while also maintaining the variety that *Royal Donuts* is known for.

"We all offer a lot of versatility and diversify the range of the music being played on the show," Vaddavalli said. "It represents the wide variety of music that can be played on our show, like a box of donuts."



Vaddavalli has incorporated this inclination for variety into his entire experience at Radio, ever since starting out as a freshman perusing an org fair and stumbling across the student media tables. Since getting involved four years ago, Vaddavalli has grown from being a DJ trainee at the station and names Amanda, the previous station manager, as a great mentor throughout the various positions he has held at Radio. Vaddavalli also notes that the trips taken with his staff, such as traveling to Baltimore last year, have become defining moments in his career by allowing opportunities to explore new cities, their cultures, and how other college radio stations operated. Through travel, events, and hosting multiple shows, Vaddavalli notes a shift in how he has gotten involved over the years.

showcase by: sneha raghavan
design by: danny torres

"I used to be very reclusive my first year here, but I've gained more experience and interacted with a lot more people," Vaddavalli said. "It's not something I get to do often, so I didn't take it for granted at all and took advantage of everything it had to offer."

As he wraps up his time at UTD, Vaddavalli notes how his music taste has changed along with his own growth. The shows he has hosted with Radio have been a testament to the development of his music taste, starting out in underground hip-hop and discovering more music in a variety of genres. Though *Royal Donuts* will be wrapping up this semester, Vaddavalli plans to make the show an opportunity to showcase these discoveries and encourage interactions between music fanatics, leaving his mark as station manager by creating and continuing the diverse, accepting environment that drew him to Radio in the first place.

"Going into the end of my 4th year with Radio, I have definitely grown a lot throughout my time here," Vaddavalli said.

**“I’VE GAINED A LOT OF
CONFIDENCE IN MYSELF
AND FOUND A COMMUNITY
THAT I FEEL TRULY
ACCEPTS ME FOR
ME.”**



DEETS

Album on repeat:

Donuts - J. Dilla

Vibe of your show:

Texas weather (varies by week)

Favorite song recently played on your show:

135 - Capital STEEZ

Favorite character:

Uncle Iroh - Avatar The Last Airbender

Go-to coffeeshop order:

Anything with caramel in it

Temoc v Enarc:

Enarc

The elite pizza topping:

Buffalo chicken

Zodiac sign:

Aries

Favorite obscure animal:

Manatees

Something trivial you strongly hate or love:

I love pacing, especially around the office.

Relaxation with Ratford

The esteemed expert is back with how you can get the most out of your Spring Break!



How do you find a lyapunov function without dying?

I dunno. I'm just a rat. You can probably find it in the lost and found or something.

What do I do if my own thoughts won't let me relax?

Try not thinking at all! I do it all the time and I feel pretty good most of the time!

What's a good spring break destination?

Hawaii! That's totally not overdone! Join your fellow white people in eroding the culture!

I can't go anywhere for spring break this year — what is there to do around Richardson?

Leave cheese out for your local rat (me).

Chill music recs?

Lo-fi beats to chill and eat cheese to.

Please fix my test anxiety?

Listen to the previously mentioned lo-fi beats to chill and eat cheese to.

Sometimes I have so much to do I just lie down and don't do anything. How do I... not do that?

Drink lots of Monster Energy until you enter a crazed state of sugar-induced mania. Don't worry about your kidneys.

How do you get your pre-med friends to chill out for five minutes?

It's scientifically impossible for a pre-med student to relax. They have no chill, they will never have chill, it is simply their natural way of being. Majestic.

Favorite comfort food?

Cheese.

My friend keeps telling me that they're too busy with classes to hang out. Do you think they're just avoiding me?

If not, how can I get them to relax?

Are you a comp-sci major? If yes, they probably are avoiding you. Please shower. If not, then just kidnap them and bring them to Dave and Buster's or something.

Where's the line between self-care and skipping all your classes to nap?

Still take naps, but take them in your classes!

I like reading horoscopes for fun, but every time I bring it up my friend keeps going on about how they're not real.

How do I explain that it's not that serious?

Explain to your friend how that's like, such Scorpio behavior tbh.

How can I relax when I need an internship?

Unpaid internships are just exploitation from the bourgeoisie! Reject corporate rule! Demand fair pay!



NICO CHUCK

freshman | psychology

Ratford's manager. Please tell me if you find a rat roaming the campus.

The Community-Driven Baseball Horror Sim That Made Me Trans



Blaseball” is a community-driven baseball horror simulation video game that made me trans — sort of.

A more accurate description of my interactions with said game would be that “Blaseball” played a pivotal, but not exclusive, role in me realizing I was and am a transgender woman. I am not even remotely the first nor the last person in the game’s community who has had that experience — and even by extension, “Blaseball” is not even remotely the first nor the last video game in general whose community has led to people having experiences quite like my own.

The premise of a video game and its community being itself the catalyst for substantial self-discovery may seem completely absurd to those who haven’t spent time in certain spaces on the internet (and for the lot of you that have, don’t worry, I’ll try and make this essay somewhat enjoyable to read while you have your playlist of hour-and-a-half-long video essays running in the background). Even if this does seem reasonable, it still will take a bit of context to explain why something adjacent to sports betting, a concept traditionally associated with masculinity and capitalism rather

than queerness, can be lumped in with, say, the role-playing shooter “Fallout: New Vegas” or the mountain-climbing platformer “Celeste” (prototypical examples of games co-opted by the LGBTQ+ community as being queer).

