

# Strange LRP Equality, Diversity and Acceptable Behaviour Policy

## Introduction

Strange Ideas aims to provide a supportive and accessible culture in which Strange LRP can be enjoyed without any player experiencing or fearing discrimination or harassment.

This policy was derived from the Snakepit Games Model Equality, Diversity, and Acceptable Behaviour Policy v 0.5.2 by Doug McGregor. You can find it [here](#). That document was released under the Creative Commons Attribution Share-Alike license, under which this document is also released.

All queries should be directed to [strange@strangelrp.org](mailto:strange@strangelrp.org).

## The Short Version

You must not:

- Discriminate against others or use derogatory or bigoted language outside of 'in-character' (IC) interactions
- Sexually harass other participants
- Become so drunk that you are unable to roleplay safely
- Smoke or vape in an inconsiderate manner
- Use illegal substances
- Film or photograph others without their consent
- Interfere with another participant's personal belongings or mobility aids (see 'IC thieving' for more details)
- Attempt to shrug off responsibility for your actions

- Engage in unacceptable behaviour in Strange Ideas' online and/or offline spaces

If you break this policy, we can:

- Offer you a warning and/or discuss the situation with you
- Ban you from attending future events
- Ask you to leave the event
- Share certain information with others, at our discretion
- Take legal action, if the situation is sufficiently serious

We will:

- Take all complaints seriously
- Keep your information confidential, especially around complaints
- Aim to provide any reasonable adjustment needed to improve accessibility

## **Mission Statement**

Strange LRP is inspired by fictional works set in a real-world historical time period (well, almost!). We are aiming to create a living, breathing, immersive world as seamlessly as possible. We use deliberate contrivances such as our referees dressed in servants' livery, and the rules have been specifically designed to facilitate storytelling over mechanics.

Uppermost in our minds, however, are the themes of racial tension, social class and the rights of women that run as bright threads through the literature and media we have drawn on to create Strange LRP, such as the work of Jane Austen, BBC's *Taboo* and Susanna Clarke's *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*. Women's property and inheritance rights in the era were inferior to that of men, and a

gentlewoman might find herself living in poverty if unable to make a suitable marriage (click here for some [mythbusting](#) on women's inheritance rights in this era ). The slave trade was outlawed but, at this time (1822), [slavery](#) itself is legal. The lives of the poor were so dramatically different to the rich as to often appear confusing to their social 'betters'.

One issue with including such themes in live roleplaying games is that their inclusion might be seen as endorsement of racism, classism or sexism. On the other hand, by excluding these themes comes the possibility of 'whitewashing' or ignoring the very real experiences of women, ethnic minorities and the widespread poverty in this period. After much soul-searching, we have decided that it is appropriate to include these themes in our game, both to be as true to the literature as possible, and as we believe that these stories should be told, lest we forget how far we have come in society and how far we have yet to go.

Our solution to some issues of including these themes in Strange LRP is to include in-character contrivances to minimise overt sexism and racism:

- First of all, social class is the most important descriptor and trumps all other characteristics. A wealthy or titled individual of any gender or ethnicity, is of high social status. For all intents and purposes, this was true of the period. While characters of a similar social class may-well interact as equals, we have designed our game to offer plenty of 'plot' and roleplay no matter what social class you decide to play.
- Second, the in-character hostess is a mixed-race heiress of great wealth and very high social status. Overt IC racism is likely to lead one to becoming a pariah among the guests and household staff, although you are welcome to roleplay around this if you wish.

- Thirdly, the heiress is very interested in the rights of women in Britain. She has very deliberately invited women of power, influence and learning so that they can make contributions to learned discussion over the weekend. Overt sexism towards women or distasteful discourse may likely lead to similar arguments and / or exclusion as outlined above. Men may find that the same is not true of the reverse.

'Cross-play' (playing a gender or ethnic/cultural background other than one's real-life gender or ethnic/cultural background) is acceptable if done respectfully. To minimise confusion, all characters should recognise and refer to another's character by their assumed gender, culture or ethnicity based on their physrepping. It is entirely acceptable to correct someone if they have misinterpreted one's physrepping, for example 'In fact, sir, you are incorrect. I am a woman, and I dress in these clothes because I eschew society's petty restrictions on our sex,' or 'As part of the consul in China, I have become accustomed to local traditions of dress and manner, but I am not Chinese, I am as English as you!'

To be clear, however, we do not endorse 'blacking up', as such- it is easy to get this sort of thing wrong; should you wish to play someone of African or Indian descent, or any other non-white ethnicity and you are OC caucasian, simply inform the people you meet as to your IC heritage.

