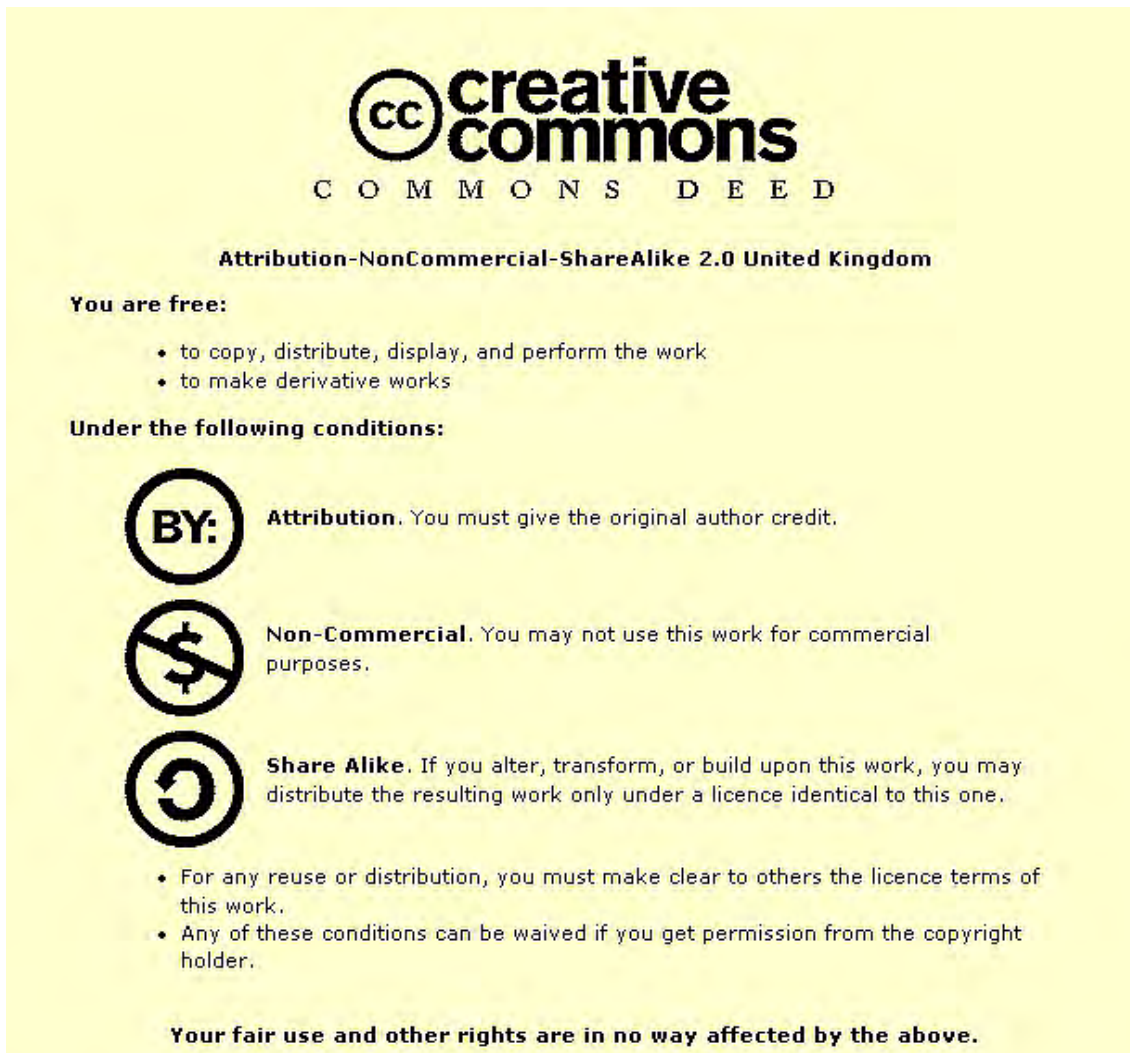


BLVSS

BASIC RULES

Simply
Scribed



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Introduction

It's been a long ride for BLYSS, mostly due to my attempts at detours on the road to completion. What you see before you is BLYSS 3.5, Basic Rules. The Basic Rules has the same content as the Core Rules, with the exception of Option and Variant sidebars and Appendices. It is for the StoryMaster who wants to run a basic game, or has no need for the options and variants presented in the Core Rules.

BLYSS had humble origins. Someone I knew was working on a roleplaying system, and it inspired me to make my own. No reason, no eventual intent – just to have a system and say "This is mine". It wasn't my first attempt at system creation, so I knew by then what wouldn't work (guess how), but even that didn't stop the original ruleset being messy and unbalanced. Since then the system's been through lots of little edits and revamps, eventually reaching version 3.5 (ironic, I know). Hopefully, there should be few things wrong with the system presented before you and a lot of things right – though I can't account for personal taste, of course.

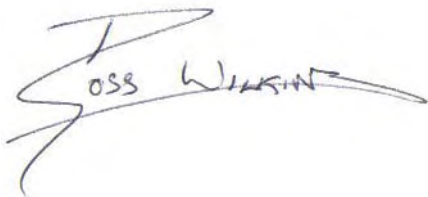
Those who know previous versions of BLYSS will note some radical changes in BLYSS 3.5, most notably the Character Point/Experience system. I fully believe these changes are for the better, but there's no need to convert characters – I tried my best to make character balance issues between versions minimal, and besides, a good SM and a good set of Players can tell a great Story with or without the notion of "character balance" being met.

What does BLYSS stand for? When I originally created BLYSS, I was roleplaying at an ezboard-based community, with the handle Blaze Yamato Spirit. BLYSS literally stands for **B**laze **Y**amato **S**pirit's **S**ystem. Dull, basically, but the acronym has a good ring to it, and that's what's important.

