Introduction

As you all know, things are evolving on almost a daily basis in the Palace community in general, the TPI sites in particular. This means that we need to step back and take a look at ourselves, as a group and individually, in order to better serve the needs of the community. If you have any suggestions, by all means pass them along.

Another source of information is Jim's excellent Wizard Manual. It is good reading anytime you have a question about the role of a Wizard and how to deal with most situations. This page, however, is infinately more detailed than Jim's manual, and should provide you with step-by-step instructions on both determining what is acceptable at our sites, as well as how to deal with offenders.

The Importance Of Equal Treatment

We are facing a wider base of users than ever before, with many being neophytes to the world of chat. This makes it more important than ever that we develop and USE a standard set of rules when dealing with problem users - equal protection and justice under the law as it were. Please note that this is one of the most important aspects of Wizardhood - we must strive to apply the rules equally across the board, regardless if the offender is a friend, an enemy, or perhaps even another Wizard.

Wizard Standards of Conduct

As TPI Wizards, most of the world sees us as representing the company in almost everything we do while online. As such, we should endevour to be as well tempered, balanced and most importantly, fair in our dealings with users. Not that we need to act like angels all the time, but certainly we can be careful as to our overall behavior. All too often, we allow our emotions to dictate our dealings - this is not a good thing. Nor is the use of props that are at best, questionable. Also (and this cannot be stressed enough). BE NICE !

To Prop, or Not to Prop

Many of us tend to overlook the use of our own props. It's very difficult to ask a user to change a prop because we feel it shows too much when our own props shows at least as much as theirs. Common sense dictates that if we are unsure about our own props, we are not in a strong position to question someone elses. So, how can you determine if your prop would be acceptable? Easy - the same standards that we apply to users MUST apply to us as well (see below). Not sure if your prop would pass the test? Better to not use it than face an irate user screaming "But yours shows more than mine does!".

Having a Bad Day?

All of us have those days where everything we touch seems to turn to a gooey brown substance. It's very important not to let these little challenges in our daily lives dictate how we deal with our Wizardly duties. If you're feeling poorly for whatever reason, better that you not Wiz than to Wiz badly. One of the least fun things to have to do is explain to a disgruntled user that so and so had a bad day and that's why they killed you for no apparent reason.

Baiting and Toying With Users

Getting a borderline snert to escalate a situation into something more in order to kill them is a big no no. In a nutshell, DON'T !
Under NO circumstances should anyone toy with an abuser, as a cat would toy with a mouse. All your actions should be swift, decisive and totally professional. There is simply no excuse for anything else.

Handling Problem Users in Public

It's very tempting to engage in a battle of wits with a problem user and then prove your point by pinning, gagging or even killing them. And while it may give us great satisfaction (and possibly add a certain

entertainment value for the rest of the users in the room), it's certainly not very professional. Nine out of ten times, it's always better to whisper to offender as opposed to taunting them publically and hoping for it to escalate into a killable offense. One must remember that most behavioral problems with users are usually caused by ignorance or simply a child looking for attention. Publically humiliating the offender could possible only serve to make them more determined when they return. By whispering to them, you remove their a) soapbox b) most of their incentive for revenge or c) their feeling that they must return to "save face".

I Wanna Be a Wizard!!

This is one of our more favorite dealings inside, isn't it? The first thing that comes to mind is to snap back some witty retort like "If you can figure out how to open the honor bar in the Honeymoon Suite, you'll find the Wizard password inside". While this may have worked in the earlier days, it's probably no longer a good idea to toy with these users.
Most of time, the user that asks this is simply in the dark about the procedure for becoming a Wizard and I find that simply explaining that we are not accepting Wizards at this time usually suffices. For the more aggressive types (usually kids), you can be a bit more creative, but bear in mind that being a smartass in your response is counterproductive and only serves to strengthen their resolve. Be firm, but be cool.

Scripting Changes

You've found this really cool room script that you know would be really cool to put into the Bar. So you enter Authoring Mode and place it in an existing hotspot and guess what? It works perfectly and now, everyone who says "Ph is a horse" gets transported to Ph's Palace! The only thing you didn't count on is that while that person is being transported, the entire bar is lagged to death while that user is waiting for his/her connection to take. And, unfortunately you left right after you verified that the script appeared to work.

