Appliance Adventures

An RPG by Dave Best
Version 1.2

Originally created as a 24 Hour RPG for http://www.1km1kt.net on the topic "Mr. Toaster needs a soul"

Credits:
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Introduction

Appliance Adventures is a story-oriented role-playing game (RPG) where the players take on the roles of intelligent household appliances. Appliance Adventures was designed for players of all ages, including younger children. If they can tell a semi-coherent story and enjoy games, they may enjoy Appliance Adventures. This document, pencils, some colored tokens, and six-sided dice are all that are needed to begin your own Appliance Adventure!

Setting

The default setting for Appliance Adventures is suburban middle America in the mid-2000s. This is mostly for ease of description. There isn't anything in the game that depends on this; any time or place (as long as there are appliances) could be used.

Tone

Games of Appliance Adventures are exercises in puzzle-solving, teamwork, improvisation, and exploration in a world full of wonder. The Player Appliances are naive explorers, making their way in a world they are ill-equipped to handle.

Examples

There are examples woven throughout Appliance Creation and the Mechanics sections. These examples appear in *italics*.

Appliance Creation

Overview

Creating a player appliance for Appliance Adventures is a simple process containing the following steps:

1. Create a Name and Personality
2. Choose an Appliance Type
3. Create Special Features
4. Create a Quirk
5. Calculate Soul Points

To ease creation, we will step through the process and create an appliance. The appliance description for this and a few other appliances are located in the Sample Appliance section.

Create a Name and Personality

How are you known to the rest of the appliances? Are you the grumpy but protective Keeton? Are you the adventurous and free-spirited Murphy?

Chris wants to play a character that gets the group into trouble, but always does his best to get them out of it. He loves going on adventures and wants to see as much of the world as he can. Chris writes down "Adventurous and free-spirited" as his personality, and decides on the name Murphy.

Choose an Appliance Type

The appliance type you choose determines what you can do. To help choose a type, you should ask yourself these questions:
What sort of unique traits do you want?
What are the other players choosing?

There is no predefined mechanical benefit to choosing one appliance type over any other, but the Narrator will treat a blender and a toaster different in play. Choose something that you feel matches your personality, and brainstorm a bit about how you can use your special capabilities to help the group.

Toaster

The toaster is a master at heating bread and bread products. A toaster tends to be

somewhat adventurous after it realizes it can use its ejection mechanism to launch itself into the air.

Coffee Maker

The coffee maker heats water, makes coffee, and talks. The coffee maker absorbs plenty of caffeine, making it the most excitable and talkative appliance.

Blender

The blender crushes ice, blends drinks, and scares small animals with a great roar. Blenders aren't usually big talkers, but they love intimidating and scaring others with their whirling blades.

Vacuum Cleaner

The vacuum cleaner is the resident clean freak. Vacuums, like blenders, can use their engine noise to scare and startle those around them. A vacuum, as one of the most mobile appliances, can be a vital backbone to the party.

Lamp

With an unrivaled flair for the dramatic, a lamp can shed light onto situations, blind foes, and be a beacon in the darkness.

These appliance types are just examples. The Narrator should feel free to write up other appliances as needed.

Continuing with the adventurous theme, Chris likes the idea of a hopping toaster. Not wanting to share the spotlight, Chris checks with the rest of the group to make sure no one else is playing a toaster. Getting the go ahead from the group, Chris writes "Toaster" in the appliance box, and starts thinking about features.

Inherent Features

Every appliance has some inherent abilities; they do have a function to perform. To represent that, write (or remember that you have) "Being a (insert appliance here) (2)" and "Knowledge of (appliance main function) (2)" under Features.

A note on terminology: A number in parentheses can be ready as 'level x' where x is the number. This number corresponds to the number of tokens to put in the pool.

Create Special Features

Every player gets three points to spend on Special Features. These points can be spent in three ways:

- Adding New Special Features

- Adding New Areas of Knowledge
- Boosting Existing Features or Areas of Knowledge

New Special Features

Special Features are features that differentiate you from every other appliance and make you at least vaguely adventure-ready. For example, a lamp could use a point to gain Spring-Powered arm to give it some ability to strike at things, or move more quickly. A Special Feature should be a justifiable change to the appliance. Adding a gun to a toaster (or any of these appliances, for that matter) would not (in the default setting) make sense. Adding wheels to a toaster would be odd, but if the player can sell it to the Narrator as a viable feature, then it should work. Special Features that can be described as an enhancement to their Core Features start at Inherent Feature Level + 1. Special Features that can not be described in these terms (the wheels, for example) start at Inherent Feature Level - 1.

