

PSYCHEDELIC METAL RPG

# SEACAT

R U L E S

L u k a R e j e c

## TO DO

### RULES AND THINGS

estimating at 70% complete

> add cleaned up conflict and combat rules -  
still INCOMPLETE

> add scene and encounter section - still  
missing

> add equipment! - still missing

> add creatures generators.



*for ULTRAVIOLET heroes*

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Sincere thanks to all the heroes who made this booklet possible.

# RULES

/ 'rülz /

■ “Actually, they’re more like guidelines.”

Source unknown, possibly a priest of the skull and crossbones goddess of the Lower Sixty Floating Islands.

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# INTRODUCTION

## A BOOK NOT FOR READING

This book is one third of the Seacat toy-box for friends: [role]playing games of heroes exploring strange worlds. Each of the books is for every player. This one covers the core mechanics of gameplay, how they function, and suggests some ways of expanding the games to fit your table.

It is arranged as a toy-box of rules and games, with many optional, loosely fitting rules, giving space for improvisation, communication, and invention.

Reading the entire book in detail and memorizing every rule is unnecessary. Mistakes will happen, different games will be invented, situations will be adjudicated. The players should have faith in themselves: even with necessarily incomplete rules, with fallible memories, with honest mistakes—and even the occasional fudged die, if that is their preference—they will be able to have a good time.

Mercenary merchants embarking into half-forgotten wastelands to trade or scavenge, machine humans awakening from aeons of sleep to seek lost masters, cultists determined to end this latest godless age, telepathic cats and body-stealing ghosts. Pompous nobles and revolutionary activists in a battle to define the future of their small civilization. Motes of dust in the eyes of Time and Space, the twin deities that make all people small.

## ROLEPLAYTIME

Seacat is written for the social games of roleplay. It assumes the players are a group of friends (or people who might want to become friends) gathered together to spend time running unexpected heroes, imagining strange worlds, using different games to explore those worlds, to survive and thrive in them, to struggle against challenges, and be surprised by the the stories that grow out of the interplay of ideas and dice, successes and failures.

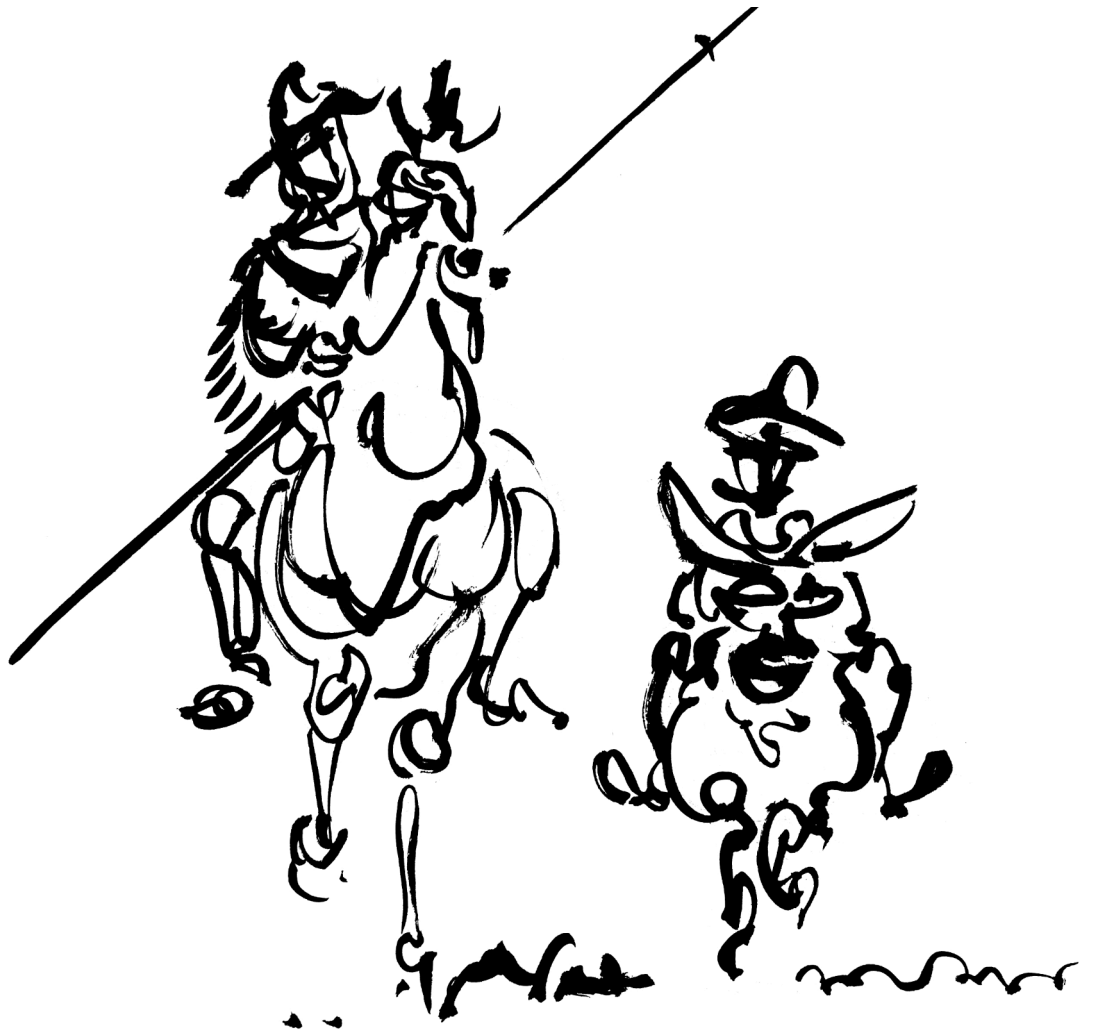
## INCOMPLETE AND DISCONNECTED AS FEATURES

No set of rules and mechanics and tables and games can cover all the possibilities of roleplaytime. This book proposes that they should not even try. During play the players will come across situations not covered by any rule or table. Rather than shy away, players should improvise and adapt. Take existing mechanics and bend and break them until they fit. The players will, in the course of play, realize that some parts of the game aren't useful or are even hindering their fun. They should throw them away. Finally, players will find invent or find cool bits and pieces of other games they want to try. Their games and rules will naturally evolve from session to session. This is fine. There is no way to break roleplaying games.

Expand. Design. Change. Every player in a roleplaying session becomes a game designer, and that is part of the fun.

## DESIGN GOALS

1. Quick setup, low prep, and short campaigns of 3–12 sessions.
2. Melodramatic, cinematic, and unexpected outcomes.
3. Imagination stimulator: players co-create the world on the fly.
4. Moderately crunchy: advancement, items, abilities, modifiers, and other fiddly knobs and switches.
5. Compatible with UVG and similar minimalist modules and settings.



# P L A Y I N G

■ “Alliteration makes everything at least 15% better.”

—AdamB

## RUNNERS & REFEREES

In a classic tabletop roleplaying game, which this mostly is, each session has two kinds of player. There is the player running the playtime (aka. the cat or referee) and there are the players running the protagonists (aka. the runners).

Neither of these terms is perfect, but they will do for now. A game table can choose other terms.

The referee player sets the stage for the playtime, prepares the sandbox, lays out the narrative hooks and themes, then runs the games and arbitrates the interactions of the heroes with the world through a mix of common sense, rules, and rulings.

The runner players take control of the protagonists of the playtime: heroes, sidekicks, and sometimes even extras. They play their various characters and use them to explore the world, overcome challenges, win against the odds or die, and in the process discover their stories through a mix of blind luck (dice) and fate (decisions).

One thing to reinforce: all the players in a roleplaying game are playing. The referee isn't an official outside of the game, like in football, or a master in control of the narrative. This is play time, not work. If someone forgets a rule or fails a quest, if players abandon a story arc or switch genres, it's no big deal. Dust the story off and keep playing.

Also, a group of players can switch around who is the cat and who are the runners from session to session. Or even during a game, maybe from scene to scene. The referee doesn't have to complete an immense, epic arc for it to be a proper roleplaying experience. A one-shot or five good scenes in a row may be enough.

Finally, it is possible to play a session with multiple referees or just a single player. It's just not as common.

### SECTION BREAKDOWN

1. Runners & Referees: two kinds of player.
2. Core Concepts: underpinnings, ideas.
3. General Terms: a glossary, if you will.
4. One Spread Overview: the main play loops covered in this book.
5. Rolls, Tests, & Targets: dice and numbers, how to use and misuse them.

# 7 CORE CONCEPTS

## 1. CO-CREATION

Players co-create the game world through play. The player (referee or cat) running the game has different tasks from the players running heroes and sidekicks (runners). The referee moves play forward and wields a soft veto to maintain a measure of consistency.

## 2. EVERYTHING IS A RESOURCE

Every attribute on a character sheet is a resource which may change, deplete or increase through play.

## 3. NATURAL LANGUAGE

The players use natural language to describe the game world: its time and space, quantities and qualities. If the outcomes of a test are consequential and uncertain the referee describes the difficulty of the challenge while assigning a target number between 3 (very easy) and 20 (very hard) behind the scenes. Challenges may have binary or multiple possible outcomes. If the runners ask what number they should roll, the referee tells them, but if they prefer to not break immersion and rely on the referee's descriptions, this is fine.

## 4. MODULAR RULES

The rules are designed to interlock only loosely. Even if the players forget specific rules, modify them or replace them altogether, the roleplay and the fun should continue. A key function of the rules and mechanics is to help generate new situations and unpredictable outcomes. So long as the games at the table achieve this, everything is fine even if the players decide to replace every mechanic, one-by-one.

## 5. POLYHEDRAL DICE

Players roll polyhedral dice. They use a d20 to test their heroes against challenges. Tests succeed when a player rolls over the target number. The number a die rolls is its natural or naked roll. Modifiers (stats, skills) sometimes apply. High rolls are almost always better. Rolling a natural 20 is always a good thing.

## 6. HARD NUMERICAL LIMITS

Heroes face mechanical limits. The maximum level a hero can reach is 9. The maximum sum (stat + skill) they ever add to any d20 roll is +13. The highest target number a hero can ever possess or set is 19—this includes defense.

## 7. RULES BREAK

Monsters and obstacles set by the referee may break all the the hero rules and limits. Specific abilities and variants may supersede all these core rules. The players together can decide to change any rules.



# GENERAL TERMS

This is a reference. No player needs to read through it, the terms are simply here to make some of the rpg terminology that follows a little clearer. No player should feel they need to master arcane jargon and language to roleplay.

ABILITY: inherent attribute of a character that lets them perform in unusual ways.	weapons, armor, tools, spells, burdens, fears, woes, and treasure.	SKILL: trained attribute of a character. A profession. First rank (skilled) applies proficiency to relevant tests, second rank (expert) doubles this.
ADVANCEMENT: the result or effect of investing experience in a character.	LEVEL (L): a creature's relative power.	
ADVANTAGE, BOON, [+]: situational bonus to a roll. The player rolls an additional die and takes natural result they prefer.	LIFE: once upon a time called hit points.	SPELL: recipe for altering reality. A type of gear, it takes up inventory.
ARCHETYPE, SKIN: a hero type, a bundle of attribute and advancement tables.	MAGIC, FANTASCIENCE: anything sufficiently advanced to be indistinguishable from magic.	STATS: S.E.A.C.A.T.: the six game stats represent natural aptitude and modify most natural rolls.
ATTRIBUTE: all the things describing a fictional character in play: proficiency, stats, skills, abilities, inventory, life, hurt, hero dice.	NATURAL RESULT, NAKED ROLL: the number on a rolled die, before any modifiers. E.g. a natural 20.	SUM: total modifier (stat + skill) applied to a d20 test.
CAMPAIGN: a series of inter-connected meetings of players, featuring a similar cast of heroes. Similar to a show's season.	PLAYER: a sentient creature partaking in a roleplaytime session.	TABLE: the physical or virtual space where the players meet.
CHARACTER: imaginary person or thing run by a player at a session.	PROFICIENCY, PRO: modifier used by skilled and expert characters.	TARGET: a number between 3 and 19 representing the difficulty of a test.
D20, D12, D8, D6, D4: the polyhedral dice with different numbers of faces.	REFEREE, CAT [GM]: the player running the game session and antagonists.	TEST: a d20 roll to overcome a target number. Often modified by a character's stat and skill.
DISADVANTAGE, BANE, [-]: situational penalty to a roll. Player rolls additional die, takes worse result.	ROLL: rolling any polyhedral die.	TOKEN: a physical object to show which player has already acted, or whose turn it is, to ensure everyone gets a share of the limelight.
EXTRA: sketched out background character, usually run by referee.	ROUND: during a conflict, esp. combat, a sufficient amount of time for every character to take their turn.	TURN: part of round, time unit when a character takes their actions.
HERO, PROTAGONIST: excessive. A primary character.	RUNNER [not-GM]: player running protagonists (heroes and sidekicks).	XP, EXPERIENCE: points or currency a player collects through play and invests in their heroes and sidekicks. Xp represent characters' successes and experiences.
HERO DICE (HD): d6s that can modify a hero's natural rolls, recover life, and fuel some other abilities.	SCENE, ENCOUNTER: basic unit of roleplay when and where the characters interact with the shared imaginary objects.	
HURT: serious injuries. Cumulative penalties that accrue as life, stats and other resources run out.	SESSION: one meeting of all or some of the players at their table to play. Similar to a show's episode.	
INVENTORY: how much a character can carry. Inventory is filled with gear,	SIDEKICK: secondary character or pet with simplified attributes.	

# ONE SPREAD OVERVIEW

## OVERVIEW

1. Classic multi-player analogue rpg with one player as the referee and other players running heroes.
2. Inspired by retro science fantasy, heavy metal magazine, and a lot of psychedelic vibes.
3. Resolves most actions with a d20.
4. Encourages all players to participate in co-creating the game world on the fly.
5. Moderately crunchy system with advancement, items, abilities, modifiers, and other levers and switches for the players.
6. Compatible with *UVG* and similar minimalist modules and settings.

## CREATING A HERO

Players choose a character sheet depending on how many sessions they expect to play a hero. A simpler (smaller) record will work better for a one-shot adventure, while the full 9-level sheet is more suited to a campaign.

1. Invest starting xp.
2. Determine level.
3. Determine life.
4. Determine proficiency (pro).
5. Determine hero dice.
6. Determine magic cost.
7. Determine skills.
8. Determine abilities.
9. Determine stats.
10. Determine inventory and gear.
11. Choose memorable name or title.
12. Play.

## CREATING A SIDEKICK OR PET

A simplified secondary character a player can run alongside their hero.

1. Player writes a one line description that includes (or implies) one thing the character is skilled at. Rolling a random skill or sidekick may help. Riffing on a trope or adapting a beloved character from a book or movie is a perfectly valid approach—all characters change through play.
2. Determine level.
3. Determine defense.
4. Determine sum (of stats and proficiency).
5. Choose memorable name or title.
6. Play.

## CREATING AN EXTRA

A simplified character, usually created by the referee and used as a foil to the heroes.

1. Write down extra's name or title.
2. Determine level.
3. Write a single descriptive adjective or noun to flesh extra out.
4. Play.

## CAMPAIGN PLAY LOOP

1. Group of players agrees to play.
2. Session zero to determine scope, logistics, and duration of play.
3. Players meet to play a session.
4. Interlude. During this downtime players may or may not continue a correspondence, world-building or plotting the next session.
5. Steps 3 and 4 repeat (ir)regularly with more-or-less coherent cast of heroes and extras. Exact players attending may vary from session to session.
6. Campaign ends with a planned finale or peters out with a whimper.
7. Players start new campaign or not.

## SESSION PLAY LOOP

1. Players assemble for a ~1–4 hour session.
2. Pleantries.
3. Players recap what happened last session.
4. Referee kicks action off with first scene or encounter. Players respond and roleplay.
5. Scene ends. Interlude as focus shifts to next scene.
6. Steps 4 and 5 repeat. Possibly with players playing different characters in different scenes.
7. Referee ends session with a wrap up, return to safety, cliff-hanger, or even just a fade to black.
8. Players clean up play area and disperse.

### SCENE PLAY LOOP

1. Referee briefly sketches out the scene, painting the most memorable elements with words: characters present, prominent props, general environment, time frame.
2. A player asks a question or states what their hero or extra does.
3. Referee responds.
4. Steps 2 and 3 repeat in a dialogue.
5. When outcomes are unclear, players roll dice to figure out what happens.
6. If a conflict breaks out between the heroes and the world, other characters, or even within themselves, *and* there is both a chance of failure and something meaningful at stake (a vague criterion), the conflict play loop begins.
7. Players end a scene by deciding how and where to move on.
8. Referee sketches out the interlude.

### CONFLICT PLAY LOOP

1. Referee sketches out the scope of the conflict, the different zones (if any), the obstacles (if any), the antagonists (if any), and what is at stake (if necessary).
2. The referee may invite other players to add details and props.
3. Players describe how their heroes and extras approach the conflict.
4. If there are sides and it makes sense for one or more sides to be surprised, the referee narrates this. The opposing side gets a free round.
5. A round begins.
6. Players roll to determine which side acts first, or if both sides act simultaneously and all actions resolve together. If there are more than two sides, the players repeat this initiative roll for each side their heroes face.
7. Each side acts and resolves its actions. When it is the heroes' turn, the players decide in what order their heroes and extras act. Players may ask the referee questions to clarify details and odds before attempting their actions.
8. Steps 5 to 7 repeat until one the conflict is resolved in a victory, draw, or defeat.
9. Referee describes the aftermath, resuming the previous scene or starting a new one.

### ROUND PLAY LOOP

1. Each player takes two actions on their turn in the round.
2. A player declares both their actions at the same time.
3. Some actions require the player to test if they can beat a target.
4. To test a player rolls  $d20 + \text{stat} + \text{skill}$  over target for heroes and simply  $d20 + \text{sum}$  over target for extras.
5. Natural 1s are always failures, natural 20s are always successes.
6. Critical successes and failures, as well as marginal successes and successes at cost, are sometimes possible.
7. Results for both actions are resolved at the same time.
8. Next player takes their turn.

# ROLLS, TESTS, & TARGETS

■ “lacta alea est.”

—JC according to Suetonius

A hero from another time awakens in their nanomagical sarcophagus. Researchers marooned on a mountain struggle to win the trust of the local yeti-analogues. Savages being transported to a new battle-world run amok on a void ship. Godlike lings on their ring-habitat argue about which of the local flora and fauna would make the best uplift candidates. A sentient motorcycle possesses their rider like a puppet of flesh and bone. A crowd of bystanders looks on, perplexed.

Players run all of these characters. The runners handle the protagonists who take center stage: the heroes, their sidekicks, and attendant extras. The referee(s) handle the antagonists: the villains, minions, creatures, and bystanders.

Most of the time, running any and all of these characters involves only dialogue. The referee presents a situation. The runner says what their hero does. The referee narrates the outcome.

But sometimes the outcome is unclear and consequential. That is when the dice come out. They serve as oracles, as random number generators. Until the dice fall, anything could happen, once they fall, players use them to narrate outcomes.

## WHO ROLLS WHEN

Every player will probably end up rolling at some point during a session. During fights, everybody will almost certainly be rolling. A good rule of thumb is that the cat shouldn't roll more often than the runners.

## WHO CALLS FOR A ROLL OR A TEST

The cat. It's always the ref who calls for a roll. A runner can suggest a roll, and a ref can accept it. But they don't have to.

**Exception:** any player can decide to roll when it only affects their protagonist.

■ “Lovesick, Ponderosa Pearplanter contemplates whether she should just throw prudence to the winds and spend her last satrap dollars at the Evershadowed Tavern. She's making a hard aura test.”

## WHO ROLLS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The ref should include the runners in determining the world around them. When a runner asks whether the rain is strong enough to soak the gunpowder, the ref asks another player to find out using an 'I don't know' roll. When it's time to roll for random encounters, to figure out how well-stocked a market is, or to determine how dutiful a local enforcer is, this method takes some pressure off the ref and shares out the world-building duties.

The group can introduce a token to pass around the table, so a player can't roll twice in a row. Every group will figure out how much or how little they like to use this sort of distributed setting generation.

## WHO TESTS FOR THE GROUP

When the whole group of heroes is trying to climb a wall, or a caravan checks for misfortune during a long journey, an interesting probabilistic problem occurs. Even if the likelihood of success is high for an individual test, the probability of all the tests being successful rapidly decreases.

Since every 1 rolled on a d20 is a critical failure, this means that every time a test is rolled there is at most a 95% chance of success and a 5% chance of failure.

After ten rolls there is a 40% chance that at least one of those rolls was a critical failure. The more tests are rolled, the more the chance of catastrophe predictably (though asymptotically) approaches 100%.

In play, this means that rolling multiple times for a single action (for example sneaking past a guard) reduces randomness and makes the rolling, essentially, pointless.

The solution is to **only test once per action, even if a whole group of characters is attempting an action**. Each time a runner tests for the whole group, they take an action token (or note in some other way that they have tested). A runner cannot test for the whole group until all the other runners have also tested. Once every runner has tested for the group, all the action tokens are returned to the table and the cycle begins again.

This means that every player will roll tests affecting the whole group at some point. If the only runner who can test when the party needs to sneak past a vigilant guard is the clumsy tourist in golem armor, this might present difficulties.

**Clarification:** what about combat? In combat each hero is usually taking their own action, so they all roll their attacks individually. However, mobs of poorly trained goblin-bots or hordes of space-fungus infested villagers can be treated as single (rather dangerous) opponents, getting a single roll.

