



The Upgrade

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Host Manual

If you have not yet read the Player Manual, then stop reading and do so before you continue. Much of this manual will not make sense if you haven't read the Player Manual first.

Layout by Frederik Berg Olsen.
A very big thank you to Joc.

The Upgrade! in Short

The Upgrade! is a freeform scenario by Vi åker jeep (We go by jeep). It was first conceived, in a quite different format, during the Swedish con Halmicon in Halmstad, 2004 by Thorbiörn Fritzson and Tobias Wrigstad. It was then revised completely adding a third author, Olle Jonsson, to the credits roll, for Knutpunkt 2005 in Norway.

The game is about our prejudice for participants in reality shows and reality shows. In particular, Temptation Island and the like. Couples sign up to be in the show, are broken up and used to form new couples that date with cameras present and live together in the luxurious Upgrade! resort on some exotic location as far from everyday life as possible. In the end, there is a closed vote by all participants whether they would like to STAY in their old relationships, or UPGRADE to the new one. New relationships where both partners independently votes UPGRADE get to stay together for another week at the UPGRADE luxury resort. The audience may also vote for the "couple of the week", or by popular demand force two people into a couple if enough people believe that they would fit each other. Couples that Upgrade! are rewarded in the spirit of creating good television. Couples that survive the show end up in the "Hall of Faith". Sometimes, they will get a reward.

As a game master, you will play the role of a game show host. We prefer two game show hosts, that is two game masters, but the game is perfectly handlable with just one. The game needs an even number of players, preferably eight, to work, or it is impossible to form couples. If you have an even number of players, you can easily invite one to become a game show host, or let someone double as a partner for two players.

The story of the game is manifold, much like a larp in the sense that there is one story for each contestant in the reality show: We will look at what happens to the contestants and their relationships as they set sail for the Upgrade! resort and how their lives are altered by all of a sudden becoming caught in the eyes of the public, and possibly humiliated on national TV. We will also look behind the scenes and examine the actions of producers, what goes on when the cameras are off, what the employees at the Upgrade! resort think about the contestants etc.

The stories and their outcomes are not scripted. What we provide are a set of sample characters that can easily be replaced by others, a questionnaire-based process of fleshing out your character and creation a relationship and a toolbox of techniques for making the game interesting to some extent tailed to the TV metaphor. If you want to script a story before playing, with the help of your second game master, or the players, or do it by yourself, that is perfectly alright.

The Upgrade! show is broadcast as a daily 60-minute program with a long weekly follow-up show that recaps the most important events of the past week. The game will alter between playing the recording of the follow-up, which includes interviews, questions from viewers and studio audience, and, perhaps most important, the screening of clips from the past week.

The show will start with a recap of the first episode where who should date who was decided using the speed-dating concept as described in this manual.

In addition to playing contestants on The Upgrade! show, the players will also play extras including producers, directors, staff on the Upgrade! resort, etc. Except from the hosts you should not have to play any other characters.

Before the game, the players will read the player manual to familiarise themselves with the techniques used in the game. Following this, they will read their characters, find their partner that they signed up with (may or many not be scripted in the character) and flesh out their relationship by filling out the questionnaires that are included in the game. When this is done, you should talk about the techniques, how to play, answer any questions etc. and then start out with a short exercise. The exercise is a media training exercise with the purpose of getting the players to talk about and present their characters, warming up and learning one or two things about what is interesting to a TV audience. When the media training event is over and done with, the show will start.