Areas of Knowledge

Special Features can also be Areas of Knowledge. A lamp might gain Knowledge of Police Procedures by watching too many police dramas on TV, or a blender might have knowledge of the surrounding area due to its perch by the window sill. These Areas of Knowledge start at (1).

Adding to Existing Features or Areas of Knowledge

Special Feature points can also be used to boost existing features, raising a Special Feature to to a (4), or an Area of Knowledge to a (2). (4) is the maximum value for a numbered feature or knowledge.

Murphy the Toaster is shaping up nicely. To give him a little more uniqueness, Chris needs to spend his Special Feature points. Chris sees Murphy as being a bit hyperactive, so he spends his first point upgrading his ejection mechanism to a High Powered Ejection Mechanism (3). This means he can use his hopping to get other people out of trouble, which Chris feels is important. For the second point, Chris adds a Flashlight (1) to his list of features. Finally, Chris adds Knowledge of Great Outdoors (1) to his list, as Murphy loves to try and catch glimpses of the television from the kitchen when nature programs are on.

Create a Quirk

Sitting around all day, acting like they aren't alive, appliances tend to go a bit stir-crazy. An appliance's quirk is manifestation of this fact. A quirk should be a small or uncommon thing; if it was severely annoying the appliance's owner would have exchanged it for a less irksome unit. Some sample quirks:
- A lamp that pulses its light as it speaks.
- A blender that is excessively polite.
- A vacuum that hums to itself when no humans are around.

- A blender that blends when it gets scared.
- A toaster with an encyclopedic knowledge of bread products who continually suggests new ones to the owner.

These quirks, when played well, can result in mechanical or story-based benefits for your character.

None of the example quirks were what Chris was looking for. After talking it over with the Narrator, Chris decides that he wants Murphy to have an "Adventure Voice". Whenever Murphy goes out of the house, or does something he considers adventurous (like toast a waffle) he switches from his normal voice to a more bombastic hero voice ("Never fear, m'lady, this magnificent waffle will be toasted to perfection!")

Calculate Soul Points

A Player Appliance has a number of Soul Points equal to six minus its highest level Feature or Knowledge. Soul Points can be vital help in a dire situation.

Chris has created a well-rounded appliance without any high attributes. Murphy's highest attribute is just three, so Chris writes three in the box for Soul Points.

Uses for Soul Points

Soul Points represent an appliance's life force, courage, and ability to cheat fate. They have a few uses:
- Spending 1 will allow the appliance to automatically succeed on the current round in an encounter. Only one appliance can do this per round.
- Two (possibly split between two appliances) can be spent to give another appliance 1 Soul Point. This should be accompanied by an encouraging speech or act.

Soul Points are regained when resting in a safe location. If the resting location is at home, where they belong, each appliance is returned to full Soul Points. If they are resting elsewhere, they gain 1 point per day.

System

Conflict Resolution

The Encounter mechanic is the core mechanic for Appliance Adventures. An encounter is made of several phases:

1. Narration
2. Formulate a Plan
3. Skill Selection
4. Roll Resolution
5. Last Chance
6. Encounter Resolution

If there is only a single appliance in the encounter, please note the *Tests of Self-Reliance* for special rules.

Narration

The Narrator describes the scene, states which appliances can be involved in the encounter, and begins role playing the conflict. He also decides how difficult this encounter is. If this is not the first round for this encounter, players who failed in the last round do not get to participate in this round.

Mike the narrator starts. "As Murphy, Claire, Keeton, and Chuck sneak out of the house, they run into their first problem. Standing before the group is a enormous dog. He growls and lets out a big bark..."

Kyle, who is playing Chuck the Nervous Blender, interrupts. "Ahh! Bzzzzzzz Bzzzzzzz Bzzzzz. Sorry."

Mike continues. "Not expecting that response, the dog backs away a bit. Not much, however. Murphy, Claire, and Chuck can act, but keep in mind that you are riding on Keeton at the moment."

Mike previously planned on this encounter being a four success encounter, but after they breezed through the last one, he secretly decides to push this one to a seven. He decides Chuck's nervous outburst was a good use of his quirk, he gives the group one success to represent the dog's reaction.