## TOKENS

An improv token was already mentioned as a way to track who's turn it is to talk when co-inventing lore, names, and backstories. A single token is enough for that, because the co-invention is a discrete game that starts and finishes with the ref. Something large and obvious works best, perhaps a miniature totem or pedestal.

Action tokens behave differently, since they're tracking which player has taken an action for the whole group. The group could use a bowl of stones, glass beads, wooden meeples, or even just a set of small dice of the same color to track these kinds of actions.

Or, a group could just rely on making marks on paper or even their memory. The reason to use a token as a physical prop is to make the game more tangible and to make it instantly clear who has acted already and who hasn't.

In digital play emoji temporarily appended to the player's name or visibly displayed somewhere else could perform the same function.

# ROLLING TO FIND OUT

Sometimes a player simply doesn't know an answer. What is the in-game weather like? How would their hero react in a given situation? What is a sidekick's favorite color? Dice can be every player's best friend when they have to quickly invent something or making a decision.

These can be improvised on the spot, but it's good to have a few probabilistic defaults to drop back on.

## BINARY DECISIONS

With coins or any dice.

- (heads or odds) "yea" (50%)
- (tails or evens) "nay" (50%)

*"Heads Elfsayer lets the pumpkin goblin run wild, tails she takes it to the witch."*

## PREFERENCES AND HUNCHES

With a d6 (six-sided die).

- (1-3) the common outcome,
- (4-5) the unusual outcome,
- (6) the rare outcome.

And flipped:

- (1) it's horrible,
- (2-3) it's annoying,
- (4-6) it's bearable.

*"The weather's usually fine in the Levelling Heights. Let's see what it's like today."*

## AVERAGES AND BELL CURVES

With 2d6 to see whether things are as expected or not.

- (2) very bad and unlikely (1/36, 2.8%),
- (3-4) bad and unlikely (5/36, 13.9%),
- (5-6) bad and likely (9/36, 25%),
- (7) bland and likely (6/36, 16.7%),
- (8-9) good and likely (9/36, 25%),
- (10-11) good and unlikely (5/36, 13.9%),
- (12) very good and rare (1/36, 2.8%).

*"Let's find out how kindly and well-disposed the hedge witch is to us!"*

With 2d10 for the same purpose if rarer edge events are required.

- (2) very bad, very unlikely (1%),
- (3-4) bad, unlikely (5%),
- (5-6) not good, quite unlikely (9%),
- (7-9) kinda not great, likely (21%),
- (10-12) average and likely (28%),
- (14-15) kinda ok, likely (21%),
- (16-17) pretty good, quite unlikely (9%),
- (18-19) good, unlikely (5%),
- (20) very good, very rare (1%).

Players should be sparing with bell curve type rolls. Two dice give a rather triangular bell curve distribution, but the more dice are added, the more results will cluster around the mean.

Most scenes (and sessions and campaigns) don't last long enough for bell curve distributions to make play interesting. Yes, they make play more "realistic" in that a more competent character will almost always win, but the dice will usually not be rolled often enough to make this fun or interesting.

## FLAT ROLL WITH POSSIBILITY OF CATASTROPHIC MISTAKE

With a d20, as with an ordinary test. Leaves space to add or subtract modifiers, and possibility of consecutive roll makes for the possibility of some extremely rare and lucky events.

- (1) catastrophic failure (5%),
- (2-11) common outcome (50%),
- (12-16) uncommon, slightly above average (25%),
- (17-19) rare, very good (15%),
- (20) very rare, excellent (5%),
- (20/20) extremely rare (0.25%).

*"Turpingore will spend the year trying to make a go of the new turnip farm."*

*"Felicitious the Catlord will snuffle around the bazaar to see if they can find a functioning rod of dominance."*

If circumstances are particularly good or bad, the player should roll with [+] or [-].

# THE DEFINED ROLL

The war axe strikes the orcbot and deals d8 damage. The caravan leader rolls d12 for an encounter check. The glum-faced quarterling rolls a d20 for their misfortune check on their week-long trek through Sevenrivers Forest.

All these rolls are defined by the rules, the module, prior invention, or the referee's planned game notes.

## APPROXIMATING DICE AND NUMBERS

Sometimes the players find themselves without a pre-defined roll. Either the players have forgotten a rule, perhaps nobody feels like opening a book and finding the precise damage for a weapon, or a new and unexpected situation has come up and the ref has to define a roll then and there. In these situations it helps to understand the numbers seacat plays with.

### **D1 (AVERAGE = 1, OPTION: D3-1)**

Not a die. Just a flat number. Minimal life or stat damage. Useful for when inventory gets damaged. A suitable life total for disposable mooks in large combat scenes. To get a "d3" just roll a d6 and divide by 2.

### **D4 (AVERAGE = 2.5)**

The smallest, pointiest die. It's used for the damage of small or weak weapons and creatures. It can generate life totals for level 0 antagonists. Useful for moderately powerful attacks against heroes' stats.

### **D6 (AVERAGE = 3.5)**

The classic die. Average civilian weapons, improvised weapons. Unpleasant trips and falls. Good for generating life totals for thugs, goblins, or other annoyances.

### **D8 (AVERAGE = 4.5)**

#### **OR D10 (AVERAGE = 5.5)**

Most common military weapons. Good for generating life totals for opponents up to level 4 or 5. Roll one die for each level.

### **D12 (AVERAGE = 6.5)**

The die for big weapons. Life totals for bigger monsters and traps.

### **D20 (AVERAGE = 10.5)**

The big die. Used for tests. Used for attacks by very large monsters or scary traps and weapons. This die can destroy any 3rd-level hero in a single roll. Scary.

### **D30 (AVERAGE = 15.5)**

A big, chunky die. Rarely used and entirely optional. Unless the referee is aiming for a very impressive roll.

### **5D8 (AVERAGE = 22.5, VERY**

#### **CLUSTERED RESULTS) OR D8 X 5 (AVERAGE = 22.5, NICE AND SWINGY)**

For really scary monsters, big traps, explosives, massive damage, and the like, there are two options. Rolling a bunch of dice and adding them together, which gives results closely clustered around the average, or multiplying the result of a single die. Rolling multiple dice is good for reliable effects, while multiplying a single die is excellent for terrifyingly unpredictable outcomes.

### **D6 X 10 (AVERAGE = 35)**

This can blow up any seacat hero. No matter their level.

## DICE LADDER

Sometimes a spell, ability, or item might call for increasing or decreasing a die one or more steps. Other times, a referee may decide to do this to fine-tune the difference between one item or situation and another. The six classic steps are:

**d4 -> d6 -> d8 -> d10 -> d12 -> d20**

The d100, usually generated by using one d10 for the tens and another d10 for the units, stands alone, outside the dice ladder.

### **FUNKIER DICE (OPTIONAL)**

Below d4 players may sometimes use a d3, d2, or even d1. Some rarer dice may be handy between d12 and d20: the d14 and the d16 (check out Goodman Games' DCC to find more of these polyhedra). Players can *precisely* approximate these by rolling a d20 and ignoring results above the cutoff or *very roughly* by using d6 + d8 and 2d8 respectively. Beyond the d20, the d24 and d30 add a lovely bit of progression. These more unusual dice can be a little hard to find and pricier, so players may keep them optional and just improvise a little. That said, weird dice are really fun.



# THE D20 STAT TEST

This is the core mechanic of the game for determining when a hero succeeds or fails at whatever they are attempting.

For heroes it always means:

Roll **d20 + stat + skill** over target.

This means rolling a d20 then adding a relevant stat and a relevant skill to beat the target set by the ref. What's a relevant stat or skill? Anything that makes sense in the context. Archaeology and thought might help with deciphering old runes in a tomb while tea-leaf reading and charisma might well apply when trying to impress with a tea ceremony.

For sidekicks and extras it usually means:

Roll **d20 + sum** over target.

These are simplified characters with just one single number used to modify their rolls when relevant. When is the sum relevant? Whenever it makes sense from their description. A goblin (L1, attentive) might apply it when searching for tracks or listening for breathing in the shadows, while a lion (L3, lazy) might struggle to apply it when doing anything other than direct lion business (biting and scratching and pouncing).

## ONES FAIL, TWENTIES SUCCEED

In every test, if the die rolls and turns up a natural 1 or 20, this is an automatic failure or success. The referee can never call for a roll if failure or success are impossible.

### HARD SUM LIMIT

Remember: the maximum sum (stat + skill) a character ever adds to any d20 roll is +13.

There is a little bit of maths behind this limit. Since the average roll of a d20 is 10.5, adding a modifier much larger than the average makes rolling the die practically meaningless or requires inflated target numbers.

## TEST STEP BY STEP

1. Runner describes what their hero tries to do.
2. Ref decides it's unclear whether success or failure would be automatic.
3. Ref assigns the test a target number between 3 and 19. They can describe the target with adjectives (easy, moderate, hard) to preserve the narrative fiction, or use numbers. Whichever is easier.
4. Runner rolls d20 and adds the sum of their hero's relevant stat and skill.
5. Based on the result, the ref narrates the success or failure.
6. Play proceeds.



### EDGE ROLLS (OPTIONAL)

When a player's test precisely equals their target, they or the ref can suggest some sacrifice that will allow success at a cost.

Ideas include:

- i. In combat, take a hit or break their weapon as they push through an enemy's defences.
- ii. In a social conflict, pay a bribe or give a personal item as a gift to convince the other character to help them.
- iii. When casting a spell, set themselves on fire or create a weaker effect rather than suffering corruption.
- iv. When breaking and entering, destroy their tools or trigger the alarm as they disable the lock mechanism.

### DOUBLE OR NOTHING (OPTIONAL)

Sometimes a player really wants their hero to succeed, even if they failed a test. They can buy a re-roll by paying a high price, pushing their luck beyond the bounds of good sense and reason. The ref may want to exercise a little discretion with this option, as used too often it can slow the game down, but it is fun for boss fights and high stakes casino scenes.

- i. In combat, they take a point of strength or endurance damage and take a hit or break their weapon as they try to strike their foe again.
- ii. In a social conflict, they suffer a point of charisma or aura damage as they are forced to pay a humiliating bribe in order to attempt to secure assistance for their cause.
- iii. When casting a spell, they suffer a point of thought or agility damage and give up a beloved souvenir to try and successfully cast a terrible, corrupting spell, despite their obvious ineptitude.

This isn't turning a failure into a success. The odds don't improve. The player is, frankly, gambling that their hero can pull off a stunt even as they get themselves deeper and deeper into trouble.

# TARGETS

When something is obviously possible or impossible, or when there are neither consequences for failure nor success, it's not necessary to make tests. But when success is unclear and danger imminent, a target number is needed to make a test.

How hard is it to leap over a burning fence? While carrying a large bucket of gasoline? Without spilling any of it? While blindfolded?

Distilling infinite narrative possibilities to a single number, determining the difficulty of a task is one of the ref's vital tasks at the game table. The point isn't to give a precise, realistic target, but to supply the odds and let a runner decide whether or not to roll the dice and try for success.

Practically, the referee assigns a **target number between 3 (very easy) and 19 (very hard)**, then describes the probability. Leaping over a burning fence might be routine, with a target of 7. Doing it while carrying a bucket of is moderately hard, (target 10). But doing it without spilling anything? Rather difficult (target 16). More so while blindfolded (target 19).

## HARD TARGET LIMIT

The minimum proficiency a hero can ever possess is +2. The maximum total bonus (sum of skill, stat, and any other incidental modifier) a hero can ever apply to a test is +13.

Targets are limited to a range between 3 and 19 to avoid edge cases where no skilled hero could ever fail (targets of 1 or 2) and situations where heroes might attempt tests (targets of 20 or more) they could never win.

The referee is encouraged to use boons [+] and banes [-] where circumstances (or player ingenuity) call for better or worse odds of success.

## FIXED TARGET NUMBERS

The basic approach is to use a fixed spread of target numbers. A d20 has twenty identical faces and each result has a 5% probability. A probability difference of just 5% (the equivalent of +1) is too small to grasp viscerally, which is why the default target numbers are split into 20% (+4) steps. That most of the target numbers are primes is a happy coincidence.

## RANDOMIZED TARGET NUMBERS

Often a referee won't know precisely what number to assign. Two similar tasks are never identical. Circumstances and actors change. Language is unclear. What one professional calls easy, another might call moderately challenging. Two free climbing routes might both be classified as relatively easy 4b (or 5.6 or what have you) ascents, but different climbers in different weather conditions might well rate them differently.

In such situations a little randomness goes a long way.

## ADJECTIVES AND EXAMPLE TARGETS

Some players might prefer rolling dice blindly, unsure of what targets their referee had set, how likely they were to succeed or fail. However, as a rule referees should freely share targets—hiding them rarely achieves much and often consumes more time, particularly when playing online. That said, it's good to have a handy list of adjectives and situations that fit different targets.

### TRIVIAL TARGET = 3

(roll 1d6 to set random trivial target)

Situations that are routine, but have a small risk of serious, catastrophic, or hilarious failure.

#### Trivial Examples:

A hero rushes to the masquerade ball across a slippery bridge. Better not fall.

or

A terrified thief tries to start their car engine as zombies crawl towards them.

#### Trivial Adjectives:

*paltry, trifling, petty, negligible, minor, piddling, super easy, puny, barely an inconvenience, tiny, frivolous, laughable, pathetic, unnoticeable, slight, peanuts.*

### EASY TARGET = 7

(1d8+3 or 2d6)

Situations that are a bit unusual, but should normally present no obstacle to a professional. An untrained hero faces a real risk of failure.

#### Easy Examples:

A knight uses their sword to explain to some peasants why feudalism exists.

or

A plumber seals a pipe from which fire-spitting toothy plants keep erupting.

#### Easy Adjectives:

*accessible, simple, effortless, straightforward, uncomplicated, basic, cinch, elementary, facile, undemanding, no trouble, piece of cake, pushover, mostly harmless.*

### MODERATE TARGET = 11

(1d10+6 or 3d6)

Situations that only professionals should attempt, and even they risk failure. Untrained heroes have better than even odds of failure.

#### Middling Examples:

A watchmaker attempts to stop a ticking time bomb.

or

A war driver rams a doubledecker battlebus with their heavy rig.

#### Moderate Adjectives:

*mediocre, ordinary, fair to middling, average, regular, common, general, boilerplate, humdrum, standard, everyday, intermediate, run of the mill, usual, tame, neutral.*

### DIFFICULT TARGET = 15

(1d12+9 or 4d6)

Even professionals face poor odds. Smart heroes will avoid these kinds of tests or seek to stack advantages in their favor before attempting them.

#### Difficult Examples:

A duelist rolls under a golem spider's legs to stab their soft(er) belly.

or

A climber solo free climbs a familiar sheer cliff face.

#### Difficult Adjectives:

*challenging, hard, demanding, onerous, laborious, tough, strenuous, exacting, trying, no picnic, bit of a rum do, arduous, galling, taxing, dangerous, formidable, dangerous.*

### EXTREME TARGET = 19

(1d12+12 or 5d6)

These are odds that only a desperate professional would even attempt. Untrained heroes only succeed by pure luck.

#### Extreme Examples:

A swashbuckler tries to pry out the gorgon's eye with a thrown knife.

or

A mountaineer attempts a solo ascent of a deadly, unscaled mountain.

#### Extreme Adjectives:

*dire, supreme, utmost, extraordinary, stupendous, unprecedented, remarkable, torturous, grueling, excruciating, backbreaking, herculean, colossal, rather a bother.*

# ADVANTAGE [+] AND DISADVANTAGE [-]

An advantage or boon [+] means the player rolls an extra die and takes the better result, a disadvantage or bane [-] means they roll an extra die and take the worse result.

Advantage [+] and disadvantage [-] work with all kinds of rolls, not just tests.

## EXAMPLE BOONS [+] [D20]

1. Terrain advantage.
2. Helpful props (chandelier, trees, statue, stage).
3. Assistance from another character.
4. Blessings from strange AI gods.
5. Superior alien weaponry.
6. Magic and enchantments.
7. Surprised or unaware opponents.
8. Cover of darkness or invisibility.
9. Convincing evidence.
10. Teamwork or flanking.
11. Cunning plans.
12. Lots and lots of cash.
13. Cover or fortifications.
14. Mutation or bio-augmentation.
15. Fancy titles and social standing.
16. Significantly greater ability.
17. Incredible mastery of a specific skill.
18. Cheating and foul play.
19. Magical potions and meals.
20. Good luck.

## EXAMPLE BANES [-] [D20]

1. Hindering terrain.
2. Obstacles (rubble, tables, chairs).
3. Obstruction by another character.
4. Curses from ultracosmic spirits.
5. Inferior barbarian tools.
6. Enchantments and magic.
7. Keen, watchful, ready opponents.
8. Bright spotlights and neon paint.
9. Isolation and vulnerability.
10. Laughably falsified evidence.
11. Stupid plans.
12. Poverty.
13. Exposed ground or restrictions.
14. Corruption or bio-degradation.
15. Dirty jobs and no social standing.
16. Significantly inferior ability.
17. Incredible clumsiness.
18. Naiveté and deluded honesty.
19. Illness, poison, or fatigue.
20. Bad luck.

Runners are encouraged to try and figure out how to use all the tools at their heroes' disposal to their advantage. Props, scene dressing, other characters, items, assistance and more could all be used to advantage. The final decision, whether advantage applies, comes down to the referee, but they should reward creativity and ingenuity. After all, even in the best case scenario, an advantage is not a certainty.

The referee can always rule that in the fictional circumstances a character's situation is better or worse than usual and have them roll with advantage or disadvantage. Various modules, abilities, skills, spells, items, or situations may also instruct players to roll with advantage or disadvantage. An axe might deal damage with advantage. A spell might give players a boon when they roll encounter dice.

Advantages and disadvantages cancel each other out. Usually boons or banes do not stack. In combat a hero doesn't gain one [+] for higher ground and a second [+] because their opponent is careless. If circumstances are so very advantageous, the referee could just rule that an action succeeds.

**Exception:** heroes can spend hero dice to gain boons, granting additional [+] to their rolls.

A hero is trying to leap across a great crevasse. They spend three hero dice so they roll four dice on the test and choose the best result out of four.

# EXPLODING\* AND CONSECUTIVE/ ROLLS

There are two related and slightly unusual rolling situations: consecutive rolls (20/20) and exploding dice (d6\*). These rolls appear almost entirely as a way to add a little bit of mechanical spice to some items and random tables. Both involve the player rolling again when their natural roll matches an initial result.

Some items and random tables use **consecutive rolls** for rare results. 18/18 means that when a player rolls a natural 18, they roll again and if the second result is also a natural 18, a special result occurs. This mechanic is a call out to the days of 18/00 Strength.

Other items, spells, situations and monsters use **exploding dice**. These are marked with an asterisk. d4\* means that every time a player rolls a 4 they roll an extra d4\* and add the result. They repeat this process as long as they keep rolling 4s. This mechanic allows for theoretically open-ended damage rolls, in practice it serves to further reduce the predictability of encounters.

## SPECIAL NUMBERS

Natural rolls of 1 and 20 during tests always have special effects. A natural roll of 1 is always a failure of some sort, possibly a drastic, catastrophic, and/or hilarious failure. A natural 20 is always a success and will usually give some kind of bonus or exceptional outcome. Particularly in combat, a natural 20 always results in a critical hit dealing double damage or more.

Some other numbers may sometimes have special effects. A natural 13 means that after the rolled test the hero has run out of a resource (such as ammo). A natural 7 represents a silver lining or positive outcome (for example, on misfortune, carousing, or encounter tables), even if the hero has otherwise failed their test.

Players can decide to assign special effects to other numbers. They can choose whichever numbers they like, but here are some ideas. These effects could apply for just a single session (strange celestial alignments affecting reality) or some special location, or the players could decide to make them permanent. Remember that these special effects apply to the referee's characters too.

### NATURAL 2 (OPTIONAL)

Doubles or nothing. Player can spend 2 life to reroll, but the effect of the outcome is doubled.

### NATURAL 3 (OPTIONAL)

Trinity fulcrum. Player can assign a boon to one ally and a bane to a second ally.

### NATURAL 5 (OPTIONAL)

Quintessence. The player's target is compelled to focus on them, suffering disadvantage [-] if it does not.

### NATURAL 11 (OPTIONAL)

Roll swap. Player gives their natural 11 and action to another player. That player reciprocates next round by giving their roll and action.

### NATURAL 17 (OPTIONAL)

Advantage hereafter. Player rolls effects with advantage (e.g. damage rolls).

### NATURAL 19 (OPTIONAL)

Maximum reliability. Player does not roll for effects but automatically deals the maximum possible (e.g. damage).

## INFRARED DESERT ENCOUNTER TABLE (CONSECUTIVE ROLL EXAMPLE) [D12]

1/1	Silver <b>machine demon</b> (L14, tempting) promises a peek behind the curtain of reality.
1	Glittering <b>metal dragon</b> (L9, mirroring) dances, feeding on sunbeams.
2	Life-eating <b>blackbody lions</b> (L5, glutinous) prowl the blastrock.
3	<b>Water-stealing sandpike</b> (L2, tunneling) parasites await.
4	Grand <b>humped quadrodons</b> (L5, familial) forage for tubers.
5	Burrowing <b>hive armadillos</b> (L1, telepathic) scrounge seeds and insects.
6	Cloud of <b>EMP locusts</b> (L2, buzzing) hunt for cellulose.
7	Migrating <b>pseudo-cactids</b> (L0, bulbous) soak in the heat.
8	Forests of great <b>funnel mushrooms</b> (L1, thermovores).
9	Pack of <b>post-civilized feraloids</b> (L2, bandits), alloyed and reformed in the heat of the Light.
10	<b>Neohuman traders</b> (L2, wary) from the scar farm communes.
11	<b>Neohuman sandcasters</b> (L3, golem-armored) in slaved full-synthetic suits.
12	Rogue <b>full-synthetic knight</b> (L5, hollow) seeking to overturn the order of the world.
12/12	Whirling <b>karmic wheel</b> (L15, reassembling) dislocated from an engine of creation, trapped within the infrared bubble.