I discovered “Blaseball” back in the summer of 2020 by watching a YouTube video promoting the game made by journalist Quinns at People Make Games, later enshrined in “Blaseball” canon as “The Anchor.” After creating an account on the website and choosing a team to be a “fan of” within the game as it were (I went with the Houston Spies), I joined the Discord server linked on the website. This Discord turned out to be the primary source of communication for fans of “Blaseball” and even the game developers themselves. But while that wasn’t necessarily a huge shock to me given my prior interactions with Discord servers at large, what did surprise me was just how unprecedentedly kind people were when interacting with newcomers like me.

But the nature of the community isn’t as unprecedented as it may seem at a first glance. “Blaseball” was conceived in the beginning

design by: cherissa banag
layout by: izkra chavez

stages of the COVID-19 pandemic by a team of indie developers as a representation of the frustrations increasingly felt within western neoliberal society. These frustrations manifested in such game mechanics as players being literally incinerated at random by “the system” during simulated matches (cough cough justice system cough cough healthcare) and an evil in-universe owner of the League who makes decisions for the sake of increasing profits and shareholder removal. This, as one may expect, led to widespread negative consequences among players (cough cough capitalism cough cough conservatism) culminating in “Blaseball” itself being swallowed by a black hole and said owner being overthrown and destroyed by players. These themes are obviously attractive to those of various minority groups with genuine grievances against the state of society today — the LGBTQ+ community of course, but also racial minorities and neurodivergent people just to name a few examples. And with “Blaseball” itself giving very little description as to what in-game characters look like or how they identify, it is no surprise that so many famous players are headcanoned as queer by fans.

When I was encouraged to add my pronouns to my Discord account, something inside of me was hesitant to list the pronouns I had been using up until that point, he/him, and opted to simply go with “any pronouns” for the time being instead. This identification wouldn’t stick around forever, of course. However, I certainly wouldn’t have felt as comfortable taking this vulnerable step for an at-the-time-cis-identifying-male if it weren’t for the community being so obviously understanding and celebratory of decisions of this nature. Regardless, as I became more acclimated to the quirky and my own identity I came to the conclusion that I was, in fact, a girl. The “Blaseball” community continued to play a role in being a safe space for me to explore the different facets of gender transition, and I am all the more happy for it to this day.

Again, I wouldn’t necessarily say “Blaseball” was The Thing that led to me coming out to myself and the world. There were quite a few discussions with my parents, my therapist, and online friends in other supportive communities along the way. At the very least, however, I could pretty fairly characterize the game and its community as a veritable entry point to the kind of self-reflection that I hadn’t engaged with up until that point in my life. I simply didn’t really even know that trans people existed prior to sometime in middle school at the earliest and didn’t come to see queer communities in a positive light until another few years after that.

For those people without exposure to LGBTQ+ culture growing up, discovering a new favorite video game that just happens to be diverse and has an equally diverse community surrounding it may just be the beginning of a journey for one realizing and celebrating a new self. (I should point out that the aforementioned games along with “Blaseball” are lauded as being of high quality by many even not on the “inside” as it were.) It may seem ridiculous that a favorite transfeminine mountain climber, gay post-apocalyptic outlander, or asexual agender pitcher may be a model of admiration enough for one to change their own name and pronouns. But it isn’t the games and communities themselves making someone transfem, gay, or agender: it’s the self-reflection that the games and communities freely encourage and discuss that is important for those who wouldn’t know to do so otherwise.

By the time you are reading this article, “Blaseball” should have hopefully booted back up after a roughly year-and-a-half hiatus. I eagerly anticipate seeing you on the mound soon! (Or more accurately, Discord server. But that doesn’t have quite the same ring to it.) Look for the giant squid holding the popcorn bucket and foam hand — it’ll help you out from here. You have my word.



WILLOW TEANEY

freshman | math

My preferred middle name is from a television show I’ve only seen approximately 9 episodes of

Divestment Campaign: SJP



UTD profits off of war, destruction, and death. Here's how.

Our university, like all American universities, has an endowment fund which is a pool of money that it collects from donations. These donations are critical to an institution's ability to make profits, which it needs to be able to invest in academic research, university infrastructure, and student life. In order for universities to make the most out of their endowment funds, they invest their money and assets into the stock market to make a profit.

Every year our university, alongside the other UT and A&M institutions connected through the University of Texas/Texas A&M Investment Company (UTIMCO), invests their collective endowment funds in hundreds of corporations with the stated goal of creating "the world's leading endowment fund, making a lasting positive impact on the future of Texas and beyond." Yet contrary to this goal, these institutions are pouring tens of millions of dollars into the world's largest weapons manufacturing and arms production companies in the world, including Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, Boeing, General Dynamics, and Northrop Grumman. As of August 2020, UTIMCO had about \$52.5 million worth of weapons, weapon systems manufacturers' debt, and equity securities. Investments into these corporations that are responsible for fueling war, military occupation, and human rights violations are a stain on the legacy of our institutions and leave a lasting negative impact on the world.

The average student at UTD has probably heard very little, if any, information regarding our university's investment activities — but for individuals whose families live in parts of the world impacted by the violence facilitated by these corporations, ignorance is not an option. From Palestinian to Kashmiri to Yemeni students and beyond, our university is profiting off of the subjugation of their families and communities overseas. It is for this reason that the Students for Justice in Palestine, alongside the Young Democratic Socialists of America, are leading a divestment campaign demanding that UTD removes our endowment funds from corporations that kill people, not just in a metaphorical sense but in a real and literal sense.

