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The Art of Purple

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Improving Your Purple Text Game in 3DX

INTRODUCTION

So, you're roleplaying in 3DX¹ and purple text begins. One player writes three paragraphs about their character's deep, dark, and tragic past. Another types a single line: *"smiles and sits down."*

The scene stalls before it ever really begins.

Purple text is the heartbeat of role play in 3DX. It's how strangers become characters, how rooms turn into stories, and how a simple interaction can evolve into something memorable. If you've spent any time roleplaying in 3DX, you've probably seen the full spectrum of purple text. Some scenes feel electric: characters bounce off each other, emotions land, and the story writes itself. Others struggle to get off the ground. The difference between them isn't necessarily in talent, but in the craft. You don't have to be a great writer to roleplay well. You can easily up your purple text game by following a few basic writing mechanics and keeping some good habits in mind. Whether you're new to roleplay

¹<https://thehiddencircle.com/roleplaying/>

or someone who has been writing purple text for years, these fundamentals can turn a scene from awkward to immersive.

SHOW, DON'T TELL

Strong writing relies on experience over explanation, otherwise things can quickly turn into a mismatched exchange of narration dumps. Players write paragraphs explaining what their character is thinking or what their backstory is instead of just letting it emerge through their actions and letting the scene reveal the character.

When writers “tell,” they summarize what their character feels or intends. When they “show,” they reveal those emotions through actions, body language, and small details that bring the scene to life. Showing works better in roleplay because it gives the other player something to respond to. Instead of simply stating emotions, you create small moments that invite interaction. Let the scene breathe!

For example, writing something like *“She smooths the wrinkles from her jacket for the third time before stepping closer, chin lifted a little higher than she feels”* helps the other player **see** nervousness without directly hearing *“She felt nervous, but pretended she was confident”*.

When you show instead of tell, you’re not just writing better, you’re giving your scene partner(s) room to participate. The difference between *“He was angry and walked over to her aggressively”* versus *“His jaw tightened. He crossed the room in three quick steps, stopping just short of her space”* is that you are letting the reader **feel** the tension instead of announcing it. Good writing thrives on this kind of momentum. Actions create movement in a scene, and movement is what gives your partner something to react to. One of the simplest ways to keep that energy flowing is by writing with an active voice rather than a passive voice.

USING YOUR ACTIVE VOICE TO KEEP THE SCENE MOVING

Active voice places the character directly in the moment. It keeps the focus on what characters are *doing* rather than what is *being done*. In roleplay, this matters because scenes move forward through action. When sentences become passive or overly indirect, the pacing slows and the scene can start to feel distant instead of immediate.

In active voice, the subject performs the action. In passive voice, the action happens to the subject. While passive voice isn’t always wrong, relying on it too often can make roleplay feel sluggish or detached.

Passive: *“The glass was knocked off the table as the argument escalated.”*

Active: *“He knocked the glass off the table as the argument escalated.”*

MORE...

Passive: *“The door was slowly pushed open.”*

Active: *“She pushed the door open slowly.”*

Passive: *“The message was read, but no response was given.”*

Active: *“They read the message but didn’t respond.”**

Passive: *“The chair was pulled back from the table.”*

Active: *“She pulled the chair back from the table.”*

Passive: *“The silence was broken after several long seconds.”*

Active: *“After several long seconds, he finally broke the silence.”*

Instead of describing something that happened, the sentence shows the character causing the moment. The action becomes clearer and more immediate because the reader knows who is doing something, and the scene feels more grounded.

In roleplay, clarity of action matters because every sentence becomes something your partner can respond to. Active voice keeps the focus on character decisions and movement, which helps scenes unfold naturally instead of feeling like distant narration. When characters are clearly acting and reacting, scenes begin to develop a kind of rhythm between players. One action leads to another, emotions shift, and tension builds moment by moment. This is what creates emotional momentum in a roleplay scene.

FIRST PERSON VS THIRD PERSON

Another question that often comes up in 3DX roleplay is whether to write in first person ("I") or third person ("he/she/they"). While both styles exist in the community, third person is generally the most common when playing a character, and not simply because using /me to purple text in-game defaults to third person. Writing in third person helps create a small amount of distance between you and the character you're portraying. Instead of describing what you are doing, you're describing what the character is doing.

***First person:** "I walk over to the bar and order a drink."*

***Third person:** "She walks over to the bar and orders a drink."*

Third person makes it easier for other players to view the interaction as a scene between characters rather than a direct interaction between players. That said, some players do prefer first person in more casual or social roleplay. When in doubt, matching the style of the person you're roleplaying with is usually a safe approach. Consistency between players tends to make scenes flow more naturally.

The most important thing is clarity. Whichever style you choose, write in a way that makes it easy for other players to follow the action and respond.

AVOID FORCING REACTIONS

Good roleplay isn't just about describing actions, but about how the emotional energy of a scene moves between the people writing it. When emotional momentum is present, each post builds on the last one. Reactions lead to new actions, tension rises or softens, and the interaction feels alive rather than static.