What is BLYSS, and what makes it different from other systems? Well, it is a system for guiding the action and establishing the results of roleplaying scenarios. It is intended to be simple at heart, everything based on the same mechanics. It is meant to be generic, easily adapted to any conceivable setting or situation. Most importantly, it is intended to be modular – with lots of Options and Variants that can easily be slotted into the system to fully customise it – and easily adaptable, so that if the right Options and Variants for your game don't exist, you can simply modify the system yourself with little hassle. I hope BLYSS achieves these things.

Try BLYSS out, see if it suits you. If you have any comments, constructive criticisms, or suggestions, [contact me](#). I'll do my best to acknowledge your email.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink. The signature is stylized, starting with a large 'S' and 'P' that loop together. The name 'ROSS WILKIN' is written in a cursive, flowing style across the middle of the signature.

Simply Scribed Productions aka
Ross Wilkin

The Obligatory "What is a Roleplaying Game?" Section

A Roleplaying Game (or RPG) is a game of make-believe where players take on the role of a fictional character, and in such part improvisational acting and part group storytelling. Such games usually require at least two participants, one or more players and one (though sometimes but not often more than one) person known variously by systems as the Games Master, Dungeon Master, Storyteller, Director, Referee, etc. In BLYSS, this person is known as the StoryMaster (or SM). It is this person's job to establish and develop the setting that the characters will occupy and populate it with people for them to interact with. The StoryMaster has ultimate control over the game and the story, but SM and players alike need to work together to make the game fun for all.

Giving Thanks

Thanks to the following people for helping critique and playtest BLYSS, assisting me by being willing guinea pigs to develop the system into what you see before you:

Alyssa Crom, James Bond, Rob Riddler, John Bagwell, Alex Stewart, Jen Picknett, Alvild Sand, Douglas Medford, Chris Picknett, Veronica Sæther, Becky Preston, Kit Stangroom, Rob Stangroom, and Shannon O'Leary

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Glossary of Terms

Ability Scale – The scale of power/skill upon which the BLYSS system is based. Each level of Ability has a corresponding *Die Pool*.

Book – The sum of multiple Chapters connected by a theme or plot element. Multiple Books comprise a *Story*, though sometimes a Book and a Story are one and the same.

Attributes – The core statistics of any character that define their raw ability physically, mentally, and socially. The basis of *Derived Attributes*.

BLYSS – Acronym for the original title of the system: **B**laze **Y**amato **S**pirit's **S**ystem.

Chapter – One "Adventure" or "Mission", typically resolved in one or two sessions' play. Many Chapters comprise an *Book*.

Character – A fictional entity that takes part in the *SM's Story*. Further defined as *PCs* and *NPCs*.

d# – The format representing dice within this document. "d" means "die" and "#" represents the number of sides. So "d6" means "one six-sided die". Multiple dice are represented in the format "**#d#**", ie. 4d6 means "four six-sided dice".

Derived Attributes – While not as central to the character as Attributes, Derived Attributes represent abilities shared by all characters that can be directly derived from their base Attributes.

Dice – Plural of *die*.

Die – Numbered polyhedrons, used to reflect the nature of random chance. They are rolled, and the number on the top side (or in the case of 4-sided dice, either the bottom side or the top of the pyramid) when they come to a standstill is the result.



Die Pool – A number of *dice* rolled together to determine whether a character succeeds or fails.

Naturals – Traits that are as natural to the character as their base Attributes. Usually only appropriate for non-humans such as an Elf with superior sight.

NPC – Non-Player Character. These are the the minor characters in the *Story*, ie. those not controlled by the *Players*.

PC – Player Character. The characters around which the *Story* revolves. They are controlled by the *Players*.

Player – All participants other than the *SM*. They take on the roles of the *PCs*.

Rank – A level of the Ability Scale corresponding to a level of ability.

Skills – Traits learnt by the character.

SM – StoryMaster. The player in charge of establishing setting and scenarios. They are also in control of all *NPCs*.

Story – The overall plot developed by the StoryMaster in which the PCs will take part. Equivalent to a "Campaign" in many other systems. Their actions will have direct consequences on the outcome of the Story.

System – A roleplaying system, usually synonymous with Roleplaying Game. See *The Obligatory "What is a Roleplaying Game?"* Section on page 2.

Talents – Traits that a character simply has a knack for.

TD – Acronym for Test Difficulty. A number assigned to a *Test* by the *SM*, corresponding to the Test's level of difficulty.

TD Scale – The scale that defines the differing levels of *Test* Difficulties (*TDs*).

Test – Whenever there is uncertainty about whether a character will succeed at a course of action, they make a Test. The *SM* calls for a combination of statistics and states a *TD*, and the player rolls all the dice these statistics grant them in a combined *Die Pool* to determine success or failure.

Trait – Any definable characteristic of the character not covered by their *Attributes* or *Derived Attributes*. Includes *Skills*, *Talents*, and *Naturals*.

Sections of this Book

This book is comprised of the following sections:

The Introductory Section: Pages 1-7

- License information
- Introduction
- The Obligatory "What is a Roleplaying Game?" Section
- Contents
- Glossary of Terms
- Sections of this Book

Character Creation: Pages 8-16

If a player doesn't mind learning the rules as they go along, this should be their first port of call. If they do, they should read the Rules & Mechanics section first.

- Character Concept
- Fleshing Out
- The Ability Scale
- Building the Character

Rules & Mechanics: Pages 17-28

This is the key section for SMs, as they will need a good understanding of the BLYSS system to effectively tell their Story.

Tests

- The Ability Scale
- Interpreting the Ability Scale
- Die Pools
- Die Rolling
- Character Tests
- Character Contests
- Combined Tests
- Combined Contests
- Screw-Ups
- Golden Rolls

Rules for Living

- Wounds, Unconsciousness, Dying, and Death
- Movement
- Fatigue, Hunger, and Thirst
- Experience

Combat Mechanics

- Chronology
- Method
- Initiative
- The Declaration Round
- The Action Round
- Weapons and Armour

Character Creation

So you want to make a BLYSS character? Follow the steps below and you'll have a complete character ready in no time!

