

An aerial photograph of a busy beach. In the foreground on the left, a large, green, textured dinosaur-like creature is partially visible. The rest of the image shows a wide expanse of golden sand crowded with people, colorful beach umbrellas, and towels. The scene is captured from a high angle, looking down on the beachgoers.

# A Day at the Beach

a roleplaying  
game by  
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# A Day at the Beach

You are a sentient patch of algae. You have banded together with some other algae to form a humanoid shape and disguise yourselves as human. Together, you make up an algoid. Humans have no idea that algoids, or any magical creatures, still exist. So you just have to stay hidden, working your day job making captcha systems for websites or whatever.

To help your disguise, you've become friends with a few humans. Today, they have socially pressured you into spending the day at the beach with them. That means that you'll be outside your comfortable routine. You'll encounter unfamiliar situations. You'll do human things you aren't familiar with. And you'll have to keep your inhuman biology from inadvertently revealing your secret.

In **A Day at the Beach**, 3-6 players collectively control one single algoid, trying to live its normal life. You will need to have Pairs deck, which is a deck of cards with ten 10 ranked cards, nine 9 ranked cards, eight 8s, etc. down to one 1 card. You can buy Pairs decks from Cheapass Games. Or you could combine two decks of regular playing cards: separate out excess 1s, 2s, etc. and include a Queen for the missing 9 and two Kings for the remaining 10s.

## Your Colony

Each player chooses a question and answers it:

- ☀ *How do we maintain our human disguise? What can cause it to go wrong?*
- ☀ *What unusual effect does our plant biology have when submerged in water?*
- ☀ *What happens to our plant body if we get too much sunlight?*
- ☀ *Who invited us to the beach? Why couldn't we refuse?*
- ☀ *What beach activity has us most worried?*
- ☀ *What do we fear will happen if everyone finds out we aren't a human being?*
- ☀ *What unusual thing do we need to survive?*

Collectively brainstorm a few human friends you're going to the beach with. Each should have a name, a way you know them, and one other detail that makes them unique.

Each player should create one detail about your human disguise. Are they old? Young? Male, female, nonbinary or some other gender? What is their profession, ethnicity, or other distinguishing features? What name do they use when interacting with humans?

Algoids are made out of many different species of aquatic plants. Each strain of algae has different needs and desires. You each push for your desire, while all working together to control the algoid as a whole.

Each player invents a drive that their algae patch pursues, and tells the other players what it is. These can be normal, relatable human motivations, like finding true love or getting a job promotion. Or they could be weird inhuman desires, like consuming certain rocks, or to implanting spores in people's eyeballs.

Draw three cards. The highest tells you how much you want to stop the goal of the player on your left. The middle tells you how much you want to fulfill your desire. The lowest tells you how much you want to help the player on your right fulfill their desire. The exact scores will be important at the end of the game. Until then, keep these three cards hidden.

Each player draws a starting hand of one card to use in conflicts.

The algoid colony begins with a suspicion of 0. If your suspicion rating ever reaches (21 \* the number of players) then the humans have discovered you are a hideous swamp plant monster.

## Scenes

Take turns framing scenes for other players. To frame a scene, describe where it is and what is happening right at the start of the scene.

Throughout a scene, players should be describing the environment, or asking each other questions and role-playing the NPCs. Any player can also describe the algoid acting as they wish, so long as no player objects to the action. For the most part, as long as players agree that something happens, it happens. The only complication is when two or more algae patches disagree about what the algoid should do. In that case, you play some cards to see what happens.



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## Internal Struggle

When two algae patches disagree about what the algoid should do, then you will play some cards to decide how the situation resolves. To begin, everyone who wants to be involved in the conflict draws a card.

If there is an NPC observing your algoid, draw and play one card faceup to represent them. If it is more than one NPC, play two cards faceup. If it is a crowd of people, play three.

Every player involved plays one card facedown from the two cards they have in their hand. All players reveal the card they played simultaneously.

If your card matches any other card played (including the NPCs), then you're out of the conflict. Keep the matching cards out, because other players could still match those values and bust themselves.

Anyone still remaining in the conflict can choose to take a hit to gain another card, played faceup in front of them. If you take another card and match someone, then that card is out and you aren't allowed to hit any more. Anyone can hit as many times as they like, until they match another card or decide to stop.

Each time you hit or stand or bust, narrate attempting to achieve your goals in the conflict. Maybe describe how you try to do it. Maybe describe why you want to do it, or a flashback or imagined outcome or something. You can't definitively resolve the situation until everyone stands, though.

Once everyone has been eliminated or decided to stop drawing, you will narrate how the situation resolves itself. Each unmatched card played lets a player declare one ironclad fact about how the situation plays out. Facts should be simple, short, declarative statements. If it takes more than a sentence, or uses any conjunctions, then that is probably two or more facts requiring two or more cards. Later statements can't undermine or contradict earlier statements. If you have 2 or more cards, you get to establish more details. Go in order, starting from the highest unmatched card and working down to the lowest one, establishing facts about how the situation resolves. Usually, the player with the highest card will decide the main issue at stake, and later players will add details or complications.

**Suspicion:** The highest match is added to the algoid's suspicion rating. The more conflict there is between the algae patches, the more quickly you will be discovered.

You can only complete your goal if your goal was the action that started a conflict and you scored the highest unmatched card.

(What happens if everyone matches? Then the situation is interrupted before it can be resolved. Nobody gets what they want. Collectively explain what happens to prevent the central question from being answered.)

## Endgame

The game ends when suspicion gets too high. If your suspicion is equal to or greater than  $(21 * \text{number of players})$ , then your algoid is exposed as an inhuman blob of algae instead of a human being.

When you are exposed, or whenever the players decide they are done, then you finish the game. Collectively, you'll create an epilogue for your algoid and their life, based on your endgame scores.

Reveal the score cards for your three desires. If you fulfilled a desire, then you add that card's value to your score. If you did not achieve that desire, then you subtract that card's score from your score. So you should wind up with a score between 30 (extremely good) and -30 (extremely bad).

Going in order from the highest score to the lowest, each player briefly narrates one little scene of the algoid's life after their day at the beach. Do they go back to their job? Are they on the run from scientists that want to dissect them? Describe a very brief vignette of the algoid's life afterward. Then the next highest score player does the same, and then the next and so on. You can't contradict previous players descriptions, just build on what they described.

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