In line with the spirit of the source material on which we have based Strange LRP we will also reference and potentially engage with 'mature themes'. While we will make every effort to write the event around our participants' requirements in this regard, we encourage our attendees to use the agreed 'safe words' and 'check-ins' during the game. See the 'Mature themes' and 'Safe words and check-ins' sections below for more information.

We hope you will find that our Mission Statement goes some way to explaining our stance on these matters. Please send any questions or words of advice to [strange@strangelrp.org](mailto:strange@strangelrp.org).

## **Purpose**

By participating in our events and/or related activities, such as participation in online spaces that we curate you automatically agree to abide by this policy under the Strange LRP Terms & Conditions. The ultimate aim of this policy is to ensure that all players and crew participating in LRPs or attending events run by Strange Ideas or events related to Strange LRP are treated fairly, with dignity and respect, and do not suffer out-of-character discrimination or harassment. This policy applies equally to events that we run and to all online spaces that we curate.

By booking a place at Strange LRP, or using any online space curated by Strange Ideas, you are agreeing to abide by the following policy for all of your interactions with players, crew, and all staff from Strange Ideas, in line with the organisers' interpretation and implementation of it. If you are not willing to abide by this policy of shared respect and dignity, we at Strange Ideas ask that you do not book for any of our events; we welcome all comments, feedback, queries, and requests for clarification on this policy, which should be directed to the email address listed at the beginning of this document.

Whilst we at Strange Ideas have attempted to create as complete a policy as possible, we unfortunately cannot plan for every eventuality for every individual, however much we might like to. However, we consider this equality and diversity policy to be a 'living document': we will continue to update it as we consider new challenges to inclusivity and accessibility, and how we can best meet these issues to provide our players and crew with the best possible experiences at our Events.

Where and when this policy is updated over its lifetime, our players and crew will be informed in advance of any events.

It is the responsibility of all participants (i.e. players, crew and organisers) at Strange LRP to adhere to this policy's guidelines, and the aims and spirit for which they stand. Following this policy is a condition of attending any event run by Strange Ideas, or using any online space that we curate. Individuals should always act as if this policy is in full effect. It should be noted that we consider the spirit of the guidelines to be as important, if not more so, than the specific wording of any part of the policy. Any attempt to defend unacceptable behaviour by attempting to twist the wording of this policy will not be tolerated.

## **'Mature' Themes**

As per the source material Strange LRP is drawn from, including 'real world' Fairy folklore, the setting includes themes that some may find distressing or uncomfortable to roleplay, i.e. 'mature' themes, including elements of 'horror'. This means that stories or scenes may arise in the game that may include (but are not limited to) madness, murder, cannibalism, physical abuse, torture, self-harm or child kidnapping. It is the responsibility of each player and member of crew to:

- Notify the Strange Ideas team well in advance of the event if you wish to be **generally excluded** from plot which is specifically written to include 'mature' themes;
- Notify us of **specific** 'mature' themes you wish to avoid if you would prefer to engage with some themes and not others.
- **At the event**, use the 'safe words' and 'check-ins' (described below) if you are OC uncomfortable in any IC situation that you are presented with or have OC concerns for another participant's wellbeing or safety.

## Safe words and Check-ins

Strange LRP largely embraces the social mores of the historical period in which it is set (see our 'Mission Statement'), therefore we understand that the 'Social PvP' aspect of roleplayed (i.e. 'in-character' or 'IC') interactions may sometimes become misunderstood as non-roleplayed (i.e. 'out-of-character' or 'OC') behaviours that contradict our expectations from players and crew. Because of this, and because of the potential for 'mature' or 'horror' themes at Strange LRP events, we use a system of 'safe words' and 'check-ins' to maintain a pro-active culture of mutual respect and understanding.

### Safe Words To Halt Roleplay and Withdraw: 'Stop the Game'

If a participant is OC-uncomfortable with an IC situation or interaction and wishes to immediately withdraw from roleplay, they may use the safe words '**Stop the Game**'. If there are concerns regarding one or more participants' physical safety, then this should be shouted loudly enough for all nearby to hear.

- Other participants involved in the IC interaction or situation must allow the individual who spoke the safe words to immediately withdraw from roleplay.
- The player who used the safe words may wish to notify a Referee of their concerns about the interaction or situation at their own discretion.