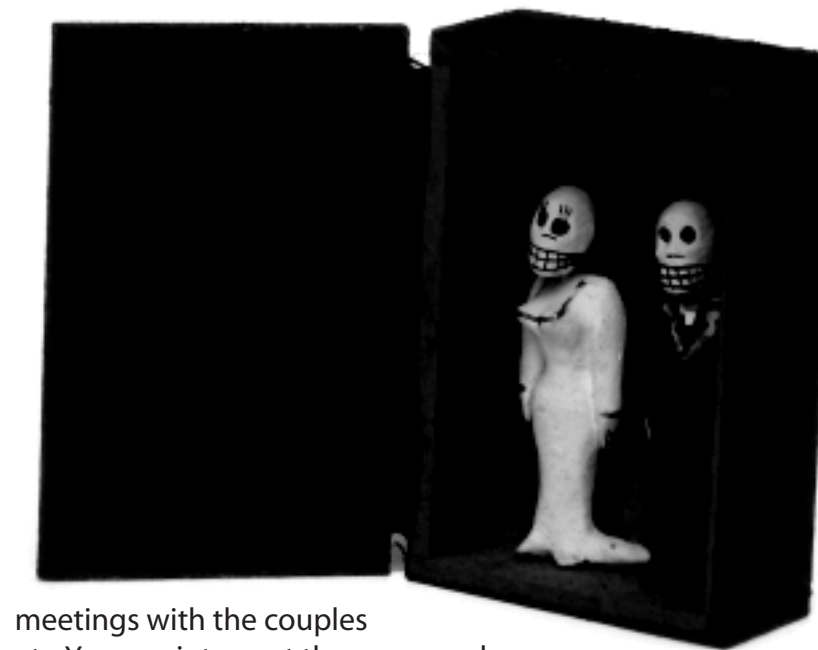


The show starts in the studio. All the contestants are there, sitting in couches or equivalent, chatting, flirting, holding hands or actively hating each other as the show has been running for at least a week as this is the weekly follow-up. You, as the hosts, will introduce the show to the viewers and immediately recap to the first time the couples

met. This is the speed-dating scene described in this manual. You introduce this saying something like "this is a clip from last week, when you first met". The game will then move into the NOW AREA (as described in the PLAYER MANUAL), and the speed dating will be played out there.

In the speed-dating scene is decided who will date who—thus, which couples, called POTENTIALS in Upgrade! terminology, have been dating on the Upgrade! island resort for the past week.

After the speed-dating, you cut back to the studio. You do well by interviewing the couples, getting them to talk about things that happened to them during the week, etc. From this point on, the game is virtually free until the end of the show. Each contestant has picked a clip from the this week that they will present and screen, meaning it is played. The contextualisation with pasts and presents etc. usually takes off pretty good and you may well find yourself playing half of the game in the possible future where couples still date and exes stalk them etc. If you play live, there will be commercial breaks when the camera is off, which may lead to interesting situations when people's true feelings can be expressed safely. If you don't play live, experiment with retaking scenes that weren't good enough, and have short breaks during which the cameras are (supposedly?) off. You can interrupt the game at any point to play a meanwhile in the kitchen of the Upgrade! resort where the staff gossip about what they have seen, etc. This is a good way of introducing facts and controlling the game. The staff can talk about hearing sound of intercourse, or discovering secret



meetings with the couples etc. You can interrupt the game and play a producer meeting two days back in time about the bad ratings leading to that all screened clips are edited in a more scandalous way. Decide that one contestant's clip was damaged because his mike was caught in his clothes and force him to take another, play it silent, or what you can come up with. During a break, someones father comes up from the studio audience to talk. Etc. You decide. A good way of adding good stuff is to introduce events like they were recurring features of the show. This manual includes some examples.

When the show is over, the contestants get to vote whether to stay or upgrade. If both contestants in a potential couple vote upgrade, they get to stay on for another week together. If two contestants in an original couple vote stay, they both get to stay for another week, but not with each other. If necessary new couples will be added from the waiting list and the show goes on. In all other cases, the couples are out of the show. As mentioned above, you can imagine the audience voting on ``most favoured couple'', ``hunk of the week'', etc. As soon as the voting is done, the game is over. It is usually good to end the game right after the vote, unless you are interested in scenes like ``You voted upgrade, but I voted stay! I'm so miserable!" But that is your decision.

Make sure to discuss the game afterwards. What worked, what didn't work. How could the game be improved, etc. What were the difficulties. Also, think about why you played like you did. Where do your images of these characters come from? Discussing and analysing a game is important, but don't overdo it, and don't take it too seriously.

Comedy, Tragedy or Drama?

The Upgrade! can be played like a comedy, a tragedy, a drama or what have you. Playing it like a comedy is the easy way out, but is not to be looked down upon. The important thing is to discuss this with your players and agree on the style of play before playing. An interesting exercise is to change style after half the game. Most of our examples can be read both as comical or tragical—it is really much all in your head. As long as you agree on how the game should be played it is going to be just fine.

Idle Players and How to Play

You have read in the player manual how the game is supposed to be played: the physical space divided into three areas. A good idea, if you have the necessary space and furniture, is to separate the studio from the NOW AREA. This way, the contestants can remain seated when they are looking at the clips instead of clearing the area for the players who are supposed to be in the clip.

When a contestant's clip is about to be screened, the hosts should first ask a few questions about the clip to give the player ample opportunity to telegraph information about the clip to the other players. This will help all the idle players to create or avoid supplemental scenes, etc. For example, if Eric says "This clip shows how my proposal to Rose was interrupted twice by Nate", Nate's player will know that he should enter and mess things up at least twice. A less revealing statement would be "This clip shows how I was saved by the bell by Nate". Now, Eric can lead Rose up on stage, play the Proposal, and Nate's player will hopefully understand that he should interrupt at the right time.