This is one reason why we want all scripting changes made to ANY public rooms to be approved first. The rule is - if it's not your room, don't script it without getting approval first.

Allscray

Ah, what great fun it is to go into the Bar and allscray innocent bystanders with prop changes. It's certainly enteraining to watch the helpless users being forced naked, or to watch the entire room say the same thing. The only problem is, most users (Members and Guests alike) tend to find this degrading, since its an example of the power wizards have over others.
Allscray has it's place, such as when we're doing a special event (like the Summer Solstice Ceremony in The Slabs) but for the most part, it should not be used on the general membership, and especially not used as a form of punishment against offending users. You have an idea for using allscray for some Wizard function? Great, bring it to Management.

Prop Goes The User

"Page from UserX at Palace Gate: Pokeurhontas is wearing a nasty prop!"

You clammer to the gate and find PH (PokeurHontas, not the horse ya perve), wearing a rather interesting prop that leaves no doubt as to their gender (well, you always DID say you liked the wide open spaces). You immediately propgag, then whisper to her / him that the prop was inappropriate for public use, right? Or do you immediately kill?

"Page from SaintJ: Could someone come to the gate and give a second opinion about Sextoy's prop?"

Shiver after shiver runs through your very being as you go to the gate to offer what input you can. You arrive to find Sextoy's prop pushing the limit, but not really over the line, so you tell SJ it seems fine to you. But, how did you make this judgement?

The general rules for props used in public are really quite simple - Anything that you would normally expect to see someone wearing in a metropolitan area during summer is basically acceptable. With that having been said, a more precise list follows:

WHAT IS NOT ACCEPTABLE:

Animated or non-animated props (cartoon or otherwise) depicting intercourse, masturbation, felatio, cunnilingus or any other sex act normally not done in a public place. This includes human and animal props (such as the famous bunny humpers one).
Beastiality in any form.
Full frontal nudity showing nipples, pubic hair and genitalia (female) or pubic hair and genitalia (maie)
Props that use hands or cleverly placed objects to hide strategic areas on an otherwise nude figure anime or real life pictures). This should only be applied to "front facing" props.
"Spread eagle" props (ones that obviously meant for arousal purposes, not a clothed one sitting in a lotus position).
Props of dildoes or other marital aids.
Props that are obviously nude, but placed in the room so as to technically comply with the rules. A good example of this is a topless female prop at the bottom of the screen, so placed as to hide it's nipples.
Props that are posed in an OBVIOUSLY suggestive manner. For example, a female prop bent over with it's butt "in your face" (clothed or bare cheeked) or a male prop grabbing himself even though it is clad in a pair of levis.
"Wet T-shirt" type props, although technically clothed, leave little to the imagination. This also goes for wet panties or underwear type props.
Underwear or lingerie props, regardless of other circumstances. One would not expect to see someone wearing either of these type of garments in public.
Any urinating or defecating prop.
Blood and gore types. For example - real photo's of accident victims.
Symbols normally associated with hate groups (such as swastikas, etc.) are out.
Guest bashing props.

WHAT IS ACCEPTABLE:

Any of the following are generally to be allowed, provided they don't fall into any category above.

Bikini props, including string bikinis (even if they are of the string type that doesn't cover buttcheeks).
Topless female props that (for lack of a better term) are shown from the back.
Anime characters, even tho scantily clad.
Religious icons.
Bare chested males.
Unzipped pants - male or female, as long as no public hair is visible or it otherwise doesn't fall into one of the categories above.
Any Prop not specifically named as "non acceptable" above

How To Deal With Prop Offenders

Rule #1 - Unless the offender has a known and provable track record of using particularly nasty props, they do not get killed.

Rule #2 - You will ALWAYS nicely ask a prop offender to change their prop and explain why. If they have a problem with compliance, you may propgag and continue to explain the policy on props. Likewise, if you stumble onto a nasty prop, you may propgag immediately, but then take the time to explain why.

Rule #3- There are no exceptions to rules 1 & 2

Nasty, Obvious Double Entendre and Questionable Names

Creative names are a part of Palace life. Unfortunately, so are overly creative ones. It's very obvious about names such as "BigDick Lover" or similar, yet it may not be so obvious about "DickMan", because there are so many cultural differences within Palace, including those of age groups. "Pimp" is a perfectly acceptable term to most 16 year olds and is considered nothing more than slang. The same could be said of the term "bitch", which is an acceptable term to some groups as well. But, we must look at the bigger picture and try not to necessarily ignore one faction's views, if at all possible (the same could be said for prop standards).