Character Concept

The first thing a player must do when creating a character is come up with their concept – a few sentences, maybe a short paragraph, describing the essence of the character. Without this initial spark, it is impossible to breath life into a character, resulting in a soulless puppet whose presence in the game isn't fun for player and SM alike.

Before deciding upon a concept, the player should be aware of what sort of game the character will be involved in, and what sort of characters other players intend to create. It is also recommended to have GM input on the concept, since your decision may have drastic effect on their stories and/or their ability to tell them.

For example, Gabe and Josh want to create characters for the game Dave runs – a tale following the exploits of a mercenary band in a setting of high fantasy adventure. Gabe's concept is that of a smooth-talking swashbuckler with a taste for adventure and ladyfolk in equal abundance. Josh, on the other hand, would like to play a temperamental barbarian who has wandered into civilisation and become entranced, against his better judgement, by the lifestyle he now has. Dave finds both these concepts acceptable, and works with the players to develop the characters further.

Fleshing Out

Too many roleplaying systems put the mechanical part of character creation before the creative part – but this is **character creation**, and you should have a developed character who is more than just a cardboard cutout before you even think of starting to assign numbers.

Once you have your character concept, everything should fall into place with your original idea at its core. Things such as name, race, sex, age, height, weight, build, appearance, personality, and background should all be considered at this stage. It is advisable to work with your SM to fit your character into the setting.

Gabe wants his character to be a minor noble, alienated from his family because of a fundamental difference of positions with his father. Leaving for a life of adventure, he has become free-spirited and full of a happiness that can only come from the simple things in life. Dave tells Gabe that the kingdom of Kaloma has plenty of noble houses, and the noble caste there has a reputation for strict adherence to their rules of nobility. Gabe is happy for Kaloma to be the homeland of his character, and tells Dave that the argument between father and son was likely political, so it fits. Finally, Dave tells Gabe that many of Kaloma's nobility are fair skinned blondes, and this gives Gabe an idea of how to describe his character. He decides to call the swashbuckler "Ralan Kal'vhet".

Josh decides that his barbarian is the son of a tribal chieftain, sent out on a quest to acquire a rare item that the shaman told him would win the war with a neighbouring tribe, should he wield it into battle with them. He has no idea how to locate the item, and joined the mercenary company because it travels widely. Dave tells Josh that there are warlike tribes in abundance on the Great Steppes to the north of Kaloma and its neighbouring kingdom of Jungmir, and that these barbarians are often tall and ropey, with dark hair and complexions. Josh is agreeable to his character hailing from this region, and chooses a name he thinks befits a barbarian – “Yama Wolfclaw”.

The Ability Scale

BLYSS is a point buy system, meaning that statistics are determined by the player buying ranks in them from a pool of points.

The level of competency or power each rank in the statistic grants to the character is determined by the Ability Scale in most cases, as shown in **Table 1-01: The Ability Scale**.

Table 1-01: The Ability Scale

Ranks	Ability	Dice Pool
0	Non-existent	d0
1	Poor	d4
2	Below average	d6
3	Average	d8
4	Above average	d10
5	Good	d12
6	Very good	d12 + d4
7	Masterful	d12 + d6
8	Incredible	d12 + d8
9	Unparalleled	d12 + d10
10	Out of this world	d12 + d12

The Ability Scale is explained further in the Rules & Mechanics section.

Building the Character

BLYSS characters are built by buying various Attributes and Traits with Character Points (or CP). Each player has **400 CP** to spend on their character, and may spend these points in any way so long as they follow these guidelines:

- No Attribute or Trait (with the exceptions of Dodges, Flesh Wounds, and Health) may be raised above "Very Good" rank (d12) using initial character points.
- Without special SM permission, all characters must have at least 1 rank in all Attributes.
- Derived Attributes cannot be raised with Character Points, with the exceptions of Dodges, Flesh Wounds, and Health.

- CP can be put towards increasing a rank even if they don't finish buying the next rank. The player should make a note of how many CP are required until the next rank.

Character Points may be spent on the following:

Attributes

In the BLYSS system, there are 9 core statistics that define the raw ability of the character, physically, mentally, and socially. These are Strength, Stamina, Agility, Dexterity, Intelligence, Wisdom, Wits, Mental Fortitude, and Charisma.

Strength represents how physically powerful a character is.

Strength has an additional function. For every rank a character has in strength above average (4 or more), they receive a +1 bonus to damage with natural attacks and relevant weapons. Equally, for every rank below average (2 or 1), a character receives a -1 penalty.

Stamina represents how much a character can endure physically.

Agility represents how nimble and graceful a character is.

Dexterity represents how skilful a character is in their movement and how expert they are in manual acts, especially with their hands.

Intelligence represents how capable a character is of gaining, comprehending, and applying knowledge.

Wisdom represents how capable a character is of judging what is true, right, or enduring.

Wits represents how capable and quick character is at perceiving and expressing concepts.

Mental Fortitude represents how much a character can endure mentally.

Charisma represents how charming or otherwise appealing a character is to others.

The cost of ranks for Attributes is as follows: 8 CP for each rank up to and including "Average" (d8), then an additional 8 CP is added to the last cost for every rank that follows (ie. 16 CP for "Above Average" (d10) or 24 CP for "Good" (d12).) These costs are cumulative, as shown in the following **Table 1-02: Attribute Costs**.

Derived Attributes

The 7 Derived Attributes, instead of being bought by the player using CP, are established using the character's Attributes. The Derived Attributes are Melee Attack, Ranged Attack, Defence, Initiative, Dodges, Flesh Wounds, and Health.

Melee Attack represents the character's ability to attack with a close combat weapon or natural attacks such as fists, claws and teeth.

Melee Attack = (Strength + Agility)/2, rounded down

Table 1-02: Attribute Costs

Ability	Cost in CP (each rank)	Cost in CP (Cumulative)
Non-existent	0	0
Poor	8	8
Below average	8	16
Average	8	24
Above average	16	40
Good	24	64
Very good	32	96
Masterful	40	136
Incredible	48	184
Unparalleled	56	240
Out of this world	64	304

To buy just one rank or increase a rank by 1 step, use the "Cost in CP (each rank)" column." To increase an Attribute from "Non-existent" Ability to any Ability, use the "Cost in CP (Cumulative)" column and pay the CP cost of the Ability you desire.

