

Wing and a Prayer Design Document

Chapter 2: Creating a Character



Creating a Character

Roleplay at *Wing and a Prayer* will be governed purely by interaction and reaction. There are no rules in this system, nor any kind of skills list. Character creation therefore comes down purely to the personality of who you're portraying.

Once you have developed a short character concept, the story team will allocate you a role in the command structure of the base and incorporate the themes you've indicated in your character outline into the plot lines of the event. The idea is to ensure that who you play fits the setting and has plenty of hooks to get involved in drama, joy and conflict. We'll get in touch with additional suggestions and queries to check what we're doing is in line with how you feel about your character.

At the same time, you'll be fleshing out the concept and developing relationships with others.

Concept

Your character concept is your opportunity to introduce your character. It can be in any format you want; maybe a quotation, a fragment of their past that's particularly important, some epithet that's used about them. Don't feel any need to write more than a couple of lines at the start – your character will develop from now until the game begins. Nor is it set in stone. We'd expect your character to evolve as you find other players to work with, and there will be plenty of opportunities to change your plan. Importantly, it must work for you. It steers our writers so we can introduce interesting plot elements that suit your character, interlock with other characters, and also fit into the game we're designing.

Inspiration might include quite plain biographical details. Where you were born? How old you are? What did you do before joining up? What are your loved ones doing for the war effort? How do you feel about that?

For example: "I'm from Gloucester and I joined up straight out of school. My brother is a pilot, and if they won't let me fly, this is as close as I can get."

For example: "I'm from a military family and the RAF gets me to grips with Jerry right now. I didn't want to wait, I wanted to get into the action!"

Or something more focused on a piece of drama in your life which you'll be using to shape your responses to events in the game: Have you lost anyone? How has that affected you?

For example: "Life started to unravel once I'd lost my loved one in the First War, and anything is worth the cost of getting back at Jerry."

For example: "My father died on the western front. Never knew him."

Or something that gives us some relationships outside of the game to work with. Who/where is your family? Why did you sign up? How will you adapt to being away from home, in the countryside?

For example: "I have prepared for this all my life. My family has been in the military for generations and now it is my turn."

For example: "I'm from Barking and I've got no brothers. My dad told me we all had to do our bit, and this was mine. I miss my mum and sisters terribly. They work in an aircraft factory in Dagenham."

Or something which speaks more to how you'll react to the events we're all of us portraying. Do you enjoy your work? Will you join in with social activities, or is that too frivolous? How are you coping with the horrors of war? If offered goods on the black market, are you likely to accept?

For example: "It's all a bit of an adventure, isn't it? Being in the countryside, more freedom than I've ever had before. And all these pilots about..."

For example: "We're here to do a job. Everything stops until this enemy is defeated. Then we can get back to normal."

Or you might want to include something about how your character feels about political issues. How do you feel about the role of women, in war and the wider world? How do you feel about the political scene in the UK?

For example: "When this is all over, things are going to have to change. I may have the vote but there's so much more I could do in life. I've been shaping decisions of life and death as a WAAF, and I want the respect that's due."

For example: "We were promised a land fit for heroes after the first war, and we didn't get it. Not this time."

Or something which defines your morality in the specific situation of war. How do you feel about the nature of war and the use of civilians as targets? About civilian internment?

For example: "They're evil, and we're the ones who are going to stop them. Whatever it takes."

Three Words

You might think of these as “tags”. They are the characteristics that define you and are likely to form the core of your game experience.

Feel free to use any three words to indicate specific character elements you wish to explore and/or to select three from our list of suggestions. We might rework your suggestions to make them more widely useful, but the spirit of your tags will be preserved. We might suggest additional tags for the character to connect them more deeply into the game world and develop opportunities for you to access plot-lines, and we might negotiate tags we'd rather you didn't use if - for example - we have too many officers.

A list of suggestions:

Nationality (British, Other)	New to the service	Competent
Class (Upper, Lower, Middle)	Old hand	Expert
Politics (Socialist, Communist, Conservative, Other)	Disastrous past	Unskilled
Hatred (German, Polish, French, Other English region, etc...)	Officer	Romantic
Patriot	NCO	Idealist
Nationalist	Brave	Pragmatist
	Coward	Addict
	Intellectual	Problem With Authority
	Practical	
	Enthusiastic	
	Sullen	

Fear, Regret, Ambition

Fears, regrets and ambitions are all more fodder for our plot-writing and your play. You'll get most game out of these if you think about things which are not only character-defining, but that are character-defining in a way which will come up during the event. For example, if your greatest fear is the lesser spotted desert hyena, it's unlikely it'll be come out during the event. Fear of drowning is probably not much of an issue for a WAAF character in play; for a RAF character, though, it's something which could all-too-easily become a problem.

An example fear: “I fear I'll never see my brother again, who is serving overseas” enables us to plot letters from your brother, or a phone call. If you find another player who wishes to play them, there might even be the potential for a transfer to the base for them.

Other example fears might include: “Dying alone”, or “People will discover my biggest secret”.

An example regret: “I never told my father I loved him” becomes relevant if you develop a father-substitute figure who climbs into a plane for a critical mission. Will you break decorum and confess your feelings before take-off? What about the social embarrassment when he returns alive?