This anti-militarism divestment campaign has a clear message to our university and to UTIMCO: divest our endowment funds from Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, General Dynamics, and Boeing now. Why these five companies? Because they are the largest weapons manufacturing and arms producing companies in the world. Almost every war in recent decades has been fueled by their products. Here's just a handful of their crimes:

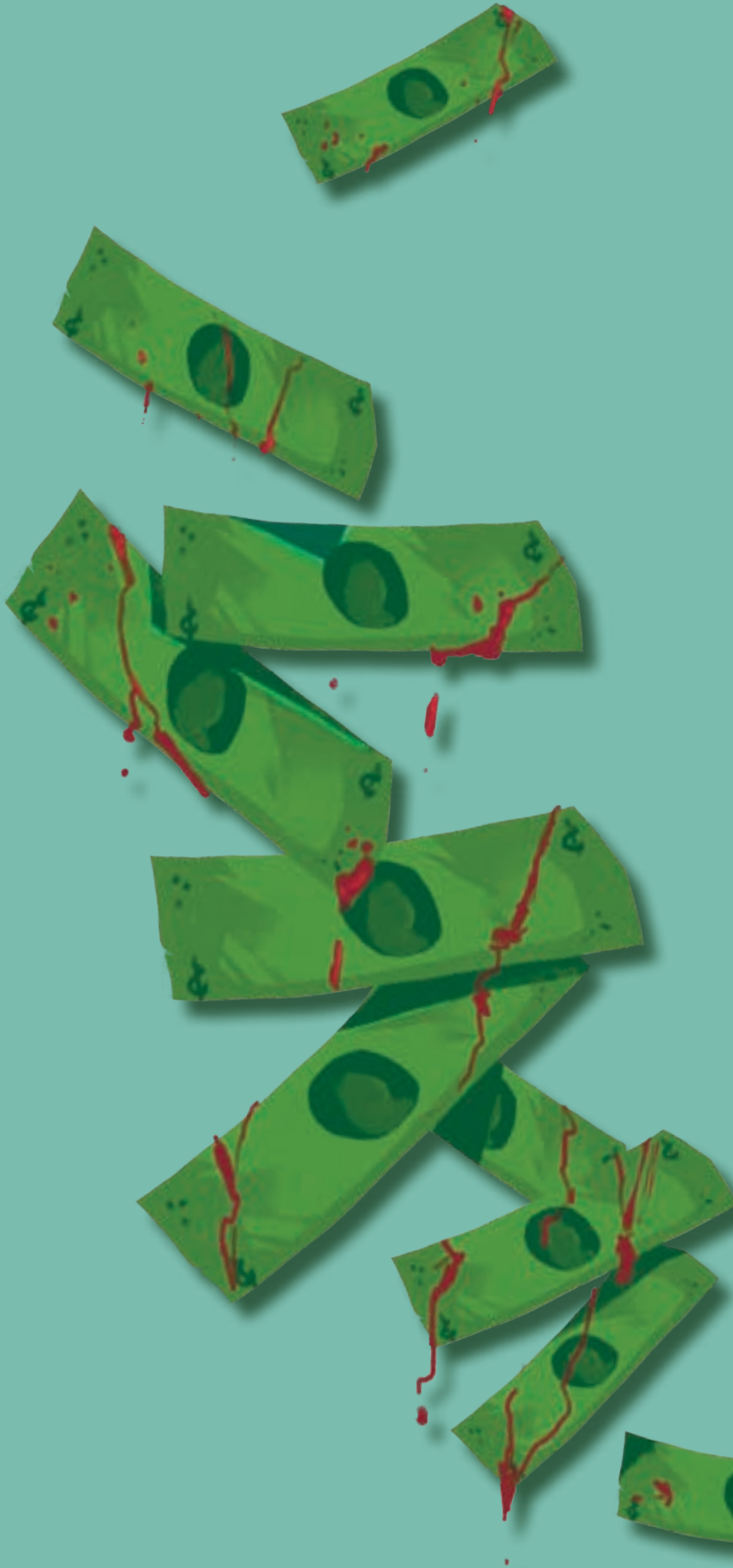
Currently, UTIMCO has a total of 22,911 shares, or \$9,549,551, invested into Lockheed Martin, the world's largest defense company and contractors in the world. From 1999 to September 2021, Lockheed Martin has spent \$493.6 million on lobbying efforts to influence U.S. policies, including lobbying for tax breaks, increasing the defense budget, promoting army missile defense, and more. Since its inception, Lockheed Martin has played a facilitating role in many gruesome wars around the world. During the 2006 Lebanon War, when Israel conducted a ground and aerial bombardment of Lebanon that severely devastated infrastructure such as villages, bridges, and seaports and destroyed tens of

thousands of homes, many of the weapons — like their Apache helicopters — were supplied by Lockheed Martin. That war resulted in the deaths of 1,183 people, a third of them children. Again in 2009, 2014, and 2018, we witnessed Lockheed Martin supply the apartheid state of Israel with products ranging from weapons systems to F-16 warplanes and much more, aiding their military forces in killing well over 3,500 people in total.