This is the reason we disallow names that most would find offensive. In other words, names such as "PimpDaddy" or "NuthaNigga" are not to be used. Likewise for names using uncommon ASCII characters. "A$$hole" is a good example of one.

Someone Using Another's Name

Anyone who has been forced to deal with particular problem can tell you - this can be one of the most difficult and
frustrating things to have to deal with. Under MOST circumstances, our level of involvement should be minimal with us suggesting that a) they should talk with the other user about it and b) there is really nothing we can do, unless it becomes an imposter situation (even then, our involvement should be minimal). Suggesting an imposter is a double edge sword, as this comment could plant the thought that an otherwise honest mistake may have evil overtones when it really doesn't. Use this comment at your descretion.
As for users who accidentally use a known Wizard's name, they should likewise be treated as above, however, the first step would be to ask the Wizard if they have a problem with it (undoubtedly, most would). If they do not, there is no need to proceed any further.
For those users who repeatedly use a Wizard's name, it's been our experience that it is usually to deceive and should be dealt with as follows:
    In order to determine the motives of this person, take the time to explain that our policy is to not allow anyone to use a Wizard's name, as it is confusing to others (you may also want to `list -k them and make a note for future reference).
    If they refuse to change it, take no action other than to tell them that should they be "caught" doing it again, they may be subject to termination. The intent here is to give them every opportunity to consider the consequences of their actions.
    If you do catch them using the name at a later time, warn them one more time (giving them ample time to change their name), then kill for a short period (perhaps 10 minutes) if they don't comply.
    If they become a real problem after this time, kill for 120.

Bible Thumpers and Other Free Speech Advocates

This can be a tricky one to have to deal with. It's important to realize two very important facts about The Palace environment:
    We are not a democracy, we are a Membership Organization. Technically, we are not extraordinarily tied to protecting First Amendment rights.
    While the above may be true, we want to remain as open as we can while still maintaining an enjoyable atmosphere for ALL users.

Those that cry that you are infringing on their Constitutional Rights don't really have a leg to stand on. On the other hand, you don't want to allow yourself to be dragged into this debate, since experience has shown that this is a no win situation. Even if you appear to "win" the argument, the bickering that inevitably accompanies such an altercation almost always leaves a bad taste in the mouth of everyone in the room. The bottom line is - users are required to follow the rules we set forth and should they not wish to, there are plenty of other Palaces out there that may be more to their liking. Of course, this comment is meant for your eyes only and should be diplomatically watered down should you ever need to use it in public. If you face one of these advocates, it's better walk away (unless the room is crying for relief).

Evangalistic users should be treated in a slightly different manner. They should be reminded that not everyone will share their views and that some may actually be hostile towards them (it's more than likely that if the evangelist has any experience, they are probably already aware of this fact). They need to understand that although they are more than welcome to enter into a discussion with anyone that wishes to engage them and talk about their views, it is NOT acceptable to stand at the Gate, or any other highly visible room and make comment after undirected comment as a matter of course. For example - "I am the light" sits at the Gate, basically annoying everyone with undirected comments such as "Repent Sinners, the end is near", but not actually engaging in conversation. In his mind, this is a street corner where he can stand and blast forth his views to any passerby.

The secret to successfully handling this type of user is to politely yet firmly ask that he stop and then IMMEDIATELY suggest a better place for this activity (any other room than the Gate and possibly the Bar). This will accomplish two things.
    It gives us an opportunity to explain our policy about such things and
    In his mind, we have not challenged his beliefs, we have only shown him the appropriate place for conducting such activities.
This technique has been used successfully a number of times.

Generally Annoying Behavior

We've all seen this type - they do nothing in particular, but are generally an annoyance - somewhat akin to a mosquito buzzing around your ears, but not actually biting you. Then, there is the type of user that is constantly pushing the envelope with borderline behavior, but not actually going over any line. Do you act or ignore?