Ranged Attack represents the character's ability to attack with a range weapon or natural attacks such as fire breath.

Ranged Attack = (Agility + Dexterity)/2, rounded down

Defence represents the character's ability to defend themselves from attack.

Defence = (Agility + Wits)/2, rounded down

Initiative represents the character's ability to react to new situations, most often in Combat.

Initiative = (Agility + Wits)/2, rounded down

Dodges – While a character is still fresh, unhurt, and energetic, they can evade attacks more easily. Damage is dealt to a character's Dodges first. This Derived Attribute isn't governed by the Ability Scale.

Dodges = Agility

Up to 5 extra Dodges can be bought at character creation. The cost of each Dodge is 4 CP.

Flesh Wounds – When a character begins to flag under the pressure of attacks, they begin to suffer minor wounds. Damage is dealt to a character's

Flesh Wounds after their Dodges run out. This Derived Attribute isn't governed by the Ability Scale.

Flesh Wounds = Stamina

Up to 10 extra Flesh Wounds can be bought at character creation. The cost of each Flesh Wound is 3 CP.

Health – Eventually, a character starts making mistakes, or simply cannot keep up with attacks, and begin to suffer serious damage. Damage is dealt to a character's Health when no Dodges or Flesh Wounds remain. This Derived Attribute isn't governed by the Ability Scale.

Health – Stamina * 6

Up to 20 extra Health points can be bought at character creation. The cost of each Health point is 2 CP.

For more information on how Dodges, Flesh Wounds, and Health affect the game, see "Wounds, Unconsciousness, Dying, and Death" in the Rules & Mechanics section.

Traits

Traits represent skills, talents, and natural abilities that characters might have, and are called Skills, Talents, and Naturals, respectively.

Traits can be positive or negative: A positive Trait costs CP, while a negative Trait will grant back CP. Note that Negative Traits are only worth CP to the character if they are taken at character creation. If acquired later on in the character's career, the character gets no compensation.

Traits can be practically anything – though your SM always has last call on what does and does not make an acceptable Trait. Many SMs will provide lists. For examples, see the BLYSS Core Rules.

Natural Traits

The Basic BLYSS character is assumed to be essentially Human – two arms, two legs, etc. This is the base framework upon which Natural Traits build – defining what can be supplemented, substituted, or removed.

Some Natural Traits provide a single advantage to a character that can never be improved (or in the case of Negative Traits, an uncorrectable disadvantage).

For example, an extra arm wouldn't usually be any more useful than the character's base two arms – the advantage would be possessing the third.

These Traits cost the same as an "Average" rank Natural (24 CP) unless the SM rules otherwise, and are not subject to Experience or Deterioration rules. Negative Traits grant the same value and are subject to the same rules.

Table 1-03: Skill Costs

Ability	Cost in CP (each rank)	Cost in CP (Cumulative)
Non-existent	0	0
Poor	4	4
Below average	4	8
Average	4	12
Above average	8	20
Good	12	32
Very good	16	49
Masterful	20	68
Incredible	24	92
Unparalleled	28	120
Out of this world	32	152

To buy just one rank or increase a rank by 1 step, use the "Cost in CP (each rank)" column." To increase an Attribute from "Non-existent" Ability to any Ability, use the "Cost in CP (Cumulative)" column and pay the CP cost of the Ability you desire.

Traits cost differing amounts depending on whether they are Skills, Talents, and Naturals, as show in Tables 1-03 through 1-04.

Using Traits

Traits add their Die Pools to that of an Attribute when the character is Tested to see whether they succeed. They can also sometimes be used on their own or combined with other Traits.

Negative Traits

A Negative Trait is jsut what it says on the tin. The Ability Scale is effectively reversed. Instead of adding dice to the Test's Die Pool, the character's ranks in the negative Trait are deducted from their ranks in Attributes and Traits adding to the Die Pool (spreading the ranks between statistics, starting with the highest ranked). Negative Traits return an amount of CP equal to that their opposite positive Trait would cost.

Table 1-04: Talent Costs

Ability	Cost in CP (each rank)	Cost in CP (Cumulative)
Non-existent	0	0
Poor	6	6
Below average	6	12
Average	6	18
Above average	12	30
Good	18	48
Very good	24	72
Masterful	30	102
Incredible	36	138
Unparalleled	42	180
Out of this world	48	228

Table 1-05: Natural Costs

Ability	Cost in CP (each rank)	Cost in CP (Cumulative)
Non-existent	0	0
Poor	8	8
Below average	8	16
Average	8	24
Above average	16	40
Good	24	64
Very good	32	96
Masterful	40	136
Incredible	48	184
Unparalleled	56	240
Out of this world	64	304

To buy just one rank or increase a rank by 1 step, use the "Cost in CP (each rank) column." To increase an Attribute from "Non-existent" Ability to any Ability, use the "Cost in CP (Cumulative)" column and pay the CP cost of the Ability you desire.

Note: *In almost all games, a character can be assumed to have their native tongue as a free skill at rank 3 (average). SMs may decide other common Traits may be shared by all characters at no cost also.*

Specialisation

A player may choose to have his character specialise in a more defined aspect of the Trait. The character can still use the base Trait, but has a better chance of success when it comes to checks with regards to their Specialisation, at the SM's discretion. To gain specialisation, a single CP must be spent for each level of specialisation.

If the Trait is specialised once for 1 CP (ie. *Mental Games [Gambling]*) the character is treated as having an additional rank whenever they are rolling for a gambling game. For each further degree of specialisation they must pay an extra 1 CP and gain an additional rank when that specialist topic comes into play (ie. *Mental Games [Gambling; Card Games]*) would grant the character an additional 2 additional ranks when gambling with cards. *Mental Games [Gambling; Card Games; Poker]* would grant them 3 additional ranks while playing Poker.)

