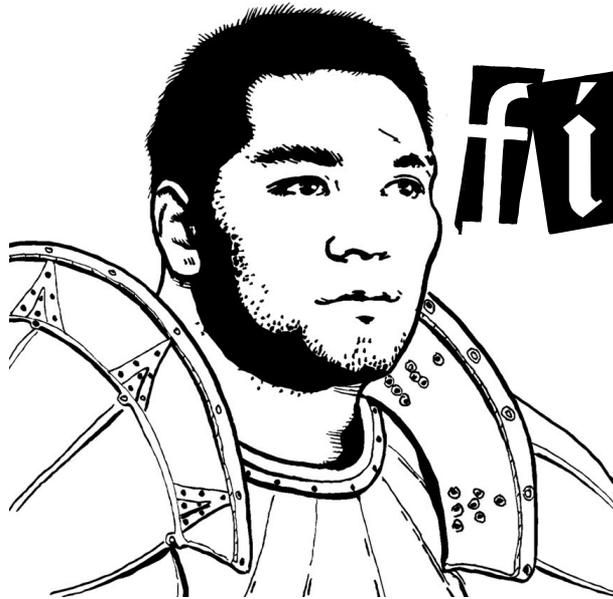




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A Role-
Playing
Game

by Jeff Moore



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<http://FiveByFiveRPG.blogspot.com>

Disclaimer – Jeff Preston and Duane O'Brien are in no way affiliated with Jeff Moore or the Five by Five Role-playing Game. They simply provided some wonderful art online, shared through the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License. It is an honor to be able to include Jeff Preston's beautiful artwork in these pages.

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Version History

What you hold in your hands (or more likely, are viewing on the screen of your computer, tablet or phone) is the third version of a role-playing game called "Five By Five."

If you are just joining us, "Welcome." Drop me a line and let me know how you learned about my game. I would love to hear from you. If you have played or read earlier versions of Five by Five you may want to know why I've brought you back here.

The first version of Five by Five was completed in 2008. It was inspired by another game called Fable by Benjamin E. Sones.¹ Fable used the same free form trait "choose anything" approach to character creation that is the foundation of Five by Five. The 5x5 task roll is original to Five by Five, but combat, weapons, and armor were all adapted from Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay.²

Five by Five was created ad-hoc for playing a quick game session with some friends by marrying the ideas from a few games that I liked together. The game worked and we had a good time. My one original contribution: the 5x5 die roll worked pretty well, too, and it provided my game with its name.³ I still like the simplicity of that first version of Five by Five, both in its design as a game and in its look as a document.

In 2010 an updated Five by Five was released in an effort to dress up Five by Five's presentation. It features color pages, some nice artwork that I licensed for the release, and some updated rules. This was my attempt to "draw some attention." I knew that Five by Five was fun, and I wanted other people to have the chance to try it. Version 2 made some improvements on the original. But it also did some things that it didn't need to do. In all honesty, I don't like version 2 as much as I like the original, despite (or perhaps because of) its slick appearance.

I have written a lot of one-off RPG's over the years. I am not playing any of them ... except Five by Five. I am still playing Five by Five. It still works as a quick and easy RPG for telling adventure stories in almost any setting. That's why I've brought you back here.

1 Archived at John Kim's Free RPG's on the web:
<http://www.darkshire.net/jhkim/rpg/freerpgs/>

2 Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay 1st Edition copyright Games Workshop all rights reserved.

3 I am a huge Joss Whedon fan, and I first heard the words "Five by Five" spoken by a character he created. Without Joss, Five by Five would have probably been called something else.

Acknowledgments and Changes

My sincere thanks to Chis Nason, Chris Vogel, Tonya Greene, Jon Edgar, and Larry Straining for feedback and support.

With Five by Five version 3 I hope to reclaim the raw charm of the original version. This version introduces a variety of rules changes and improvements:

- The 5x5 die roll itself has changed, providing even number distribution and a greater number range.
- Combat is new and improved. The new combat system uses the 5x5 roll to full effect and is not a transplanted system.
- Character creation has been restructured making it easier for players without a strong character concept at the start to create a character.
- Doubles are no longer tied to character advancement. Character Advancement has been overhauled.
- Karma Points are new to this version of Five by Five, providing players with more options, and giving purpose to the "weakness" trait.
- Wonderful new art by Jeff Preston made possible through the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License.

Thanks for giving Five by Five a look.

Feel free to contact me. I can be reached at:
<http://dreamsanddragons.blogspot.com>

Regards,

Jeff Moore

Welcome

This introduction is a brief overview of pen and paper role-playing games. After this are the actual "rules." The rules explain how to create characters and how to answer questions like, "Did my character jump over the pit safely?" After you've read through the rules, grab a few of your friends. Two or three others besides yourself should be perfect. One person holds the position of "Game Manager" or "GM." Everyone else is a "player."

Game Manager

In a role-playing game the GM helps the players to construct an adventure story. The GM guides the players through the story using descriptive narration. The GM describes the circumstances and setting of an event and then asks the other players, "What do you do?"