Other example regrets might include: “I didn't seize every chance when life was good”, or “Not speaking up when I saw X happening”

An example ambition: “I want to marry into wealth” becomes relevant when the eldest son of the Earl of Gloucester is stationed at Stow Maries as an officer. It might inspire even more play if you are in a relationship with the son of a local lawyer when the Earl's son arrives.

Other example ambitions might include: “To fly a plane”, “To gain political power”, “To win X's heart” or “To become a war correspondent!”

Examples

You come up with a character concept: "Life started to unravel once I'd lost my loved one in the First War, and anything is worth the cost of getting back at Jerry."

Your "three words" are: British, Practical, and Old Enemy. You give the following answers to your greatest fear, regret and ambition:

"Dying alone"

"I never told my father I loved him"

"I dream of actually killing Jerry in combat."

In response, we add: NCO, Hatred (Germans) to your list of words, and suggest a more general reworking of Old Enemy as Thirst for Revenge. On agreement, your character outline ends up as:

"Life started to unravel once I'd lost my loved one in the First War, and anything is worth the cost of getting back at Jerry."

Nationality (British)
NCO

Practical
Old hand

Hatred (Germans)
Thirst for revenge

My greatest fear, regret and ambition:

"Dying alone"

"I never told my father I loved him"

"I dream of actually killing Jerry in combat."

So whatever else the character is, their defining aspects are that they are British and have a specific thirst for revenge, and the player can expect their game to revolve around those things. Perhaps they'll find themselves in a position where they choose higher German casualties by sacrificing civilian lives, in opposition to a character with a specific love for a relation who lives in that area.



Another example:

You come up with a character concept: "I'm from Gloucester and I joined up straight out of school. My brother is a pilot, and if they won't let me fly, this is a close as I can get. When this is all over, things are going to have to change. I may have the vote but there's so much I more I could do in life. I've been shaping decisions of life and death as a WAAF, and I want the respect that's due."

Your "three words" are: Socialist, Intellectual, New to the service. You give the following answers to your greatest fear, regret and ambition:

"I fear I'll never see my brother again, who is serving overseas."

"I wish the war hadn't got between me and university."

"I want a career in politics after the war."

In response, we add: Officer, both because we feel that would add some interesting conflicts between your character and some known NCOs, and also perhaps because we need another officer. On agreement, your character outline ends up as:

“When this is all over, things are going to have to change. I may have the vote, but there’s so much I more I could do in life. I’ve been shaping decisions of life and death as a WAAF, and I want the respect that’s due.”

Socialist
Intellectual

New to the service
Officer

My greatest fear, regret and ambition:

“I fear I’ll never see my brother again, who is serving overseas.”

“I wish the war hadn’t got between me and university.”

“I want a career in politics after the war.”

At the event, you might expect your character to conflict with more conservative characters, specifically those with experience in the WAAF. Opportunities to play on your fear, regret and ambition might emerge in play.

A note for the RAF

RAF players are asked to work on two character ideas before the event. When a character dies, that player's second character will be brought in at the earliest opportunity. Both characters will be equally embedded relationship-wise, because they'll both have been created before the event starts. There's no need to worry about two sets of kit - that's the beauty of uniforms. In the unlikely event that a player dies more than twice, we'll help you out on the day!

Role on Base

WAAF characters will be formed into Watches. On shift, these watches will spend their time in the Ops Room, detecting and responding to Luftwaffe movements. (For more details, see the Stow Maries September 1940 and Wargame chapters). Off shift, their time is their own; to spend relaxing, roaming or engaged in other duties.

RAF characters will be formed into squadrons. Obviously, these groups of people have a primarily military role, but they also drive much of the interaction you’ll have with others. Your fellow pilots, your gunners and your navigators, are the characters you will live and die with. (For more details, see the Stow Maries September 1940 and Wargame chapters).

Fleshing out your Character

Once your character is finalised, you’ll flesh out their character with additional elements of their personal history, and relationships. Ideally, these details would be inspired by the relationships they might give you with other characters: whether positive or negative, whether close or distant. This pre-game activity is likely to be an important part of your enjoyment of the event, helping you arrive on base with an established community and knowledge of your role. That said, you don’t need to do any of it. As happened to many people who lived through this time in history, you can arrive on base knowing no-one, and leave with friends tested in the heat of high-pressure situations.

However, you may well find that some preparation helps. You might find it useful to have some old acquaintances to rely on, or revenge yourself on, or friendships to re-ignite. This is done by putting out a Looking For Relationships (LFR) call on the dedicated Facebook page that might look something like this:

Mrs Daisy Fairham (26); worried, clever, talkative, widowed
Radar Operator

Looking for:

- childhood friend: we grew up together and have always been close. You helped me through the death of my husband.
- village rival: we belong to the same W.I. group and you constantly beat me in the baking competitions.
- unrequited romance with pilot: you flirted with me once at a base dance and never looked at me again, but I've held a torch for you ever since.
- old acquaintance who knows a secret about me: we haven't seen each other in a few years, but you still remember.

Once you have confirmed who your relationships are with, and what they are, you can build on that through letter writing, exchange of backgrounds, or even pre-game gatherings. By the time you arrive at the event you'll already have several player-generated possessions and strong foundations for IC relationships.



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Lauren Owen, Thorsten Schillo & Ian Thomas