Remember that you gain the benefits of ALL levels of specialisation you have paid for. A character with *Mental Games [Gambling; Card Games]* would have an additional 2 ranks when gambling with cards, or 1 additional rank when gambling using some other type of game.

At the SM's options, certain Traits may require specialisation. Good examples of where to enforce this are Weapon Skills, Armour Skills, Knowledges, Crafts, and Professions.

Finishing Touches

Finally, the character may need to be equipped, have various aspects of their development expanded upon that only came to light during creation, and the SM or setting might require additional development of the character not covered in these rules. Once you've finished this step, you have a complete character!

Example characters can be found in the BLYSS Core Rules.

Template Characters

BLYSS is designed so that players are free to create the type of characters they want to play, though the core rules assume that the characters being made possess few if any non-mundane abilities. It is possible to achieve a greater variety of characters through the use of Options, which will be presented in a later supplement.

However, if speed is an issue, a player may elect to choose a template when creating a character. This in itself could be considered an Option, but is such an important one that it is a part of the core rules regardless of its entirely optional nature.

An Archetypal Template defines a character's role (similar to a "class" or "profession" in other systems), list "priority" attributes, provides a suggested initial set of traits, and comes complete with a few roleplaying suggestions (known as Character Clichés) for the character archetype in question. Racial Templates are also possible, but will not appear here as the system, being generic and open-ended, isn't rooted in a genre or setting that requires them.

Following are some examples of Archetypal Templates which could apply in almost any genre. In addition, your SM may provide further templates for you to choose from - if you wish to use one, be sure to ask them!

Craftsman/Professional

Craftsmen and Professionals are the workers; those whose careers lie in more mundane fields. Craftsmen can also be artists, and are almost exclusively of an artistic bent in modern and futuristic settings.

Priority Attributes: Intelligence; Wisdom.

Suggested Traits: Concentration; Craft; Profession.

Character Clichés: The blacksmith; the fletcher; the wilderness guide; the glassblower; the fisherman; the tour guide.

Expert

The Expert archetype covers any character knowledgeable on one or more subjects. This template is perfect for the character with book smarts.

Priority Attributes: Intelligence; Wisdom.

Suggested Traits: Concentration; Knowledge; Medicine; Science.

Character Clichés: The elderly sage; the wise old hermit; the healer; the university student; the knowledgeable scientist; the respected surgeon.

Rogue

The Rogue archetype covers all characters whose focus is on skills that are underhand, and even illicit. Anyone with a criminal penchant is a candidate for this template.

Priority Attributes: Agility; Dexterity; Intelligence; Wisdom; Wits; Charisma.

Suggested Traits: Escapist; Forgery; Lock Picking; Manipulation; Ranged Combat; Sneak; Thievery.

Character Clichés: The dextrous pick-pocket; the daring burglar; the stealthy ninja; the charismatic swindler.

Warrior

The Warrior archetype covers a huge variety of characters in any one genre, let alone all of them. Anyone focused on combat or a more specific aspect of militancy is a candidate for this template.

Priority Attributes: Strength; Stamina; Agility; Dexterity; Wits.

Suggested Traits: Armed Combat; Ranged Combat; Unarmed Combat.

Character Clichés: The master archer; the noble knight; the spiritual martial arts master; the crack shot; the wrestler; the boxer.

Rules & Mechanics

The heart of the BLYSS system, this section covers rules common to games of any genre.

Tests

The Ability Scale

The entire BLYSS system is based around what is known as the BLYSS Ability Scale, a measure of power or competency and how they interact with each other. Almost every statistic in BLYSS Basic is ranked on this scale, with the exceptions of Dodges, Flesh Wounds, and Health.

Table 2-01: The Ability Scale

Ranks	Ability	Dice Pool
0	Non-existent	d0
1	Poor	d4
2	Below average	d6
3	Average	d8
4	Above average	d10
5	Good	d12
6	Very good	d12 + d4
7	Masterful	d12 + d6
8	Incredible	d12 + d8
9	Unparalleled	d12 + d10
10	Out of this world	d12 + d12

Interpreting the Ability Scale

Each rank in the Ability Scale, which is rated between one rank and ten, equates to a certain level of power or competence, rough divisions to help differentiate between ability levels within the BLYSS system.

In turn, the Ability Level is associated with a Die Pool, the smallest being d4 and the largest being 2d12. These die pools are the difference between ranks of power in terms of game mechanics - rolling more dice is better than rolling less dice, and rolling larger dice is better than rolling smaller dice.

Therefore, the higher a character's rank in any given statistic, the better their level of ability, and the higher their chance within the BLYSS system to succeed at whatever task they are attempting.

Die Pools

Whenever a character attempts a task, the dice their player rolls in the attempt are collectively known as their Die Pool. A Die Pool can be a single die, such as the d8 granted from an average rank, or multiple dice, such as the d12 + d4 granted from a very good rank.

The Die Pools of two positive statistics (Attributes and positive Traits) can be combined into one. This can be an Attribute + Attribute roll, such as an Intelligence + Wits Die Pool for a character engaging another in a trash-talking competition. More often, however, it will be an Attribute + Trait roll, such as a Dexterity + Lockpicking Die Pool for a character breaking and entering into somebody's house. When an Attribute and a negative Trait are combined, however, the value of the negative Trait is deducted from that of the positive statistic before the Die Pool is established.

Two or more negative Traits can - if all are applicable - affect the same Attribute. For example, a Dexterity - Clumsy Die Pool for another, more inept chaacter trying to break into the house. Two negative Traits cannot be combined except when affecting the same positive statistic.

Die Rolling

When a character attempts to accomplish something, they roll a pool of dice according to their ability in one or more of their statistics.

Character Tests

If a player rolls against an Attribute or Trait, or some combined statistics belonging to their character, this is known as a Test. Tests occur at junctures in the game where the character may or may not succeed at something.

The SM assigns a Test Difficulty (TD). While assigning TDs, SMs should always be aware of **Table 2-02: The TD Scale**, which is a good guideline and suggests minimum Die Pool requirements for TDs.