Formulate a Plan

Through role playing, the player appliances gain knowledge of the scene and formulate a plan of action.

Andy, who is playing Keeton asks "Can we get around the beast?"

"You could probably try to book it, but you are loaded down with the others. You will drop at least one of them if you move too quickly." Mike the narrator answers.

Keeton: "Fine mess you've got us into, Murphy. Any ideas, folks?"

Chuck speaks up: "Sure didn't like the blendering. Let's spook him."

"Fab-u-lous. Let's wow this mongrel" says Claire.

"My fault? You love it! I'll get around behind him." says Murphy.

"Okay," says Andy, "We're ready."

Skill Selection

Going around the table, in order of ascending quantity of Soul Points, each player describes what skill they would like to use this encounter. If any players have the same number of Soul Points, they may decide who will go first. If the player has a relevant skill, they put a number of their colored tokens into the center of the table equal to the skill level. Once everyone has declared, everyone simultaneously rolls a die.

Keeton used a Soul Point on the previous encounter, so he has the fewest, with four. Andy says he will use his Vacuuming (2). Next is either Nicky playing Claire, or Kyle. Nicky elects to go first, and declares Claire will use Performing (2). Kyle says he will use Really Loud Motor (3). Finally Chris declares that Murphy will use his High Powered Ejection Mechanism (3).

As each player chooses their skill, they put their skill tokens into the pot. Andy puts in two, Nicky puts in two, Kyle puts in three, and Chris puts in three.

Everyone rolls. Andy rolls a four, Nicky rolls a six, Kyle rolls a two, and Chris groans as he rolls a one.

Roll Resolution

The storytelling begins. Go around the table in the order descending die rolls. Each player with a die roll equal to six succeeds automatically. They describe what they did. Each player who failed their roll must now try to pass by using points from the center pot. The points of each player in the pot can not be split. A player can claim sets of tokens from the pot to add them to his die roll. Points used from the center can not be used again in the encounter. Each set taken from the center must be narrated in the context of the story.

If any player who rolled a one ends with a success (without using a Soul Point) he scores a resounding success, and gains one Soul Point immediately.

One player appliance that does not succeed this round may choose to spend a Soul Point to automatically succeed. If more than one player would like to spend a Soul Point then the players must decide who can spend one. All other appliances fail, skipping the next round and each gaining a Failure Point for the group.

If, at the end of this phase, the party has not gained enough Success Points to succeed or Failure Points to fail, start a new round at phase one, Narration.

Nicky starts this round. "I turn on my brightest light, start singing a show tune, and do my

best to keep the light in the dogs eyes."

"Where are you?" asks Mike.

Nicky replies, "I'm staying right where I'm at, on top of the vacuum."

Mike adds one to the number of successes.

Andy goes next. "I put the vacuum in reverse and start blowing dust, revving the engine and approaching the dog." Andy doesn't want to take any tokens from the pool, but he is down to one Soul Point. If he wants to stay in the encounter, he needs to succeed. He reaches into the pool and takes out Chris' tokens, which will put him at seven, a success.

Andy narrates Murphy's help: "With a loud ker-CHUNK, Murphy's ejection mechanism sends Murphy loudly off the back of Keeton." Andy looks over at Chris, who nods. Chris could have, if he didn't like what Andy suggested, amended the statement.

Mike adds one to the success count, bringing the total to three.

Kyle is up next. Looking at the token pool, Kyle sees both Chuck and Murphy can't succeed, without using Soul Points. "Oookay." Kyle starts. He reaches for the pile and pulls out Claire's points. "Spotlight, on me, baby! Chuck starts blending, and sliding down Keeton's body.

While sliding, Claire pulls the light out of the dog's eyes and uses it to make Chuck look big and scary."

Mike asks, "Anything else?" Chuck only has a four, so he will fail if he doesn't pull any more tokens.

"Nope. It's to Murph." Kyle sits back, hoping to see something cool from Murphy.

Chris grins, "This is going to be neat." He pulls the two remaining sets of tokens from the pool. This will give him his roll of a one, plus three from Kyle, and two from Keeton; a total of six. A resounding success!

"As Murphy leaps from Keeton's back, he feels an extra push as Keeton pushes him off by inflating his dust bag. Right before Murphy lands, Chucks stops blending. Making Murphy's crash landing extra audible. Murphy keeps hopping, as he moves to get behind the dog."