The next company on our list is Raytheon. Raytheon has \$64.4 billion in revenue as of 2022, 96% of which is derived from its defense sector. Raytheon is the world's second-largest military company, which manufactures missiles, bombs, components for fighter jets, and other weapon systems used by the Israeli military against Palestinian civilians. Raytheon has supplied the Israeli government with a diverse array of weapons, missiles, bombs, fighter jets, military drones, and warships, often gifted to Israel through the U.S. government's Foreign Military Financing program. The weapons are used indiscriminately against Palestinian civilians, resulting in casualties and the destruction of civilian homes and infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, water, and electric systems. The illegal naval blockade of the Gaza strip is administered through the Israeli Navy's 4.5 Sa'ar missile ships, which utilize Raytheon's Phalanx weapon system. In addition to human rights violations in Palestine, Raytheon has developed directed energy weapons that emit radiation for the U.S. Department of Defense for use in Afghanistan and Iraq and has since marketed to prison, police, and security authorities. Raytheon is a major supplier of arms to the Saudi-led coalition engaged in a war against Yemen, which indiscriminately targets civilians.

Boeing is the third company UTD pours funds into. Boeing primarily produces aircrafts, and it is the weapons manufacturing company with the second largest defense revenue in the world. It





manufactures approximately half of all commercial and defense aircraft fleets worldwide, bringing in \$93.4 billion in revenue in 2017. That same year, revenues from the United States Department of Defense and U.S. government contracts made up 31% of Boeing's total revenues, with contracts to customers outside of the U.S. and foreign military sales making up 55% of company revenues. Boeing has developed and produced the Arrow 3 missile in collaboration with the Israel Aerospace Industries, and it has marketed the Israeli Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) military drones to the United States. Israel has utilized missiles, explosives, and F-16 aircraft supplied by Boeing to attack Palestinian civilians and infrastructure. Additionally, the Israeli navy's Sa'ar missile ships are equipped with Boeing's Harpoon missile system to enforce the illegal naval blockade of the Gaza Strip. Boeing's war crimes are not limited to Palestine. Saudi Arabia's destructive war in Yemen has been armed by Boeing. The Hindu nationalist Indian state utilizes Apache and Chinook helicopters in its settler colonial project in Kashmir. Boeing products have been used for surveillance at the US-Mexico border. Scan eagles, manufactured by Boeing, have been used to assassinate activists in the Philippines.

General Dynamics (GD) also designs, manufactures, and sells military weapons and equipment, such as armored fighting and robotic combat vehicles, tanks, artillery systems, aircraft guns, and cybersecurity systems. As of 2022, it is the world's fifth-largest military company, producing \$38.5 billion in annual revenue, 80% of which comes from its defense sector. GD provides the Israeli military with a wide variety of weapons, as well as integrating its technologies into Israel's weapons systems, such as fighter jets and armored combat vehicles. The weapons manufactured by GD have been used by Israel to attack Palestinian civilians, destroy civilian homes, and civilian infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, water, and electric systems. GD also plays a part in immigrant biometric surveillance and monitoring of the U.S.-Mexico border, further militarizing the border.

Lastly, there is Northrop Grumman. Northrop Grumman is one of the world's largest military companies and develops missile systems, manned aircraft, high energy laser systems, surveillance and reconnaissance systems, electronic warfare systems, and training and logistics support. In addition to the manufacturing of arms, Northrop Grumman specializes in creation of mass biometric surveillance, such as the Homeland Advanced Recognition Technology System (HART), which would have the ability to store information of more than 500 million individuals and support at least 720,000 new data entries daily. Northrop Grumman has already worked in the past as a contractor for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), manufacturing border security surveillance for over 40 ports of entry along the U.S.-Mexico border.

And believe it or not, these are just a handful of these companies' crimes.

Last year, on February 28, 2022, UTD President Richard Benson

sent an email out to all students stating that UTD is an American institution of higher education that is “committed to democratic principles both at home and abroad,” and it will “hold in contempt those who would subjugate a free people through military force.”

“The hypocrisy and discrepancy between our university’s verbal statements and actions is clear as day. We call on our university to do better.”

It is because it is against the backdrop of The University of Texas at Dallas’ moral commitment to social, political, and economic justice that we, as a coalition of students and student organizations, call on our university to divest its stocks, funds, and endowment from the aforementioned companies.

This isn’t just a matter of international politics. When our university invests our endowment funds in companies that are facilitating the killing and oppression of people here and around the globe, it is intentionally and directly taking a political position against marginalized groups. Divestment is our vehicle to actively speak out and reject this stance. We understand the power of divestment from the valiant students who pushed their universities to divest from South African apartheid in the latter half of the twentieth century. Today, we draw inspiration from the many divestment initiatives on the rise all over the country. As we witness students from other institutions actively take a stand against their universities’ role in profiting off of war, death, and oppression, we feel empowered to mobilize our student body at UTD to do the same.

To our student body, we call on you to not remain silent and complicit after being made aware of these destructive actions of our university, and we call on you to support our call to

#DivestfromDeath. We call on the UTD Student Government, the elected body that supposedly exists to speak to administration on behalf of the student body and our interests, to adopt a resolution that asks for the following:

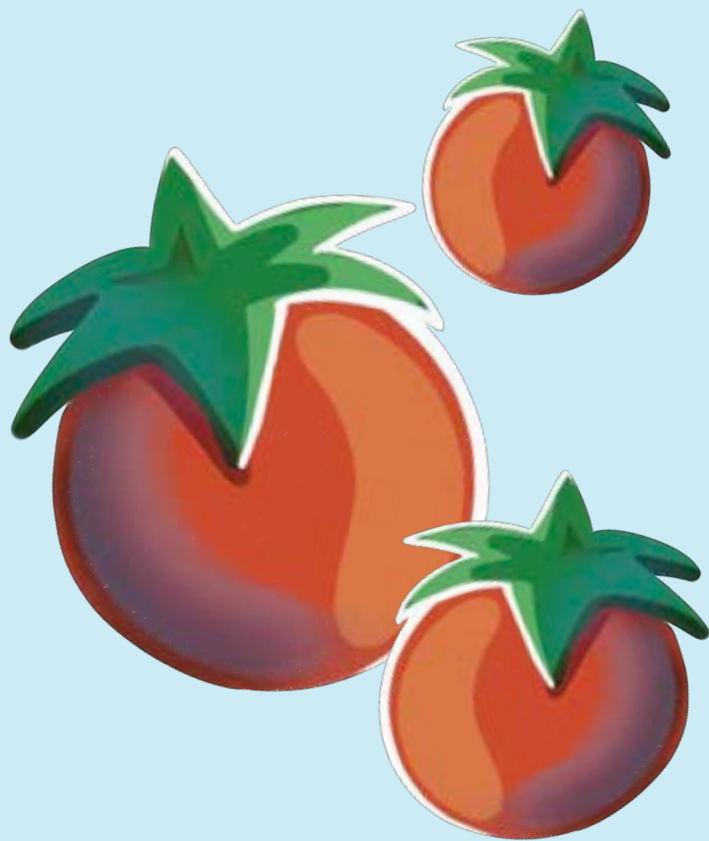
- * For UTD to divest its endowment funds (sell shares) from corporations complicit and directly facilitating war, occupation, policing, militarism, and death around the world.
- * For UTD/UTIMCO to adopt a transparent investment policy.
- * For UTD/UTIMCO to develop a Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) criteria that guides our university in making ethical and morally responsible investments.

So long as our university supports the killing of our families and communities abroad, we will remain unwavering in our commitment to hold it responsible and to demand that it does better.

Sophia Chau
Nidaa Lafi
Noorziyan Gosani



The Unifying Power of *Hateable People*



It's 11:47 p.m. You have two quizzes, a discussion board, and a paper due at midnight. You should be finishing them like a normal, responsible human being. Instead, you and seven other people sit huddled around a game of Mario Party 8, like geniuses. All is fun and joyous, except for one critical detail: one guy just absolutely cannot shut up. Every other second, he tells everyone what they're doing wrong, gloats about winning the minigames, and immediately blames luck when things go wrong. He also makes it excruciatingly clear that he's been playing this game since he was 2, and it's okay if no one else is as brilliant and dashing a Mario Partier as he is. Basically, he sucks. Unfortunately, he's also in the lead. You watch in horror as he thoroughly trounces, out-lucks, and bullies your other friends for forty-five minutes, sure to win and learn no lesson and continue to be the least enjoyable Mario Party companion of all time. However, on the last few turns — just before the player in last place breaks down crying (because you can always tell) — the three losing players share a sharp, determined series of nods behind the tyrant's back. Suddenly, the three former rivals band together to lay the monster low, coordinating minigames and on-the-board actions with clockwork precision and synchrony that puts the entire crowd at the edge of their seats. Despite the fact that only one player can win, they pool all of their energies into their goal, even if it means throwing one or two of them under the bus every so often. In the final moments, everyone cheers as the trio takes the victory, and the disgraced Mario Party pro hangs his head low at the epiphany of the most powerful universal truth: spite unites people to accomplish anything.

In professional wrestling, a “heel” is a person who engages the audience by being as comically unlikable as possible. Not only do they beat up the fan-favorite hero, they do so with underhanded tricks, a mischievous grin, and all the arrogant swagger of Robbie Rotten himself (rest in peace, king). Although not every horrible person in life is as exaggerated or staged as WWE heels, the idea of people coming together to triumph over someone they all hate is neither a new nor uncommon idea. In fact, linking arms with the enemies of our enemies is the driving force behind major aspects of our daily lives, even if it’s not as readily apparent as it should seem.

America’s National Churchill Museum states that Winston

Churchill once remarked, “If Hitler invaded Hell, I would at least make a favorable reference to the Devil in the House of Commons.” This referred to the fact that despite Britain’s wariness of Russia at the time, both countries were able to put aside their differences to act on their mutual disapproval of the Nazi regime and fight on the same side of World War II — a concept that later bound America to the Allies, as well. Of course, various other instances of spite-driven unity occur throughout history — especially against Britain — which speaks volumes about the ancient reliability of hatred as a team-building source.

In recent years, the concept of “canceling” captures a more casual application of this phenomenon. Politicians, comedians, social media influencers, actors, and corporations go through various hoops to appeal to whatever niche corners of the internet might possibly like them, but whatever groups they manage to gain favor from pale in comparison to the universal nature of canceling. As soon as someone in the public eye is caught with less-than-favorable behavior or rhetoric, a much larger following than they’ve ever engaged with shows up to make sure everyone knows to stop liking them. While not taken seriously at first glance, the swift boycott and dissemination of information regarding canceled figures proves a strong example of how collective disdain brings legitimate economic impacts on a regular, large-scale basis.

Furthermore, the easy and frequent identification of what people don’t like gives a strong sense of collective priorities, and therefore an easier time understanding who and where is safe for certain individuals. In the case of a homophobic tweet by a UTD professor within the past year, the sudden outcry from a number of UTD’s student organizations and students reinforced the campus as a place where members of the LGBTQ+ community are safe and supported by their peers.