Probably the best way to judge this is the reaction of the room. If the majority seems to be fine with it, it's probably best to let it slide. One possible exception to this may be both the Gates and the Bar, since these are the most frequented areas. The best way to deal with these annoying users is to gag, not necessarily kill (unless the situation escalates).

Guest Bashing by Members

We want to discourage Guest bashing in all it's forms. Whether it's a prop depicting a Guest as a pet on a leash, or a name like "Guest Killer", this should be discouraged. Killing an offender would be used only as an absolute last resort as usually talking to the transgressor is more than adequate to get them to change. This may actually be a good opening to share with the room why Guests should not shunned and, for the most part, Guests are people too.....

Tracking Users (can you spell "System Page Spam"?)

`trackip is probably one of the more misused commands you have access to. It's not at all uncommon to watch someone kill a user, only to track their IP for some ridiculously long period of time as a matter of routine. This is not only a waste of effort for the attending Wizard, it's also a pain for the rest of us to watch system page after system page of track messages. Like any tool, this one is only as good as the craftsman (person?) who wields it.

You should remember 2 things about using `trackip.

    When you kill someone (be it a Guest or a Member), doing a track over 10 minutes tends to be counterproductive since the odds are low that they will try to regain access for longer than this period of time. If a longer time is truly needed, you can always extend it.
    Every user from the IP you are tracking will show up in a System Page. For a domain such as AOL or Netcom, this could mean alot of track pages. The longer the track is effective, the more the spam.

By keeping track times low, you have probably accomplished your goal of seeing if that user has returned, while keeping the system pages to a minimum.

IP Bans

This one ranks right up there with `trackip for being used way too often. First, some background on what IP's are all about and exactly what a ban (especially with a wildcard) does. Take for example the following IP address

208.129.208.236

When we ban an IP, we usually do so by using a wildcard (*) as the last entry. This effectively prevents users from 255 different IP assignments access to the Palace server this range of IP's are banned from. If we ban with two wildcards (208.129.*.*), we have theoretically locked out 255 * 255 users or 65, 025 users (although in practical application, it's probably much less than this, but still quite a significant number). It has to do with what class the network is and other techie items. By the way, anyone wanting to know more about network classes and IP structure on the Internet, there is an excellent book on the subject published by O'Reilly and Associates entitled "TCP/IP Network Adminstration"

With this much power to restrict access, it should be obvious that you should NEVER use more than one wildcard. If a more serious ban is needed for some reason, approval from TPI is required.

Some important points to remember about this command:

    You cannot ban the IP of a registered member. Members are banned by their reg key only. About the only possible reason to ban a member by IP is if they should come back as a Guest (by removing their registration file), but this should only be done after you've confirmed they've returned, never as an automatic routine. When you ban an IP, you will usually need to use a wildcard (*), as most users use a dynamic IP assigment.

Actions Across Rooms (pins, gags, kills)

Under most circumstances, it will never be necessary to take action against an abuser of the rules, but there are a few circumstances that may require it.

    A script killer - a user that takes great delight in using one of the so-called crash scripts to clear the room. If you fall victim to one of these terribly entertaining individuals, you may kill from another room when you return.
    If you find yourself chasing someone who has run from room to room, you may pin them remotely. Of course, once pinned, you should go there and talk with them.

Aside from these cases, you should never have to take any sort of "across room" action.

Kill Times and Circumstance

First some obvious (and not so obvious) facts about killing a user.

    Most users take being killed very personally, as if it were the end of the world.
    Most users that are killed do not learn any sort of lesson after the first occasion.
    Killing a user is more the removal of a problem than it is a teaching method.

This having been said, the rules for killing

    With few exceptions, the `death timer should be left set at 120 minutes. This is the standard kill time at TPI servers. For the most part, Wizards are authorized to kill up to 720 minutes (12 hours). This should be more than an adequate amount of time to obtain authorization for more time, if needed. There will be certain instances where prior approval has been given for special cases, such as pre-authorization for the script killers, who may be killed for 5000 minutes on their second offense.

The same time limit (720 minutes) applies to IP bans as well

Commenting to the Banlist

The banlist gives the rest of us a way of knowing the circumstances under which a kill, a track or an IP ban was done under. Chances are that most guest kills will not need to be commented, unless they were extraordinary in some way (for example - a particularly nasty one). Member kills should ALWAYS be commented, no matter how short the time.