### Safe Words to 'De-escalate' Roleplay: 'This is Beyond the Pale'

If a participant has OC concerns about the potential for an IC situation or interaction to escalate beyond their **own** limits of OC comfort and wish to indicate they would prefer others involved in the scene to 'de-escalate' or otherwise change their roleplay without breaking other's immersion, they may use the safe words, '**This is Beyond the Pale**'.

- You may elaborate in an IC fashion if you wish to indicate your preferences for roleplay, but you must clearly begin with the words ‘This is Beyond the Pale’).
- Other participants involved in the situation or interaction may choose, if they wish, to change how they continue to roleplay during the situation or interaction. Please note that if the situation continues to escalate beyond OC comfort levels for any participant, they have the right to use the safe words, ‘Stop the Game’.

### **Check-ins**

Players and crew may react to perceived or potential concerns about another individual’s OC wellbeing without breaking ‘immersion’ by speaking the words, **‘Are you in good temper?’** This may be spoken for all to hear or whispered as the situation demands. If you are asked this question you **must** respond either:

- **‘No’** if you wish not to continue roleplay in this interaction or scene (you may elaborate in an IC fashion if you wish, but your response must clearly begin with the word ‘No’).
- **‘Yes’** if you wish to continue to roleplay in this interaction or scene (you may elaborate in an IC fashion if you wish, but your response must clearly begin with the word ‘Yes’).

Please note that ‘check-ins’ may be used at any time, by any participant, whether due to concerns regarding an imminent IC situation or interaction, an immediate concern or to ‘check in’ with another participant afterwards.

### **Acceptable Behaviour**

We expect all participants in our events to accept full personal responsibility for all of their actions. Excuses – such as actions resulting from intoxication – are not

considered to be acceptable, and will be judged as harshly, if not more so, than unacceptable behaviour which occurs in the context of sobriety – see the “Anti-Weasel Policy” below.

### **Unacceptable Behaviour**

Due to the themes present in Strange LRP, the safe words and check-ins we use during the game are in place because we accept participants to be considerate of others’ OC comfort during roleplay and can help participants identify behaviour that is unacceptable to others. If a person persists in unacceptable behaviour after hearing safe words from any participant are spoken, then it is grounds for reporting the participant to the Strange Ideas team.

During an event if a participant at any time engages in unacceptable behaviour in a situation or interaction which is clearly OC or engages in unacceptable behaviour in any of Strange Ideas’ online spaces, then it is grounds for reporting to the Strange Ideas team and may result in sanctions against the offending party. See the sections on ‘safe words and check-ins’ above and the ‘**Weasel Policy**’ below.

Whilst it is impossible to give a comprehensive list of all behaviour that we consider to be unacceptable, the following general categories apply:

### **Discrimination, Bigotry and Derogatory Comments**

In all ‘Out-of-character’ (OC) situations and interactions it is unacceptable to discriminate against or insult another participant on the basis of any out-of-character attribute that they may possess, for example racist, sexist, or ableist slurs, etc. Strange Ideas does not accept the excuse that any such language is

used lightly, ironically, or in jest, for example 'I always call them that', or 'I can call them that because we're friends'.

During IC situations or interactions, if a participant towards which you are being discriminatory, bigoted or derogatory regarding one or more OC attribute uses the safe words you must change your IC behaviour immediately.

## **Sexual Harassment**

Strange Ideas considers sexual harassment to be entirely unacceptable at our games, and we pledge to fully support anyone who feels that they have been sexually harassed if they feel able to come forward about it. Sexual harassment can generally be considered to be any pattern of repeated and unwelcome sexual advances, including but not restricted to:

- Sexual comments, teasing, jokes, or comments on appearance or behaviour
- Creating an overly sexualised environment, for example by maintaining sexual conversations when individuals present have asked for the topic to be changed, or through displaying pornographic material outside of spaces in which all present have consented
- Pressure for personal interaction with a sexual or romantic intent
- Hugging, touching, groping, or any other unwanted physical contact

It should be noted that sexual harassment can be perpetrated by a person or persons of *any* gender, against persons of *any* gender.

Issues can arise around sexual harassment at LRP events when participants attempt to justify what would be unacceptable behaviour in any other circumstance as "just being in character". While flirting in some forms may be acceptable behaviour with regards to the setting, we encourage our players and crew to use the safe words and check-ins described above if they wish to de-

escalate or discontinue roleplaying any scene that they are finding uncomfortable or have concerns about another player's wellbeing.

We at Strange Ideas do not consider 'it was just IC' as an excuse or justification for any continuing behaviour/roleplay after an individual has used the safe words 'stop the game' and will take a dim view of any 'roleplay' which was previously requested to be de-escalated with the safe words 'this is beyond the Pale' before play halted. The use of 'it was just IC' as a defence for sexual harassment of another participant will be considered to fall foul of our 'Weasel Policy', outlined below.