The grassroots unification of people with an enemy in common took place in the last presidential election as well. Liberals, leftists, and anti-Trump conservatives all managed to put aside their differences to march to the polls under one chant: “Settle for Biden.” Not only did voters gather their strength to kick Trump out of office, but Pew Research confirms a higher percentage of the population voted than has been the case in decades. In the most consequential political election in the nation, the greatest incentive for people to work together wasn’t a hope for good policy under a strong leader, but for not-completely-horrible policy under literally anyone other than Trump.



Even in media, the element of someone to hate gives the audience a closer connection to the protagonist, as well as a greater reason to stay invested in how things turn out. The classic American underdog story necessitates an overdog for the hero to beat, and popular media like Star Wars, The Boys, and The Lion King wouldn’t have the same bite without Palpatine, Homelander, and Scar. A good villain who crystallizes the ideas we demonize gives us something to root against, and the way we sympathize and bond with the protagonist and each other over this makes a work all the more satisfying when the villain loses.

Just as everyone can forget the ways in which they’re dissimilar to boo and jeer at WWE heels, the power of “screw this guy in particular” unifies people more effectively than any other motivation to work together and get things done.

Although the heels in our lives and society look different and pose varying levels of legitimate threat, they give us something to work towards (or against) and remind us of a valuable common thread we have with our fellow humans. While the things we love to loathe might not always deserve to be celebrated, there’s a certain beauty in the power of friendship that comes from the power of sheer unadulterated hatred.



ETHAN WUU

freshman | atec

Intellectual Genius — pictured eating \$30 worth of sushi when he meant to order \$15.



Furries are Friends, Not Foes

For many internet users, hearing the word “furry” can evoke a sense of either curiosity or dread. For those who don’t know, furries are a subculture of people with an interest in anthropomorphic animals. Someone’s anthropomorphic persona, or “fursona,” is an original character and/or representation of that person as an animal. These characters often exhibit human qualities like intelligence, speech, the ability to walk on two legs and wear clothes, and so on.

Growing up in the age of the internet, various subcultures and fringe groups have become more available to us now than ever before. Furries are a great example of a subculture gaining widespread recognition through the internet, although the public perception of furries isn’t entirely accurate. Most of the general public seems to think of the furry community as some sort of kink or fetish, however most furries will tell you otherwise. For example: me! I’m a furry — or I suppose I’m a subcategory of furry called a scalie, since

my fursona (technically scalesona) is a gecko — but either way I’d like to debunk some common misconceptions and get the inside scoop on what being a furry is about.

Firstly, Furries are everywhere — not just on the internet, but in everyday life as well. In fact, UTD has an extraordinarily active furry community. This makes perfect sense considering that DFW is one of the largest furry hotspots in the country. Every spring, the city of Dallas hosts a convention called Texas Furry Fiesta, which is the fourth largest furry convention in the United States by attendance. Attendees travel from all over the country to experience this four-day celebration of the fandom, with good reason! Speaking from experience, there’s an infinite number of ways to enjoy yourself while attending a furry convention. One example is live music, which can span across any musical genre you can imagine. I’ve attended rock concerts, raves, even drag performances at furry conventions before. Other examples

include artist markets and dealer spaces — many of these sellers are local, independent vendors who make a living from tabling at these events. You’ll also find panel discussions on a range of topics from crafting tips, to live podcasts, to Q&As with popular creators in the fandom. There are even support panels for disenfranchised groups like trans furries or furries of color, where people can come together and talk about their experiences and acknowledge their intersectionality with the furry community. Because of this, I believe that furry conventions are some of the most fun, welcoming, and creative celebrations of fandom culture you can find.

Being a furry isn’t all about partying (although it’s certainly a perk). Many people in the furry community take pride in its creative endeavors as well. There are an array of games, podcasts, music, and books all made by and for furries. Art and media are the community’s bread and butter, it’s how many furries make a living. There are numerous jokes online about

how popular furry artists make boatloads of cash by drawing anthropomorphic animals for a living, and while that can be true, the average furry artist is typically a lot smaller in scale. Most of the furry artists that I personally know are supported by a small but loyal following of friends and patrons who essentially pass the same \$50 bill around by constantly commissioning each other for art. Some of these artists are eventually able to support themselves full-time through their work, but many view it as a hobby rather than a career. On the other hand, working full-time as a furry artist can be very rewarding! There are many examples of artists who do illustration, modeling, music or writing and have garnered a great deal of popularity and financial gain from it. People who make fursuits are a particularly good example of this. For those unaware, fursuits are custom-made costumes of anthropomorphic characters — many consider them to be a form of cosplay. In my opinion, the skill, artistry and engineering it takes to create a beautiful, functional, wearable piece of art that must be both durable and comfortable cannot be overstated. Fursuit makers, you are stronger than the U.S. Marines.

It's one thing to hear about what makes the furry community worth exploring from my own perspective, but alas, I'm just one furry. So, I've consulted a handful of other folks in the community for their experience, advice, and opinions — several of whom are from UTD!

Everyone starts somewhere and furies are no exception to that. In my case, I believed that there was some sort of threshold that I had to meet in order to self-identify as a furry (there isn't, anyone who tells you otherwise is lying), which caused me to avoid the community for many years out of fear that I wasn't serious enough about it, or that I wasn't active enough to be considered a "real furry" (whatever I thought that meant). Another perspective is that of my friend Kaan, who I met at Texas Furry Fiesta and have kept in touch with since. She lives in Florida, and when I inquired about her experience entering the community, Kaan told me that she mocked the fandom for several years before embracing it. "In high school I was always kind of a furry hater," she admits. She and her friends were familiar with the concept of furies, but engaged with them in a joking way. "We'd pretend to be furies just to mess with each other," she continued. Throughout our talk, Kaan recounted to me how this eventually grew into a genuine love and admiration for the community. "I was able to explore a softer side of myself that trauma had made me repress for years, and that's really what convinced me to stay."