## FERALOID GUN-SYMBIOTE (EXPLODING DICE EXAMPLE)

### Veil-shredder

Bound machine demons strip illusions from their victims in a flickering rainbow cascade. It drinks 1d4\* life from its master every time it needs to 'reload' itself.

#agi #void #machine #symbiote

Damage: 2d4\* madness, Reload: 4

Range: short, Size: 1 stone







# CHARACTERS

“Middle English *character*, from Latin *character* mark, distinctive quality, from Greek *charaktēr*, from *charassein* to scratch, engrave.” (Merriam-Webster)

“But this hinders not that there may be more shining characters in the Play.”

— John Dryden, *Of dramatic poesie*, 1668 (also via Merriam-Webster)

Protagonists and antagonists, heroes and villains, sidekicks, extras, animals, and monsters. All these imaginary characters are gristle for the games of roleplay. At the table players take on their roles, running them across obstacles and against foes towards sunlit victories and happy endings (or not).

## TYPES OF CHARACTERS

The game divides characters somewhat arbitrarily into categories depending on how much play time they see and hence how fleshed out they are mechanically.

### HEROES

The protagonists of sessions and campaigns. One player usually runs a hero exclusively. Though a player may have multiple heroes, they only run one during a given session. The other heroes are magically and conveniently “not there” that session. Because they see the most play, these characters also have the most detailed attributes.

### SIDEKICKS AND PETS

Secondary characters or pets run by players alongside their main hero(es). They have simplified attributes.

### EXTRAS

These are all the background characters, villain’s minions, civilians, wildlife, and other creatures usually run by the referee. To save everybody’s time their attributes are only sketched out.

### ANTAGONISTS AND MONSTERS

These are characters usually run by the referee that serve as obstacles to the heroes. They may be more detailed than extras, but this is not essential as the referee can generate the required attributes as required using a random creature table, their level and description. If an antagonist becomes a recurring character it is helpful to record their attributes so they remain consistent.

# HEROES

Heroes “transcend ordinary [people] in skill, strength, and courage” (*Britannica: hero*), but though they go beyond the ordinary, nothing is there to suggest that they are, in fact, good.

## TEN HERO ATTRIBUTES

This chapter details the ten core rules modules that create suitably excessive heroes for the Ultraviolet Grasslands and other fantascience worlds:

- i. Proficiency
- ii. Stats
- iii. Skills
- iv. Abilities
- v. Hero dice
- vi. Life (and hurt)
- vii. Magic
- viii. Gear
- ix. Experience
- x. Level (and advancement)

Before a player even starts creating a hero, they should consider how much time they have to make their hero and how many sessions they will play them.

## NO TIME, NO HERO SHEETS, NO READY-MADE HEROES

If there is nothing available, the player should just join the group and write “quantum hero” at the top of a sheet of paper when they have time. They can put a big +2 in a circle, that’s their proficiency (pro). Next they write a one-sentence description of their hero’s profession and a name. Finally, they should write down three mundane objects in the hero’s possession. When their turn comes up and they need a stat, they can generate it. When there is some slack time another player should help them figure out their level and life attributes (equal to the lowest numbers in the group). The hero can be completed later, between sessions. Don’t waste time, get them playing.

## NO TIME, NO READY-MADE HEROES

The player takes a hero sheet and fills that out with the above information.

## NO TIME

The player chooses a ready-made, pre-generated hero.

## ENOUGH TIME, ONE-SHOT GAME

If the hero will be played for just one or two sessions the players can take the smallest, simplest hero record sheet with space for just three skills, three abilities, and six gear. Even if the hero should start with more abilities or skills or equipment, unless they fit somewhere on the sheet, they’re not available. There won’t be enough time to use them anyway. If the game lasts longer, the player can upgrade to a bigger hero sheet.

## ENOUGH TIME, MINI-SERIES GAME

If the hero will be around for three to twelve sessions the player can start with the brève hero sheet with space for six skills, six abilities, and twelve gear. As before, this should suffice to start.

## ENOUGH TIME, FULL CAMPAIGN

If the hero is joining an indefinite campaign, the full hero sheet will work best and even that will probably run out of space as pets, vehicles, extras, spells, items, and properties proliferate over time. If the player is really enjoying themselves, they might consider investing in a dot-printed or gridded journal, and creating custom sheets and notes for their hero.

## PLAYING ONLINE

When playing online, using video or voice protocols, it’s a good to also use digital character records. This can be as simple as a plain text file or post in a discord channel reserved for characters, a neatly laid-out spreadsheet in the cloud, or even something more complex.

No matter which serves the players best, the plain text hero record is a good place to start.



# PROFICIENCY

Stripped down to the core of play, heroes make two kinds of tests. Those where they know what they're doing and those where they don't. Heroes who know what they're doing add their **proficiency** (or **pro**) score when they roll, heroes who don't ... don't. Heroes always apply their stats to their rolls. The six stats represent their natural or innate aptitudes.

**Every hero starts with a proficiency score of 2.**

All of a hero's different skills use this same proficiency score, which rises slowly with advancement. This score represents the value of being a professional or an expert.

Using a single pro score to represent a hero's competence at different skills is an obvious simplification. The main advantage of this approach is that it saves time during play, since a player has to remember only one single number instead of a looking up a different number for every skill. Reworking this mechanic to use different scores for different abilities is quite simple, but it does require some fiddling with the advancement mechanics.

Antagonists, sidekicks, pets, extras and monsters do not have separate proficiencies and aptitudes. To keep things simple, they have a single sum score which they apply when they are doing something they are designed for.

## ALTERNATE STARTING PRO SCORES (OPTIONAL)

Perhaps the players have decided to start at different levels, or a pet has been uplifted to become a full hero, or the players have enjoyed playing a flashback as demigods so much they decided to explore those stories more, or perhaps a player just wants to gamble with all their stats. These are all valid reasons to generate proficiency scores.

LEVEL	PRO	1/1	ROLL D12 TO RANDOMIZE			
			1-2	3-10	11-12	12/12
0	1	0	0	1	2	3
1	2	0	1	2	2	3
2	2	1	1	2	2	4
3	2	1	1	2	3	4
4	2	1	2	2	3	4
5	3	1	2	3	3	4
6	3	2	2	3	4	5
7	3	2	3	3	4	5
8	3	2	3	3	5	6
9	4	3	3	4	5	7

## STRENGTH

The active physical stat. It does what it says on the tin. Lifting bars, bending gates, whacking heads, carrying mehirs.

## ENDURANCE

The passive physical stat. It represents how much pain and strain a hero can take. Marathons, freezing temperatures, disease.

## AGILITY

The dynamic physical stat. It's about applying the hero's body with precision and speed to dodge oncoming death hamsters and throw void bombs with razor precision.

## CHARISMA

The active mental stat. The name goes back to classical Greek *khárisma*, representing divine fortune and favor. The gods and reason hate the uncharismatic, so charisma also serves as a luck stat. When a hero tries to force through their arguments by force of personality, this is what they use.

When a player asks if their hero can find a war pig, greased lightning mobile, rod of doom, or simply the latest edition of *Burly Barbarians* at the newsmonger's, that's also a charisma test. Further, nine times out of ten, random effects or mindless creatures will target the least charismatic hero first (actually, this rule is optional).

## AURA

The passive mental stat. It indicates how much punishment the hero's soul, spirit, or psyche can take when faced by horror and stress. It correlates almost completely with endurance.

It is explicitly not wisdom. It does not show good judgement or shrewd insight. Those are character traits that players decide for their hero, much like they decide on the colour of the hero's hair or shoes, without affecting mechanics in any way.

## THOUGHT

The dynamic mental stat, correlated with how quickly the hero can process and manipulate information. Its naming is also a shout out to the Egyptian god Thoth.

# STATS

“You still don't understand what you're dealing with, do you? Perfect organism. Its structural perfection is matched only by its hostility.”

— Ash, *Alien*, 1979 (written by Dan O'Bannon)

Seacat plays with six stats: strength, endurance, agility, charisma, aura, and thought. **A stat of 0 is the minimum for heroes, 5 is the maximum for humans.** They represent the natural aptitude of a character (while skills are learned proficiencies) and map to the ability modifier bonuses of the stats of classical fantasy roleplaying games.

Heroes have no negative stats by default because they make the maths of rolling tests more annoying without adding anything interesting.

## GENERATING STATS

Different tables and referees have always figured out their own preferred ways of generating character stats, which is as it should be. This section is therefore more guideline than rule.

### DISTRIBUTE 7 POINTS

The most basic approach is to distribute 7 points among the six stats, with a maximum of 3 in any one stat at the start of the game. This makes for heroes significantly more competent than run of the mill humans and no glaring weaknesses. Statistically it is equivalent to rolling 4d6 drop lowest to generate stats in many classic fantasy roleplaying games.

### DISTRIBUTE 11 POINTS

11 points with no maximums gives heroes stat arrays that make them exceptionally talented at their specialties of choice.

### PER HERO ARCHETYPE

Each bundle presented in the archetypes book suggests custom rolling methods tailored to that character.

### ROLLING A BUNCH OF DICE

The player rolls d20s and consults the following table to assign their six stats. For more epic stats, have the players roll each stat with advantage.

D20	STAT	DESCRIPTION
1–10	0	Close to the human mean.
11–14	1	A little above average.
15–17	2	Really quite good.
18–19	3	Excellent.
20	4	Exceptional.
20/20	5	The 18/00 of stats.

## STAT DAMAGE

Many dangers can damage heroes' stats, from starvation to disease to monsters. The minimum possible remains 0, however (this is both to keep the maths simpler and to prevent damage resulting in too vicious a circle).

All stat damage is temporary unless otherwise specified or a hero dies, in which case, well, it's permanent. Stats are one of the key attributes, along with life, that heroes recover by resting.

Any stat damage a hero suffers when their stat is at 0 gives them a point of hurt (formerly fatigue), but does not further reduce their stat. Whether a source deals one point or ten, the hero only takes a single point of hurt. If a hero has any stat points, overflow stat damage (for example, suffering 5 points of thought damage when they have a thought stat of 1) is ignored, their stat is reduced to 0, and they take no harm points.

## STAT DAMAGE AND EXTRAS

Extras do not have stats per se. When they take stat damage, they reduce their sum by that amount. If stat damage reduces an extra's sum to 0 they are out of the fight. Extras do not track hurt (fatigue) points to keep things simpler.

## HARDCORE MODE (OPTIONAL)

Players can decide as a group to let their heroes end up with negative stats through play. This makes the math of tests a little bit slower (subtraction!). In this case, any stat damage a hero suffers when their stat is at 0 or less gives them a harm (fatigue) point as well as reducing their stat.

## NO HEROES (OPTIONAL)

If the players decide they want to play ordinary, humdrum humans, they certainly can. They could consider modifying the default rules in the following ways:

1. Heroes start at level 0, with 5 life and no invested experience.
2. Heroes can have negative stats (to a minimum of -5).
3. Players distribute no points among their hero's stats. Instead they adjust them from 0 (with a maximum of 3), subtracting a point from one stat for each point added to another stat.
4. Heroes start with two skills and a proficiency score of 2.
5. Heroes start with no abilities.
6. Every time a hero gains a level, they can increase one stat by one point.

## ANATOMY OF A SKILL

**Street Magician** (title)

#thief #trickster #performer (tags)

*The sound of strange pipes wafting.* (fluff)

Bring joy to children. Perform magic tricks and sleight of hand. Use cold reading and

cunning to dupe marks. (three sentences)

The **title** gives a first impression, a cliché to start roleplaying from.

The **tags** are useful for searching and categorization.

The **fluff** sets a bit of mood and setting. It's optional, to be honest.

The **three sentences** give a practical outline for using the skill in play.

## GIFTED AMATEUR (OPTIONAL)

The players may agree that a hero has dabbled enough in a certain field related to their normal pursuits that while they don't add their proficiency to their test, they also do not roll with disadvantage. It is simplest to adjudicate this situation ad hoc.

## PERFECT MATCH (OPTIONAL)

When a hero's skill **perfectly** matches the specific circumstances, the runner may allow the player to roll with advantage. For example, a plumber trying unblock a trash compactor's outlet before it crushes the party, or a soldier trying to figure out if their personal weapon has been tampered with.

This is a subjective matter and players should communicate clearly and be ready to compromise on whether a skill set is a perfect match or not.

# SKILLS

Skills are descriptive bundles of learning, practice, and experience that represents **what a hero is good at**. A hero can always try to do something, but if they are **skilled**, they are good enough to make a living with their know-how (they're a pro), while as an **expert** is good enough to teach that profession.

There is no mechanical difference between what other games call professions, proficiencies, tools, and saves. This is a little fuzzy on purpose! There is overlap in the daily tasks of an accountant and a plumber, and there is difference. The same holds for a soldier and a spy, a tinker and a tailor.

## WHEN TO USE SKILLS

Players use their wits and imagination to figure out how their hero's skill might reasonably apply in given circumstances.

Usually dialogue between players will resolve the situation. When an outcome is uncertain and there are stakes to success or failure the dice should come out.

## HOW SKILLS WORK

A hero will usually find themselves in one of three possible situations when testing their skill.

### 1. No relevant skill.

If the hero has no relevant skill, they do not add their proficiency to the test and make the roll with disadvantage [-].

### 2. Skilled, Professional (they have one rank in a skill).

If the hero is skilled in a relevant skill, they add their proficiency to the d20 roll when they make a test.

### 3. Expert (two or more ranks in a skill).

If the hero is an expert in a relevant skill, they add double their proficiency to the d20 roll when they make a test.

The reason heroes test with disadvantage when they have no relevant skill is because the skills are designed to be broad and encourage creative interpretation. When even that fails, the hero must truly be in quite a pickle.

Imagine a hero who is a skilled *office worker*. They certainly know how to drive, commuting for hours every day on the red roads. Under normal circumstances they manage perfectly well. But ask them to execute even a simple wasteland ramming manoeuvre and they'll be in trouble.

Unless, of course, they have an exceptionally good vehicle which compensates for their ineptitude. This is the second reason for the default disadvantage: it allows both professionals and rank amateurs to benefit from high quality gear.

## WHAT COUNTS AS A SKILL?

When players **invent new skills**, consider:

1. Does it sound fun to roleplay?
2. Is it something a person could do for a living or as a hobby pursuit?
3. Can they describe it in three sentences?
4. Can they give it a memorable title?

If the answers are yes, it's probably a good skill to play with.

For example, 'Sleight of Hand' isn't a very good skill. It describes a very specific task, with very narrow application. 'Street Magician' or 'Party Clown' would be a better, broader and memorable skill.

'Melee Combat' would be a bit dull and mechanical. 'Gladiator' or 'Infantry Soldier' make for more vivid characters and better stories.

## LEARNING NEW SKILLS

When a player invests experience in a hero and advances them, they sometimes gain new skills automatically (and usually somewhat randomly). This represents a culmination of their off screen training and practice.

In most other circumstances, to **gain or improve skills** a hero must visit different locations and mentors and **collect successes**. At the end of a week of study at a location or with a mentor, they make a moderate thought test (that's a roll over 11). Each location or mentor can only provide one success, but a hero can keep studying at the same location if at first they don't succeed. After achieving four successes the hero gains their new skill.

Simpler or more difficult skills are certainly possible. Something like the 'Dark Arts of Irshe Dalgba' might require six locations and tests while learning to 'Drive [an automatic cargo wagon]' might require as little as two.

## LIMITED SPACE FOR SKILLS

The hero sheets have limited space for skills. This is on purpose, to discourage overflowing kitchen-sink heroes and encourage a little bit of specialization.

If a player runs out of space, they can:

1. Appropriate an ability or inventory slot for the new skill.
2. Replace an existing skill.

## ADJUSTING SKILLS

Players may discover that some skills just don't fit any more, that they are profoundly overpowered or underused. In that case, they should discuss with the other players and rewrite the three sentences skill description.

## TRACKING SUCCESSES

The simplest way to track successes is to jot down the desired new skill on the sheet and make a check mark, cross, or 'X' for every success accumulated. Until the skill is acquired, the player can mark it with a small asterisk or other symbol.

## ANATOMY OF AN ABILITY

**Death Hunger** (title)

#fighter #demon (tags)

Death awakens the blood demon within.

(poetic description)

*Rank 1:* Tracks enemies taken out of the fight (or killed) in a battle scene. Each enemy the hero takes out grants them a cumulative +1 to attacks until scene end. (rank and effect)

*Rank 2:* Also gains a cumulative +1 to

damage for every enemy taken out. (rank and effect)

The **title** gives a colourful first impression of the ability.

The **tags** are, again, mostly for searching and categorization.

The **poetic description** gives a thematic idea of how the ability manifests in play. It can go into a bit of world-building and background, giving more hooks for roleplay.

The **rank and effect** give the mechanical effect of the ability at each rank. Abilities can have different numbers of ranks.

# ABILITIES

Perks, traits, mutations, divine gifts. The fire resistance of a salamander. An ur-plant-derived ability to feed on sunlight. Cyber-telekinetic augmentation. Folk hero celebrity status. A parasitic symbiote that grants superhuman strength.

Abilities can get weird and are a bit of a catch-all category. Still, whatever they are and however they are acquired, **they allow a hero to function outside the human norm** and are beyond the skills an ordinary human could acquire through theory and practice. They are all treated the same way and go in the same section of the hero sheet.

## HOW ABILITIES WORK

Abilities are thematically narrower than skills, but mechanically more powerful. Many are passive and beneficial, while others combine benefits and penalties. They change how a hero interacts with the rules and usually don't require tests, sacrifices, ammunition or other equipment. Indeed, each ability is fundamentally a small exception to the core rules of the game.

The most common types are:

1. Direct **augmentations** to a hero, for example increased stats or the ability to go without food.
2. Situational **modifiers or actions**, for example increased damage when cornered or advantage to tests when using cold iron items.
3. Social **status** that gives access to resources, sidekicks, and extras.
4. Miscellaneous **bonuses and resources** available to a hero at certain times or locations. For example, weapon drops or internal fabricators.
5. And **things that just sounded cool**, but might be a bit useless actually.

Some abilities have ranks. If a hero randomly generates the same ability multiple times, or chooses it again, they gain higher rank effects.

Social abilities increase a hero's resources and ability to influence the world around them, but these are not super powers. They are subject to a referee's soft veto, which demands dialogue and trust between referees and runners. Approached in good faith they are great fun.

## #PINNACLE ABILITIES

A few abilities are marked with the **#pinnacle** tag. These abilities usually represent the culmination of a certain archetypal hero's journey. Unlike all other abilities, players cannot choose them for their heroes when they have an opportunity to choose a new ability.

The **#pinnacle** abilities can only be unlocked through random rolls on the grand list of abilities or with specific advancements.

## INVENTING NEW ABILITIES

When players invent a new ability, they should consider:

1. Does it have a one-line poetic description and memorable title?
2. Can its effect be described in one or two sentences?
3. Are they sure it's not completely overpowered or boring for players whose heroes don't have the same ability?

If the answers are yes, it's probably a good ability.

For example, 'Detector of Evil' isn't a very good ability. It makes a hero the ultimate arbiter of morality. This removes choices from the other players. Something like 'Desire Detective' would be more interesting. 'Gill Implants' is a bit basic, but fine. A water-breathing hero expands the group's reach, but can lead to solo adventures. If the referee is comfortable assigning extras to the other players, this can become more interesting. 'Biomechanical Intestinal Upgrades' is kind of cool. Maybe it lets the hero digest any organic matter. This reduces their dependence on food supplies, but makes for mildly humorous situations ("Hansel eats what? Again?").

## ACQUIRING NEW ABILITIES

When a player invests experience in a hero and advances them, they can gain new abilities. In-fiction this may be handwaved as the result of a longer process of study, change, and growth.

The other way heroes usually gain abilities is through exposure to strange technologies, weird radiation, horrifying augmentations, dangerous red buttons pushed, and terrifying elder lingish ruins explored.

By default there is no other way to train or study for new abilities. Referees can also use them as interesting rewards for completing quests, or as ways for heroes to burn a lot of resources (ahem, cash).

## LIMITED SPACE FOR ABILITIES

As with skills, the hero sheet has limited space for abilities. The reasoning is the same: keeping heroes simple and encouraging a little bit of specialization.

If a player runs out of space, they can:

1. Appropriate a skill or inventory slot for the new ability.
2. Replace an existing ability.

## ADJUSTING ABILITIES

Players may discover that some abilities just don't work for them. In that case they should discuss the problem with the other players and rewrite the ability's description and effects.

### SPECIALIZATION (OPTIONAL)

Players may decide to allow specialization. This means that when they would roll on an ability table for their hero, they may instead choose to increase the rank of an existing ability one step.

### THE ADJUSTED ARCHIVES

As players adjust skills, abilities, spells, items, mechanics and more to suit their table, they can consider compiling all their changes in a shared blog or even just a simple doc file. By the very act of roleplaying and changing their games to fit their table they are also doing game design. There really are very few better ways of figuring out how games work than taking them apart, modifying them, and putting them together again.

