

## The Ten Thousand Stances

A 24 Hour RPG

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By Daniel Marble

The Ten Thousand Stances is an RPG. I am going to assume you know what an RPG is. The basis of the Ten Thousand Stances is unarmed combat, high-flying kung fu antics, and earth shattering styles.

The Ten Thousand Stances (from now on shortened to 10KS) is slightly different from most RPGs, in that it is played with a deck of cards. Removing 10 face cards results in a randomization between 1 and 10, and a 1/42 chance of Critical Success or Failure.

### Preparation:

In order to play 10KS, you will need a pad of paper, a couple pens, a deck of standard playing cards for each person, and a few hours (to start with). Modify the decks by removing the jokers and all of the face cards except the aces, the King of Spades and the King of Diamonds.

### Character Creation

Character Creation is simple. Simply distribute 10 points among your 5 attributes, maximum of 3 in any 1 attribute, pick a starting style and two stances of that style, and go. You get your starting Style at 2 ranks, and your starting Stances at 1 rank each. GM discretion is required. You may not pick a dead style or a stance with only 1 rank.

Strength: your character's physical strength, ability to break objects, and all around hardiness.

Speed: your character's physical agility and dexterity

Karma: Your character's karmic essence.

Chi: your character's spiritual hardiness

Mind: your character's mental dexterity.

### Attribute Scale:

1 in an attribute indicates human norm. Most normal people will have a 1 in all 5 attributes.

2 indicates exceptional human. A body builder may have a 2 in strength, while a genius will have a 2 mind.

3 indicates the peak of human performance. Albert Einstein has a 3 Mind. Speed 3 can catch arrows.

4 and greater is superhuman.

6 and greater is incredible superhuman.

10 indicates irrationally strong in the attribute. A 10 in speed can dodge bullets, and a 10 in mind is a walking calculator. A 10 in chi is enlightened. A 10 in strength can break stone walls with one finger.

Conflict Resolution: Conflict resolution is simple. both parties flip a card, add their modifiers, and see who is higher. Aces count as ones, the King of Spades is a critical success and the king of Diamonds is a critical failure. A critical failure is always a failure,

unless the opponent also gets a critical failure. A critical success is always a success, unless the opponent also gets a success. In case of ties, the character who had card value without modifiers wins. If there are further ties, the character with higher Karma is victorious.

Example: Liu Duxiao wants to kick in a door, so he can fight the evil Black Lotus Style acolytes barricaded inside. It's a simple Strength check. Liu flips a card, adds his strength. The GM flips a card, adds 1 because the door is rather thick, and another 1 because the Black Lotus Style acolytes barricaded it particularly well. Liu has 4 strength, and gets an 8. The GM gets a 4. The door shatters, and Liu prepares for combat.

Combat: Combat is very common in 10KS. One on one combat is resolved differently from mass combat.

One on One combat: One on One combat in the world of high power combat is simply one side beating the other senseless, until the other gets an opening and can beating the hell out of his opponent.

The maximum number of attacks that can be dealt from one side to the other is 8. Both sides pick a stance out of his cache of stances, and whoever has the highest speed goes first, and begins beating his opponent. Both sides flip a card from their deck onto the appropriate slot on their stance sheet, and consult the numbers.

Note: If there are multiple numbers, separated by backspaces, there are multiple levels of the stance. If your character has the stance at level 1, you use the first number, level 2 uses the second number, ect. If a number isn't a number, but a statistic, it is that character's statistic.

Example:

Caine, enigmatic wanderer, is has level 1 crane stance (see crane stance, at the end of this book), and 3 speeds. If attacking with Crane Flurry, the first attack, he would have +1 to attack, and if he attacked with his Crane Flutter, he would be at +3. if, later on, Caine gained additional training and learned level 2 crane stance, he would have +2 to attack with his crane flurry.

Attacker:

Completion: If the card drawn is greater than this number, you may attack again if the attack is not countered. If the card is less than completion, your opponent gets to attack.

Hit: this mod is added to the card for the purposes of determining whether or not the attack hit.

Damage: the amount of composure that the attack deals.

Text: Whatever other text this attack has.

Defender:

Defense: this mod is added to the card for the purposes of determining if the attack hit.

Counter: if the attack did not hit, and the base card in this slot is greater than the counter, then the opponent makes no more attacks and you become the attacker.