That being said, don't force a moment. As you adjust your focus to giving a player something to react to, **don't force reactions**.

One of the quickest ways to disrupt a roleplay scene is by writing another character's reaction for them. Every player controls their own character, so deciding how someone else responds removes their ability to participate in the moment.

***For example:** "John takes out his sword. You gasp at how big it is!"*

In this case, the player no longer has a choice about how their character reacts. Maybe their character wouldn't gasp at all! Maybe they would laugh, step back, or reach for their own weapon. By writing their reaction for them, the scene stops being collaborative and starts becoming one-sided narration.

***A better approach:** "John takes out his sword, the blade catching the light as he lifts it slightly."*

Now the moment is open! The other player can decide how their character responds, whether that's fear, curiosity, confidence, or something completely unexpected. When you focus on your character's actions and allow others to control their own reactions, the interaction stays dynamic and collaborative.

COLLABORATIVE STORYTELLING

Think of roleplay less like writing a story and more like playing catch. One person throws an action into the scene, the other person responds, and the moment evolves from there.

It's easy to get excited about your character and forget that roleplay is still social interaction. No matter how detailed your character's story might be, roleplay scenes are built between people in real time.

When someone suddenly appears and starts dumping paragraphs of lore about their character's past, titles, or abilities, it breaks immersion. Instead of feeling like a living moment between two characters, the scene starts to feel more like a monologue.

Build the story together. Good habits include leaving space for responses, reacting to what the other person writes, and allowing the scene to evolve naturally rather than trying to control every direction it takes.

The most memorable scenes rarely come from one player telling a story: they come from two players (or more!) discovering the story together.

THE POWER OF THE WALK-UP

I always give credit where credit is due: one of the best roleplayers in this community (known as **Saraphina**) taught me the power of a good walk-up.

The way you enter a scene often determines whether roleplay happens at all. A good walk-up creates a small moment that invites interaction. A bad walk-up can stop the scene before it ever begins.

One of the most common mistakes is walking into a room and unloading lore.

***For example:** "Hello. I am Lord Kaelith, heir to the throne of a fallen kingdom. My family was betrayed when I was young, and now I wander the world seeking revenge."*

While that may be an interesting backstory, it doesn't give anyone much to work with in the moment. Instead of reacting to the scene around them, the other players are suddenly listening to a monologue.

A stronger walk-up focuses on a small action that lets the scene unfold naturally.

***Instead, try this:** "He pauses near the bar, brushing rain from his coat before glancing around the room."*

Now the moment is open. Someone might greet him, ask about the rain, offer a drink, or simply observe him. A simple action creates the beginning of a scene.

Good walk-ups follow the same habits we've already talked about: show rather than tell, use clear actions, and leave space for other players to react. You don't need a dramatic entrance. Often the best scenes begin with something simple.

Sometimes all it takes is walking into the room and giving someone a moment to respond. In fact, many of the strongest roleplay moments come from small actions rather than large blocks of text.

LESS IS MORE

You don't have to write giant paragraphs to be a good roleplayer in 3DX. Many strong scenes are built on small, vivid moments rather than long explanations. A short post that clearly shows what a character does, how they react, or what changes in the environment can often move a scene forward more effectively than several paragraphs of description. Roleplay is a shared space. Leaving room in your posts gives your partner space to react, build tension, and shape the moment with you.

CHARACTER SHEETS

One last habit that can help improve your roleplay is creating a simple character sheet. It doesn't have to be a massive document or a wall of lore. Keeping it short and focused is often more useful. It's even better if you treat it as a *working document* that you can add to as your character's story progresses.

A character sheet gives you a place to organize the small details that make your character feel alive: their habits, motivations, fears, strengths, quirks, likes, and dislikes. These details don't have to be explained all at once in a scene. Instead, they act as a quiet source of inspiration while you roleplay.

When you understand your character well, it becomes much easier to decide how they would react in different situations. A cautious character might hesitate before speaking. A confident one might push the conversation forward. These small traits naturally lead to actions that other players can respond to, helping scenes stay dynamic and collaborative.

Character sheets can also keep your motivation alive between scenes. Adding new ideas, adjusting parts of your character's history, or writing down potential story hooks can make you excited to step back into roleplay.

The goal isn't to create a perfect biography. It's simply to give yourself a reference point that helps your character grow naturally as new moments unfold.

Keep in mind that your character sheet is primarily a tool for you. Handing someone a document and saying “here, read this and roleplay with me” turns the social interaction into homework. It’s much more fun for other players to discover those details naturally through scenes as your character reveals them over time.

CONCLUSION

At the end of the day, purple text isn’t about writing the longest post or having the most detailed character. It’s about creating moments that other players can step into. Good roleplay happens when characters react to each other, when scenes evolve naturally, and when everyone involved has space to shape the story together. If you focus on showing actions, keeping your writing clear and active, leaving room for reactions, and building scenes collaboratively, you’ll find that roleplay becomes easier and far more rewarding. Purple text isn’t just a writing style, but it’s a shared experience. And sometimes the best scenes begin with something as simple as walking into the room and giving someone a moment to respond.