

FACILITATING FIASCO

PREPARATION

You must have on hand:

A copy of Fiasco and the playsets you like.
Two black and two white dice per player.
Index cards.
Several markers.

It's nice to also have:

Play mat.
Extra copies of the playsets you'll offer.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome everyone and explain Fiasco's tone - darkly comic, a game about flawed people with powerful ambition and poor impulse control. Emphasize the fun of failure.

Offer four or so playsets you'd love to play and let them choose their favorite. Don't let them choose from a giant stack. Don't facilitate playsets you don't like.

SETUP: RELATIONSHIPS

Put an index card between each pair of players. Ask them to write "Relationship" at the top of this card.

Roll all the dice and sort them by number. If you get a weird roll heavy with a particular number, just roll them again. A broad distribution will make a setup with new players easier.

Explain that you won't know who your character is until later, but that you'll be crafting Relationships first. Each Relationship has a general category, like "Family", and a specific detail, like "Parent and Child". A Relationship must have a category before its detail can be fleshed out, so the first player (you) must choose a category.

Choose a category, pick up the associated die, and write it the category on a card not attached to your character. Explain that anyone can author an element on any card at the table, not just ones near them. Put the die on the card.

Turn to the person on your left and invite them to review the Relationship list in the playset, choose a die, and either add a detail to the category you just chose or to start a new category. Make sure they put the chosen die on the card.

Point out any numbers that are scarce and keep a general total. "OK, that's the last five and we already have no fours. You can now choose one, two, three, or six."

Continue facilitating the rotation. On your second turn, either choose something really prosaic and obvious or support another player's clear agenda if they have articulated one.

When the Relationships each have two dice on them, take a moment to discuss what you see emerging in terms of situation, but caution everyone not to get too invested yet.

SETUP: THE REST

Put down an index card beneath each completed Relationship.

Explain that each Relationship has some additional bit of excitement attached to it - an Object, Location, or Need. You must have one of each, and when in doubt go with extra Needs. They are chosen exactly like Relationships, using the remaining dice. Mention that the final die is wild and can be any number. That choice will belong to the player on your right.

Explain that whatever Object, Need or Location is attached to a Relationship, it is very, very important to both characters in that Relationship somehow.

Once you have a complete Setup, figure out what's going on. Explain that Relationships might be binary, or they might be pointing at a third party, and flexibility is encouraged in interpretation.

PREPARING TO PLAY

Once you have a potent situation, explain how to play. Ideally, use the play mat to illustrate each step in turn.

Explain that the game takes place across two acts, interrupted by a Tilt. The Tilt will introduce additional chaos and instability. After Act Two there is a short Aftermath phase, when we learn about our characters tragic outcomes.

Let them know how scenes work - that you'll have your character in the spotlight when it is your turn, and that you'll get two scenes per Act. Illustrate the two options a player has for scene framing - to Establish or to Resolve - by inventing a scene involving a couple of your newly-created characters. Demonstrate why each is fun and valuable, and make it clear you cannot do both.

Explain that in Act One, no matter whether you Established or Resolved, you give your die away at the end of your scene. You can give it to any other player for any reason at all. Briefly show them why the dice you accumulate matter, by illustrating how the Tilt and Aftermath favor characters with lots of a single color and punish characters with die parity.

PLAY ACT ONE

Ask if anyone has a juicy scene they'd like to Establish. If no one does, Establish a strong scene yourself.

Remind overly enthusiastic or "deer in the headlights" players of the option to Resolve. Demonstrate this yourself if necessary. Make sure to tell them they can create one person scenes, flashbacks, and play other dramatic tricks if they wish.

Strongly support other player's creative contributions. Emphasize that character death is explicitly on the table and is totally OK.

HANDLE THE TILT

When it is time for the Tilt, reiterate that the game is half over. Illustrate the die rolling mechanic and have everyone roll - they will be eager to. Determine who decides the Tilt and give each of them an index card. Explain that, using the remaining dice, they should author a category. When both have done so, swap cards and have them add a detail to the other player's category. Consider grabbing the dice they use rather than keeping them on the cards, so there is no confusion or mixing of dice. When the Tilt elements are decided, throw them back in the pool.

Explain that the Tilt elements are community property, and that we just want to see them occur during Act Two in some fashion.

Take a short break.

PLAY ACT TWO

Before beginning Act Two, explain that everyone now keeps their dice after scenes. This is usually an "a ha!" moment.

Emphasize that each player has only two scenes in the spotlight and encourage them to make their scenes really count. Tell them that it is perfectly acceptable to have color scenes with no roleplaying as well, since these tend to be somewhat common late in the game when paths have been decided. Emphasize that not everything needs to be thoroughly resolved, thanks to the Aftermath.

Let them know the last die is wild and can be either black or white.

AFTERMATH

Ask another player to read the Aftermath outcomes aloud, and actively help make sense of the results.

In a convention game, I often dispense with the montage to keep it close to two hours. If this makes sense, or the energy is dragging, feel free. If you have time and everyone is into it, go ahead and do the montage.

Thank everyone for playing. Offer to send the index cards away with any player willing to write up the game as an AP report somewhere.

THANKS!

We're very glad you facilitated Fiasco! Let us know how it went.