Combat Example:

Xiao Tsong is fighting Hiro Tanaka. They both have 1 rank in North Wind and Crane Style. Xiao has more speed, and so he goes first. Xiao picks North Wind, Hiro picks Crane. First attack, Sky's Pounce, Xiao flips up a 6 and Hiro flips a 10. 10 + rank 1 Crane Defense of 0 is greater than 6+ Rank 1 Sky's Pounce attack of 0, and so the attack misses.

Because the attack misses, and 10 is greater than rank 1 Crane counter of 8, and so it is now Hiro's turn to attack. Hiro flips a 9, and Xiao flips an 8.  $9+1$  is greater than  $8+0$ , so the attack is a success, and Xiao takes 2 points of damage from the Crane's Flurry, and because 9 is greater than rank 1 crane's flurry's completion of 6, Hiro gets to make another attack, the Gust of Leaves. Hiro flips a 5, and Xiao flips a 7. 7 is equal to 7, but Xiao has a higher base value on his card, so the attack is a failure. Hiro deals no damage and the special effect of Gust of Leaves don't take effect, but because 5 is greater than or equal to Gust of Leave's completion of 5, and 7 isn't greater than or equal to rank 1 North Wind's Counter of 8, the attack isn't countered, Hiro gets another attack, the Crane Rake. Both sides flip up an ace. 2 is greater than 1, so the attack hits, and Xiao takes 2 points of damage, but it doesn't meet the attack's completion of 6, so Hiro may not make another attack. Xiao becomes the attacker, and attempts Sky's Pounce again.

### Multiple Opponents

If one side outnumbered the other, uneven pairings result. If there are multiple opponents, one person may be considered the attacker and the defender. for example, A is fighting B and C. A is on the offensive, attacking B. because B is being attacked, he is considered the defender, and because C is not being attacked, he is an attacker, and A is defending against C. A character cannot use multiple stances at the same time. if B successfully counter attacked A, A would start defending against B and attacking C. such switches take place at the end of flurries (B would get to finish all the attacks he is entitled to against A before A started attacking him).

### Damage & Composure:

Whenever an attack hits, it deals damage equal to it's damage. Damage is taken from your deck, and placed into a damage pile, face down.. If your deck is ever reduced to zero cards, you pass out. Cards that you play for attacks are put into a discarded pile, and when your deck is empty, the discarded pile is shuffled and turned into a new deck. Cards used for non-combat checks are simply shuffled back into the deck. The Discarded pile is to save time and speed up combat.

### Healing:

Because most damage is non-lethal, merely bruises and swelling, it heals at a rate of 1 point per hour. Every hour, shuffle your damage stack and place the top one into your deck, without looking at it. Lethal Damage (see below) heals at a rate of 1 point every day. Every day, reduce the amount of lethal damage on your character sheet by 1.

### Lethal Damage:

Some attacks deal lethal damage. Lethal damage is more dire than regular damage, and is actual cuts, broken bones, ect. Lethal damage is treated like regular damage, but you also mark off 1 point of lethal damage on your character sheet. Whenever combat begins, if your total damage is less than the amount of lethal damage on your character sheet, you take the amount of damage in difference. If your character is unconscious and takes damage, you instead take lethal damage.

Example: Xiu Xong was in an awful fight, and took 20 points of damage, in addition to 4 points of lethal damage. After a full day of resting, he is back to having his full 42 points

of composure, and 3 lethal damage. He can do anything as good as if he was well, but when he starts he has to fight the Uso Gang, he takes 3 points of damage, reducing him to 39 composure. In his fight with the gang, he takes 10 more damage, and 5 more lethal damage. After 12 hours of rest, he has 8 lethal damage, 6 regular damage, and 36 composure. If he has to run at full speed to chase down a cart carrying a treatise for his monastery, he will take 2 points of regular damage, making his regular damage match his lethal damage.

#### Styles, Stances, and Techniques:

There are innumerable stances in the world of 10KS. The rules for learning stances are relatively simple.

Styles are schools of training. Your rank in the style doesn't really matter, and is a number between 0 and 10. Every Style has Stances. Your rank in the Stances determines how good you are at that particular stance, and is a number between 0 and 5. Some stances have fewer ranks. The total of all of your ranks in stances of a style must be less than or equal to your rank in that style. All of the ranks of 1 style's stances add up to 9.