Sort of like clocks or washing machines.



## “WON'T BENNIES RUIN MY GAME?”

“I've heard game masters complain that hero dice ruin 'their game.' That the heroes become too powerful and there is no challenge left. That these 'bennies' are unearned and reward players simply for turning up.

Yes, they do reward players for turning up. As an adult in the 2020 I find it is a lot harder for a group to get together regularly than it was when I was a student, and quite possibly than it was back in the 1980s before the erosion of stable 9–5 jobs. Players deserve recognition for making it to the table.

Further, time is short and with less time there are fewer dice rolled, and hence fewer chances for critical hits. I like crits and I haven't met many players who've complained about the chance to roll one or two more criticals per night.

Do hero dice make heroes too powerful? No. The deck is stacked and the ref is playing with a whole world of challenges. Hero dice do give players more control, encouraging them to go further and take more risks. But they are a limited resource that runs out, while the dangers they face do not.

Finally, the game doesn't belong to game masters alone. The roleplaytime is shared by all the players together. Hero dice purposefully reduce the power of the game master and their pre-scripted plot. They are part of the toolkit for turning a game master into a referee or, more humorously, the cat.

Yes, they make it possible to end boss fights in a single round. Yes, they make it possible to stack a series of consecutive natural 20s, turning a x2 critical hit into a x16 critical hit. Yes, they make it possible to one-shot a dragon. Yes, that is the point. That is very, very precisely the point.”

—the author (L2, ranting)

# HERO DICE

One thing that sets heroes apart from sidekicks and extras is that they succeed at thousand-to-one odds nine times out of ten. They get this plot armor from d6s called hero dice.

Heroes acquire these d6s directly through play, from ancient magitech or space alien 'gods' pleased with their deeds. Players also accumulate hero dice by:

1. Attending a game session.
2. Playing for an hour or two (depending on how much die rolling happens).

A group can decide on other sources of these dice (e.g. for helping set up and clean up the play area, for arriving on time). Players assign these hero dice as they acquire them. If they have a stable of heroes, they choose how to distribute them.

## SIDEKICKS, EXTRAS AND HERO DICE

If they acquire hero dice during play, they can use them. Their runners might consider making them full heroes at that point.

## STORING HERO DICE

Generally, heroes can store **as many hero dice as they have levels**. If using advancement tables, the maximum number of hero dice will vary.

## USING HERO DICE

A hero die is a special d6. Players can get a small bowl to store these dice. This meta-game tool lets players adjust the odds in their heroes' favor. Specifically:

### 3. ADJUST OTHER ROLLS

Immediately after rolling another die, a player can decide to roll a hero die and adjust the initial naked roll by up to that amount. So, if their d20 came up 17 on their attack roll, they can roll a hero d6 and hope to turn it into a natural 20—and thus a critical hit. They can also use the hero dice this way to explode other dice or make consecutive rolls.

### 4. GAIN A BOON

A player can spend one or more hero dice before rolling a die to gain a boon [+] on that roll. Multiple hero dice can be used together this way. This only applies to rolls for actions within a hero's control, not when generating random stats or corrupting mutations.

### 5. REGAIN LIFE

A player can also roll a hero die at any time to regain that many life points.

### 6. REGAIN STAT POINT

And a player can spend a hero die at any time to regain one stat point.



# LIFE (AND HURT)

Life is an abstract resource that represents how much plot armor they have going for them. Every creature in the game has a life score, even things that are not technically alive. Players may translate those life totals to structural integrity or some snappy name in their heads. A character's life is set by their advancement, abilities, and equipment.

In practice life is exactly like hit points in many classical games. Renaming hit points life helps to emphasize that combat does not necessarily entail spurting wounds, and that words can, indeed, also kill. Magic, artifacts, abilities, and other in-game objects are also powered by life. Poetically, magic and life are intertwined, both drawing from the same well-spring of cosmic creation.

## LIFE LOSS

Any life that is spent or lost is recovered by resting, just like stat points. Like stats, a hero's life cannot be less than zero. When a character's life score reaches zero, they might be out of play.

1. Extras, sidekicks, monsters, pets, and vehicles who run out of life are out of play. Whether they are dead or destroyed, or merely temporarily incapacitated is up to the kind of fiction the players prefer to play.
2. When a hero is reduced to zero life their narrative buffer is gone. Any damage they suffer while at zero life gives them one point of hurt, regardless whether they suffered 2 or 20 points of damage. If they have life points remaining and overflow damage would reduce them below zero life, they are reduced to zero instead.

## HURT

All healthy heroes have no hurt points. The hurt track is the hero's death spiral. It represents the point where the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune begin to really grind them down and swiftly make them less and less capable of continuing on their heroic journeys. Some scary monsters and spells deal out hurt points directly. Hurt points are removed by resting.

A hero's hurt track may follow the standard progression on the supplied hero sheets, or a hurt track more narratively in keeping with the tone of play at the table and the heroic archetype the runner is aiming for. Players should have a discussion about what they prefer—different players at the same table may prefer to play heroes with different hurt tracks and that's fine.

### STANDARD HURT TRACK

1. Fine, maybe a little grumpy. Close call.
2. In a lot of pain or otherwise off their game. Hero has [-] to every roll.
3. Slowed by a crippling strike. Hero can move only half as well as before.
4. Broken. The hero's maximum life score is halved and can't be restored until the hero has removed their hurt points.
5. The hero is out of the scene.
6. Defeat. The hero is out of the game.

### TRUE GROGNARD (OPTIONAL)

1. Grumbling.
2. Dark muttering.
3. More grumbling.
4. It's just a flesh wound. Loses 1 stat point per round until they bandage themselves up.
5. Dead.

### OLDSCHOOL MODE (OPTIONAL)

The players can decide to run their game like it's Lake Geneva in 1980. When a hero is reduced to zero life, that's that. They're dead. Time for the player to roll up a new hero.

### HURT: THE ATTRIBUTE FORMERLY KNOWN AS FATIGUE

Any kind of design is a step by step project, building off the shoulders of other giants. In the UVG hurt is referred to as fatigue, a nod to the classic fantasy game whence the idea was respectfully lifted, dusted off, and given a wee bit more prominence. It's a great mechanic for adding a bit of risk and danger even to heroes well-endowed with life.

### COMIC RELIEF HERO (OPTIONAL)

1. Goes sprawling, loses next turn.
2. Whatever they were holding is lost. Likely destroyed for ever.
3. Something conveniently soft and pie-like hits them in the face. They are blinded and lose their next turn.
4. Loses 1d10 inventory items. If the hero has insufficient inventory items, they lose the shirt off their back.
5. Knocked out cold.

# MAGIC

Magic is everywhere in Seacat. The given world is enchanted. Awash in energies. Alive with *Ka*. Vibrating with *Lei*. Gushing with *Vir*. Threaded with radiations and information spheres and tiny wave-particle machines. Woven into the very structure of the universal simulation of reality.

Or, at the very least, the world is deep and old. Layers upon layers of misinformation and disinformation, reality alteration, and mad distortion coat the world like the filth of aeons. There are wheels and processes churning madly just beneath the skin of the ordinary and everyday. Where does the line between technology and magic and religion lie?

The line is a lie.

It is a truth: there are great powers waiting to be plucked free by a careless fool styling themselves wizard. But what are they? How do they work? Humans seek patterns. Invent explanations. Time passes. The theories are forgotten but the practices remain.

Those half forgotten powers promise so much. To overcome life and death, to ascend to the heavens like the prophets of old, to reawaken the glittering sky cities, to journey beyond the veil of night into the lands of Everlight and Neverfade.

So many promises. So many fools. So much pain, corruption, mutation, change, and death in their wakes.

## WHAT ARE SPELLS?

Spells are practical recipes, rituals for ripping mundane reality open and changing it to serve the hero.

At best, they are naive and flawed. At worst, they are dangerous, garbled mistakes, misused and misunderstood.

## CASTING SPELLS

Magic rips reality, imposing otherworldly wrongness on the mundane, so spells hurt. Heroes pay the spell price to begin casting a spell.

**Spell Price (in life or stat points) = Magic Cost × Spell Power**

HERO TYPE	MAGIC COST
Witch, wizard, etc.	1
Explorer, hero, thief, etc.	2
Warrior, fighter, etc.	3
Barbarian, deathcyborg, etc.	4

Different types of hero incur different magic costs.

For example, an explorer with a magic cost of 2 summons a 3rd power *Thornstone Obelisk*. They pay 6 life or any mix of life and stat points. A witch, with a magic cost of 1, casting the same spell pays only 3 life.

The player whose hero casts a spell narrates the details of the procedure. Maybe the hero casts a spell by reading it out loud from a magic book, maybe it's a dance routine that summons a demon, maybe it's dribbly candles.

## ANYONE CAN CAST SPELLS

Any hero can try to cast spells, whether they have a relevant skill or not, so long as they pay the spell price.

If they lack a relevant skill, spell casting is harder. The spell price is doubled and all spell die rolls are made with disadvantage, including corruption rolls.

## SPELL POWER

Some spells are more powerful than others, or can be prepared in more effective (and expensive) ways. Higher power spells have a higher spell price and are more dangerous to cast. A hero can cast any spell of any power, but it is **dangerous** to cast a spell of a higher power than the hero's level.

## DANGEROUS MAGIC

When a hero casts a dangerous spell (marked with a **#dangerous** tag) or they cast a spell whose power is higher than their level, they must test their relevant magic skill to see if the magic **corrupts** them. Magic corruption twists a hero's body, abrades their soul, and changes their personality.

The spell price is the test target.

If the hero lacks a relevant skill, they test with disadvantage. If the hero's level is higher than the spell power of the spell they're casting, they test with advantage.

## SPELLS GO IN THE INVENTORY

Each spell a hero can cast goes in their inventory. This is the **spell burden** and is usually equal to 1 stone.

Most spells are not just recipes and bundles of words a hero carries in their head. They are a burden that weighs them down. This might be ritual equipment and manuals, warding charms and protective clothes, ancient tools and body paints. Maybe even creepy skulls and newt juice. Maybe just the weight of malign knowledge or the pain of an ontogenic nanite injection.

The burden isn't used up during casting. It can be stored elsewhere, for example in a library, but a hero can't cast a spell that is not in their inventory. Some rare tomes are valuable simply because they let a hero carry multiple spells in a single inventory slot.

## STARTING SPELLS

Starting spells are listed in the gear section of each hero generator.

## ACQUIRING NEW SPELLS

Heroes gain new spells by adventuring and studying strange artifacts, as treasure or payment for their work. Casting a new spell without studying it first is always dangerous.

Learning how to use a new spell somewhat safely requires a week's study. After that time, when the hero casts the spell for the first time, they make a moderate thought test. If they fail, they misunderstood how the spell works and it is now dangerous for them. The hero then makes a second test to see if the first trial casting of the spell has corrupted them. If the spell was already tagged as dangerous, the hero makes the corruption test with disadvantage.

## ANATOMY OF A SPELL

**Anastasiya's Charged Hand** (title)

**#electric** (tags)

The wizard rubs their hands together without rhythm and builds up an offensive electromagnetic charge. Their hands stay charged for several minutes or until they touch an object that conducts electricity. (casting description)

*Power 1:* Their next touch or unarmed attack deals 1d10 electric damage. (power and effect)

*Power 2:* Their touch also stuns the target for 1d4 rounds or knocks it back. (power and effect)

The spell **title** is like a song title. It's trying to be catchy and metaphoric, not a dry encyclopaedia entry.

The **tags** categorize the spell. Skills with matching tags can be used to cast a spell. If a hero's skills don't match a spell, they might still hack the spell and learn to cast it some other way. Alternatively, if a skill lacks suitable tags but feels like it could fit, that's perfectly fine, too. Some categories of spells also have specific game mechanics.

The **casting description** sets up the spell: what the hero does, how they prepare, and how long it takes.

The **power and effect** describe the effect of casting the spell based on how much life the hero pours into it. This section of the description also specifies whether spending more power changes how the spell is prepared.

## SPECIAL SPELL TAGS

Some spells are designed with mechanical quirks that change how they function. As players create their own spells, they are encouraged to try inventing and developing new mechanics of their own. If something doesn't work well in play it can always be changed later.

### #ANCHOR

The spell creates a physical anchor which the hero stores in their inventory to keep the spell active and controlled. Destroying or losing the anchor ends the spell (or worse).

### #ATTACK

The spell is cast as an attack action. A hero uses their relevant magical skill to test against their foe's defense and affect them.

If a spell targets other attributes than defense, this is usually spelled out.

### #DANGEROUS

The spell forces a test to avoid magical corruption every time it is cast.

Applying this tag to more spells is an easy way for the players to restrict certain kinds of magic within a setting.

### #FOCUS

The spell requires focus to stay active. A hero must spend an action every turn, or the spell ends.

A hero can always pay double the spell price to imbue the spell with their vital essence, keeping it active without focus. This is usually dangerous and requires a test against magical corruption.

### #IMBUE

A spell that is kept active as long as a hero imbues it with their vital essence (life or stat points). The imbued points are reserved, reducing the hero's maximum life or stat total, and cannot be recovered until the spell ends.

### #ITEM

When a hero creates a magic item they use the spell to lock their life force (life or stat points) within a physical object. They can only recover the locked attributes when the magic item is disenchanting or destroyed. This is similar to the imbue tag, except a hero cannot simply end the spell at will.

Simple examples of magic items are magic swords, rings, and wicker fetishes.

## CASTING PARAMETERS

Casting any spell involves multiple parameters. How long does it take to cast? How does it end? How long does it last? How far do the effects reach? What does it affect? Individual spells can, of course, deviate from these parameters in their specifics.

### CASTING TIME

Unless otherwise specified, a hero takes only a single action to cast a spell.

A hero cannot usually cast a spell with long casting time (a few minutes, an hour, etc.) in the heat of battle.

### ENDING A SPELL

Unless otherwise specified, a hero does not need to take an action to end a spell, even if it is focused or imbued.

Disenchanting a magic item always requires at least a single action.

### SPELL DURATIONS

Unless otherwise specified, a spell is nearly instantaneous in its effect.

Most other spells have durations described in minutes, hours, days, and other real-world units of time. The only exception are some combat spells with durations listed in rounds. Out of combat, a round usually lasts several seconds.

Some spells last until a specific condition is met (e.g. until the next sunrise, until the door is opened).

When a spell's duration runs out, the spell fades away with a mildly hallucinatory dissonance.

### SPELL RANGES

Spell ranges are abstracted to the same zones as the rest of the game. The phrasing in the description may vary.

#### 1. Self, Zero, Nil

The spell only affects the hero themselves.

#### 2. Melee, Touch, Adjacent

The spell only affects a space, object, or creature the hero touches or could touch with just a step or two (a short range of about 2 metres or 5–7 feet).

#### 3. Close, Near

The spell has a middling range of about 10 metres or 30 feet. In an indoor environment, this is enough to cover most rooms or corridors.

#### 4. Far, Long

The spell has a range of about 40 metres or 120 feet. Enough to roughly cover a smallish football pitch.

#### 5. Distant, Extreme, Very Long, Other

The spell has a longer or somehow different range. A hero using this spell is outside the normal flow of most personal battles.

### TARGETS

Unless otherwise specified, a spell affects all creatures and inanimate objects in its area of effect.

### UNWILLING TARGETS

If a hero casts a spell on an unwilling target, they must always succeed at a suitable test for it take effect. In combat situations, this might be a test against the target's defense or warding, depending on what makes sense from the spell description.

The exception is if the target is bound or restrained, for example a vampire bound in silver or a xeniform safely embedded in an artificial chest.

### CREATURES AFFECTED, AREAS OF EFFECT

Since areas of effect are abstracted, just like ranges, the relevant question is usually how many creatures does a spell affect?

#### 1. Single, One, Precise

The spell affects one creature.

#### 2. Small Area, Adjacent

The spell affects 1d6 creatures in a small area (about 2–4 metres across) or surrounding the hero.

#### 3. Middling, Medium

The spell affects 2d6\* creatures in a mid-sized area about 10 metres across.

#### 4. Large, Big

The spell affects 4d6\* creatures in an area about 40 metres across.

#### 5. Massive, Immense, X Targets

The spell has some other very large or very specific area or number of creatures.

A lot of parameters affect these numbers and the game runner will often have to adjudicate. If creatures are tightly packed, the number affected might double. If they are keeping their distance from one another, the number affected might be rolled with disadvantage. If the target creatures are particularly small, a fireball might engulf more of them, while a storm of daggers would injure fewer. If they were particularly large, the effects might be reversed.

## HACKING SPELLS

If a hero has a skill which could potentially (with some explanation and hand-waving) also be used to cast a spell with a certain tag, they can hack the spell. This involves spending 2d4 weeks of game time tinkering with the spell, then a thought test to successfully adapt the spell to their skillset. A relevant ability, like fool's luck, may apply.

### D20 SPELL HACKING TEST

1	Hero fails miserably and will never succeed. They gain a random mutation from the corruption table.
2–3	Hero fails laughably and cannot try again. They must make a moderate test against corruption.
4–7	Hero fails and must make a moderate test against corruption.
8–11	Failure and an easy test against corruption.
12–15	Partial failure and trivial test against corruption. Hero rolls next spell hacking test with advantage.
16+	Success! Hero has hacked the spell and adapted it to work with their existing fantascientific skills! Player adds a new tag to the spell to fit hero's skills.

When a hero successfully hacks a spell their player should narrate how it works and how they have modified it. Each other player then suggests a quirk of the hacked spell. The hero's player chooses the best quirk (using popular acclaim as a guide) and writes down the new, modified spell.

The player may name the new, modified spell after their hero.

## CREATING NEW SPELLS

When inventing new spells players should consider:

1. Is it an idea that creates fun solutions and novel situations?
2. Is it something that isn't a universal 'I win' button?
3. Can it be described in three sentences?
4. Does it have a memorable name?

If the answers are yes, then it might be a good spell. Worth trying, anyhow.

To come up with ideas players can use a book or movie or song title for the initial creative jolt, then mix it with another title (or just their imagination) to reinterpret what kind of spell the titles could give.

### EXAMPLE INVENTED SPELL

#### Enter Sand Cloud

#elemental #focus #nature

The wizard rocks back and forth for several seconds, then decoheres into a silicate sand cloud held together by strange forces.

*Power 3:* The wizard can withstand severe heat and cold and survive without oxygen while in this silicon cloud form. They still get thirsty, tired, and hungry as normal.

For example, take an album title like 'Nonadaptation' and a song title like 'Enter Sandman'. The second title suggests elements silicon, sand. Not organic. Perhaps something like the spell just to the left.

This is an interesting spell because it lets the hero bypass the normal commonsense rules of being an organic creature. Instead, they function as a floating cloud of sand. On the other hand, there is a significant drawback: as the hero has to focus, they can only take one action per round. The spell is also quite expensive: it costs most heroes 6 life. Enough to think twice about overusing it.

## SETTING SPELL POWER FOR NEW SPELLS

Spell power determines at what level a hero can cast a spell safely and how much vitality (life and stats) it costs to cast. Since hero levels cannot exceed 9 and the combined life and stat points of a true wizard will usually not exceed 42, this makes adjusting the accessibility of spells quite easy

### POWER 0

This spell requires no sacrifice. It's equivalent to an ordinary action, like running or firing a pistol. A spell with a power of 0 can be used at will by any hero. Players should be a little bit cautious to keep it specialized (then again, they can always adjust it later!).

### POWER 1

A 3rd level wizard hero could use this spell about 20 times before running out of life. It can be a little bit more powerful or useful than mundane equipment or actions.

### POWER 3

A 3rd level wizard could use this spell just 6–7 times before running out of life. This is not an ability the wizard will use often, so it can be significantly more powerful than mundane actions and allow interesting local changes to the fundamental rules of reality.

### POWER 7

A 3rd level wizard could use this spell twice, and even a 9th level wizard might only pull it off six times. A spell this powerful could conceivably disable enemies automatically or make visible and semi-permanent changes to reality.

### POWER 11

A 3rd level wizard could cast this spell once. It would be dangerous to even a 9th level wizard. Such a spell might be the stuff of fairytales: decades of slumber, exploding mountains, small iron stars falling from the sky, drastic reality changes.

### POWER 21

A spell likely to corrupt any mortal. Power to rewrite histories and transforms aeons.

### POWER 42

A spell the mightiest half-god magus might cast once, giving their life in the process.

Note that the life and stat points are listed for wizard heroes. This is because their magic cost is 1, allowing them to cast the most spells. Most heroes' magic cost is 2, doubling the price of their spells. Even though an explorer might have combined life and stat points of 54 they could only pay for 27 points of spells. A fighter hero's magic cost is 3, tripling the price of their spells. Thus their average of 70 life and stat points only pays for 23 points of spells.

## ADJUSTING SPELLS

With descriptions that aim for natural language and poetry over technical precision, groups will invariably end up with spells that are mechanically too powerful or useful, reducing the creativity of roleplay and the utility of other characters. When that happens the players should discuss and decide what to do. There are a lot of simple options short of simply banning the spell:

1. Make the spell dangerous.
2. Increase the spell power.
3. Adjust the efficacy of the spell: reduce its damage, range, or number of targets.
4. Add an additional cost or drawback to the spell.

The in-game narrative rationale for this kind of change is simple. Spells are a half-understood mish-mash of fantascience requiring rare components, half-understood rituals, and goldilocks conditions to activate. Just like in the story of Jekyll & Hyde, the wizard discovers that something has changed and the experimental spell is no longer as effective. Or, perhaps, its dangerous properties only became apparent after a period of careless use. Just recall how radioactivity was prescribed as a cure-all in the early 20th century.