### **Alcohol, Smoking, and Drugs**

We understand that LRP is a social activity, and that some participants enjoy drinking alcohol, smoking, or using other intoxicating substances in such situations. Without wishing to take any moral position on this issue, we would like to make the following clear:

- It is unacceptable for a participant to become so drunk that they are incapable of continuing to roleplay in a safe, responsible, and respectful fashion. Participants who are found to be in such a state will be asked to remove themselves from the in-character area.
- If a participant has consumed alcohol, it is their responsibility to ensure that they do not get into a situation in which they are likely to cause harm to another person or venue, such as by engaging in combat when they are incapable of fighting safely. If in doubt, a participant should err on the side of caution – as a rule of thumb, if you wouldn't drive, you shouldn't fight.
- It is unacceptable to use *any* illegal intoxicating substances at Strange LRP events. This has serious legal repercussions for both the site and event management team, and can put individuals in difficult situations in regard to their professional obligations to report illegal activity. We reserve the right to

ask any participant who is using illegal substances to immediately leave the venue, and to ban any individual breaking this rule from future Strange Ideas events.

- The use of other intoxicants which are technically legal, such as poppers (amyl nitrate), is likewise considered unacceptable.
- Strange Ideas ask smokers and the users of e-cigarettes and vapes to obey all site-specific regulations around designated smoking areas, and to also be mindful of not smoking where it will inconvenience others. This includes not smoking in areas that people have no choice other than to pass through – such as near entrances or on major thoroughfares – asking permission from those around them before smoking, and moving away or extinguishing cigarettes on request. It is unacceptable to smoke indoors at *any* of our events, or in any tent provided by Strange Ideas.

### **Other kinds of Inappropriate Behaviour**

Additionally, Strange Ideas considers the following to be unacceptable at our events; again, this is not to be considered an exhaustive list:

- Filming, or photographing participants without their consent. We expect all photographers at our events – whether they are acting in an official capacity or not – to be mindful that some participants may not wish to be photographed, and to take down any unwanted photographs on request. Additionally, Strange Ideas considers the use of any video recording equipment such as GoPro by any participant to be unacceptable unless *explicit* permission to use such devices has been given in advance.
- Interfering with any participant's mobility or sensory aids, such as moving a wheelchair without the *explicit* permission of its user.

- Entering an individual's out-of-character room or tent without their *explicit* permission, or refusing to leave an individual's out-of-character room or tent after being asked. See the note on 'IC Thieving', below.
- Interfering with any individual's out-of-character belongings unless that individual has specifically asked a person to retrieve something.
- "Gender policing", for example, by asking another participant to leave a bathroom area based on their perceived gender.

### **IC Thieving**

- In-character bedrooms or spaces 'belonging' to a character are only 'IC' at that individual's discretion. While they may be entered without express permission during 'time-in', as soon as that individual decides that their space is no longer an IC space or time-out is called (whichever comes first), others may only remain in that space at the occupants' behest.

### **The Weasel Policy**

None of the following are *ever* considered a valid excuse for unacceptable behaviour. Attempting to justify such behaviour with these or similar excuses will be judged harshly should any complaint be made against a participant:

- "I was only joking"
- "I was drunk"
- "It was in-character"

We remind all participants that the spirit of the policy is to be considered more authoritative than the exact wording, and legalistic attempts to defend breaches of acceptable behaviour will not be treated as valid.

It is worth noting that whilst intent may provide context for any given behaviour, it is not something on which we take a particular stance. This is to say – participants are held accountable for their actions and the consequences of those actions, not their intentions.

### **Complaints Policy**

Strange Ideas supports a culture in which unacceptable behaviour is challenged – no matter at what level it occurs, and the team will support any player, crew member, or team member at Strange Ideas who feels that they have suffered discrimination or harassment from another participant. We encourage all participants to challenge any unacceptable behaviour as and when it occurs, but we understand that not everyone will feel confident or comfortable in doing so. To this end, we would encourage participants to bring complaints to our attention, and we pledge to deal with any complaints so raised in a prompt, respectful, appropriate, and confidential manner.

### **Complaint Reporting**

At any event run by Strange Ideas there will be one or more designated members of staff or crew who are authorised to deal with complaints; their identities shall be made clear in advance of the event, and we shall endeavour to ensure that multiple genders are represented in the Complaints team.