Chris makes a note on his character sheet that he now has four Soul Points.

Mike adds one success and one failure, bringing the totals to four and one. The party is half-way done.

"Kyle, as Chuck was sliding down Keeton's back, he caught a fold in the bag and fell off. He is laying on his side, next to Keeton. You guys haven't scared this thing off, yet."

Encounter Resolution

When the party ultimately succeeds or fails at the encounter, you exit the loop of rounds, and enter the Encounter Resolution phase. Success is defined as meeting or beating the number of successes the Narrator set as the threshold at the beginning of the encounter. Failure occurs when the group gives up, when the entire party runs out of Soul Points, or gains too many Failure Points.

If any player stood out as playing their appliance exceedingly well, or narrated their part of the story very well, they can be rewarded with a Soul Point. This should not be done frequently.

"The dog yelps and makes a break for the street. Clearly, it didn't know what it was up

against. What next?"

Tests of Self Reliance

Appliances are not meant for solo adventuring. If an appliance gets separated from the group and must take on an encounter alone, they must adhere to a special rule. An appliance can take their own contribution to the pool (since it is the only one) but they can only take half of the pool if it is due to a Feature. If it is from an Area of Knowledge, they can take the whole amount.

The Moral of the Story

Appliance Adventures was originally intended to be a one-shot game. If you wish to continue adventuring with the same appliances and you want the appliances to grow over the course of the adventures, this is the suggested advancement mechanism. Once the appliances return to their home safe and sound, you can role play a scene of the appliances talking about what they learned, both about themselves, and what they can do. One of these can become a new Area of Knowledge (1), or a +1 enhancement to an existing Area of Knowledge. If the appliance happened to pick up some new gear, it can be added as a Special Feature (1) for as long as they have it. Alternately, the appliance can gain 1 temporary Soul Point. A temporary Soul Point is a normal Soul Point, but it does not count against your maximum number of Soul Points.

Structure of a Game

A game of Appliance Adventures is broken up into encounters that the Player Appliances must overcome. A typical adventure is made of between three and six encounters.

Encounters

In Appliance Adventures, 'encounter' is a broad term. At its core, an encounter is any situation that does not have a fixed outcome. It can represent conflict with an antagonist of some sort (like the dog in the example), an environmental difficulty (like crossing a busy street), or an investigation (like figuring out where Keeton went)

Encounters should move the story forward; they should never feel repetitive, contrived, or like they are slowing the story down. In the case of crossing the busy street, if the street isn't important to the story, don't make it that way. The crossing could be part of a larger encounter (find the way to the junk shop), or just narrated.

Adventure Design

The easiest way to write an adventure for the game is to create a flow chart of the encounters you wish to include. After creating the chart, you should be able to determine success and failure conditions.

It is important to remember that a big goal of Appliance Adventures is exploring. Don't make your adventure designs too reliant on visiting certain locations or doing certain things, beyond the basic goal of the adventure.

Encounter Design

An encounter is made of four primary pieces of information.
- Setup
- Success and Failure Ratings
- Success State
- Failure State

Setup

This is the bit of role playing and exposition that sets the scene for the Player Appliance's heroics. It is important that you give the players enough information to come up with a solution, but not enough to force them into a corner or a single course of action. The setup should also give the players some sense of the difficulty of the encounter; the Narrator need not tell the party how many successes are needed. If the encounter could be hit due to either a success or failure of a previous encounter there may be separate Setup sections for both states.

Success and Failure Rating

The Success Rating of an encounter should roughly correlate into number of appliances in the party multiplied by one for easy, two for medium, and three for hard or four for very hard. The Failure Rating should be equal to the number of appliances. There is nothing inherently 'right' about these amounts. If encounters seem too easy or too difficult for your players, or if you just want to provide some variety, tweak the numbers a bit.

Success State

This is the positive outcome of the encounter. The state should include a bit of exposition, and point the way to the next encounter.

Failure State

Not every encounter is a success, but failure of an encounter should not be the same as failure of the adventure. Failure should open up a different avenue that could still lead to success, even if it is more difficult.

Where Did Keeton Go?

This sample adventure makes use of the appliances that appeared in the previous examples. They are described completely in the Sample Character section. In this adventure, Keeton, the curmudgeonly vacuum cleaner, has disappeared! It's up to the rest of the group to come to his rescue.