## WHY OPTIONAL GEAR RULES?

At many tables, or even just during some sessions, the players won't want to track inventory in detail. This is perfectly fine. Players can simply agree to use common sense and leave it at that.

Many gear rules are optional to emphasize this fact.

Accurate inventory records need not be kept in order to have a meaningful campaign.

# INVENTORY & GEAR

A hero's inventory is a limited asset where the player notes all the things burdening their hero. It's not just for physical objects; woes, fears, illness, and magic spells, pets, extras all occupy inventory space. If heroes run out of space for abilities or skills, they can repurpose the inventory.

The rationale behind this obvious abstraction is to encourage players to make hard choices between what they want their heroes to bring along on their adventures and what they can.

Inventory space on the human scale is defined using the following units.

**1 sack = 10 stones = 100 soaps = 2,500 cash**

1. The sack is a basic inventory unit. As much as an average human can carry more-or-less unencumbered. It does not have to be a literal sack.
2. A stone is one tenth of a sack, also a generic significant item, like a sabre or spear or shield or shovel. About 5–7 kilos.
3. One soap is a hundredth of a sack, also a generic small item, like a signal whistle or signet ring or spike. Or bar of soap.
4. Cash (€) represents one standard unit of currency.

Most mostly human heroes can carry two sacks at once, but the second sack cumbersome. An encumbered hero has disadvantage to every physical test.

## SPECIAL INVENTORY BY METAHERO ARCHETYPE (OPTIONAL)

Players who want to use the archetypal metaheroes—the wizard (thoughtful), thief (tricky), and fighter (tough)—at their table can use special inventory rules to distinguish their heroes. With these rules:

1. Wizards gain a special **memory palace** where they can store spells. Their palace has one room per hero level.
2. Thieves gain a special mutual assistance **network** where they can list the extras who can help them with heists and other support. Their network has a number of members equal to their proficiency score.
3. Fighters gain a special beloved equipment **panoply** where they can store and level up gear. Somehow they always find the room to strap on their favorite sword or shotgun.

## INVENTORY BY SCOPE OF PLAY (OPTIONAL)

Depending on how many sessions players expect to play, the size of a hero's inventory can be modified to foreground the necessity to make hard choices about what will fit and what won't.

1. Full campaign (indefinite number of sessions). Use the default, with 10 stones per sack and the cumbersome second sack.
2. Miniseries game (three to twelve sessions). Each sack is only six stones.
3. One-shot game (one or two sessions). Each sack is only six stones. Each hero can carry only one sack (no cumbersome second sack).

## VARIABLE INVENTORY BY ENDURANCE (OPTIONAL)

Players looking to make the endurance stat more broadly useful can take advantage of this rule at their table.

Endurance modifies how many stones a hero can fit in their sack — effectively giving them a bigger inventory. For example, if a hero has an endurance score of 3, each of their sacks can carry three additional stones.

## QUICK ACCESS INVENTORY (OPTIONAL)

Players looking for a bit more inventory management can designate the three (or one or two) top inventory slots easily accessible. The hero can grab those items, or store objects there, without taking an additional action.



## CASH AND TREASURE

Cash is an abstraction of the liquid disposable wealth a character might have on their person. It does not necessarily represent a single coin. How much it is precisely worth also depends on the in-game fiction. By default, players may assume that one cash is equal to the daily income of an average laborer.

### CASH WHAT IT BUYS

~0.1	A common meal or ingredient. Knick knacks. Mass tourist souvenir.
~1	A day's food and lodging for two proletarian baseline humans. A basic tool. An uncommon ingredient. A fancy meal.
~10	A day's food and lodging for two middle-class mildly-enhanced humans. A professional tool. A rare ingredient. A ticket to a fine opera.
~100	A day's food and lodging for two betterfolk aesthetically-augmented humans. A rare or expert tool. Very rare ingredients. A basic vehicle. A hut. A small farm.
~1000	A day's food and lodging for two members of the abmortal neoimperial family. An uncommon vehicle. A small cottage. A middling farm.
~10k	An hour's rock-hitting trip by an imperial executive unit. A rare vehicle. A comfortable residence. A large farm or ranch.
~100k	A nearly super-heroic augment. A luxurious residence. An estate.
~1m	Abmortality. A seat on the neoimperial shadow parliament. A modest palace.

### HOW MUCH IS A TREASURE WORTH?

The default assumption is that the heroes will both earn and spend quite significant sums of cash and treasure. Referees or players can use this table to randomly determine approximately how much a given treasure is worth. It's up to the referee if they prefer a flat roll or one influenced by Charisma.

ROUGH RARITY	D100	CHA (D20)	CASH PER SACK
Uncommon	01-50	1-10	€50 (or €1d100)
Valuable	51-80	11-15	€250 (or €1d10 x 50)
Rare	81-98	16-19	€1000 (or €1d20 x 100)
Exceptional	99-00	20+	€5000 (or €1d100 x 100)
Unique	00/0	20/20	€25k (€1d10 x 5k)

If the players prefer to play poorer, more desperate adventures, then simply reducing the values of treasure and loot by a factor of 10 or 50 should suffice. For more variability, exploding dice can be used for the cash per sack column.

### DETERMINING SIZE BY COUNTING ADJECTIVES (OPTIONAL)

To determine the size of a treasure or item, the referee can count how many fancy words are used to describe it, counting a sack for every word. This does not represent mere weight and size, but also the care that has to be put into moving a valuable object without damaging it.

On the scale of stones the same idea can be applied to fine equipment or tools.

### HACKING OUT PORTABLE TREASURES (OPTIONAL)

A character can hack out 1d6 + level percent of a larger treasure's value in a few minutes. The hacked out fragments take one stone's worth of space. This reduces the value of the remaining treasure by 10x that amount in percent. For example, Pikker the Peng-Ling comes across a €6000 statue of the Angel of Decay and rolls 5%. They gouge out the gold bits for €300 and pocket them. The remaining defaced sculpture is now worth 50% less: €3000. Unsurprisingly hacking apart treasures reduces their value.

### TYPES OF CASH (D20)

- Luminous land cowries from the Forests of Mist and Stars.
- Magic-infused scales of the sky dragons.
- Memory crystals of the lost empire.
- Stamped round chunks of soft metal.
- Whorled pearls.
- Bronze knives.
- Duraplast tokens from the decayed Casino Kingdoms.
- Ritual trading bones from the Necromancer Republic.
- Composite ferroceramic heptagons.
- Debtwood from the half-elven Deeproader Consortium.
- Solidified rainbow pucks.
- Scripture fiches of ductile think-matter.
- Gently glowing vidy orbs from the Reality Theatre Era.
- Diorite rings and eyeteeth.
- Semi-precious rods and wands.
- Coralline bracelets.
- Cards of unrusting metallo-plastic.
- Small tinkling copper bells.
- Tiny golden barges in acrylic orbs.
- Polished

# EXPERIENCE

“Experiences are the lifeblood of heroes. They turn regular legume entrepreneurs into grotesquely over-powered extravagant tomb-robbers who hold a city to ransom in exchange for pretending to kill the dragon that they themselves summoned from the gate of fire.”

—Luka in the UVC

Experience is an arbitrary currency players can invest to advance heroes, sidekicks and pets, or to improve gear, spells, or other items. Players acquire experience points (xp) through play and store them on their active hero's sheet. Only heroes can store experience for investment in this way.

Players can invest experience every time their hero rests in a safe location. They can invest the hero's available xp in as many different characters and things as the hero has access to during their rest period, but only once for each individual recipient. Players can also invest experience in other players' characters and equipment.

The most experience that can ever be invested in a hero is 99,999. Sidekicks, pets, and equipment have lower maximums. The most experience a hero can ever store for later investment is 9,999.

If a hero is retired with uninvested experience, their player can immediately invest that entire amount in a new hero, or in a promoted sidekick.

## EXPERIENCE AMOUNTS

The amounts of experience players can earn do not vary much with the power (or level) of their heroes. Lower level heroes are restricted in how swiftly they can advance by the limitation on how often they can invest experience, higher level heroes by high quickly they can earn experience.

### SOURCE

### XP

Something minimal. A cool move, memorable deed, humorous slipup.

1d6 x 5  
1d20

Something common. Surviving a conflict, discovering a new location or creature, completing a mediocre quest.

1d6 x 10  
or 1d100

Something rare. Heroic carousing, surviving an epic conflict, completing a memorable quest.

1d6 x 100 or  
1d1000

Something unique. Completing a heroic quest, altering flow of history, transforming the game.

1d6 x 1000  
or 1d10k

Of course, this is a clear example of rules as guidelines. Players can decide to speed up or slow down advancement by adjusting experience earned.

## EXPERIENCE AS INCENTIVE

Before a campaign or series of sessions start the players should have some idea of the kind of game they want to play. They should decide, at least roughly, what kind of in-game achievements will be rewarded with experience. The sources of experience form an incentive structure for play and will *greatly* change the how play unfolds.

By default the Ultraviolet Grasslands awards experience for exploring new things, surviving conflicts, spending cash on wild parties, and completing travel quests. Other games can be wildly different with different incentives.

In the oldest versions of roleplaying experience was awarded exclusively for gold. Specifically, one piece of stolen ('found') gold was worth one piece of experience when dragged back to a safe town. In this kind of game, the focus is on getting in and out of a location fast and with as much loot as possible. This kind of game generally focuses very much on thievery, stealth, and trickery, with combat often treated as a rather expensive fail state.

Later editions added experience for defeating monsters or even awarded experience only for defeating monsters. This put the focus very much on tactics and combat. Gameplay became about finding high-value 'boss' monsters and slaughtering them.

Other versions went for simpler things. Experience for participating in the game, experience for making other players laugh, experience for being the instant-pizza-baker, experience for completing a quest, experience for failing tests. Some games even did away with experience entirely.

## SOURCES OF EXPERIENCE

There is no one right way to play, and so there is no one right way to assign experience. Players can even change up sources of experience from session to session depending on what kind of game they want to play that day. For a horror adventure, experience might be gained by sheer survival, a power metal heroic adventure might assign it for displays of valor and bravery, rousing speeches or guitar solos, and killing monsters, while an old school tomb-robbing module might be best suited by experience for gold. So long as players are on board with what their heroes are getting into during a given session, this is perfectly fine.

Many adventure modules can include their own specific victory conditions and experience sources.

### RANDOMIZED EXPERIENCE AMOUNTS

Players may roll dice to determine precisely how much experience their hero earns from a given source. In-fiction this can be justified by the narrative conceit that no two people learn equally from the same teacher.

Psychologically, this adds a small element of uncertainty which adds a little touch of variable ratio payoff to the experience mechanic. If this kind of operant conditioning isn't something the players would enjoy, they can skip it. But statistically speaking they are likely to enjoy it.

### GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE

When experience points are listed for an achievement, for example discovering a new location in the wilderness, that amount is earned by each participating player and noted on their hero sheet. Even a player who participates in a scene indirectly by assisting the referee by running one of the extras should roll for experience earned.

Players may also have personal quests or goals for which they alone can earn experience. Examples might be avenging a parent's death or finding a way to magically regrow their face after a magical accident. A referee should work with all the players to make sure these sources are relatively fair. Someone should not earn more experience simply for being more vocal than others.

The players may also set themselves group goals or quests, with the referee again having final say in how much experience certain achievements might be worth. These might be a quest to rebuild a community, circumnavigate a planetoid, or overthrow the Grey Lords of Deadtime.

### EXPERIENCE AS REWARD FOR PLAYER SKILL

A popular style of play involves the referee distributing sources of experience unevenly through the game world. This is easiest to do with a generic source, like cash in a dungeon, but can be done with nearly every source.

A simple way to conceptualize it is with pareto's 80/20 principle. 80% of the locations are relatively easy to reach and account for about 20% of the total available experience. These might be poorly defended rooms in a dungeon or easy to find and explore natural sights. The remaining 20% of the locations hold 80% of the available experience. These might be secret chambers protected by traps and monsters, or they might be breathtaking wonders made inaccessible by grueling terrain, weather, and other misfortunes.

### POSSIBLE SOURCES (D20)

1. High stats rolled. Luck snowballs.
2. All cash earned, looted, or stolen. Hypercapitalist. Might add a monopoly board. Heists and murderhobos.
3. All works of art recovered.
4. All cash profligately wasted carousing. A pulp adventure vibe.
5. All enemies killed. Slaughterquest.
6. Monsters hunted. Murder quests.
7. Enemies defeated. Trickery rewarded.
8. Trophies collected. Big game hunting.
9. Encounters survived. Cowardice pays.
10. New creatures observed and studied. Biology and naturalism.
11. New locations visited and explored. Tourism. Natural geography.
12. New spells and anomalies found or activated. Archaeology. The pushing of red buttons.
13. Quests completed. Story mode.
14. Civilians saved. Valorous hero mode.
15. Loyal lackeys gained. Feudal lord mode.
16. Locations and creatures illustrated. Artist setting.
17. The episodic and colourful tales of the party written and recounted. Writerly encouragement.
18. Attendance. Showing up to play is its own reward.
19. Helping run the game. Encouraging pro-social behaviour.
20. Food prepared for the group. Play as social dining experience.

### AUTOMATIC EXPERIENCE (OPTIONAL)

Players can certainly decide to play without earning experience, advancing heroes and sidekicks on a preset schedule. However, since xp is used as a currency that players invest in their characters, it may be a better idea to only assign an agreed amount of experience per session attended. A group of players should decide for themselves what amount of experience gives them the experience they prefer. About 1000 experience per session should be sufficient for a 12-episode campaign to take heroes from level 0 to level 5 or 6.

# ADVANCEMENT & LEVELS

■ “8000以上だ...!”

Source: Vegeta Saiyan shouting “It’s over 9000!” [sic] in “The Return of Goku”, Dragon Ball Z (1997).

## NO ADVANCEMENT (OPTIONAL)

There are times when advancement is irrelevant. Particularly when playing a one- or two-session game, the players can decide to waive the advancement and experience mechanics entirely.

If they decide to continue playing with the same heroes later, they can always retroactively assign experience and advance their heroes a couple of times.

## CHOOSING ABILITIES AND SKILLS (OPTIONAL)

By default heroes, skills and abilities are generated randomly. If players agree, exceptions can be made.

1. Players can choose to reroll once if they dislike a result or feel it doesn't fit their hero (though they are encouraged to try and figure out how it might fit—this can be a fun creative endeavour).
2. Or players may choose to gain additional ranks in abilities or skills they have already unlocked, rather than gaining new skills or abilities.

Note that some skills, abilities, and spells may be a little extreme. In these cases, players may always roll again or choose something different. Players shouldn't be forced to play characters or abilities they deeply dislike.

Note also that when choosing skills or abilities, anything tagged #pinnacle can only be unlocked through advancement rolls, not choice.

In many roleplaying games as characters gain experience they automatically gain levels, increasing their powers by leaps and bounds. This is not the case with Seacat. Levels are just one of the attributes that can increase with advancement. Players invest experience to advance a hero, pet, or item.

Advancement for heroes is somewhat unpredictable. Heroes can advance using the generic ‘everyhero’ table, or follow a specific archetype. In both cases, a player cannot usually predict exactly how their hero will develop in advance. Advancement for other characters is a little simplified.

There are two key reasons of using random tables for hero advancement. First, it's kind of fun, a power-up mini-game. Second, it changes some of the optimization game from single-player pursuit and challenges the whole group of players to figure out how their disparate heroes and abilities work together.

## LEVELS

Levels are an abstraction of power. Nominally, a higher-level character is more powerful than a lower-level character. Higher-level creatures usually have more life points, add higher sums to their test rolls, and are more effective in conflicts. The key word is usually.

Different heroes with different abilities but the same level may turn out to have very different capabilities facing the same (or different) challenges. This is alright. Rigorous mechanical balance is not the goal and the relationship between level and power is a rough approximation, not a precise and rigorous distinction. However, higher levels do bring some bragging rights to players.

Mechanically levels also increase the power of some abilities, spells, and items whose effectiveness is directly based on the level of a character or their opponent.

Heroes are limited to a maximum level of 9. Sidekicks and pets are usually limited to a maximum level of 5, while monsters do not have level limits—though any attempt at balance truly does break down after levels are turned up to 11 and higher.

## HOW ADVANCEMENT WORKS

The advancement mechanic takes a hero (or sidekick, or item, or what have you) with starting attributes that are modified (usually improved, but not always) as a player invests experience. Players can invest experience when their hero rests in a safe location. Because the rest mechanic involves resting a full week there is an in-game speed break on hero advancement. The fastest any hero could theoretically go from level 0 to level 9 is about 70 weeks.

Each advancement table has twenty possible results or advancements, plus a final 21<sup>st</sup> result that is unlocked once all other advancements are taken. Each result can only be applied once. When a duplicate is rolled, the player chooses another result. To track advancements the player can tally rolls on their hero sheet or mark them off on a print-out of their advancement table.

When heroes gain (or lose) life, hero dice, levels, skills, stats, abilities, and sidekicks through advancement their attribute maximums change permanently and are recorded on their hero sheets. Any numerical attribute gained (or lost) also changes the current value by that amount. Thus a hero with 20 current life and 30 maximum life who gains 6 life through advancements gains both 6 maximum and current life.

Some advancements carry costs, inflicting hurt, damage, or loss of gear or wealth on a hero. The hero's runner can choose to not suffer the loss and skip this advancement for the time being. The advancement is not crossed off the list and the invested xp are returned to the player. The hero simply made no progress this time.

## HERO TIERS

There are three somewhat abstract, overlapping 'tiers' for heroes, and the whole group should decide what tier they want to start at. Practically, the reason for the tiers is to make it easier to quickly start with a more powerful hero. If players decide to start halfway through a tier, they should invest the requisite xp and roll on the advancement tables until they are satisfied.

## EVERYHERO AND HERO ARCHETYPES

The *Archetypes* book presents possible bundles of skills, abilities, gear, and custom random advancement tables for a series of hero archetypes. They are not rigorous classes, but rather mere guidelines for the direction a player's hero may take as they advance.

The **everyhero** presented on the following pages is not so much an archetype as a blank canvas (or skeleton) for every player who either wants to pick and choose their own mix of skills and abilities, or just let random generators do all their work for them.

Most of the archetypes are only defined for the second tier (pulp heroes) and players whose heroes start at level 0 should start with an everyhero—unless they have suitable archetypes available or have made their own. Every epic hero is (or should be) unique. The players of such heroes can use the everyhero epic advancement table, but are encouraged to also develop some new skills, abilities, and spells together with the other players at their table, creating an individualized progression for their hero.



# TIER 1 EVERYHERO: JUST ANOTHER BODY

Levels 0 to 3.

That special mix of ambition and desperation, longing and regret. That unique experience of loss, that particular need to prove themselves, to recover stability and security, to build a better world. But it's not just that.

There were signs from early on. Patterns. Proof of their competence. Exceptional ability. An unusual calling.

Yes. They are unique. Just like all the other skeletons gently baking in the Transplutonian Waste.

The early levels tell the story of how an ordinary character becomes a hero. Abilities are few, survival is uncertain, and advancement is slowed by the hero's need to rest.

## TIER 1 EVERYHERO: STARTING ATTRIBUTES

1. Invested experience: 0
2. Level: 0
3. Life: 5
4. Proficiency: +1
5. Hero dice:  $od6$
6. Magic cost: 2
7. Skills: roll once on skill list or choose
8. Abilities: none
9. Stats: distribute 5 points\*
10. Gear: 30 cash and one random item

\*Most archetypes start at level 3 and distribute 7 stat points. Starting at the very beginning, these heroes' stats are reduced to leave room for growth.

## A SLOWER GAME (OPTIONAL)

Some groups prefer a slower pace of advancement. In that case, the simplest solution is increase how much experience a player must invest in their hero for every advancement.

Investing 250 experience per advancement, and 500 experience for the final step, will give a much more "second edition" feel to the game, with the heroes scrabbling for crumbs and advancement much longer.

Players keen for this kind of play should also double the xp investments required to promote sidekicks, gear, and other extras.

## TIER 1 EVERYHERO ADVANCEMENT [D20]

The everyhero advancement table is generic: a player can choose to use it with any hero instead of their archetypal advancement table.

Every time the hero rests in a safe location their player can invest 70 xp and roll d20 once on this advancement table. To track advancements the player can tally rolls on a print-out of this table.

1. Despair. A dead end. No progress. Worse, disillusionment drives the hero to abandon an old pursuit, losing an existing skill or ability.
2. Hero learns a new skill or ability, but their health suffers as they study mouldering artefacts and implants, rather than enjoying the fresh air. Gain a random skill or ability and lose 3 life.
3. Hero receives a sign that they are on the right path. Gain 1 hero die.
4. Take solace in friendship and camaraderie. A bond is forged. Gain 3 life.
5. Forgotten ancestral abilities awaken. Roll a random ability.
6. In the light of a welcoming star, the creative daemons smile. Gain 4 life.
7. Fortunes smile on the hero. They (roll  $d6$ ): (1–3) roll on another tier's advancement table or (4–5) roll again on this table (if a crossed-off result is rolled, the player chooses another result instead; any result chosen or rolled is not crossed off) or (6) roll a random skill.
8. Dreams are in reach for those who apply themselves, whisper the implant-sellers. Gain a random skill.
9. Community acknowledges the hero's competence. Hero gains 1 level. Also: every several weeks (roll  $d6$ ): (1–3) a tedious but necessary task occupies the hero, (4–5) a chance to trade their skill for an uncommon but useful item arises, (6) the community surprises them with a useful and valuable gift.
10. A chance encounter with a notable personage helps the hero unlock more of their potential. Gain a random ability and 1 hero die.
11. By the light of the old builders, they become better in every way. Hero's proficiency increases by 1.
12. The warm glow of success strengthens the hero's anchor to this mortal world. Gain 4 life.
13. Misfortunes suffered have made the hero stronger. They gain 1 stat point. If the hero has no abilities, they also gain an ability.