Many have deeply personal connections to the community like Kaan does, others engage with it for the social interaction and safe space that it provides. One newer member of the furry community on campus, a senior computer science major who goes by the handle Abe Estos and has only identified as a furry for roughly a year, shared with me why he believes the community is so special. "Everyone is so friendly," he tells me. "I never had as full of a social life before I joined in. Everyone respects your comfort zone."

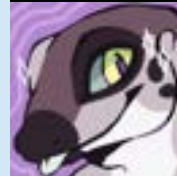
I can certainly attest to this, as I took a gap year before the pandemic hit in 2020, which caused me to spend a year and a half in near complete isolation. No jobs, no classes — just me, alone in my apartment for months on end. Attending online furry meetups and expressing myself through

my art kept me much saner than I would have been otherwise. Who needs therapy when you can be a lizard online?! (This is a joke, please do not become a lizard as a substitute for therapy.) In the succinct words of Ori, a former UTD furry who graduated in 2020 and now works in software development, "It's nice to pretend that you're a cat on the internet instead of being a boring adult in the real world." So true bestie.

It might come as a surprise that the furry community is, like many things, a spectrum in terms of how people express themselves and engage with fandom content. One UTD furry that I interviewed — a sophomore in information technology and systems that has chosen to remain completely anonymous — mentioned that what you make of the furry community is what you get from it. "You don't have to be as involved as a popular furry," they noted. Having fun is always the most important thing. If something doesn't interest you or makes you uncomfortable, then there's no pressure to participate in it! One thing that I've noticed about this community is its general awareness and accommodation of other people's comfort. From what I've seen, the furry community is largely composed of marginalized groups — queer, neurodivergent, and disabled people for example — and safety is enormously important because of this. Every other furry that I've met wants the spaces they inhabit to be as comfortable and enjoyable as possible, and for the most part I believe that the community has achieved that in spades.

To part on a good note, I'll leave you with this piece of advice: Be not afraid! Believe it or not, furies are people. I know the paws, claws, and tails can be deceiving, but underneath the fluff, there are some folks worth getting to know.

MICKEY DOLPHIN



sophomore | atec
lizard on the internet...
now in print?!?!



Everything is a Gacha Game



Everything you know is a part of this gacha game known as life. Specifically, life is a gacha game. Gacha games are video games that implement a specific game mechanic, enticing players to spend in-game currency to gain random in-game items or benefits. Often, these games use the free-to-play model which means players can play some aspects of the game for free... It might be free to start, but players need to keep on gambling to progress in the latter parts of the game, and this is where the dangers of gacha games come from.

design and layout by: michelle le

Loot Boxes

In a similar vein to gacha games, there are loot box-based games. In these games, loot boxes are awarded randomly to players and have prizes you can find inside. Some game developers are generous and will let you open these loot boxes and keep the prize. Some greedy developers “lock” these boxes and require “keys” to access the rewards inside; these keys may cost real-world currency which makes it harder for free-to-play players who don’t have the money to access these benefits.

Social Media

Social media websites and apps are designed to get users to stay on their specific platform for as long as possible by raising various emotions from them and getting as much personalized information from their user base as possible. Scrolling on social media timelines is one big game. If you keep scrolling, maybe you might get a wholesome cat video for that extra rush of dopamine or maybe you’ll see a violent act of racism towards a marginalized group that you may be a part of. Next, you might see an old friend get married to their high school sweetheart and then see an ad for the Duolingo app where the Duolingo mascot gives birth to Scrub Daddy’s child (which is a real TikTok post from their official page!). Doomscrolling on social media timelines is a gamble since people keep coming back to keep scrolling as a distraction. But most users keep coming back to play the social media game until they are satisfied for the time being.

Dating Apps

On the topic of mobile apps, dating apps are some of the most popular IRL gacha games out there. Sometimes players will find characters on these apps that are not suited for them. There is a very low probability of finding the perfect match on these dating apps — almost slim to none. And yet, people still find themselves swiping and playing this game to search for their soulmate. The higher powers that be, the dating app algorithms, choose what appears on the main page. Tinder and Bumble use swiping-based mechanics to sort through profiles. Mindlessly swiping is easy to do on these apps, the time investment in these games may be the price to pay for these games. Or it could be the in-app transactions where players could pay extra money to be featured or have the ability to swipe right more

often. Hinge is slightly less unhinged in this randomness factor where players are required to comment or like specific aspects of a profile instead of a simple right swipe. However, these games are addictive because players are constantly searching for their next date or fling... While you’re at it, might as well gamble and catch an STI. Collect them all!

College/Job Applications

Applying to college? Finding an internship or job to work at? The applicant is at the whims of a higher authority, whether that be a college or company. This is just like gacha game developers designing their games to have an extremely low probability to get a desired item or character. College applicants can raise their odds by participating in extracurriculars or studying extra hard for exams; Job seekers can add relevant skills and job experience to their resumes and cover letters to get the best chance of applying to these jobs. However, applicants do not control who gets accepted or rejected. Yes, college recruiters and hiring managers are the individuals who decide who gets accepted or hired. However, many colleges rely on enrollment algorithms and jobs rely on applicant tracking systems to organize all the applications and see who would be best suited for the job using keywords and other technology magic.