Notes: The Success and Failure Ratings assume a group of three appliances. Adjust them according to your actual group size. This adventure could be easily expanded by taking the **Sneak Around Town** encounter and breaking it apart into separate legs of the journey. This would definitely make sense if the junk shop is further away.

Collect Clues

Setup: Morning has come and the humans have left the house when the appliances realize Keeton is gone! Where did he go?

Success Rating: 6 (Medium Difficulty)

Success State: Through their sleuthing, the appliances determined that Keeton has probably gone to the junk shop where he was originally purchased. They also get some rudimentary directions to the junk shop. Go to the **Sneak Around Town** Encounter.

Failure Rating: 3

Failure State: The appliances either have no clue where Keeton has gone, or even worse, have an incorrect destination in mind. Go to the **Sneak Around Town** Encounter.

Notes: This is a good chance to get the players acquainted with the universe of Appliance Adventures. How they determine where Keeton went is pretty open; they could interrogate the other appliances (including the security system, if there is one), mount a police procedural-style investigation of the 'crime scene', or just decide to go looking for him.

Sneak Around Town

Setup for Success: The junk shop lies a good five miles away, which is much to far for a group of appliances to sneak. They'll need to figure out some way of getting there. Fortunately for them, today is trash day.

Setup for Failure: The appliances have a difficult journey ahead of themselves. If they don't know where to look, they should make sure to ask appliances they pass (traffic light and cameras, phone booths, etc.) if they saw the vacuum pass by. Fortunately for them, today is trash day.

Success Rating: 9 (Hard Difficulty) if they are going to the junk shop or 12 (Very Hard Difficulty) if they aren't.

Success State: The group finds Keeton sitting in the display window of the junk shop with a new price sticker on him. Go to the **Jailbreak!** Encounter.

Failure Rating: 3

Failure State: Dejected and no closer to their goal, the appliances end up either back at home, or in some alley at nightfall. If they are back at home, they can try again the next day. Go to the **Collect Clues** or **Sneak Around Town** Encounter, depending on what they want to do. If they are not at home or in some safe place, they find themselves picked up by a fat, greasy man and roughly thrown into the back of a pickup truck. They are taken to the junk shop and locked in the merchandise cage to be examined in the morning. Go to the **Jailbreak!** Encounter.

Notes: If the group decides to wait until night to attempt to find Keeton, lower the difficulty by one level (from Hard to Medium, or Very Hard to Hard) to represent the freedom gained from reduced traffic and better conditions for hiding.

Jailbreak!

Setup for Success: Seeing Keeton locked up, the group needs to come up with a way to break him out of the shop.

Setup for Failure: There is a whole slew of appliances in various states of disrepair in the cage, as well as some of the pricier lightweight appliances (like vacuum cleaners and laptop computers) in good working order. The group needs to figure a way to get out of the cage, and then out of the store.

Success Rating: 9 (Hard Difficulty) if not inside the store or 6 (Medium Difficulty) if they are in the cage.

Success State: Having successfully broken Keeton (and maybe themselves) out of the junk shop, the appliances must now make their way home.

Failure Rating: 3

Failure State: If the appliances weren't in the cage before, they are now. Go to the **Jailbreak!** Encounter.

Notes: This Encounter should be a chance for the players to really shine. Give them a pretty free reign, and go along with some of their wackier ideas. Depending on your pacing and how the game went, getting back home could be the assumed result or a whole other adventure.

Sample Appliances

Keeton, the Vacuum

Grumpy and protective of his 'family'
Soul Points: 3
Features:
Extended Vacuum Hose (3)
Persuading (1)
Knowledge of Surrounding Area (1)
Quirk: Tends to wander off when not in use.

Murphy, the Toaster

Adventurous and free-spirited
Soul Points: 3
High Powered Ejection Mechanism (3)
Flashlight (1)
Knowledge of Great Outdoors (1)
Quirk: Adventure Voice

Chuck, the Blender

Workaholic who wants to fit in
Soul Points: 3
Really Loud Motor (3)
People Watcher (1)
Knowledge of Latin Dancing (1)
Quirk: Excitable, blends when scared.

Claire, the Lamp

Loves (being) the limelight
Soul Points: 4
Performing (2)
Knowledge of old musicals (1)
Quirk: Talks like a rich old movie star.