20. Hero finds an guide or guru willing to teach them how mentor willing to teach them how to become an archetypal hero of their choice (for examples see the *Archetypes* book). The guide sets the hero three tasks.

**The tasks are** (roll d6): (1) a week of backbreaking labor helping the guide, (2) expensive investments in the guru's less-than-savory habits equal to half of the hero's wealth, (3) a week of lonely exile in a remote place fetching or delivering strange half-worthless items and culminating in a dangerous struggle with some foe or daemon, (4) an unusual ritual alteration of the hero's appearance, (5) the traditional casting aside of a beloved possession or prior bond, (6) 1d4\* weeks spent crafting an artefact to impress the guide with the hero's dedication. They then sell or destroy the artefact.

**After three tasks are completed**, the guru inducts the hero into their new archetype with a week-long ritual and wellness package. The exact details are up to the player, but perhaps some kind of certificate is involved.

*After certification*, the hero adopts their new archetype. Additionally, the hero learns a new skill and acquires a new weapon, spell, armor, steed, or piece of near-magical gear of their choice.

*or*

#### **No masters! No gurus!**

The hero refuses to be pigeon-holed and will make their own path to glory. They complete one random personal task taking at least a 1d4\* weeks. The hero then gains a skill or ability of the player's choice (except any with a #pinnacle tag).

The precise task is up to the players. A simple mini-game is for the hero's runner to suggest a skill they want. The other players then suggest quests, subject to the referee's soft veto or complication, and the runner picks the one they prefer.

#### **21: PULP EVERYHERO STATUS**

After all 20 results are marked off, the next time the hero rests the player can invest a final 100 xp to advance them to level 3 (with a total of 1500 xp invested).

The hero is now officially 3rd level. People in their community and their avowed calling know of them. They are capable of far greater feats than average human. Warriors are as wily and tough the best captains of the undying legions, wizards make reality bend to their whim like the cinnabar scholars of the air-hopping order, adventurers recall the tales of the fabled seven delvers who restored the five great scientific traditions to the kneeling ancestors of today's great republics.

The hero also receives (roll d6): (1) a humble residence courtesy of their community, (2) an offer of initiation into a shadowy regional cabal, (3) the approval of local mercantile interests and reduced prices, (4) a measure of renown that opens doors and buys free drinks and meals, (5) an eager sidekick (L1, apprentice) willing to overlook even the most glaring character flaws, (6) or an ancient magitech artifact of some power and utility.

14. The weeks and months of trials have taught the hero much in the way of not dying. Gain 3 life.
15. With another dawn seen, another trial survived, they become more. Gain a random ability and 1 life.
16. Study brings not only its own rewards. Gain a random skill and 2 life.
17. Without luck, there is no survival. The longer a hero survives, the luckier they must be. They gain 1 hero die.
18. Other professionals acknowledge that the hero is no rabble. Hero gains 1 level. *Also:* a role model or leader surprises the hero with the gift of (roll d6): (1) a trendy new spell, (2) sharp-looking clothes or armor, (3) a fine steed, (4) a significant amount of money (200 cash + 100 per hero's level), (5) a masterful weapon, or (6) a rare magical item from long long ago.
19. The hero's efforts and good luck have made them better. Gain 1 stat point and 1 life.

## TIER 2 EVERYHERO: GLAMOUR AND MADNESS

Levels 3 to 6.

Will the world forget these heroes? Yes. There will be local histories. Then folk tales. Then their deeds will be swallowed by the legends that survive the test of time, by the myths invented to explain the vast uncaring cosmos.

All their superhuman deeds will be swept away, just so much storytelling on the careless winds of time.

The middle tier is where the tales of great heroes are written. Where they rise up from among the great society of humanity and become individuals. Unique, unforgettable, historic. As glorious in battle as the great horse lords of the Centaur Empire, as powerful as the great avatar wizards who laid waste the oldest world with the heavy metal arrows of the Rain God.

### TIER 2 EVERYHERO: STARTING ATTRIBUTES

1. Invested experience: 1500
2. Level: 3
3. Life: 20
4. Proficiency: +2
5. Hero dice: 3d6
6. Magic cost: 2
7. Skills: roll thrice for skills or choose
8. Abilities: roll twice for abilities or choose
9. Stats: distribute 7 points
10. Gear: 300 cash, one weapon and two random items

### TIER 2 EVERYHERO ADVANCEMENT [D20]

The everyhero advancement table is generic: a player can choose to use it with any hero instead of their archetypal advancement table.

Every time the hero rests in a safe location their player can invest 500 xp and roll d20 once on this advancement table. Each result can only be applied once. All effects are permanent. When a duplicate is rolled, the player chooses another result. To track advancements the player can tally advancements on their hero sheet or mark them off on a print-out of this table.

1. What a waste of time. The hero makes no progress and even develops aversion to a whole field of study and everything associated with it. They mark one skill and refuse to learn it in the future.
2. Dark truths trouble the hero as they learn a new skill. Roll a random skill and lose 3 life. The hero also suffers one point of hurt.
3. In the face of fear the hero prevailed. Gain 1 hero die.
4. Camaraderie uplifts. Gain 3 life.
5. Dreams and ill omens of dark and tragic futures awaken new powers. Gain a random ability.
6. In the face of a beast dawns understanding, in the breast of a hero dawns new life. Gain 6 life.
7. Fortunes smile on the hero. Roll on any archetype's advancement table or they roll again on this table (if a crossed-off result is rolled, the player chooses another result instead; any result chosen or rolled is not crossed off).
8. Tribulations teach new skills. Gain a random skill. Hero also suffers one point of hurt.
9. With mighty deeds comes growing notoriety. Hero gains 1 level. Also, every several weeks (roll d6): (1) a malicious or unfortunate event occurs to inconvenience the hero, (2-3) an annoying or frustrating opportunity arises, (4-6) an innocuous coincidence reminds the hero of their notoriety.
10. A chance aroma awakens a deep memory of lost days. Hero rolls a random ability and gains 1 hero die.
11. Taking reality by the throat, shrugging off the bonds of prophecy, the hero rises. Hero's proficiency increases by 1.
12. Buoyed by fame and the memory of past success, the hero clings on to life more tenaciously. Gain 4 life.
13. A personal loss spurs the hero to impose their will on the world. Gain 1 stat point.
14. The essence of the hero recapitulates the mysterious journey of the world. Is this but prophecy? Gain 3 life.
15. It was a strange dream, a visitation by a daemon, a half-buried memory of the future. Gain a random ability and 1 life.

16. The knowledge from old books, the teachings half-forgotten, they finally click. With understanding comes joy. Hero gains a random skill and 2 life.
17. Around a strange corner that should not be there, beyond a gate that makes no sense, through a mirror of imagination, the hero faces their own mortality and live. They must make each day count. Gain 1 hero die.
18. Their great deeds have inspired commoners and aristocrats alike. Hero gains acceptance and 1 level.  
*Also:* a representative of the community, an opposition figure, a personage in power, or a revolutionary provides the hero with (roll d6): (1) a fine place to work, (2) a handsome place to stay, (3) a very capable sidekick, (4) estates or holdings that generate a comfortable rent, (5) a fancy title that opens doors and impresses people, or (6) actual behind the scenes influence and obligations, including possibly an induction into a secret society.
19. Training, study, and the perks of power all pay off. Gain 1 stat point and 1 life.

20. Hero discovers a mentor or mystic willing to teach them how to become a **true warrior** or a **true wizard** (player's choice which ability they prefer). They set three tasks.

**The tasks are** (roll d6): (1) a week of humiliating public rituals, (2) pointless expenses equal to half of the hero's wealth, (3) a week of hardship in a remote place, (4) an unusual change to the hero's appearance, (5) the ritual destruction of a prized possession, (6) to save or destroy someone or something for the mentor figure, no questions asked.

**After three tasks are completed**, the hero undertakes a week-long ritual. The details are up to the player.

After induction, the hero gains either the True Warrior or the True Wizard ability. These change the hero's life total and magic cost. Additionally, the hero learns a new weapon skill or spell skill respectively.

*or*

**This mentor is a fraud!**

The hero will make their own path. They complete one random task taking at least 1d4\* weeks. The hero then gains a skill or ability of the player's choice (except any with a #pinnacle tag).

The precise task is up to the players. A simple mini-game is for the hero's runner to suggest a skill they want. The other players then suggest quests, subject to the referee's soft veto or complication, and the runner picks the one they prefer.

**EPIC EVERYHERO STATUS**

After all 20 results are marked off, the next time the hero rests the player can invest a final 1000 xp to advance them to level 6 (with a total of 12500 xp invested).

The hero is now officially 6th level. People know them. Respected, upstanding heroes are admired. Villains are feared. Penny dreadfuls and operas are written embroidering their exploits. The gossip vidys make 'thoughtful' bite-sized productions about their private lives.

The hero also receives (roll d6): (1) a lucrative position at a local commercial or financial institution, (2) a position of expertise at a technical or military organization, (3) a position of power within the local regime or opposition, (4) celebrity status with adoring fans and nosy paparazzi, (5) discrete but thorough access to community resources via a private patronage network, (6) or ownership of a ridiculous white elephant project, maybe a derelict voidliner or a haunted glass palace.

## TIER 3 EVERYHERO: LEGENDS FOR THE FUTURE

Levels 6 to 9.

A proud elephant destroyed his village. The villagers fled in fear and tremor.

A hero strolled up from their bath in the lake, reciting the scriptures of fearlessness. When the villagers saw that hero walking towards the elephant they yelled, "Do not go near him! He is mad! Wild!"

The hero took no heed and walked straight up to that mad elephant and offered their hand. When the elephant saw the hero approach, he immediately lost all anger and lay down peacefully.

Paraphrased from *The Glories of the Bhagavad-gītā*, Chapter 16, translated by Kāshināth Trimbak Telang (1882).

Epic heroes become creatures of legend. Their advancement is slowed by high experience costs and smaller life increases. A mortal body can only hold so much life! Still, what is life compared to power overwhelming?

### TIER 3 EVERYHERO: STARTING ATTRIBUTES

1. Invested experience: 12500
2. Level: 6
3. Life: 38
4. Proficiency: +3
5. Hero dice: 6d6
6. Magic cost: 2
7. Skills: roll 5 times on skill list or choose
8. Abilities: roll 5 times on ability list or choose
9. Stats: distribute 9 points\*
10. Gear: 3000 cash, clothes or armor, a weapon, three random items and one legendary artifact.

\*Most archetypes start at level 3 and distribute 7 stat points. Starting at the very beginning, these heroes' stats are reduced to leave room for growth.

### TIER 3 EVERYHERO ADVANCEMENT [D20]

The everyhero advancement table is generic: a player can choose to use it with any hero instead of their archetypal advancement table.

Every time the hero rests in a safe location their player can invest 4000 xp and roll d20 once on this advancement table. To track advancements the player can tally rolls on a print-out of this table.

1. The hero's travails were vain, but attracted the attention of a powerful entity. Their (roll d6): (1) settlement, (2) organization, (3) house, (4) treasure, (5) friends, or (6) posterity face destruction.
2. The hollowness of ambition troubles the hero as they learn a new skill. Roll a random skill and lose 4 life. The hero also suffers two points of hurt.
3. A daemon of doubt wrestles the hero for days on end. It is a hard test. When they finally prevail, they gain 1 hero die and suffer a point of hurt.
4. A friend in need calls. If the hero spends a week aiding them, they gain 2 life. If there is no time, the hero does not advance this time and the invested xp are refunded.
5. A disembodied ghost appears, announcing a dark and tragic future. The hero glimpses (roll d6): (1) their death, (2) the death of all their dreams, (3) the fall of a great empire, (4) the wages of sin, (5) how they outlive all their friends, (6) history rendering them irrelevant. Gain a random ability.
6. A spirit creature emerges from the bush and offers itself to the hero as a sacrifice. If they kill it, they gain 6 life. If they keep it, they gain a spirit pet.
7. Chaos bows to the hero, choices follow. Choose a result from any archetype's advancement table or roll again on this table (if a crossed-off result is rolled, the player chooses another result instead; any result chosen or rolled is not crossed off).
8. Hero suffers the painful loss of (roll d6): (1) a family member, (2) a home, (3) a friend, (4) a pet, (5) a treasure, or (6) a sidekick or mentor. From this loss they gain a random skill.
9. An epic task beckons. The community approaches the hero, asking them to (roll d6): (1) act as judge in a difficult case, (2) negotiate a painful truce, (3) rediscover an important truth, (4) retrieve a lost treasure, (5) hunt down a dangerous monster, (6) redeem a fallen paragon. Once the task is complete, the hero's fame grows and they gain 1 level.
10. A letter, mislaid, finally arrives. The

letter is too late, the opportunity lost. Once the hero erects a suitable memorial, they roll a random ability and gain 1 hero die.

11. A bout of (roll d6): (1) illness, (2) indecision, (3) indigestion, (4) anxiety, (5) paranoia, (6) melancholy racks the hero. The hero suffers two points of hurt. Hero's proficiency increases by 1.
12. Discovering meaning in a small, novel daily ritual, the hero's determination to live life fully increases. Gain 4 life.
13. The meaning of a recent victory rings hollow. If the hero rejects their reward or gives away treasure earned they gain 1 stat point.
14. The essence of law's arrow is unveiled to the hero in a dream. Whether they accept it or not, they gain 3 life.
15. In a strange dream an ancient daemon or deity tempts the hero with great power. They either learn where a great artifact of power lies and how to reach it, or they gain a random ability as they spurn the angel of temptation.
16. In happy contentment, the hero considers retirement. The hero may either acquire a sudden and unexpected inheritance and retire, or they gain a random skill and 2 life.
17. A haggard messenger appears, claiming to from (roll d6): (1) a lost future, (2) a forgotten past, (3) a far kingdom, (4) a downtrodden minority, (5) a noble friend, or (6) a parallel world. After they deliver their message they fade away. If the hero accepts their message they gain 1 hero die but tragedy soon strikes a nearby settlement. If the hero rejects their message they gain 1 stat point and nothing else seems to occur.
18. The hero's adoring fans demand they (roll d6): (1) harshly punish a criminal, (2) undertake a pilgrimage, (3) donate to help the community in need, (4) sacrifice their most beloved possession to appease a local deity, (5) put on a great feast, (6) marry into the local administrative nobility. If the hero accepts they gain 1 level. If the hero declines, they do not advance this time and the invested xp are refunded. *After* a tribune of the people, an

ambitious military commander, a usurper, a wealthy merchant, a hereditary priest, or a famous celebrity provides the hero with (roll d6): (1) a medal, (2) a large letter of merit with gilt lettering, (3) a palace and title in a remote province, (4) a prestigious but powerless position involving lots of ribbon-cutting, (5) a pleasure dome and an unlimited supply of intoxicants, or (6) a double-edged weapon of great power and a stern warning to stay out of local politics from now on.

19. A magic (roll d6): (1) stone, (2) tree, (3) lake, (4) waterfall, (5) mountain, or (6) cave summons the hero. When they arrive, a radiant being blesses them. Gain 1 stat point and 1 life.
20. If the hero does not yet have a #pinnacle ability, they now unlock one. If they already have a pinnacle ability, they gain an ability of their choice.

*then*

A young and inept protégé approaches the hero. They are (roll d6): (1) very brave but foolish, (2) smart but cowardly, (3) educated but naive, (4) beautiful but clumsy, (5) alien but loving, (6) exceptionally gifted in all respects but with a heart of darkness. The protégé begs the hero to teach them. If they agree, they gain a loyal sidekick (L3, apprentice). If they send them on their way, their business blossoms and wealth increases and they can enjoy counting their coins at home, alone, with only a butler for company.

The players are encouraged to invent tasks and quests for the protégé. **When a protégé goes off on a quest**, the player rolls 2d6: (2) the protégé disappears, (3-4) humiliated, they return in failure, (5-6) they fail but learn a lesson, (7) they either barely succeed or learn something new, (8-9) they succeed and learn nothing, (10-11) they succeed and learn a lesson, (12) their fame grows and perhaps envy is kindled in the hero's bosom.

## ULTIMATE EVERYHERO STATUS

After all 20 results are marked off, the next time the hero rests the player can invest a final 1000 xp to advance them to level 9 (with a total of 99,999 xp invested).

The hero is now officially 9th level. Everyone thinks they know them. They are legend. Their stories are invented and multiplied. Their lives now belong to their communities, the only other option is flight or hermitage.

The hero retires to a life of (roll d6): (1) luxury and decadence, (2) service to their community, (3) endless accumulation of wealth, (4) ambitious social and political ascendancy, (5) forbidden studies into the occult, or (6) carefree travel under an assumed identity.

Probably the best option is for the player to treat their hero as semi-retired at this point. Narrating how they influence the world now and again, serving as a source of wealth and connections for other characters, but otherwise no longer the focus of play.

The player may continue to play the same character, but a bit of improvisation will be required. One option is to expand the hero's power and abilities with individual items and artifacts, and with additional bennies or hero dice as they continue to accumulate power over time. But, ideally, the numbers on the hero's sheet should stop increasing, as the power curve permitted by the dice peters out at this point.

# EXTRAS, SIDEKICKS, AND PETS

Sancho Pansa, der sich übrigens dessen nie gerühmt hat, gelang es im Laufe der Jahre, durch Beistellung einer Menge Ritter- und Räuberromane in den Abend- und Nachtstunden seinen Teufel, dem er später den Namen Don Quixote gab, derart von sich abzulenken, daß dieser dann haltlos die verrücktesten Taten ausführte, die aber mangels eines vorbestimmten Gegenstandes, der eben Sancho Pansa hätte sein sollen, niemandem schadeten. Sancho Pansa, ein freier Mann, folgte gleichmütig, vielleicht aus einem gewissen Verantwortlichkeitsgefühl, dem Don Quixote auf seinen Zügen und hatte davon eine große und nützliche Unterhaltung bis an sein Ende.

*Die Wahrheit über Sancho Pansa, Franz Kafka (1931)*

Heroes are the most complex characters encountered in play simply because each is the dedicated focus of a single player. Most other characters are mechanically simpler. Some are run exclusively by the referee, some by the players, but in each case it is best to leave them simple until the story or dice require they gain more attributes and detail.

## ANATOMY OF AN EXTRA IN THE TEXT: MINIMAL ATTRIBUTES

In line an **extra** (L1, pig) or a **creature** (L4, pan-solar) is only described with a title or name, level, and noun (or adjective).

The **title** (extra) describes who or what it is. The **noun** (pig) adds color to help roleplay them. The **level** (L1) is a clue to their relative power. For most extras this is all they'll ever need, because combat shouldn't be the default option.

If conflict does occur, it can help if the extra has a few more attributes. Players can roll them randomly with a creature generator or check the extra's expanded attributes if it is detailed in a bestiary or other appendix.

## EXTRAS

Most other characters encountered in play are mechanically simpler than heroes. The referee usually runs most extras, but they can also assign some to other players to make a scene more lively.

These might be **zebra** (L2, pseudohorses) grazing on the side of Pynchon's Lens, the three-mile-high gravity-shifted force-plate sticking out of the Parmezzan Peninsula, or **goblins** (L1, virulent) brandishing yunja curse-sticks. Or just about anything else.

In play, extras might be encountered just about anywhere. In books and modules they are usually noted in two settings: in the text itself or in an appendix, perhaps a *dramatis personae* or a bestiary.



## HOW EXTRAS WORK

Mechanically, extras function like super-simplified heroes.

When extras make tests there are two possible situations:

1. They know what they're doing and roll  $d20 + \text{sum}$ .
2. They don't know what they're doing and roll a naked  $d20$ .

Unless otherwise specified, they get two actions, just like heroes.

If, for some reason, an extra's stat or proficiency are required, and not just the sum, their proficiency modifiers are usually equal to their level divided by 4, plus 1, rounded up ( $\text{pro} = (L/4) + 1$ ). So:

LEVEL	SUM	STAT	PRO	EXAMPLES
0	2	2	1	Rabbit-pig farm symbiote.
1–3	3–6	1–4	2	Average human, ghoul, or sporeling.
5–8	7–10	4–7	3	Epic hero or dire monster.
9–12	11–14	7–10	4	Legendary foe or unique demon.
13–16	15–18	10–13	5	Mother machine or behemoth.
17	19	13	6	A demiurge.

This can all get a bit much and all a referee really needs to remember in the heat of play is that most creatures' sums are usually a bit higher than their level, their stats a bit lower than their level.

## TURNING EXTRAS INTO SIDEKICKS

Players may run across a particularly friendly **farting marsh dragon** (L1, highly explosive), **lost puppy** (L1, lucky), or **sovereign quadrodont** (L6, mammoth), and decide they want to adopt it.

This is easy and mechanically the players have just two important tasks:

1. Assign the new sidekick a hero owner.
2. Give the new sidekick a name, nickname, or other term of affection.

This done, the players can invest xp to raise their new sidekick's level, increasing their attributes and abilities.

