



Five minutes with...

27 Jun, 2024

Five minutes with...Jeremy Crawford.

- Game Director for marquee role-playing game DUNGEONS & DRAGONS
- Joined Wizards of the Coast in 2007 and has acted as lead rules designer since 5th edition, including the 2014 Player's Handbook and *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything* – the fastest-selling D&D supplement in the game's history
- Recognized as Gayming Icon of the Year at this year's [Gayming Awards](#)

? A wonderful journey.

As Game Director for DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, I oversee the RPG products that we make for D&D, across everything including game mechanics, art, and writing. Right now, the focus is on [the new core rulebooks](#): the new Dungeon Master's Guide, Monster Manual, and Player's Handbook (which we recently sent off to the printer!). It's an exciting time for us because it's the first time in 10 years that we've refreshed the core of our game. As someone who started playing the 1st edition in elementary school, it has been a wonderful journey getting to work on D&D and see the game evolve over its lifespan.

▲ Expanding the tent.

When I started at Wizards in 2007, we were still publishing the 3rd edition, and very focused on tactical play. For example, both the 3rd and 4th editions required the use of miniatures. One of the things we very consciously did when developing the 5th edition in 2014 was to open the game back up by focusing more on the storytelling aspect, so that people had more liberty in how they played. You could gather around a table with miniatures on a grid (a style of gameplay we still support), or engage in a more fully immersive, theatrical style of play. We wanted to invite all kinds of players into the D&D tent. And today, there are even more ways for folks to connect and play through our digital play experiences, even if they can't get together in person.

? Delivering joy to fans all over the world.

D&D has over 64 million fans worldwide. With such a large and often vocal fan community, different factions of fans sometimes want diametrically opposed things. But there's always something for us to learn from fan feedback.

We have institutionalized mechanisms for receiving input from fans; for example, we release early versions of our designs [through our website](#) and invite fans to give us their totally frank opinions. As game designers, it's our job to examine the feedback, see what's causing a strong emotional response, and then chart a course that will get us to a place to bring joy to as many people as possible – while keeping the game stable and ready to build new things.

? That 'spirit of welcome.'

We are constantly looking for ways for D&D to feel welcoming to far more people; so that anyone who comes to the game will say 'I see a little bit of

myself here.'

Before the launch of 5th edition, less than 10% of the D&D audience identified as female. So we made sure that at least half of all the heroes depicted in the 5th edition were women. It was also the first time the rulebook invited readers to think about aspects of their character's gender identity and sexual orientation. The changes we made in the rules, art, and storytelling created this alchemy that did ultimately allow us to meet our goal of making the game more welcoming: today, 10 years later, almost 50% of new players identify as women. We have lots of players who identify as part of the queer community, and we've seen many more people of color join the game. This spirit of welcome has always been part of my design work, and it's been so gratifying to see how meaningful the game can be to people.

It's important for us to reflect love and friendship in our art, because so many people end up making deep friendships through D&D. There's something magical that happens: you're telling a story together, and building a world. You're not only friends, but co-creators. It's a very powerful combination.

? On my mind...

Many creators are doing wonderfully thoughtful things in gaming and in other arts that draw people together and help us understand one another better. I hope that work succeeds in bringing hope to those who feel isolated or misunderstood. The world is a better place when we share our stories and create new stories together.

? What's next?

It's an exciting time for us as we prepare to release the new 5th edition. We have pushed ourselves even harder to maintain that spirit of welcome in the new rulebooks – and fans will see depictions in our art of all sorts of individuals, and couple and family configurations. I hope the audience for D&D continues to grow and become even more diverse than it already is.

As we weave technology together with imagination, I'm excited to see all the different ways people will be playing. 10 years from now, there will be new ways to play D&D that we cannot yet even imagine.