

Inspiration by the Apocalypse (D&D 5e Houserule)

You can learn a lot by playing and running other RPG systems. This homebrew is inspired by Powered by the Apocalypse games (like Dungeon World and City of Mists). I've used it in my last campaign and for the first time, Inspiration was useful and fun. I hope your players like it as well.



The problem (IMO) with Inspiration in 5e:

1. Players forget about it
2. DMs forget to give it out
3. There is a disconnect between the role-playing reward and the mechanical bonus (advantage on a check)
4. Players are afraid to use it when they have it

I think that the problems I have encountered in the first two points all stem from the third. For the fourth point, there is some analysis paralysis when using a one-time bonus that can be used on *any* check (Should I use inspiration on an attack roll when I may need it to pass a saving throw against *Finger of Death*?)

How can we fix it without restructuring the whole thing? Simple, players choose to gain inspiration when they take an action (that require dice rolls) that directly relate to their traits, bond, ideal, or flaw. Think of these descriptors as **Tags** from a Powered by the Apocalypse game. When players take an action that relates to their goals/motivations/personality described by one of their characteristics, they "tag" that characteristic and gain advantage on one roll associated with that action.

That's it! Keep it as simple as possible. Some examples (from the open source Acolyte background):

"Nothing can shake my optimistic attitude."
Arawei would never let us die in wilderness! Player gains advantage on a Wisdom (Survival) roll.

"I quote (or misquote) sacred texts and proverbs in almost every situation."
Thus spake St. Cuthbert, "Square corners shall be pounded round!" Play gains advantage on an attack roll.

"I am tolerant (or intolerant) of other faiths and respect (or condemn) the worship of other gods."
The light of Pelor--the true master of this world--protects me against your curse, servant of Vecna! Player gains advantage on a saving throw.

"I've enjoyed fine food, drink, and high society among my temple's elite. Rough living grates on me."
The roast gryphon veal is superb, Sir Rodrick. Now, about our proposal...Player gains advantage on a Charisma (Persuasion) check.

Once a player has tagged (used a characteristic to gain advantage) a trait, bond, ideal, or flaw, they cannot tag it again until the next session of play.

Variant: Player Tags

More detailed characteristics work better with this system (What ancient relic do you seek to recover? What was your childhood hero like? What are your god's goals?). Player-written characteristics also (in my experience) work better than the ones listed in the manual.

Variant: DM Tags

When players receive a new quest or undergo a significant character development, hand them a new tag that they can now use to gain inspiration and advantage.

Variant: Refreshing Tags

If four possible free advantages once per session is too much for your liking, limit players to one tag (one free advantage) once per session. Or, don't refresh their tags until the current quest, checkpoint, level, or narrative arc is over.

Variant: Negative Flaws

Instead of letting players tag their flaw to gain advantage, let them tag their own flaw to refresh (let them use a tag again this session) on one of their other tags.

Variant: Party Tags

Let your players create a common tag related to their shared goal as a group. Anyone in the party can reference this tag to use inspiration once per session. Or, let players pick another character that they have a strong relationship with and create a shared tag based on that!



Thanks for reading this "Inspiration by the Apocalypse" houserule by DM Rob and DM Matt of [Dungeon Master of None](#). Check out our podcast for more suggestions and homebrewery.