## ANATOMY OF AN EXTRA IN A BESTIARY: EXPANDED ATTRIBUTES

### War Pig (L3, cunning)

#pig #mammal #biomodified (tags)

*Such a huggable beast.*

At some point a biomancer general in the Bloodiron Legion Free Democracy came up with the brilliant idea of creating bioenhanced warpigs. Over the years most of them lost their venomous bites and hypnotic gazes, but their herds continue to terrorize remote free-steads in the Glazed Reach. (description)

Def: 13

Life: 13

Sum: +6 (attributes)

Attack: Gore ( $2d6^*$ ) and trample ( $1d4$  to all adjacent). (attack)

Ability: When the war pig runs out of life there is a 50% chance it is faking and actually still has 7 life. (ability)

The **tags** help categorize, search, and use an extra at a glance.

The **attributes** flesh out the creature for conflict. Their defense (Def) if they are attacked, life if they take damage (or are used as a spell-casting battery), and sum combines stat and proficiency into a single number to add when rolling tests.

The **attack** lists how they commonly fight and how much damage they deal.

The **ability**, if any, describes the creature's quirks and special attributes in combat.

The **description** rounds out the extra, giving a bit of background, some behaviors, common skills if any, and so on.

# SIDEKICKS & PETS

Every player running a hero can also control secondary characters: sidekicks. These can be pets (say a cat), something more magical (say a butterfly-winged color-changing laser-emitting unicorn), human companions (perhaps Ioanna the Undertaker's Apprentice), or even vehicles (the Heromobile).

Each sidekick is 'owned' by one hero, and usually one player runs both their hero and their sidekicks, making decisions and rolling dice for all of them. But this doesn't mean that the different characters communicate telepathically or that animal pets magically have human levels of intelligence—unless such abilities are discovered or chosen during play.

## ANATOMY OF A SIDEKICK

**Flunky** (L1, secretary) (title, level, and noun)

A loyal but cowardly sidekick who does research and secretarial tasks, carries out the hero's orders and brews a mean (roll d6): (1) coffee, (2) tea, (3) beer, (4) sleeping tincture, (5) mind-numbing draught, (6) storm in a teacup. (description and quirk)

Def: 9

Life: 5

Sum: +3 (attributes)

The **title** (Flunky) describes who the sidekick is and the **noun** (secretary) adds color to help roleplay them. The **level** (L1) is a clue to their relative power. For many sidekicks, this is all they'll ever need.

The attributes flesh out the sidekick in case they're caught in combat: their defense (Def) if they are attacked, life if they take damage (or are used as a spell-casting battery), and sum to represent a combination of their proficiency and stat. Their attributes are also a baseline from which they can advance if a player spends xp on them.

The description and quirk round out the sidekick, describing how they behave, their skills, and traits.

When players note down their sidekicks, it will often also make sense to note down what equipment or gear they are carrying. By default, each sidekick has a sack's worth of inventory space, but half of it is occupied by their personal effects.

## HOW SIDEKICKS WORK

Mechanically sidekicks are basically extras.

1. The main benefit sidekicks bring to a group of heroes (besides comic relief) is access to additional actions, skills, and abilities that the heroes might not possess on their own.
2. When a sidekick tests to see if they succeed at an action their runner rolls d20 and adds the sidekick's sum. Some hero abilities also adds the hero's proficiency to the test. In this way, the more inspiring a hero is, the better all their sidekicks will perform.
3. Sidekicks might not all be good fighters, but if caught in combat each gets two actions on their turn, just like heroes.
4. Defense mashes together relevant stats, skills, and equipment. When heroes equip their sidekicks with better gear some eyeballing is required.
5. If a sidekick has an ability victims have to test against, like a venomous bite, the default target number is the same as their starting defense.
6. Unless otherwise specified, sidekicks and pets are ordinary humans or animals; hurting, bleeding, and using tools like everyone else.



## SHARING SIDEKICKS

Players can also lend sidekicks to one another. For example, in a group with three players, one player's wizard hero with a pet cat and a floating skull companion goes on a side quest. It could be a good idea for the player to pass the cat and skull to the other players, who then play them in scenes and combat. This keeps all the players engaged in every scene.

Note: when one player controls another player's sidekick this is like playing with a borrowed instrument. They should handle each others' sidekicks with care and in good faith. Breaking another player's sidekick is akin to breaking their action figure. The referee should support every player's veto over their sidekicks' actions.

A sidekick can also become a group character, shared by all players. Maybe they're a favorite donkey who survived a half-dozen battles, or a trusty old main-line battle golem.

## SUICIDAL SIDEKICKS

The sidekick's player doesn't always have complete control of their sidekicks: they are not full protagonists. The referee can exercise a soft-veto to stop them doing something entirely out of character, utterly stupid, or suicidal. For example, no sane human will agree to walk through a minefield to clear it for their friend or mentor. A brain-neutered slave might, however.

That said, over time, through play sidekicks naturally tend to become more like heroes, and players may even promote them to full heroes. That's fine. Players can have stables of heroes. If a sidekick becomes a hero, their player should eventually flesh them out with a full suite of stats and other attributes.

## PROMOTING SIDEKICKS

Just like heroes, sidekicks do not gain their own experience. Instead, their player chooses how to invest the experience earned by their hero. The higher a sidekick's level, the more experience it takes to promote them to the next level.

LEVEL	INVEST	TOTAL XP	PROMOTION EFFECTS
0	–	0	none
1	+250	250	+1 def, +1d6 life, +1d6-5 sum, +1d6-5 abilities or skills
2	+500	750	+1 def, +1d8 life, +1d4-3 sum, +1d4-3 abilities or skills
3	+750	1500	+1 def, +1d8 life, +1d3-2 sum, +1d3-2 abilities or skills
4	+1500	3000	+1 def, +1d8 life, +1d2-1 sum, +1d2-1 abilities or skills
5	+3000	6000	+1 def, +1d8 life, +1 sum, +1 ability or skill

Some promotion effects have a chance of negative results. The minimum for any promotion roll is always 0, unless otherwise specified. The negative dice are there to simulate low but increasing odds of improvement with level.

Sidekicks **cannot be promoted beyond fifth level**. If players want to turn them into full-fledged heroes at that point, that's fine.

### #NOPROMOTION

Some sidekicks, like the Tourist's Friendly Mimic or the Skeleton's Fellow Skeleton have a #nopromotion tag and cannot be promoted. This is either because they are already too high level (the mimic is level 13) or cannot learn (the brainless skeletons).

### **CAMPAIGN PLAY LOOP**

1. Group of players agrees to play.
2. Session zero to determine scope, logistics, and duration of play.
3. Players meet to play a session.
4. Interlude. During this downtime players may or may not continue a correspondence, world-building or plotting the next session.
5. Steps 3 and 4 repeat (ir)regularly with more-or-less coherent cast of heroes and extras. Exact players attending may vary from session to session.
6. Campaign ends with a planned finale or peters out with a whimper.
7. Players start new campaign or not.

### **SESSION PLAY LOOP**

1. Players assemble for a ~1–4 hour session.
2. Pleasantries.
3. Players recap what happened last session.
4. Referee kicks action off with first scene or encounter. Players respond and roleplay.
5. Scene ends. Interlude as focus shifts to next scene.
6. Steps 4 and 5 repeat. Possibly with players playing different characters in different scenes.
7. Referee ends session with a wrap up, return to safety, cliff-hanger, or even just a fade to black.
8. Players clean up play area and disperse.

## WHY IS THE REFEREE CALLED THE CAT?

This player role is called the ref, or more humorously, the cat, to emphasize that terms like “dungeon master” or “game master” are misleading. The game runner is no master—maybe a game host or referee. But even more than that, they’re the member of the band that gets the evening organized, prepares a few hooks, and sets the beat for the game. They’re like the bass player of the roleplaying group. Cool, sure, but coolest when they make everyone play and shine together.



### SPECIAL REFEREE TITLES [D12]

If the players agree, they can assign the ref a special title and power each session. Each power gives a slightly silly meta-game effect to liven up the session and, sometimes, encourage friendlier roleplay.

#### 1. **Catspaw**

If there is a cat in the house, it's the referee's nominal boss. They can use its name as part of their title.

#### 2. **Cat Lady or Lord**

Gift other players 50 xp for lasagna or a tin of tuna.

#### 3. **Game Golem**

Once per session they can move a random location on the game map due to a reality glitch.

#### 4. **Dog Duke**

Can grant 1d4 re-rolls to players who bring food, snacks, and music to the game session.

#### 5. **Caître D'**

Can give a player 100 xp if they help clean up the kitchen and table after the game session.

#### 6. **Dyeus Katter**

Can have a hero's mildly annoying ancestor ghost appear to give advice or present the moral lesson of the session.

#### 7. **Sky Cat**

Like Ceiling Cat, they can invoke epic

atmospheric effects in-game at any time, from rain to lightning. And nobody may groan at the cliché.

#### 8. **Bass Player**

Can give a player 1d6 x 10 xp every time they choose an apt background song. They can veto annoying songs, of course.

#### 9. **Hazeraiser**

Can open one travel portal for heroes per session. Demand sacrifices at will.

#### 10. **Prismatic Lady**

Randomly recolours in-game locations. It becomes (roll d6): (1) monochrome, (2) desaturated, (3) all cool hues, (4) warm hues, (5) bright, harmonious colours, (6) a brutal riot of neon and day-glo.

#### 11. **Hero Herder**

Draws a great big (abandoned?) railroad linking prepped quantum locations on the big map in the middle of the table (there is one, right?). The heroes don't have to take it, but ... it's there.

#### 12. **The Cat**

Nine times during the campaign, they can bestow an extra life on a character of their choice.

## WHY ARE THERE NO PCS AND NPCS?

Because the cat or ref is specifically presented as a specific kind of player, not some kind of “master” outside the playing group, it makes no sense to split the characters into those that belong to players and those that do not. The characters are instead split according to how prominent they are within the session and how mechanically detailed they are.

While the heroes, the main protagonists of play, remain in the runners' hands throughout, the sidekicks and extras can shift around among players as the scenes require. For example, if a single hero goes to reconnoitre a town, the cat may well assign extras like guards, townspeople, and the jeering mob to other runners who would otherwise have little to do during the scene.

# TASKS AT THE TABLE (OR ONLINE)

## SPECIAL PLAYER TITLES [D14]

If the players want, they can all take on special titles and powers each session. Why leave that fun just to the referee? Each title covers some tasks along with some mild meta-game effects. Roll twice to mix up tasks and powers for more variety.

### 1. Time Maker

Task: organizes the session.

Power: once per real-time hour gives another player an extra action to spend on one of their characters.

### 2. Lady or Lord of Hosts

Task: hosts the session.

Power: once per session discovers a safe location for the characters or introduces a host of extras in the distance. The host does not need to be friendly.

### 3. Chef of Gods

Task: provides food for the session.

Power: once per session discovers a delectable meal that restores one character's health or life total. One of their heroes also gains 50 x level experience points.

### 4. Senior Hygiene Technomancer

Task: oversees cleanup.

Power: once per session removes poison or curse from a character.

### 5. Maker of Heroes

Task: helps players make characters.

Power: once per real-time hour grants another player a boon [+].

### 6. Gatebreaker

Task: explains rules to new players.

Power: once per session adjusts a rule just this once.

Players perform multiple tasks during a roleplaytime session. Traditionally many systems bundle them together with the roles of referee (game master or what have you) and runner (player, protagonist). Often this means that the referee is tasked with much more work than the other players, which can lead to exhaustion, burnout, and failed roleplaying groups. It's also a big reason why many players avoid refereeing sessions. By unpacking the tasks and talking about them it might be easier to divide the labor fairly.

## 1. ORGANIZING A SESSION

Finding a time and place for the group to meet. This can be any player, but it's good to make sure somebody is responsible for making the call.

## 2. HOSTING A SESSION

Often roleplaying takes place at somebody's home. This can be any player, but it's important to realize that as the host, they are also have a special social role beyond just play. Thus, while the host has an obligation to make the group feel welcome, the other players also have a responsibility to be good guests and not abuse the host's hospitality. If playing outside of a home, say at a cafe, the player organizing the session takes on some of the social role of a host. Playing online, somebody will usually be responsible for setting up the digital tools used to play and track events in the game.

## 3. TAKING CARE OF FOOD AND DRINKS:

Roleplaying is a social event that often involves eating and drinking. Whether there will be food and drinks at the table is a group decision, but it's worth respecting the host player's preferences. Some groups make every player responsible for their own food, others do potlucks, yet others prepare communal meals like the traditional frozen pizza. The players should decide who will bring what, who (if anyone) will handle preparation during the sessions (e.g. who's handling the frozen pizzas and making sure they don't burn in the oven, who's making sure the glasses don't run dry), and it's absolutely a good idea to collect food money up front so nobody's left holding the tab. Online this task tends to disappear.



#### 4. CLEANING UP AFTER A SESSION

Especially if there is food involved, there will be cutlery and things to clean up. All the players should pitch in to help the host clean up after a session. Ideally, the players won't leave until the home is as clean as they found it.

#### 5. GENERATING CHARACTERS

New heroes and sidekicks regularly come into play. There should be one player who knows the rules for making new characters well enough that they can help others. It is helpful if this is not the referee, letting them focus on keeping the session rolling along.

#### 6. INTRODUCING NEW PLAYERS TO GAME RULES

When a new player joins the group, it helps if there is another player who is not the referee who can guide them through the rules.

#### 7. ROLEPLAYING THE HEROES

This is the primary task of the runners. The referee should absolutely not roleplay their heroes or make their decisions for them.

#### 8. ROLEPLAYING THE ANTAGONISTS

This is a primary referee task, since obstacles to the heroes' desires is where stories are born.

#### 9. ROLEPLAYING THE EXTRAS AND SIDEKICKS

Any player can take over the extras or sidekicks in a scene. Usually, a runner will roleplay their hero's sidekicks, but they can assign them to other players too. Likewise, a referee can assign an extra along with a one or two-line description to a player not directly involved in a scene. The referee can call for tests to determine the extra's reactions, but beyond that sharing them out keeps all the players playing and makes outcomes unexpectable for everyone, including the referee themselves. Who knows, maybe the runner will suddenly turn the stat-less invented-on-the-spot shopkeeper into a beloved recurring character?

#### 10. PREPARING HOOKS, PLOTS, AND MODULES FOR A SESSION

This is almost always the referee's task. Ideally it should be fun, not a chore. As a rule of thumb, the preparation should not take more time than running the session itself, and ideally less. The more a referee listens to the other players during a session, and riffs off that, the more dynamic it should be.

#### 7. Villain's Secret Friend

Task: beefs up the antagonists.  
Power: once per session gives an antagonist a boon on all tests in exchange for doubled xp from that scene. If the boon is not given, the cat gains two boons to use in one scene of their choice next session, doubling xp from that scene.

#### 8. Inventor of Names

Task: invents names for locations, items and extras.  
Power: once per session discovers the true name of an antagonist, advantaging a few harmful spells.

#### 9. Loremaker

Task: lore about places and things.  
Power: once per session sneaks a useful feature into the environment.

#### 10. Quartermaster

Task: tracks party resources.  
Power: once per session discovers a useful mundane item in the stores.

#### 11. Keeper of References

Task: tracks in-game lore.  
Power: once per session changes one item of lore to benefit the party.

#### 12. The Journalist

Task: keeps campaign journal.  
Power: once per session may forget to record an event, "inadvertently" helping the party.

#### 13. Catkin Cartographer

Task: keeps the party's maps.  
Power: once per session discovers a shortcut or secret route.

#### 14. Adventure Artist

Task: illustrates the party's adventures and encounters.  
Power: once per session spots a weakness or vulnerability on a creature or object.

### **11. MAKING UP LORE, NAMES, AND BACKSTORIES**

A large part of the fun of roleplaying is invention and imagination. Any player can and should do this. Traditionally, this task falls almost entirely on the referee (or on pre-written tomes), however it's a good idea to share it out among all the players. When the group encounters something new in the game the referee can take an exquisite-corpse improv approach. The referee roughly describes the new encounter, then point to another player and asks them to add some detail, then the next and asks them to add some contrast, and so on, varying the questions a little bit. The runners may pass an improv token from one to another to make sure each of them gets their fair turn adding to the world's lore. Additionally, the referee can declare players to be experts in things related to their heroes, so the runner of a dwarven hero takes the driver's seat when it comes to describing dwarven lore.

If the referee takes this approach, they should wield a soft veto to maintain some consistency in the shared world and to keep it roughly balanced, so that one player's ideas don't steamroll everybody else's.

### **12. RUNNING THE ENVIRONMENT, SANDBOX, AND ADVENTURE MODULE**

This is another primary referee task. Keeping the imaginary world ticking over, setting the stage for the heroes.

### **13. RUNNING ANTAGONISTS IN COMBAT**

This task usually falls to the referee, but they could outsource it to a runner whose heroes aren't present, or even a secondary referee player.

### **14. REFEREEING CONFLICTS AND COMBAT BETWEEN HEROES AND ANTAGONISTS**

This is a primary referee task, but insofar as it deals with rules, an impartial runner whose heroes are not involved, could also handle this task.

### **15. KEEPING TRACK OF THE HEROES' RESOURCES**

This is a task for each runner individually when it comes to their own heroes, but one player might also handle the resources of the whole group, for example their caravans or possessions.

## **16. RULES ARBITRATION**

This task usually falls to the referee, but it is easy to outsource to any player so long as they are fair and impartial.

## **17. REFERENCING EXISTING BOOKS AND LORE**

Another task that usually falls to the referee, but could be assigned to anyone.

## **18. KEEPING A CAMPAIGN JOURNAL**

Again, a task that often falls to the referee, but could go to any player. A group can even decide to skip it altogether, and the sessions will still be fun. Ideally, the player taking on this task likes to write.

## **19. DRAWING CHARACTERS, SCENES, AND MAPS**

This is a task that really helps bring the game alive and every group should encourage as many players as possible to participate. In practice, many groups will usually have one or two players really get into the craft aspect of play. That's fine. Having a session art journal is a fun activity in itself.

## **20. STAYING ON THE SAME PAGE**

This isn't really a task, but a useful for every player. A group meets to play together and it's important for all the players to read the room, make sure nobody is getting uncomfortable, and that everyone is enthusiastically on-board with a course of action. Splitting the party could be fun, but it might leave a lot of players pretty bored. Introducing a terrifying spidercat character might have been a good idea, if two of the players weren't arachnophobic.



# SCENES CONFLICT

## CONFLICT

*Heroes against heroes, protagonists against antagonists.*

“Mighty Diomedes, without a tremor, replied: ‘You’ve failed, not succeeded, but before you two are done one of you must die, and sate with his blood Ares, god of the shield’s tough hide. With that, Diomedes hurled his spear whose bronze blade Athene guided to the face beside the eye, shattering Pandarus’ white teeth, shearing his tongue at the root, and exiting through the chin. He tumbled from the chariot with a clang of bright burnished armour, the swift horses swerved, and there his strength failed, his spirit was loosed.”

—Homer, *Iliad*, Bk V:239-296 The death of Pandarus, translated by A. S. Kline (2009).

Conflict is at the heart of every story and every game. Indeed, a case could be made for simply calling games mock conflicts. The human brain is wired, ever since the age of campfires and tales against the dark, to compile narratives from chance events.

The hunter rises and finds their bow missing. Hunter searches for their bow. Finds tracks. Follow. Hunter is in conflict with their environment.

Hunter finds thief. Werechild. A cry. Harsh words. Mockeries and posturing. The werechild makes to attack. Hunter strikes werechild down. Hunter is in conflict with other creature.

Hunter has bow again. Stands over bleeding werechild. Save thief? Leave thief for the hyena? Cut werechild’s throat? Hunter is in conflict with themselves.

World. Others. Self. Those are the basic conflicts from the perspective of the protagonist. The hero.

Players use dice to generate unpredictable outcomes for their heroes when conflicts arise. Does hero manage to climb the mountain? Do they best their sibling in the race? Do they master their own hubris?

All three situations: hero vs. world, hero vs. (anti)hero, and hero vs. self are conflicts. In play two of those are usually relatively simple to resolve. When a hero struggles against the world or against themselves there is only one active agent: the hero themselves.

Things become slightly more dynamic (complicated) when the conflict is between different sides: heroes and (anti)heroes, protagonists and antagonists, or even between two players’ characters. With multiple sides involved in a conflict several rounds of actions and tactics by everyone involved generally require more dice rolling.

### A NOTE ON PROTAGONISTS

The core of any conflict centers on the protagonists. They are always played by the runners, while the referee and, sometimes, players not involved in the scene playing the antagonists. Usually the protagonists are the runners’ heroes, but there are other possibilities: sidekicks handling a side mission, extras dragged into an unexpected conflict, or even newly introduced characters used to illustrate a flashback or events on the fringes of the main session.

The protagonists usually don’t change when play switches from scene to conflict, so there is rarely any need to reintroduce them. Nonetheless, it is a good idea for the referee to quickly run down who the protagonists are and what is their situation in a given conflict to make sure all the players are on the same page and can approach the shared imaginary space more or less aligned.

## RESOURCES AND LIMITATIONS

When characters enter a conflict they also possess resources which are depleted as they take actions and are affected by actions.

Not every conflict needs to use the same resources, but most conflicts involving the runners' heroes directly will use the following resources:

1. **Life:** An abstract, catch-all resource that could be summarized as plot armor. This powers spells, but can also be sacrificed to directly modify die rolls.
2. **Stats or Sum:** The natural aptitudes that describe the character can be depleted in extremis.
3. **Hero Dice:** Metagame boost to heroes.
4. **Possessions:** The character's in-game objects (e.g. weapons, information, favors, burdens, curses, etc.). These increase or modify the character's ability to act.

