Rule of Three

Rule of Three is a roleplaying game system for 3-9 players.

Character Creation

When creating a character, you have 27 points to spend on motivations and attributes, 27 points to spend on background, skills and equipment, and 27 "antipoints" to distribute across your character chart. The character chart is at the end of this document.

When marking points onto the character chart, we suggest you use vertical strokes rather than figures to represent the points.

You have 6 points to spend on **motivations**. You may spend 1 or 2 points on a single motivation; a 2-point motivation is stronger than a 1-point motivation. You may have between 3 and 6 motivations.

You have 21 points to spend on **attributes**. In level 1, you can invest 3 points across the 3 arenas (physical, social and mental). You may spend 0, 1 or 2 points on each.

You have 3 points for each *group* of level 2s (e.g. the Mental group). You may spend 0, 1 or 2 points on each.

Finally, for each *group* of level 3s, you have 1 point (a total of 9).

Add up across the table to find the usefulness of the third-level attribute. So if you gave Mental 1 point, Senses 2 points and Hearing 1 point, Hearing has a usefulness of 4.

The maximum usefulness you can have is six points in any one (third-level) attribute.

Background is based on attributes and/or motivations. You have 9 points to spend on background, and you may spend 1 or 2 points on each background fact, 1 being a narrow piece of background (something that would apply to dozens or hundreds of people: "a member of the Monks of Ee") and 2 being a broader piece of background (something that would apply to thousands of people: "from the nation of Plotzilvania, known for their dancing ability"). The total usefulness of the background is the sum of the points *invested* in the related level 3 attribute(s) or motivation(s) and the background fact itself.

You may also have "zero-rated" background facts which simply provide colour and which give you no advantage. Every character has at least one of these: his or her name. You may choose to add points to some of these later on and develop them into useful elements.

Skills are based on background. You have 9 points to spend on skills, and you may spend 1 or 2 points on each skill initially, 1 representing intermediate level and 2 representing advanced level. Your total ability in the skill is the sum of the points *invested* in attribute level 3, the relevant background fact, and the skill itself.

You may also have "zero-rated" skills which simply provide colour and which give you no advantage (though you may choose to develop them later on).

Equipment use is based on skills. You have 9 points to spend on equipment, and you may spend 1 or 2 points on each piece of equipment initially, 1 being an average piece of equipment and 2 a good one. The total usefulness of the equipment is the sum of the points *invested* in the relevant background fact, the relevant skill, and the equipment itself.

You may also have "zero-rated" equipment which simply provides colour and which gives no advantage.

Motivations, third-level attributes, *background facts*, *skills* and *pieces of equipment* are collectively referred to as "elements".

You have 27 points to spend on **Drawbacks**. These can be placed anywhere on the sheet; they can be motivations, attributes, background facts, "unskills" or pieces of equipment. Drawbacks provide a hindrance, and you may place 1 or 2 points of drawback in a given element. You can represent drawback points by horizontal lines and non-drawback points by vertical lines, to distinguish them.

The Story and Challenges

The **story** has a three-act structure. In the first act, the characters get to know each other and the setting, and discover what they need to do to complete the story successfully. In the second act, the characters struggle against their environment and are tested on the way to completing the objective. The third act brings the story to a conclusion and resolves the issues raised.

Challenges in the course of the story are in either the Mental, Physical or Social arena. A Mental challenge could be, for instance, researching something in a library or solving a code; a Physical challenge could be running, jumping, climbing or catching something; a Social challenge could be speaking in public. Players take turns proposing challenges for each other's characters (including for groups of characters) within the shared game setting, which can be any imaginable setting, real or fictional.

Your characters can use any relevant element(s) which belong to the challenge arena to confront the challenge, but you must narrate how you do so in a convincing manner.

Each element gets a six-sided die. You may use one element during Act I, two during Act II, and three during Act III.

In order to overcome the challenge, you must roll at least one die equal to or under the usefulness of the element which that die represents. So if the element has a usefulness of 4, and you roll 1, 2, 3 or 4, you have overcome the challenge. The only impact of the additional dice is usually to give you more chances; two successes are not better than one (with one exception noted below – multiple dice can be used for tiebreaking in character-on-character challenges).

For an Easy challenge, you get a bonus of 1 to your usefulness. For a Hard challenge, you get a minus of 1 (so even with a usefulness of 6, you can fail a Hard challenge, though you usually won't).