#### Example:

Hiro Huang is an acolyte of the North Mountain Style, and is rank 5 within North Mountain Style. He is a rank 2 Crane Stance, and a rank 3 North Wind Stance. If he cannot improve his Crane Stance or North Wind Stance until he improves his North Mountain Style

#### Techniques:

Techniques are subsets of Stances. A technique is a little trick your character has learned for fighting within that stance. Techniques are activated before you flip the card for the appropriate attack. Techniques may only be used once per combat

Example: Hiro Huang has rank 2 Crane Stance, and the Wind Dance technique rank 1, which improves your completion statistic for **Leap** attacks. Once per combat, when using a Crane Stance **Leap** attack, and only a Crane Stance **Leap** attack, he may declare he is using the Wind Dance Technique, and reduce his completion by 1.

#### Mastery Powers

Mastery Powers are special abilities given to people who have accumulated great skill in a single style. For example, someone who has become a master of the Shadow Hawk style and is just learning the Laughing Dragon style will have special advantages due to his mastery of 1 art. Every style has 1 mastery power. At level 5, you gain the benefit of that mastery power to all Stances in that style, and at level 10, you gain the benefit of that mastery power to all Stances.

#### Weapons

In the current version of 10KS, there are no rules for weapons.

#### Adventures and Training Points

At the end of an adventure, characters are awarded training points depending on how well they did. Recommended training points are between 6-8 for Low strength characters, and 12-14 for Master level characters.

#### Training:

Your character's ability to train depends upon what implements he has available to train him. If he is merely following a treatise, or ancient manual of the style, the maximum rank he may gain in the Style is 3, the maximum rank he may gain in any stance is 1 (except for stances which only have one rank, which cannot be trained using a treatise), and he may not gain techniques. Training this way costs 1 week per training point spent. If he is training with a higher-level member of the style, he may gain any rank in the Style, and any rank in the stances except for the final one. This training takes 1 week per two training points spent, rounding up. Training with a Master (someone who has the max ranks in every stance and the rank 10 in the style) can teach you anything, and it only takes 1 week/3 training points spent, rounding up.

#### Training to improve attributes

Improving attributes is very hard. To increase an attribute up to 3, it costs 5 training points \* new attribute value. to increase up to 6, it costs 10 training points \* new attribute value. to increase past 6, it costs 20 training points \* new attribute value. Training time is the same as if you were increasing ranks (1 week/TP if alone, 1 week/2TP if help from non-master with higher attribute than you in that attribute, 1 week/3 TP if help from Master w/ higher attribute than you in that attribute)

Example: Acolyte Xiao Xiao wants to increase his strength to 3. It will cost him 15 training points, and because an elder student with strength 4 is aiding him, it will only take (15/2) weeks, or 2 months.

Example: Master Fong wants to increase his Speed from 6 to 7. It will cost him  $7 \times 20$ , or 140 Training points, and takes 140 weeks, or a little less than 3 years of training.

#### Training Costs:

Increasing your Rank in a style costs 4 training points \* your new rank.

Example: going from Rank 2 to Rank 3 costs 12 Training Points

Increasing your Rank in a Stance costs your new rank \* 2 \* (7 - the number of ranks in the technique)

Example: Going from rank 2 to 3 in a 5 rank Stance costs ( $3 \times 2 \times 2$ ) or 12 training points.

Going from rank 0 to rank 1 in a 1 rank stance costs ( $1 \times 2 \times 6$ ) or 12 training points

To see how much increasing your techniques costs, see the technique description

#### Down time and Training

Time between adventures is assumed to be used training. You gain 1 training point for every month of downtime. Even if you are spending training points to improve your attributes or ranks, you still gain training points this way.

#### Styles and Stances

As of now, the only style is North Mountain Style. This is due to time constraints, but for the love of god and all that is holy, if you like the game, make more Styles

##### **North Mountain Style**

Stance: Crane Stance: 3 ranks

Stance: North Wind Stance: 4 Ranks

Stance: Falling Boulder Stance: 2 Ranks

Master Ability

You gain +1 to attack on all Leap attacks.

North Mountain Style is a style that focuses on leaps and evasion, and strong kicks.