Any participant who wishes to raise a complaint – either for themselves, or on behalf of another participant – is welcome to bring it to the named person or persons, who will take the lead with dealing with the complaint, and escalating it further if needed. If a participant has a complaint that they do not feel comfortable raising with the designated crew-member, then we would encourage

you to raise the issue with a member of Strange Ideas permanent staff.

Additionally, we will endeavour to have a named individual who is not directly associated with our team, to whom a participant can bring any complaints they might have about any of our permanent staff or organisers.

Strange Ideas will keep a log of all incidents which are raised in this manner, though all details contained within this log will be kept confidential, and be accessible only to Strange Ideas permanent staff.

When acting in response to a complaint, we will keep the complainant anonymous unless they specifically grant us permission to do otherwise.

### **Warnings, Bans and Legal Action**

When a complaint is raised, we pledge to investigate it in a thorough, and impartial manner. Strange Ideas recognises that there is a need to be fair and balanced in our treatment of any complaint; however, we reject the need for only acting when there is proof beyond reasonable doubt that the complaint is substantive. In general, we take the stance that all parties will be assumed to have been acting in good faith until proven otherwise, but we will lean towards giving the complainant the benefit of the doubt if the situation is unclear.

Breach of our policy may be grounds for an individual being banned from further attendance of *all* events run by Strange Ideas including Strange LRPs, or – if sufficiently serious – being asked to leave an event immediately, with no refund offered. In general, we anticipate giving any person in breach of this policy at least one warning before issuing a ban – so that an individual has a chance to attempt to adhere to this policy – however this should not be relied upon. Strange Ideas reserves the right to refuse bookings, or immediately eject players from our

events, without any prior warning, should we consider there to be sufficient grounds to do so.

We reserve the right to ban any individual, or to refuse any booking, for any reason if we feel that it is necessary, with or without giving an explanation. Whilst it is not our intention to implement specific “must-avoid” policies, we expect individuals to respect the wishes of others who may not want to interact with them for any reason.

We reserve the right to share details of complaints made against individuals, or warnings, bans, and other sanctions, with other LRP organisers and related groups as we deem fit.

Strange Ideas reserves the right to take legal action against any participant should the situation be sufficiently serious to warrant it, for example in cases of assault, sexual harassment, racial abuse, etc. In such cases, we will always confer with the injured party about the degree to which they would wish to pursue such action, and be guided by their wishes. Only in exceptional circumstances – such as when the injured party is under the age of eighteen, or there is a serious and immediate risk to others due to the nature of an allegation – would we ever consider taking legal action without the consent of the injured party.

Whilst we acknowledge that the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 does not specifically require us to have a child and vulnerable adult protection policy in place, we will take any allegations relating to incidents of this kind very seriously, and will in all cases seek further advice from the relevant statutory bodies on how to proceed should incidents of this nature occur.

## **Promoting Equality and Accessibility**

Due to the restrictions of the present site (Treowen), Strange LRP Event 2 is not considered to be accessible for wheelchair-users. We acknowledge that due to our focus on supplying an immersive 'period' venue, future venues may also have restricted options for accessibility but pledge to take accessibility into account when planning future events.

For reference, Treowen has no permanent ramps appropriate for wheelchairs to access the building. Additionally, the ground floor has steps between some rooms and there are no ground floor bedrooms. Although there are ground floor toilets, these are not wheelchair-accessible. There is no lift (elevator) access to upstairs rooms.

However, we will try to offer accessibility options to our participants as far as we are able, and acknowledge that our participants are far better judges of their own requirements than we are. Accessibility limitations for any given site will be published on our website so that prospective participants may make an informed choice before booking. As such, this is a 'living' document.

Strange Ideas pledges to strive towards creating a game environment in which diversity is welcomed and accessibility is championed. To this end, we shall seek to incorporate any reasonable adjustments to our events to promote inclusivity, including but not restricted to:

- Adjustments to catering to take into account dietary requirements
- Free access to water and snacks outside of mealtimes
- Access to refrigerator space for medications and the like

- Priority allocation of sleeping facilities for those with restricted mobility or other needs, for example bedrooms as low down in the house as possible.
- Access to power sources for sleeping aids, phones or other devices
- Adjustment of in-game factors to avoid or alleviate out-of-character distress, such as by avoiding phobic triggers, or adjusting roleplaying effects (see appropriate sections above)
- The option for bedrooms to be out-of-character spaces, where required, through the use of 'do not disturb' signs
- Attempts to provide story options for those with specific accessibility needs to engage with plot.
- Providing gender-neutral bathroom facilities
- Wi-fi access

Thank you for reading.