Table 2-02: The TD Scale

TD	Challenge Level	Minimum Die Pool
0	Non-existant	d0
2	Poor	d4
4	Below average	d4
6	Average	d4
8	Above average	d6
10	Difficult	d6
12	Very difficult	d8
14	Highly challenging	d10
16	Ridiculously challenging	d12
18	Unparalleled challenge	d12 + d4
20	Nigh-impossible challenge	d12 +d6

The SM will also call for a particular statistic or combination of statistics. A character must have a Minimum Die Pool of a certain amount if they are to attempt the Test, otherwise (unless in exceptional circumstances at the SM's

discretion) it is assumed that they simply cannot meet the challenge of the Test.

The player then rolls all the dice available to them from the relevant attributes and/or traits – the combined set of dice becomes their Die Pool. If any of these rolls equal or beat the set TD, the character succeeds at the Test. The more dice beat the TD, the greater the level of success. If all dice beat the TD, the Test is considered a critical success.

Character Contests

Contests occur when two or more characters come into conflict. Perhaps they're arm wrestling; fighting; debating; searching for something; or perhaps even playing drinking games.

Each character rolls as per a normal test, and the same rules apply, but in this case the difficulty will be the opposing character's rank in whatever statistic they're using.

Whoever succeeds wins.

If both succeed, the winner is the character with the most successes. In the unlikely case of an equal amount of successes being achieved by each character, the characters draw, or, if it is impossible to draw in the circumstances, the players should roll again.

The SM is free to rule that if one character's rank is three or higher more than their opponent's rank, there is no real contest (i.e. An above average boxer taking on a poor boxer, or the same above average boxer taking on a masterful boxer). However, this should never be a concrete rule, and should depend on circumstance.

Combined Tests

When two or more characters want to pool their efforts, they make a Combined Test.

One of the characters is designated as the character being assisted. The players of all other characters joining the effort make the relevant rolls. All of their successes are converted into ranks and these ranks are then divided equally between all the statistics contributing to the assisted character's Die Pool, allowing them to roll greater dice than usual.

There is a negative aspect to this, which is summed up well by the phrase "Too many cooks spoil the broth" – if one character screws up (see Screw-Ups), the entire effort is affected by it. If a character screws up, all of the Screw-Ups that haven't been cancelled carry over to the assisted character's Test. If any character critically screws up, the whole effort is voided and the effects of the critical Screw-Up are felt.

Combined Contests

It is possible for teams to work against each other. For example, the two sides in a tug-of-war.

Each team should roll to resolve Combined Tests, and then the assisted character of each team will compete in a Character Contest.

Screw-Ups

A Screw-Up means that the character has made a mistake or experiences some bad luck that not only causes them to fail the Test, but actually end up worse off because of the failure. A roll of 1 on a die indicates a potential Screw-Up. This die cancels out one of the characters' successes on the same Test.

If all successes are negated by Screw-Ups, and there are no additional 1s, the Test is treated as if it were a normal failure. If there are one or more screw-ups left, however, the character has officially Screwed Up.

A Screw-Up could mean the character dropping their weapon, forgetting their lines on stage, losing their grip on a cliff edge... Whatever the case, though bad and sometimes potentially fatal, a Screw-Up should allow potential for recovery.

Remember that just as with a success, the more screw-ups the player rolls that aren't cancelled out, the worse the degree of the Screw-Up.

If the player rolls straight 1s, they have critically screwed up. There is no chance of recovery from a critical screw-up, so if the character is in a dangerous situation this could very well be fatal.

Golden Rolls

At the SM's discretion, a Golden Roll (a die that came up with the highest possible number – 4 on a d4, 12 on a d12, etc.) can be an automatic success for the purpose of the Test, irrespective of whether it beats the TD. The SM should be careful when making this decision – it isn't sensible to apply this rule to each and every Test, so consider each by its own merits.

If there are both Screw-Ups and Golden Rolls in a Die Pool, the Golden Rolls count as success for the purposes of cancelling the Screw-Ups (regardless of whether they are in fact successes), and the Screw-Ups must always negate the Golden Rolls before any other successes.

Should the Golden Rolls also beat the TD, however, not only do they cancel out one Screw-Up, but they also still count as a regular success!

Rules For Living

Wounds, Unconsciousness, Dying and Death

Wounds

In games that involve combat, the rules presented here are essential, as they explain what happens as a character runs out of health points.

A character has 6 Wound Levels, as shown in **Table 2-03: Wound Levels**.

Table 2-03: Wound Levels

Wound Level	Reached When	Effect
Healthy	The character has full Health, Flesh Wounds, and Dodges	None
Flesh Wounds	The character has no Dodges remaining and has taken 1 or more Flesh Wounds	-1 to all rolls
Light Wounds	The character has lost 1/3 of their Health (rounded up)	-1 rank to all Tests
Moderate Wounds	The character has lost 2/3 of their Health (rounded up)	-2 ranks to all Tests
Heavy Wounds	The character has been reduced to below 10 Health	-3 ranks to all Tests
Incapacitated	The character is Unconscious, Dying, or Dead	The character is helpless

Rank penalties are shared between dice, highest ranked first.

Wound penalties are *not* cumulative, each one supercedes the last.

Unconsciousness

If a character is reduced to 0 Health, they are automatically knocked unconscious.

It is possible to knock a character unconscious regardless of their health or the damage dealt. Such attacks have a knockout chance (typically at Average (d8)) which is rolled against a TD of 6.

Dying

If a character's health is taken below 0 (i.e. Into minus numbers), they are considered to be dying.

In the next turn, the player must make a Stamina check against a set TD of 6 for their character to be stabilised. If they fail, they must continue making Stamina checks on subsequent turns with a cumulative -1 penalty to their rank.

Death

If a character has not stabilised before the cumulative penalty to their Stamina checks has effectively reduced the Attribute to rank 0, they die.