Crane Stance Techniques

Wind Dance:

Ranks: 3

Cost: 4/6/8

Prerequisites: Speed 3/Speed 4/Speed 6

Once per combat, reduce the Completion of one of your **Leap** attack by your Wind Dance rank.

Crane's Claw

Ranks: 3

Cost: 5/7/10

Prerequisites: Strength 3/Strength 4/Strength 7

Once per combat, increase the damage of one of your non-**leap** attacks by 1, and increase the completion by 3-Crane's Claw Rank

North Wind Stance Techniques

Cold Wind

Ranks: 2

Cost: 5/6

Prerequisites: Strength 3/Strength 5

Once per combat, increase one of your **Leap** attack's damage by 1, and take 3-Cold Wind Ranks damage.

Falling Boulder Stance Technique

Sky's Pulse

Ranks: 2

Cost: 5/10

Prerequisite: Chi2/Chi4

Once per combat, after you succeed at a **Leap** attack, deal no damage and instead heal Sky's Pulse Rank \* 2

Creating Stances

When creating a new stance, keep the following things in mind.

As the moves progress, the completion should go up, but not necessarily the attack or damage. High level techniques may be worth a point more damage than the low level techniques, but merely the fact that you have already dealt a ton of damage already is good enough for those attacks to be good. That being said, low level attacks should have less special abilities (Text abilities and/or attribute replacement) with the exception of penalty abilities, and the first attack should have no special abilities. And 8<sup>th</sup> attacks should be special and strong. And the 7<sup>th</sup> attack should have a very high completion value. The style should have some theme, and attribute replacement of numbers should be based on the attributes that would help.

## Campaign Ideas

The characters are all members of a style monastery. Just as they are completing their training, when their master is mysteriously assassinated. Their school disperses to the four winds, and they must spend the campaign fleeing from their mysterious adversary, gaining skills in the martial arts, and learning why their master was killed.

The characters are wandering ascetics, seeking to learn a myriad of martial arts. As they stop at each school, they must perform some feat to gain training from the school's master, embarking on an adventure in the process. The character's quickly become incredibly versatile, although because they will not be very strong.

The characters meet an old man, who is the final practitioner of an ancient style. The characters must master the style and become skilled fighters before the style's ancestral enemy, the Devil's Palm Style, can destroy the world with a Demon's Gate.

## Adventure Ideas

A treatise detailing an ancient lost style has fallen into the wrong hands, a warlord who seeks to train an army of lethal assassins

A group of villainous acolytes are terrorizing a small community.

An evil master is seeking to assassinate a benevolent governor, and throw the world into disarray.

## Notes from the Author

### On Game Mastering

There are so many things to say about game mastering, and there is no time, quite literally. If you want to hear the same generic tips for good GMing found in every RPG, just look in one of them.

### Realism and 10KS

Ten Thousand Stances isn't meant to be hyperrealistic. Both in that super powered martial artists are flying across the landscape and breaking bones with their voices, and in that it isn't accurate. I don't care if the Phoenix stance does this or the Lion Stance historically entails that. I don't care that character's names aren't real Chinese or Japanese or Korean. It's called Fantasy. The world of 10KS is basically America, as it is the only land I know really well, inundated with what I think are asian themes. The language that is spoken is English, except that all the character's names are asian sounding.

Thanks:

I would like to thank Kung-Fu Hustle, and all the other bad Wuxia movies that have inspired me. I would like to thank 24 Hour RPG for making me get off my fat rump and make something. I would like to thank Richard Garfield for inventing Magic: The Gathering, because although it's an egregious sin against the gaming world, it still is responsible for my favorite Genre of games, the CCG, which somewhat inspired this game. Thank you.