Heroes will also face limitations to their ability to act. Some intrinsic (inventory), others resulting from circumstances, and yet others from their failures.

1. **Inventory:** The character's inventory works like a hand in card games. It limits how many objects the character can access in a conflict.
2. **Hurt:** Severe failures and mishaps in a conflict burden a character with penalties that make it hard to continue the conflict.
3. **Removal From Play:** A character sufficiently defeated may be removed from play through death, retirement, or other means.
4. **Circumstances:** A catch-all term to suggest that breathing air under water or walking through rocks are not usually possible actions.



# CONFLICT LOOP OVERVIEW

The boundaries between a scene and a conflict are porous. A single scene can dip into conflict and out of it multiple times. At a palace ball the duchess may try to impress with a dance, while the wizard picks a lock and the warrior of fortune sneaks through the inner forbidden garden. The success or failure of each smaller conflict will affect the overall scene without ending it.

Conflicts are mechanically more detailed than scenes because they represents crossroads in the roleplay. Stakes are higher and there will be consequences for the heroes (and the emergent story). Will the firstborn outwit the dragon and steal their magic scale or die? Will the pirate captain convince the king to let them marry their firstborn or will they be cast out? Will the outcast king find their divine revelation in the wastes or will they fail and crumble?

Each conflict follows, in greater or lesser detail, the following structure.

1. The referee sketches out the scope of the conflict (time, space, reality dysfunctions), different zones (if any), obstacles (if any), protagonists and antagonists (if any), and what is at stake (if necessary).
2. The referee may invite other players to add details and props.
3. Runners describe how their heroes and extras approach the conflict, what they have prepared, where they are, what they intend to do.
4. If there are sides, the referee narrates whether any side(s) are surprised. The side(s) who are not surprised get a free round.
5. A round begins.
6. Players roll initiative to determine which side acts first, or if both sides act simultaneously and all actions resolve together. If there are more than two sides, the players repeat this initiative roll for each side their heroes face.
7. Each side acts and resolves its actions. On the heroes' turn the players decide the order in which heroes and extras act. Players may ask the referee questions to clarify details before attempting their actions.
8. Steps 5 to 7 repeat until one the conflict is resolved in a victory, draw, or defeat. It is possible for a conflict to last just a single round.
9. The referee then describes the aftermath and the previous scene resumes or a new one begins.

To highlight how the conflict loop can be used to play through varieties of conflicts, while keeping the scope of the text reasonable, three 'flavors' are presented for each of the aforementioned steps: physical, social, and psychological. Physical conflicts are fights or races, body against body. Social conflicts deal with status, relationships, and money. Finally, psychological conflicts pit wits against wits, minds against themselves. None of these 'flavors' is necessarily completely isolated from one another, but mixing and matching will always require some improvisation by the referee.

# SKETCHING OUT THE SCOPE

This crucial referee step sets up the parameters of play for the conflict. Depending on the genre, theme, and scene of play a lot of the scope is already assumed. For example, if the heroes are a ragged band of hoboes exploring the abandoned mansion of Nuz Drayl, the thief who stole electric fire from the divine golems, the fictional premise of “exploring the abandoned mansion” defines the time scale (handfuls of minutes per scene), space (human-sized rooms, doors, hallways), the zones (current room, places adjacent through doors and windows, further away), and many expected obstacles (crumbling architecture, traps, locked safes, sealed chambers). The referee uses their imagination (or notes) and improvisation to adapt the antagonist (if any) and stakes to the individual conflict—a ghoul or a passing militiaman will pose different challenges to the heroes.

## **SCOPE OF PHYSICAL CONFLICTS**

TO ADD CONTENT

## **SCOPE OF SOCIAL CONFLICTS**

TO ADD CONTENT

## **SCOPE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONFLICTS**

The referee sketches out the scope of the conflict (time and space), the different zones (if any), the obstacles (if any), the protagonists and the antagonists (if any), and what is at stake (if necessary).

WELL, I TRIED TO HAVE THIS SECTION FINALIZED, BUT ... JULY PATREON DEADLINE. LET'S SEE IF I MANAGED TO UPLOAD IT ON TIME ...

I'LL UPLOAD AN UPDATED RULES DOC SOON.

—LUKA, JULY 31 2020



# APPENDIX: TOOLS FOR PLAY

“Reaching out to embrace the random  
Reaching out to embrace whatever may come.”

—Tool, *Lateralus*, Lateralus (2001)

## TOOLS

- i. Hero records.
- ii. Plain text
- iii. Minihero sheet
- iv. Hero sheet
- v. Metahero sheet

What even is roleplaying without a profusion of papers and pencils? A digital savanna, studded with rollerbots perhaps?

## HERO RECORDS

For most players keeping a record of their protagonist is important. For players who want any kind of continuity, it is quite essential. Though playing without any kind of character record is possible, memories are fallible.

Depending on their requirements, players should decide how they prefer to record their characters in play. The text version of the hero record is provided to make it simple to play with digital tools. Only headings are formatted.

# PLAIN TEXT HERO SHEET

## HERO:

Name:  
Friends:  
Enemy:  
Title:  
Species:  
Looks:  
Debt:  
Likes:  
Player:  
/\*adjust details as required\*/

## EXPERIENCE:

Invested:

## LEVEL:

## PROFICIENCY:

## STATS:

Strength:  
>Remaining:  
Endurance:  
>Remaining:  
Agility:  
>Remaining:  
Charisma:  
>Remaining:  
Aura:  
>Remaining:  
Thought:  
>Remaining:

## SKILLS:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ (starting skill, rank: #)  
2. \_\_\_\_\_ (starting skill, rank: #)  
3. \_\_\_\_\_ (starting skill, rank: #)  
4. \_\_\_\_\_ (rank: #)  
5. \_\_\_\_\_ (rank: #)  
6. \_\_\_\_\_ (rank: #)  
7. \_\_\_\_\_ (rank: #)  
8. \_\_\_\_\_ (rank: #)  
9. \_\_\_\_\_ (rank: #)  
10. \_\_\_\_\_ (rank: #)

## ABILITIES:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ (starting ability, rank: #)  
2. \_\_\_\_\_ (rank: #)  
3. \_\_\_\_\_ (rank: #)  
4. \_\_\_\_\_ (rank: #)  
5. \_\_\_\_\_ (rank: #)  
6. \_\_\_\_\_ (rank: #)  
7. \_\_\_\_\_ (rank: #)  
8. \_\_\_\_\_ (rank: #)  
9. \_\_\_\_\_ (rank: #)  
10. \_\_\_\_\_ (rank: #)

## GEAR (NO PENALTY):

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
6. \_\_\_\_\_  
7. \_\_\_\_\_  
8. \_\_\_\_\_  
9. \_\_\_\_\_  
10. \_\_\_\_\_

/\*each slot = 1 stone, includes spells\*/

## EXCESS GEAR (HALF SPEED & [-]):

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
6. \_\_\_\_\_  
7. \_\_\_\_\_  
8. \_\_\_\_\_  
9. \_\_\_\_\_  
10. \_\_\_\_\_

/\*repeat as required\*/

## LIFE:

Remaining:

## HURT:

Fine {}  
Disadvantaged [-] {}  
Slow {}  
Half Life {}  
Out {}  
Defeat {}

## HERO DICE (D6):

Remaining:

## MAGIC COST:

## COMBAT:

Physical...  
>Defense:  
>Range Attack:  
>Melee Attack:  
Metaphysical...  
>Warding:  
>Magic Attack:  
>Social Attack:

## ATTACK MODES:

Tool:  
>Damage:  
>Range:  
>Tag:  
Tool:  
>Damage:  
>Range:  
>Tag:  
/\*repeat as required\*/

## PET OR SIDEKICK:

Name:  
Invested xp:  
Level:  
Defense:  
Sum:  
Life:  
Ability:

# TWO MINI HERO SHEETS

For those one or two session games.

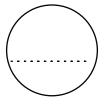
HERO: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: .....

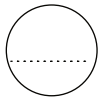
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Species: .....

Looks: .....



Str



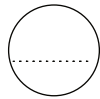
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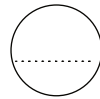
PRO



Cha



Aur



Tho

## SKILLS

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

## ABILITIES

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

EXPERIENCE: \_\_\_\_\_

Invested: .....

LEVEL: \_\_\_\_\_

## GEAR

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

4. ....

5. ....

6. ....

Excess: .....

HURT  fine,  bane[-],  slow,  ½ life,  out,  defeat

LIFE: \_\_\_\_\_

Remaining: .....

MAGIC COST:

HERO DICE:

≡(=^..^=)≡

Player: .....

## COMBAT

✕ Physical

Defense: .....

Range Attack: .....

Melee Attack: .....

☯ Metaphysical

Warding: .....

Magic Attack: .....

Social Attack: .....

## ATTACK MODES

Method: .....

Damage: .....

Range: .....

Tags: .....

Method: .....

Damage: .....

Range: .....

Tags: .....

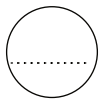
HERO: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: .....

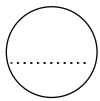
Title: .....

Species: .....

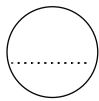
Looks: .....



Str



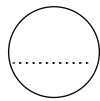
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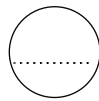
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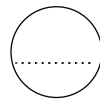
PRO



Cha



Aur



Tho

## SKILLS

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

## ABILITIES

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

EXPERIENCE: \_\_\_\_\_

Invested: .....

LEVEL: \_\_\_\_\_

## GEAR

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

4. ....

5. ....

6. ....

Excess: .....

HURT  fine,  bane[-],  slow,  ½ life,  out,  defeat

LIFE: \_\_\_\_\_

Remaining: .....

MAGIC COST:

HERO DICE:

Player: .....

## COMBAT

✕ Physical

Defense: .....

Range Attack: .....

Melee Attack: .....

☯ Metaphysical

Warding: .....

Magic Attack: .....

Social Attack: .....

## ATTACK MODES

Method: .....

Damage: .....

Range: .....

Tags: .....

Method: .....

Damage: .....

Range: .....

Tags: .....



# A BREVE HERO SHEET

For three to twelve sessions or so.

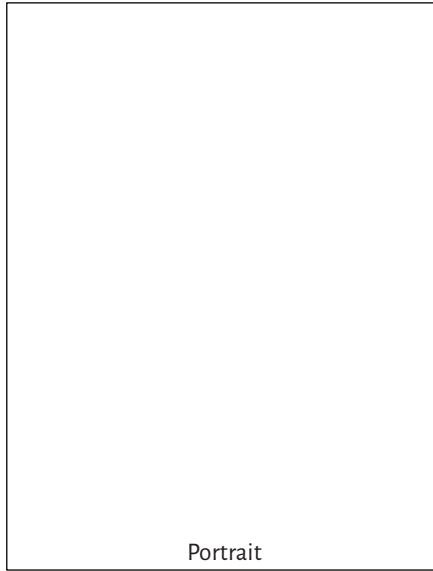
**HERO:** \_\_\_\_\_

Name: .....  
 Friends: .....  
 Enemy: .....  
 Title: .....  
 Species: .....  
 Looks: .....  
 Debt: .....  
 Likes: .....  
 Player: .....

**EXPERIENCE:** \_\_\_\_\_

Invested: .....

**LEVEL:** \_\_\_\_\_



Str

End

Agi

PRO

Cha

Aur

Tho

**GEAR**

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....
6. ....

**CUMBERSOME GEAR**

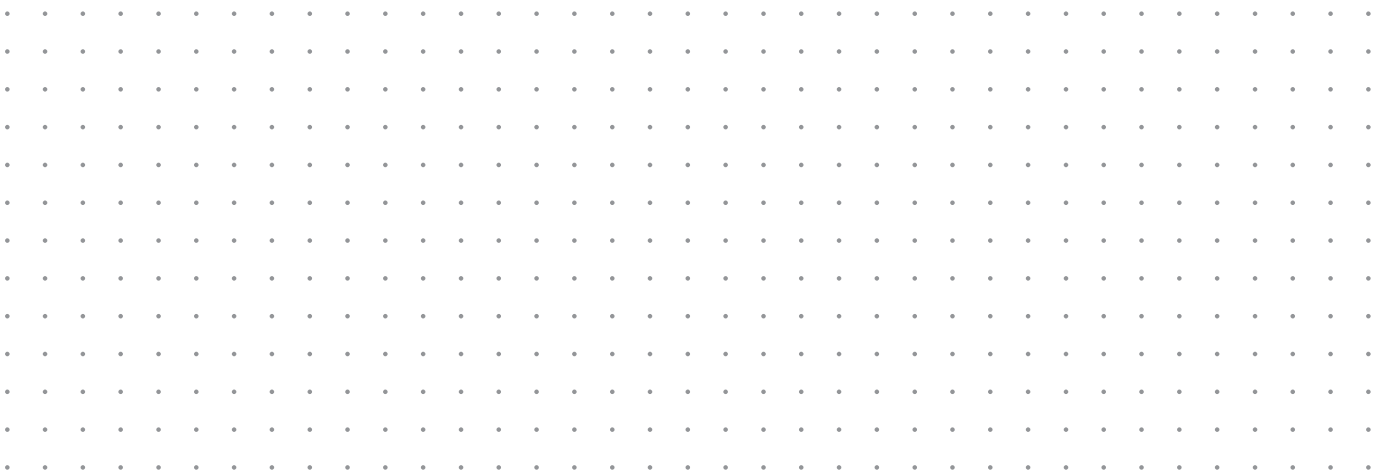
1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....
6. ....

**ATTACK MODES**

<b>Method:</b> .....	<b>Method:</b> .....	<b>Method:</b> .....
Damage: .....	Damage: .....	Damage: .....
Range: .....	Range: .....	Range: .....
Tags: .....	Tags: .....	Tags: .....

**PET OR SIDEKICK**

Name: .....	Level: .....	Life: .....
Invested xp: .....	Defense: .....	Ability: .....
	Sum: .....	Ability: .....



**SKILLS**

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....
6. ....

**ABILITIES**

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....
6. ....

**LIFE:** \_\_\_\_\_

Life Remaining: .....

**MAGIC COST:**

**HERO DICE:**

**HURT**    fine,    bane[-],    slow,  
 ½ life,    out,    defeat

**COMBAT**

**✂ Physical**  
 Defense: .....  
 Range Attack: .....  
 Melee Attack: .....

**🌀 Metaphysical**  
 Warding: .....  
 Magic Attack: .....  
 Social Attack: .....

# AN ULTRAVIOLET CAMPAIGN HERO SHEET

Until a hero gets a full journal to themselves.

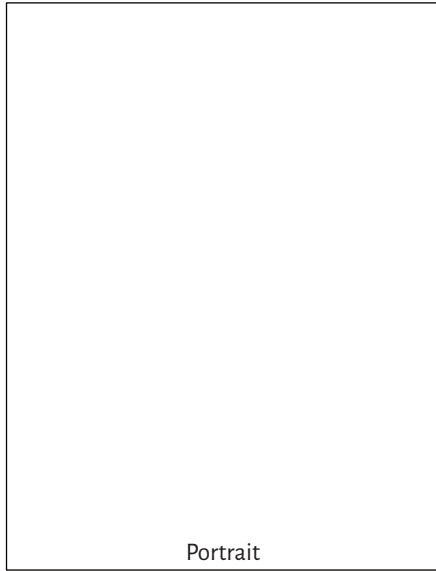
**HERO:** \_\_\_\_\_

Name: .....  
Friends: .....  
Enemy: .....  
Title: .....  
Species: .....  
Looks: .....  
Debt: .....  
Likes: .....  
Player: .....

**EXPERIENCE:** \_\_\_\_\_

Invested: .....

**LEVEL:** \_\_\_\_\_



## GEAR

1. ....  
2. ....  
3. ....  
4. ....  
5. ....  
6. ....  
7. ....  
8. ....  
9. ....  
10. ....

## CUMBERSOME GEAR

1. ....  
2. ....  
3. ....  
4. ....  
5. ....  
6. ....  
7. ....  
8. ....  
9. ....  
10. ....

## ATTACK MODES

<b>Method:</b> .....	<b>Method:</b> .....	<b>Method:</b> .....
Damage: .....	Damage: .....	Damage: .....
Range: .....	Range: .....	Range: .....
Tags: .....	Tags: .....	Tags: .....

<b>Method:</b> .....	<b>Method:</b> .....	<b>Method:</b> .....
Damage: .....	Damage: .....	Damage: .....
Range: .....	Range: .....	Range: .....
Tags: .....	Tags: .....	Tags: .....

## PET OR SIDEKICK

Name: ..... Ability: .....  
Invested xp: ..... Ability: .....  
Level: ..... Ability: .....  
Defense: ..... Capacity: .....  
Sum: ..... Gear: .....  
Life: ..... Likes: .....

## SKILLS

1. ....  
2. ....  
3. ....  
4. ....  
5. ....  
6. ....  
7. ....  
8. ....  
9. ....  
10. ....

## ABILITIES

1. ....  
2. ....  
3. ....  
4. ....  
5. ....  
6. ....  
7. ....  
8. ....  
9. ....  
10. ....

**LIFE:** \_\_\_\_\_

Life Remaining: .....

**MAGIC COST:**

**HERO DICE:**

**HURT**  fine,  bane[-],  slow,  
 ½ life,  out,  defeat

## COMBAT

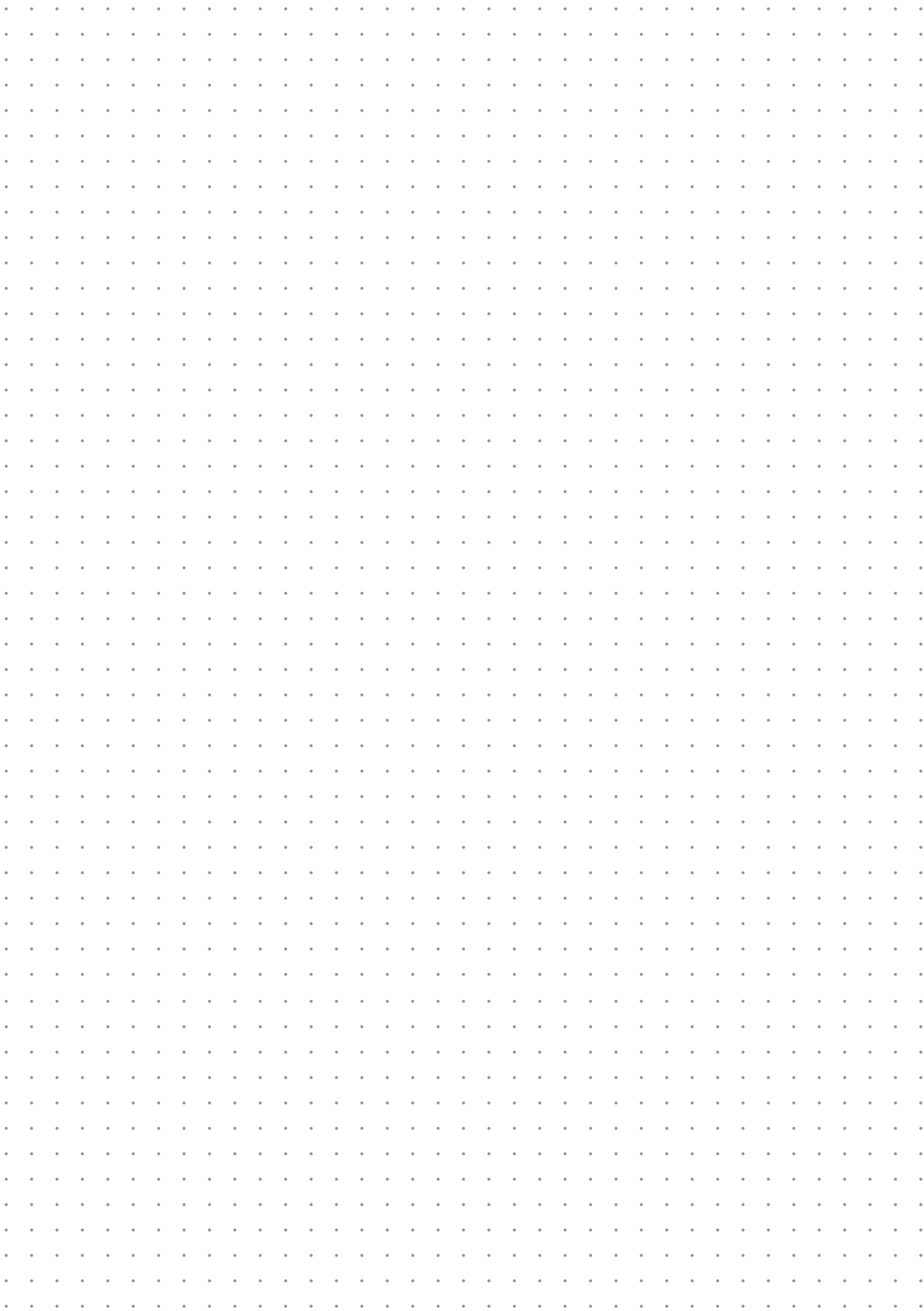
### ✕ Physical

Defense: .....  
Range Attack: .....  
Melee Attack: .....

### ☯ Metaphysical

Warding: .....  
Magic Attack: .....  
Social Attack: .....





**FIN.**