Clips will regularly only contain two characters, with occasional extras, etc. The idle players will watch and offer supplemental scenes. The interplay between the regular scenes and the supplemental scenes is a core game technique. Unless there are supplemental scenes, things will be boring and uninteresting. Try to encourage the players to flesh out other players' characters in supplemental scenes, even make up scenes of your own to show everyone where it's at!



Scenes and Possible Scenes

Here is a description of scenes mentioned above and possible scenes to throw at the players if convenient. They are also meant as inspiration for you to create your own scenes for your own games.

Media Training

In this scene, every couple is visited by a pair of media trainers, that will help the couple prepare for the reality of a TV show. The media trainers will read a short character description and be supplied a short list of activities for the training session. The scene will then be played once for each couple and each scene will take one item off the list until all items are covered. Each time, another couple will play the media trainers and the rest of the players will offer perspectives in the other areas, etc. At this stage, it is OK to have too many supplemental scenes, since we also have the pedagogic goal of introducing techniques to the players.

The media training scene is a training scene in many respects. The in-game goal of the scene is to teach the characters how to behave on TV. In addition to what was stated before, the off-game goal is for you to accommodate yourselves with the techniques we will use. During this scene, it is not only OK but encouraged to stop, go out of character and ask a question about what happened, what would have happened if this or that was changed, and so on. We can even repeat a scene if desirable. Think about what happens and why at this stage.

The Japanese Bath

In Japan, men always come first. Women second. You could easily turn this scene around gender-wise, but do play on the gender thing as that is just the kind of show the Upgrade! is. In the Japanese bath, the women will wash the men. Who washes who is randomly assigned as long as the original couples are avoided. The idea is of course to build tension. Isn't my partner a bit too close with that what's-his/her-face? Maybe seeing your partner rubbing some sensual oil on the half-naked body of your rival is going to get someone's blood pumping? Remember, the goal is good television. Naturally, be careful with all events like this one if you are hoping to tone down the comical side to the game.

Speed-dating

Gotta love it! The speed-dating concept will prevent you from ending up with the wrong woman during your fifteen minutes of fame.

Speed-dating works like this: arrange the chairs into two rows facing each other in the center of the now area. The women sit on one row, and the men on the other. The couples should be facing each other. When the gong sounds and the music starts playing, the men move one step to the left and start introducing themselves to the new women in front of them. Try to get a feel for each man or woman—is he or she a potential upgrade from your current partner? You have approximately two minutes before the gong sounds and it is time for the men to rotate left. This procedure is repeated until the couples are facing each other again. Now, discuss with your regular partner your feelings and goals and why you participated in The Upgrade! When the gong sounds for the last time, it is time for the women to choose.

When all men and women have speed-dated, it is time for the women to decide which of the men they want to form a potential couple with. Each woman will give a rose to the man she wishes to date. If a man receives more than one rose, he is free to choose \emph{unless his choice can result in a woman being forced to date her regular partner}. The hosts will have to pay attention and solve any conflicts that might arise. Letting the hosts solve problems is in the spirit of The Upgrade! The contestants know that anything can happen.

Once the couples have been formed and possibly interviewed by the hosts, they are off to the Upgrade! Hotel to spend a weekend in love and luxury before arriving at the studio to record the weekly finale.

Arriving at the Upgrade! Hotel

The couples arrive at the Upgrade! Hotel to find that each suite has been specially prepared in some way—each suite will be decorated in some theme, for example a do-it-yourself theme with a lot of unprepared food, herbs etc. and a famous cook, a wild west theme with a mechanical bull, beer sausage, a water bed, a tiger rug etc. Let the players themselves describe the arrival scene and let them go as wild as you have all agreed is suitable for the type of game you want to play. Another possibility is of course that you describe the rooms to the players, but only do that if you have a plan for why the room should look in a particular style.

Think short clips shown as teasers to the show.

Experience Exchange

The Experience Exchange is about the men meeting up and talking about the women in their absence, and vice versa. Use your gender awareness and let the men meet in the Turkish Sauna or at a football stadium, and the Women at a spa where they will be massaged and pampered etc. If necessary, let the hosts be present to serve as a catalyst for the discussions. Let the men boast about conquerings, give each other experience, etc. Clips from the experience exchange event are generally particularly interesting to recap in the studio—the women will hear the men talk about them and vice versa. A husband who is going to vote Upgrade! with a bad conscience might give tips to the guy dating his wife how to win her heart etc. Or two women might agree to swap husbands.