Tip-Based Jobs

Working in food service, food delivery, or any other tip-based job is a gamble. The typical tipping rate is 15%-25%. Every now and then, the game might be generous and sometimes you can get a huge-ass tip from an old retired dude who’s feeling generous that day. There is also that dangerous mentality where you can get addicted to how much you can make with tips and, ultimately, it can be hard to leave those kinds of jobs. This is why you see many old ladies who are waitresses; they’re addicted to getting those tips.

Genetics

Sometimes you’re born and that sucks. Some are more genetically blessed than others: some people are born taller, some are born stronger, and some are born white. It is truly up to whatever the genetic lottery grants you. You didn’t decide to be born, but you were the one chosen sperm out of 100 million sperm that came out of your father’s willy. Those are some low odds for a game, at about a 0.00000001% chance to exist. For reference, in the hit game Genshin Impact, the typical likelihood to get a 5-star character is 0.6%, which is somewhat better odds.

It is pretty impressive that you are alive to read this sentence today. You were fortunate enough to be attending UTD, a competitive school, and happened to pick up this magazine and specifically found this article. The likelihood to enjoy simple pleasures like reading this silly article in your free time while procrastinating on your class assignments is so slim, yet it happened! Life is random, but we are all addicted to playing this game. Take a gamble and see if you can beat the odds and get the random item you’ve been wishing for.

AKIE KASAI



senior | literature
ough

How to Play D&D Correctly

Welcome, fresh-faced intrepid adventurer! You're about to embark on a journey every college student dreams of and attempts with shoddily written Reddit posts at the beginning of every semester: playing Dungeons and Dragons! If you've made it to this step, you've already accomplished more than 99.9% of others, whose D&D fantasies remain in late-night Discord calls and scheduling limbo. But there are still a few more golden nuggets of knowledge I may bestow upon you before you venture off into your first campaign.

Do your homework:

Once you've committed all the available handbooks to memory, watch D&D shows and take notes on every single rule violation. Be sure to post your findings in the comments section and on Reddit as well. The players and DM need to be educated on their mistakes, and who better to teach them than you? Once you get to your own session 0, share the knowledge with your table by bringing these exalted journals of wisdom with you.

Stock your inventory:

Always have your high school geometry kit on hand; the tools inside are almost as important as your dice. Re-memorize the Pythagorean Theorem to calculate the hypotenuse and get the exact distance from your handaxe to the floating lich, rather than relying on fickle things like grids or eyeballing. Squinting and saying "looks about right" is not enough. Never enough.

Dice are the law:

Never fudge rolls. Who are you, God? To make sure your dice set is truly complete, commission a custom-made d2. Those never seem to get included for some reason.

Creating your character:

You can't be an elf barbarian — everyone knows elves are too scrawny for hand-to-hand combat. No respectable player would create a character like that. Certain races just play better as certain classes. You'd better min-max so your character has the best possible stats, rather than worrying about things like appearance or backstory. Nothing else matters if you can't 1v1 a dragon; that's what the game is all about.



There is no racism in D&D:

Everyone is allowed to play whichever race they want. If you notice a similarity between a D&D race and a real-life stereotype, then maybe you're the problem. In fact, they're called "species" as of December 2022, so there.

Sourcebooks are king:

Stop thinking about homebrew. D&D is made for acting out your favorite fantasy novels, so stick to the script. The only acceptable NPC for your campaign is Drizzt Do'Urden. If someone tells you "anything can happen in D&D," they're lying; everything that can and will ever happen in a game of D&D is clearly delineated in the sourcebooks. And don't even think about setting your game in a unique time period. There is only one history! We have to all live in a magical medieval pseudo-Europe. D&D is the ultimate linear and codified game, so there's no reason to change its perfection at every table.

Stay in character:

Any good player will take extensive improv classes. Don't break character, especially to make meta jokes. And to really sell it, you have to become a professional voice actor and linguist. It's for your fellow players. How else will they be able to truly immerse themselves in the D&D experience if you're speaking in English, a language that doesn't exist in that world? Have everyone in the party download Duolingo for Dothraki. It's a bonding experience!

You are the main character of your story—and everyone else's:

Make sure they know you're the protagonist by doing the most damage in battles (which shouldn't be hard if you've min-maxed correctly), snatching up the best loot before anyone else can reach it (it's your story, so everything belongs to you), and waxing poetic during every single roleplay opportunity (how else will people hear your unique and heart-wrenching backstory about being the only orphan to ever exist?).

The "F" in Fantasy does not stand for fun:

The most important rule is to not have fun. Fantasy is not fun. It's a genre built on war and harsh realities (except for racism, which has never been present in fantasy) that we can't face as mere humans. Your ultimate goal should be to leave your fellow players as traumatized as their characters by the end of the campaign. Realism.

Congratulations for doing the bare minimum!

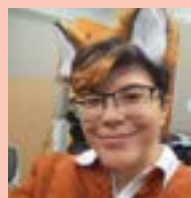
If you've been following along diligently you should now be the best player at your table, a thing that is normal to strive for and possible to achieve. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Go forth on your grand adventure! Effortlessly slay every monster and NPC you encounter, remind your DM about your darkvision any time they so much as mention a shadow, and become the hero of legend you were always meant to be! If your group abandons you because they weren't dedicated enough to the true art of D&D, there are tons of people on Reddit who want to play with you.



ALLY DUONG

senior | literature

intentionally made my elf princess illiterate



GAVIN ARRIAGA

junior | marketing

I've only played animal-based races in D&D.

by: danny torres



Anatomy of a Tobor...

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