Even if you automatically succeed, roll the dice, because how well you succeed is based on how much you roll under your element's usefulness (adjusted for easy/hard challenges if applicable), as per the following table:

attribute – roll =	Outcome
-6	Grievous failure giving you permanent damage. Lose 1 point in an appropriate* element (may not go below 1).
-5	You suffer significant situational loss beyond losing the challenge.
-4	You suffer minor situational loss beyond losing the challenge.
-3	You fail the challenge quite conclusively and obviously.
-2	You fail the challenge.
-1	You fail the challenge, though only just.
0	You barely meet the challenge; you are not harmed.

1	You meet the challenge adequately but without distinction.
2	You meet the challenge fairly easily.
3	You meet the challenge strongly and impressively.
4	You achieve minor situational benefits beyond winning the challenge.
5	You achieve significant situational benefits beyond winning the challenge.
6	Legendary success giving you permanent benefits. Add 1 point to an appropriate* element (usefulness may not go above 6). You may keep this to use as a "luck point" if you prefer.

* An element is "appropriate" if you can convincingly narrate how victory in these circumstances will improve it.

In the case of challenges between characters, both characters have dice. The challenger declares what he or she is attempting and the element(s) being used, and the group agrees on whether the challenge is Easy, Normal or Hard. The challenger rolls to determine whether he or she succeeds in the move attempted. If not, the responder does not need to roll in response, but can launch a challenge of his or her own, given the new situation. The responder may narrate the challenger's failure (whether choosing to challenge in turn or not).

If the challenger succeeds, the responder to the challenge automatically confronts a challenge consisting of the challenger's success at his or her attempted move. However, whether the challenge is Easy, Normal or Hard is determined by the challenger's level of *success*: 0-1, Easy; 2-4, Normal; 5-6, Hard.

If the responder fails, the challenger narrates the responder's failure, including situational losses or permanent damage if appropriate. The responder can appeal to the other players if the narration appears unfair.

If the responder succeeds by 0-1, the challenger's challenge has been fought off, but not conclusively; the challenger may launch another challenge.

If the responder succeeds by 2-4, the two are effectively drawn; the one who succeeded by a larger number, or the responder in the case of an exact tie, may launch another challenge. (If several dice are being rolled by each person, compare the highest die each person has rolled. If this is a tie, attempt to break the tie by comparing the next highest, and so on.) Or the two may agree that they are evenly matched and break off the conflict.

If the responder succeeds by 5-6, the responder has gained the advantage and may launch another challenge.

The responder to any challenge always has the option of not fighting it, but giving in, if the likely losses are too great or defeat appears certain.

The Setting

The setting can be anything you wish, based on reality or fiction, your own or someone else's. A useful way of generating the details of the setting can be to play a game of Open Questions before each act.

Open Questions is played by going round the players in a circle. One is chosen to be the initial holder of a six-sided die, and speaks first. Each player states a fact about the setting. The die is then rolled. If possible, obtain an "interrogative die", which has the words Who, What, When, Where, How and Why on the six faces; otherwise, use an ordinary six-sided die and convert the numbers into the words in the order just given. The player who has just stated a fact must ask an open question (one requiring at least a sentence answer), beginning with the word indicated by

the die roll, and the next player must answer it. This is their statement of fact, and the die is then rolled again and they ask a question of the next player.

When the turn comes around to the player holding the die, he or she may either declare "more" (indicating another round on the same topic), "change" (indicating a new topic should be begun), or "enough" (indicating an end to the game). In either of the first two cases, he or she then hands the die to the person on his or her left, who begins the next round with a statement, rolls the die, and asks a question of the next player. If the die holder declares "enough", the rest of the group must agree, otherwise it is treated as a call of "change".

Someone should record the facts stated about the setting as they are stated.

Further facts can be established about the setting during play by simply introducing them into the narrative, providing the group does not veto them.

Character Chart

Motivations		
M1	M2	M3
M4	M5	M6

Attributes

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Physical	Strength	Resilience
		Energy
		Stamina
	Reactions	Speed
		Alertness
		Accuracy
	Dexterity	Agility
		Coordination
		Sensitivity
Social	Stability	Courage
		Optimism
		Persistence
	Charisma	Attractiveness
		Persuasiveness
		Confidence
	Empathy	Trustworthiness
		Warmth
		Wisdom
Mental	Senses	Taste/Smell
		Hearing
		Sight
	Creativity	Inventiveness
		Enthusiasm
		Skill
	Intelligence	Memory
		Concentration
		Analysis

Source	Background	Skill	Equipment