## Appendix

<b>Crane Flurry</b> <b>Completion:</b> 6/5/4 <b>Hit:</b> + 1/+ 1/+ 2 <b>Damage:</b> 2/3/3	<b>Gust of Leaves</b> <b>Completion:</b> 5/5/4 <b>Hit:</b> + 2/+ 3/+ 3 <b>Damage:</b> 0/0/1 Leap A feint. if successful, +1 to opponent's counter for this attack, and +1 damage with next attack	<b>Crane Rake</b> <b>Completion:</b> 6/4/4 <b>Hit:</b> + 1/+ 1/+ 2 <b>Damage:</b> 2/3/3	<b>Crane's Flutter</b> <b>Completion:</b> 7/6/5 <b>Hit:</b> Speed/Speed/Speed <b>Damage:</b> 0/0/0 <b>Leap</b> Crane's Flutter may not deal damage. if successful, your next attack gains +3 to hit.
<b>Crane Stance,</b>	<b>Defense:</b> +1/+ 1/+ 2 <b>Counter:</b> 8/7/6		
<b>Crane's Stomp</b> <b>Completion:</b> 8/7/6 <b>Hit:</b> -1/0/+ 1 <b>Damage:</b> Strength/Strength/ Strength+ 1	<b>Iron Crane</b> <b>Completion</b> 9/8/7 <b>Hit:</b> +0/+ 1/+ 1 <b>Damage:</b> 3/4/5	<b>Crane plucking figs</b> <b>Completion:</b> 10/9/8 <b>Hit:</b> + 1/+ 2/+ 2 <b>Damage:</b> 1/1/1 Leap	<b>Stone Crane</b> <b>Completion:</b> None <b>Hit:</b> +0/+ 1/+ 2 <b>Damage:</b> Speed/Speed/Speed + 1 Leap



<p>Sky's Pounce Completion: 6/6/5/4 Attack: + 0/+ 1/+ 2/+ 2 Damage: 1/2/2/3 Leap Kick</p>	<p>Body like the Tide Completion: 7/6/6/5 Attack: + 1/+ 1/+ 2/+ 2 Damage: 2/2/3/4 This attack has +2 completion and -1 attack if there is not a vertical surface within 30 feet that the character could rebound off of.</p>	<p>Sky's Ascendant Completion: 8/7/7/6 Attack: + 2/+ 2/+ 2/+ 3 Damage: 3/3/4/4 Leap, Flip Kick If this attack is countered, your opponent's next attack is at +2 Attack</p>	<p>Snow Falling in Autumn Completion: 8/8/7/7 Attack: + 1/+ 1/+ 2/+ 3 Damage: Strength/Strength/ Strength/Strength Kick</p>
North Wind Style	Defense: 0/+ 1/+ 1/+ 2 Counter: 8/8/7/6		
<p>North Wind's Run Completion: 9/8/8/7 Attack: + 1/+ 1/+ 2/+ 2 Damage: 0/0/1/1 Leap If this attack is successful, your next attack gains +1 damage</p>	<p>Rain of Heaven Completion 9/9/8/7 Attack: + 0/+ 1/+ 1/+ 2 Damage: 2/3/3/4</p>	<p>Crow's Kick Completion: 10/10/9/9 Attack: + 1/+ 1/+ 2/+ 2 Damage: 1/1/2/2 Kick, Throw If this attack is successful, get +1 on your next Attack.</p>	<p>The Merciless North Wind Completion: N/A Attack: -1/-1/0/+ 1 Damage: 4/5/5/6</p>

Fist Like Stone  
Completion:  
6/5  
Attack:  
+1/+2  
Damage:  
2/3

Falling Boulder Stance

Iron Boulder  
Completion:  
6/5  
Attack:  
+1/+2  
Damage:  
2/3  
+1 Damage if your  
speed is greater than 4

Defense: 0/+1  
Counter: 7/6

Dropping Leaves Kick  
Completion:  
7/7  
Attack:  
+0/+1  
Damage:  
3/3

Disgraced Swan  
Completion:  
8/7  
Attack:  
+1/+2  
Damage:  
0/1  
Leap

Skylark Kick  
Completion:  
8/8  
Attack:  
0/+1  
Damage:  
2/3

Stone's Fury  
Completion:  
9/8  
Attack:  
+1/+2  
Damage:  
3/3

Titan's Leap  
Completion:  
10/9  
Attack:  
+4/+5  
Damage:  
0/0  
Leap  
If this attack is unsuccessful,  
it is automatically  
considered to have failed it's  
Completion. Your opponent  
becomes the attacker

Falling Mountain  
Completion  
N/A  
Attack:  
0/+1  
Damage:  
Strength/Strength+2

#### About the Author

This is my first real RPG, although I've always played them and been interested in their design. I don't remember where I first learned of 24 Hour RPG, but it's been fun. I'm sorry about the shoddiness of the Graphics, but graphic art isn't my specialty.