Bungy Jump

This could be any challenge event, really. The idea is to present the couple with the following question: “If you both do this yet undisclosed thing, you get 1,000 euros (or whatever, a luxurious dinner, etc.), but if only one of you do it, or neither of you, you get nothing!” The couple is then separated and presented with the challenge alone. Of course, no-one will know for sure what their partner one has chosen. The idea is of course to generate scenes where one overcomes his or her fear of bungyjumping mistakenly believing that their partner of course jumped. Don’t miss playing the aftermath—that’s of course more interesting than the actual jumping.

How to resolve action situations like bungy jumping is described in the player manual.

Another favourite is to let the contestants spend one day in a room full of sweets and delights without eating and play it back like a series of short edited clips.

Producer Meeting

The producer meeting is set in the piña colada laden sky bar at the Upgrade! Hotel right after the couples arrive. The producers can watch the couple’s through cameras in the rooms. They have to decide where to take the show now that the couples have been formed. What couple should be forced to do what? Etc. Keep this meeting short and effective as the producers probably have that other thing to go to, you know.

Make the players understand that the camera is off. You might need to give the players a push if this is a completely new situation for them. A voice-over might also help, for example, telling a tale about nervous producers, bad sales figures for commercials and exploding production costs. They have to save their asses, and the contestants will pay for it with their public lives (or whatever).

Producers care about demographics, the potential each couple has to connect with the viewers, how to push certain products, etc.

The players’ goal in this scene is to produce a list of things that will happen to the couples over the next few days of shooting. Help them if they get stuck.

A good trick is to have a TV screen in the producer meeting monitoring what is currently happening in the hotel suites as the couples arrive. Thus, you could easily cut to playing a scene in one of those rooms and go back again. Remember, the producers have to know something about the couples in order to know how to deal with them.

Tips and Tricks

Concentrate on one couple at a time. Idle players should watch so that they are able to launch supplemental scenes.

Timing is essential. It is not a bad idea to abruptly end a scene in a way that suggests something that did not really happen. If Eric gives Patricia a massage and the screen softly fades to black and then shows the morning next day, it suggests secret sex regardless of what really happened.

When suitable, have an off-camera scene. For example, the camera team's night off enables the couples to meet in the bar for drinks without supervision and fear of doing something that will be shown on national TV. How does this affect their interaction? Also, it is VERY GOOD to have a few scenes that brings all the characters together, not to mention the effect of seeing someone else enter the room, hand in hand with your partner. Don't start with such a scene, though. The players have to form couple relations before it is interesting to toss them together. Also, the players should not be led to believe that they will be "served" with pre-made scenes. This is their game—they are the producers, audience and contestants.

It is a good thing to have an explicit goal or a theme for each scene with a couple.

For example, if the producers decide on a bungee jump challenge for Eric and Patricia, the theme is obviously testing their relationship. Offering them money etc. will encourage Eric to force Patricia into jumping even if she doesn't want to, just to get the money.

If you want, the game can continue for more than one week. Maybe give the contestants a day off, etc. Have a producer meeting to decide next week's events. Maybe choose a theme for the upcoming week. If this sounds very loose, good! There are no good guidelines that we can give here—if your game is good and it feels like people are interested in continuing, you probably have enough inspiration and adrenalin to keep rolling without our support.

Inspirational Examples

The inspirational examples can well be shown to the players. The reason why we don't do that by default is because of previous complaints that "you don't want to pick something of the list, you want to be original, but the list has almost everything in it". While this is not really true, we chose to show the examples to the game master first and foremost.

Now area

1. X and Y meet for the first time after the speed-dating.
2. X and Y talk about having sex and decide to...
3. X and Y wake up after having had sex under the influence—high tension.
4. Moonlight walk.
5. Romantic dinner.
6. A quarrel.
7. Meeting regular partner during a romantic stroll with new partner. Perhaps the regular partner's new partner is there also.
8. "Truth or dare" or "I've never..."
9. Arriving at the theme decorated hotel room.
10. Is given the opportunity to win a cash prize in a competition (what do you know about your new partner) or by doing an assignment or daring something (lying in a coffin with spiders).
11. Cries on someone's shoulder.
12. X realises that he/she and Y are made for each other.
13. X realises that this (relationship with Y) will never work.
14. X realises that he/she can be totally him/herself with Y.
15. Accidentally hurts him/herself. (E.g., steps on a sea-urchin.)
16. Discusses a possible future together---how do you want your life? What if we should marry... ("I'm a vegetarian" and "I want to state up-front that I will never have kids/I want a dozen.")
17. Language problems. X was bad at learning languages and tries to speak with the Swedish as little as possible and thus chooses a Finnish man/woman in the speed-dating.
18. X and Y has a "moment", e.g., an oyster dinner that is ruined by stomach cramps or just works out splendid.
19. X gives his/her date a massage with an entirely new product from Fleur de Saint and completely ruins the moment by just talking about how incredible the PRODUCT is.