Alternatively, the SM can rule that they fall into a coma if the final/majority of the damage dealt to them was by a blunt weapon or for dramatic purposes.

Movement

The more ranks a character has in Agility the higher their potential movement during a combat round. An average ranked, human-sized character can move 30 ft. Every rank above average (4 or more) a character has increase their Movement by 3 ft. Every rank below average decreases their Movement by 6 ft.

Fatigue, Hunger, and Thirst

Even the toughest of heroes can suffer from deprivation of food, drink, and sleep. The following rules are not particularly realistic, but are a simple solution to the problems.

Fatigue

A character can last a number of hours equal to their Stamina multiplied by 8 without suffering from any of the above - this is their Threshold. After that, they must make a Mental Fortitude check every half hour to stay awake.

For every additional hour a character stays awake beyond their normal limit all of their attributes and traits with the exception of Health, Flesh Wounds and Mana (if a magic option is in use) attributes temporarily decrease by one rank. Should either or both their Stamina and Mental Fortitude decrease to 0 ranks, the character can no longer stay awake and falls unconscious.

The penalties accrued due to Fatigue are recovered at a rate of one rank each per two hours of uninterrupted sleep.

Hunger

Hunger works in exactly the same way as Fatigue, except for the fact that putting eating off only decreases their statistics after each 24 hours have passed following reaching their Threshold.

The penalties accrued due to Hunger are recovered at a rate of one rank each per day the character has eaten a healthy amount of food.

Thirst

Again, Thirst works in the same way as Fatigue, though a characters' statistics decrease once every 2 hours.

The penalties accrued due to Thirst are recovered at a rate of one rank each per four hours in which the character drinks a healthy amount of liquid.

If a character falls unconscious due to hunger or thirst they are obviously incapable of eating or drinking by their own volition, and are at risk of dying. At

the onset of every increment of time equal to their Stamina multiplied by 4, the player should roll a Stamina Test for the character at a TD of 10. If they fail, the character loses a Wound's worth of Health. This continues until the character has 0 hit points, at which point the guidelines for Dying described above should be followed.

Experience

Characters learn and grow. The purpose of the experience system is to simulate these developments in terms of the game mechanics.

Experience is gained in the form of Character Points. The SM should award a number of CP at the end of each in-game Chapter or session of play, whichever is longer. They should award CP to each player as follows:

- Always award 3 CP
- Award an extra 1 CP for each very challenging experience
- Award an extra 1-3 CP for good roleplaying
- Award an extra 1 CP if the player can explain to the SM's satisfaction the details of something their character has learned (about themselves, those around them, the world, or the Story) during the Chapter or session.

CP have the same value as they did at Character Creation, and can be spent in the same manner and without the need for the expenditure guidelines.

Remember that you don't have to fully buy a rank, just note how many CP you have spent towards it.

Deterioration

At the SM's option, sometimes characters *don't* learn and grow. Instead, their abilities deteriorate over time.

Usually, this occurs when a Trait has gone unused for a large amount of in-game time: A matter of months for Skills, a year or so for Talents, and even longer for Naturals.

Sometimes the character can lose experience for other reasons, however, and they may be a lot more rapid.

Once the process of deterioration has begun, the character loses 2 CP worth from the Trait. If this takes them below the minimum CP required to be in that rank, their ability level decreases. The character continues to lose 2 CP for every similar increment of time thereafter until the character uses the Trait once more.

These lost CP can only be regained by expending further CP gained through the Experience system.

Combat Mechanics

Combat situations are resolved using Tests, just like any other. The actions a character may take, however, involve certain permutations of the rules.

Chronology

Combat is divided into Rounds of roughly 3 seconds each. All actions to be taken in a given combat round are assumed to be possible within this time-frame - either that or span multiple rounds.

Method

- [1 – Establish Initiative]
- 2 – Declaration Round
- 3 – Action Round
- 4 – End of Round

Initiative

Some characters react more quickly than others do. In the course of combat, events can change this.

All characters have an Initiative Attribute, equal to their (Wits + Agility)/2, rounded down.

Initiative is the only character Test where the number of successes is of integral importance. The character with the most successes has the highest Initiative, and so on. Any players whose characters have an equal number of successes compare the total value of their successes. If this is also equal, the character's ranks in Initiative are used. In the event that even this produces equal results, the characters are placed in the order most convenient for the SM, or roll again between them, depending on SM preference.

Initiative is rolled at the beginning of the first round of combat and re-rolled thereafter at any point where events take a new twist (SM's discretion), representing the chaotic nature of combat.

The Declaration Round

In the Declaration Round, each player declares their character's intended actions, starting with the character lowest in the Initiative Order. In this way characters with faster reaction times can incorporate their reactions to the actions of slower characters within their own actions.

To clarify, a character may react to the actions of any character that went before them in the Declaration Round.

The Action Round

In the Action Round, the results of all actions specified in the Declaration Round are established, in the same order where possible.

Offensive Actions

Aiming

The character takes aim and spends the Round concentrating exclusively on their intended target. As a result, in the next Round they are less likely to miss.

An Aim Test is made using a Dexterity + Intelligence check at a TD of 8 (Above Average).

Every success on an Aim Test translates as an extra point added to the character's Attack attribute next round. An Aim test automatically fails if the character is interrupted, such as being hit by an attack.

The character can also Aim for a specific location - this is known as a Called Shot. The Test TD of a Called Shot is increased according to the size of the target - the smaller it is, the harder to hit. A target roughly the size of a human limb increases the TD to 10 (Difficult), a target roughly the size of a human head increases the TD to 12 (Very Difficult), and a target roughly the size of a human eye increases the TD to 14 (Highly Challenging).

Similarly, if a target of an Aim or Called Shot is larger than a human, it is easier to Aim at. As a general rule, every time the target size is doubled, the TD decreases by a single Challenge Level (-2).

Attacking

The character attempts to attack an opponent.

All characters have a Melee Attack Attribute, equal to their (Strength + Agility)/2, rounded down, and a Ranged Attack Attribute, equal to their (Agility + Dexterity)/2, rounded down.