Possible future area

The purpose of the possible future scenes is to show what could possibly happen as a consequence of a scene in the now area if things continue in this direction, or show what goes on in the mind of a character, etc.

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|--|---|
| 1. My career finally started rolling... | 7. X and Y are now married... |
| 2. Some angry viewers whopped my ass on the bus... | 8. X and Y meet in court... |
| 3. A lot of people come up to me... | 9. X dies... |
| 4. TV/radio/newspaper interview... | 10. X says something about Y in an interview... |
| 5. Is given an official assignment due to celebrity status... | 11. X meets Y on the town and they chat a bit about memories past (revealing something, etc.) |
| 6. Is invited to a celebrity party and cannot help trying to get a few autographs... | 12. X is hosting a show of his/her own |

Past area

The purpose of the past area scenes is to show some perspective on the scenes from the new area---give a background to something that happens, show some depth etc. It is not until you learn that Eric is VERY scared of heights that you realise how much he is really trying to get together with Rose when he follows her to go mountain climbing.

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|---|---|
| 1. X is afraid of heights. | 7. Scene that shows that some other scene was true, false, etc. |
| 2. X never learned to swim. | 8. Scene that shows why it is so hard for X to trust someone. |
| 3. X and Y really married to save their relationship. | 9. Scene that shows that Patti really always is THAT nervous. |
| 4. Scene that discloses why X (and/or Y) REALLY wanted to be on the show. | 10. Scene that discloses that Jason and Helen are siblings. |
| 5. Everyone in my family was a celebrity in some form or another... (that's why I want to be on TV) | |
| 6. This has happened to X before. | |

Media Trainer #1

Professional media trainer for many years. Divorced with children aged 5 and 7 (two girls). Expensive habits but in general no real life. Really wants to convey an image of ``being a pro”.

Quickies

1. Usually had more significant clients, but not after THE MISTAKE. Subsequently very restrictive, nervous that the contestants won't have what it takes to be on national TV.
2. Whenever you talk to someone, try to give them the feeling that you are really listening to them. Encourage them, give nods, hmms, indications. Flatter them. It is almost as if you were sitting in their laps.
3. In your mind, you are responsible for finding out if anyone of these fine people couldn't cope with the enormous stress of being exposed on TV, and if so to prevent them from being there.
4. Used to talking to rich clients with status and not used to being the professional coming to the kitchen of an ordinary person.
5. Try playing down your personality, this usually works very well with the old and famous clientele.
6. Never worked with Media trainer #2 before. Can't even remember the name.

Start with the questions from the log and strike up a short conversation around the subject. Watch the clock, and try to poke at any areas that feel fragile.

Media Trainer #2

Pretty inexperienced. Really wants to be a REAL practicing psychologist, but this will do for now. No real pride in the job; if it can be fun, try to make it so. They're all a bunch of losers anyway. I mean, who in their right mind would want to do something like this?

Quickies

1. First time working with Media trainer #1. Eager to find out more about that person, who looks familiar. You want to look good in front of him/her to get ahead.
2. Pretty careless about the job.
3. Try to break them. If you can't do that, then they're probably solid enough to go on TV. If they break, bail out.
4. Try leading the conversation to more interesting subjects. This could be anything depending on the situation and profession of the interviewee.

Start with the questions from the log and strike up a short conversation around the subject. Watch the clock, and try to poke at any areas that feel fragile.

Media Training Log

for The Upgrade! 4th Season

Top tips for contestants

1. Be honest and open at all times.
2. Respond promptly to press enquiries: the way and speed with which you deal with them will affect the media's perception of you.
3. Always give a prompt answer, though not necessarily to the question.
4. Don't let anyone put words in your mouth.

Things to ask the presumptive contestants

We ask these questions to prepare you for being in the spotlight. These questions relate to things in your personality that will most likely be exposed when you participate in a TV show. If you feel uneasy about these questions, please tell us.

1. Why did you want to participate in this show?
2. Can you see yourselves with other partners?
3. What is your view on "open" relationships?
4. How do you feel about long-term commitment?
5. Name three properties do you look for in a potential partner?
6. How many of the these properties does your current partner possess?
7. If you could improve one thing about your partner, what would it be?
8. If your partner could improve one thing about you, what do you think that would be? (Alternate: would your relationship survive infidelity, and what would you count as infidelity?)