Obviously, the attribute to be used for the character's attempt depends on what they're doing - if they're swinging a sword it's a Melee Attack. If they're firing a bow or throwing a dagger, it's a Ranged Attack. Traits, such as weapon skills, can be combined with the relevant attribute.

Normally, a character makes their Attack roll against a TD of 8 (Above Average), though circumstances may change this.

A character can make a Called Shot (see Aiming) without Aiming, but in this case the TD increase is twice again what it would have been. A target roughly the size of a human limb increases the TD to 12 (Very Difficult), a target roughly the size of a human head increases the TD to 14 (Highly Challenging), and a target roughly the size of a human eye increases the TD to 16 (Ridiculously Challenging).

The target of an Attack can choose to take a Defensive Action if they have not yet acted in the combat round, or if they can act more than once in the round.

Only then, if the Attack succeeds, will it cause its damage (see Weapons and Armour).

Disarming

Instead of Attacking an opponent, a character can attempt to disarm them of their weapon. This works in exactly the same way as an Attack, and the opponent can Defend as usual - however, regardless of whether the target still has an action left they always get one defense against a Disarm attempt using their Strength Die Pool. Using a Defense Action simply gives the target two chances to avoid the disarm attempt.

Defensive Actions

Counterattacking

If a character successfully Defends (see Defending below) they may make their next Attack action at a TD of 2 (one Challenge Level) lower than normal. Usually, this means the TD is reduced from 8 (Above Average) to 6 (Average).

Defending

If wielding an appropriate weapon or piece of equipment, the character attempts to defend against an attack. This action turns the opponents' attack Test into a Contest, allowing the defender to roll a Die Pool formed of their dice in Defense and the appropriate weapon or equipment skill.

Note that even if the attacker succeeds at besting the defender in the Contest, they must also still beat the Attack TD as normal.

Evading

The character attempts to evade an attack. This manœuvre can be made without a weapon or equipment - sometimes, it is the only recourse. Evasion works in the same manner as Defending, except the Die Pool is formed from the character's dice in Agility and appropriate traits.

Other Actions

Equipment Use

Generally speaking, it takes at least 1 combat round to ready an item for use, and 1 round to use it. So to sheath a sword and withdraw a dagger, for example, it would take 2 rounds.

A piece of equipment can be dropped as a free action - that is, it takes negligible time to do it. In the example above, if the character simply abandoned his sword rather than sheathing it, they could withdraw the dagger in the same round.

Movement

The character may simply wish to change position. Depending on the degree of movement, it may count as an action or may be free. Remember that a combat round is only 3 seconds – starting to move from standing or moving a

short distance would count as a full action, while taking a single step or ducking probably wouldn't.

Weapons and Armour

Weapons

In the BLYSS system, melee weapons are described using 3 definable categories – Attack Modifier, Damage, and Special Rules. Ranged weapons also have a Range Increment.

Attack Modifier

Any positive/negative modifier the weapon has on a character's accuracy. This is applied to the character's combined Attack Die Pool. If a character uses a weapon they have no skill with, they incur an additional 2 rank penalty to their Attack Attribute as well as their weapon's Attack Modifier.

Damage

The amount of damage the weapon can deal in one blow. This is usually expressed as a die type, such as "d8", to reflect the fact that not all successful blows will be of the same magnitude, though some unique attack forms may deal a set damage.

Special Rules

Any other effects the weapon has on game mechanics when it is being wielded. These are often notes on the effects of the other categories - for example, a sabre might grant a +1 Attack Modifier, but only when the character is mounted, so "Attack Mod only applies while mounted" might be written under Special Rules. However, Special Rules need not have anything to do with Attack Modifier, Damage, or Range Increment.

Range Increment

Up to the weapon's stated Range Increment is considered Short Range, and receives no penalties. For every Range Increment beyond Short Range, a character loses one rank from their Attack Die Pool.

Armour

In the BLYSS system, armour is described using 4 definable categories – Action Modifier, Cover, Armour Rating, and Special Rules.

Action Modifier

Any modifier (usually negative) that the armour might make to relevant statistics (applied to the point pool). Additionally, if the character has no skill with the armour, these penalties are doubled.

Cover

The parts of the body the armour covers: Head (H); Face (F); Torso (T); Arms (A); and Legs (L). If an attack is aimed specifically at a part of the character not covered by armour with a Called Shot, the character does not gain the benefit of their armour.

If an attack is not specifically aimed, it is assumed to be directed against whatever armour the character wears that is covering their torso.

Armour Rating

If an attack hits a character, the player of the victim rolls a Character Contest using the Die Pool granted by the Armour Rating of any armour the character may be wearing. If any of their dice beat the value of all the attack dice, then the armour soaks the damage that would otherwise be inflicted.

If the attack beats the Armour Rating, the player is faced with a choice – They may have the damage apply to their character's Health as per normal, or allow their character's armour to be damaged.

Damaged armour is a third less effective at absorbing damage (ie. Its Armour Rating is reduced by one third of the original rating, rounding down when necessary.). Generally speaking, armour has 3 "lives" (3/3; 2/3; 1/3; Destroyed), but at the GM's discretion it can be ruined more rapidly if the damage dealt to it is high. The GM is also free to rule that a character **MUST** take some damage or the armour **IS** damaged if it makes sense given the situation.

While a piece of armour still has 1 or more "lives", it can be repaired, but once it is reduced 0 "lives" it is irreparably destroyed.

Special Rules

Any other effects the armour has on game mechanics when it is being wielded. These are often notes on the effects of the other categories - for example, a suit of chainmail might have a -2 penalty to its Armour Rating against piercing weapons, so "-2 Armour Rating vs. Piercing" might be written under Special Rules. However, Special Rules need not have anything to do with Action Modifier, Cover, or Armour Rating.

BLYSS is a generic roleplaying system to suit any genre and setting. The Basic Rules presents the very core of the BLYSS system, a flexible and easily adaptable set of rules and mechanics that can meet the requirements of any game!