Example: You are walking through the cemetery late at night. The moon is full and provides you with ample visibility through the darkness. The tomb stones cast long shadows and the grass smells damp, moistened by evening dew. You are investigating the disappearances of several people in the area. Your investigation has brought you here. Could there be some evil presence in this grave yard? Before you have time to ponder this question further, you hear a blood curdling scream from somewhere behind you. What do you do?

Players

Players react to the situations described by the GM as if they were the heroes of an adventure story. The GM will layout the scene, describing the circumstances and setting of an event and will ask the players, "What do you do?" Players imagine themselves as the heroes of the scene and describe what happens next.

Example: I quickly spin around to "see" where the scream came from. Assuming I don't immediately spot the source of the sound, I take a quick inventory: outer jacket pockets, "Garlic cloves, check!" Cross on chain around neck: "Check!" I pull the wooden stake from the inner pocket of my jacket and take off running in the direction where I thought that I heard the scream.

Characters

There are two kinds of characters in a role-playing game: Player Characters (PC's) and Non-Player Characters (NPC's.) Players control the PC's. Each player has one PC under their control. This character acts for the player in the story. Each player will have a character sheet that describes things about their PC so that each player will have an idea of the scope and variety of things their character is good at doing. NPC's include every character, animal, creature, or monster that may interact with a PC in the story. All of these are controlled by the GM.

Epic Heroes

The PC's are the "heroes" of an adventure story. The first thing to do is to get everyone together and talk about the type of adventure story you wish to tell. Is this the story of adventurous youths who battle a secret society of vampires in the late hours after school? Is this the story of rebellious space pirates who smuggle goods into forbidden territories under the radar of an oppressive galactic empire? Is this the story of magical elves and stalwart knights who battle the forces of evil fairy hoards? Decide on your basic story: the "big picture" kind of epic that you wish to explore. Then think about the kinds of heroes there are in such an epic. Your character is one of these heroes.

What is this hero good at doing? Decide how your hero "fits" into the story. Is your hero a brilliant computer hacker? ... a fantastic swordsman? ... an ace spaceship pilot? ... a beautiful seductress? Think about the character you want to play. Jot down a few notes about the character. What is the character good at doing? These will become your character's traits.

Traits

There are 3 categories of Traits. With one exception traits define the things that your characters do well. The 3 categories of traits are: Combat Traits, Non-Combat Traits, and the Trouble Trait. Combat traits are tied directly to the combat rules. Non-Combat Traits are much broader and can be most anything not directly tied to combat. The Trouble Trait is a special trait that defines something that your character is not good at doing.

Combat Traits

Combat traits are the most restricted of the traits that you will select to build your character. Combat Traits each only effect the one combat roll for which they have been defined. When you choose a combat trait you must also choose which combat roll the trait effects. The combat rolls are: Interrupt, Attack, Defend, and Resist. Your character doesn't need to have any combat traits if you don't want them. Combat Rolls can always be attempted unskilled.

Non-Combat Traits

Non-Combat Traits cover anything your character does outside of combat. Non-Combat Traits help describe the things that your character is good at doing. This can be a career like: Doctor, Lawyer, Musician, Spaceship Pilot, Cook or Linguist. It can be a physical or mental aspect like: Strong, Fast, Beautiful, Intelligent, Brave or Charming. It can be cultural like: Millionaire Playboy, Night Elf or Pleasure Droid. A Non-Combat Trait is anything that helps shape your character's role within the context of the story.



The Trouble Trait

While all other traits define areas where your character excels, your Trouble trait describes an area of weakness. Your character's Trouble Trait is something that they do in the story that almost always gives them trouble. A good Trouble Trait might add a new layer of complexity to your character or provide a source for comic relief. Characters in fiction are defined as much by what they can't do as what they can.

Trait Ranks

Identifying things that make your character special is just the first step. As a "Race Car Driver" you know that your character has skills when it comes to driving a car, but how good is your character at driving a car? The degree of ability that your character has in any given trait is defined by its Rank. The different Ranks are defined through descriptors. The descriptors arrange the ranks on a scale from least proficiency to greatest proficiency. A Novice has only a little more experience than the average person, while an Expert may have many many hours of experience, and training. Starting out your highest Rank will be Expert, but you will improve your Ranks as you play.

[No] Novice: You are just beginning to exhibit an interest in this. You know more about it than the average person, but only a little more.

[Ap] Apprentice: You are a beginning student of this. You have taken an active roll in learning how to do this.

[Jo] Journeyman: You have studied and worked at this enough to consider this among one of your acquired skills or talents. You think you're pretty good at doing this.

[Ad] Adept: You've done this a lot. You probably do this every day. This is something you can do confidently without too much forethought.

[Ex] Expert: You are able to take risks and to stretch the limits of what can be done. Routine tasks are beneath your talent and you are beginning to look for greater challenges.

[Ma] Master: This is what you're known for ... Experts look to you for advice, guidance, and training.

[Gr] Grand Master: Masters look to you for advice and training. You have advanced your field with your innovation and talent.

[El] Elite: You are the best in your field. Only a few other people in the world (galaxy) are as good as this.

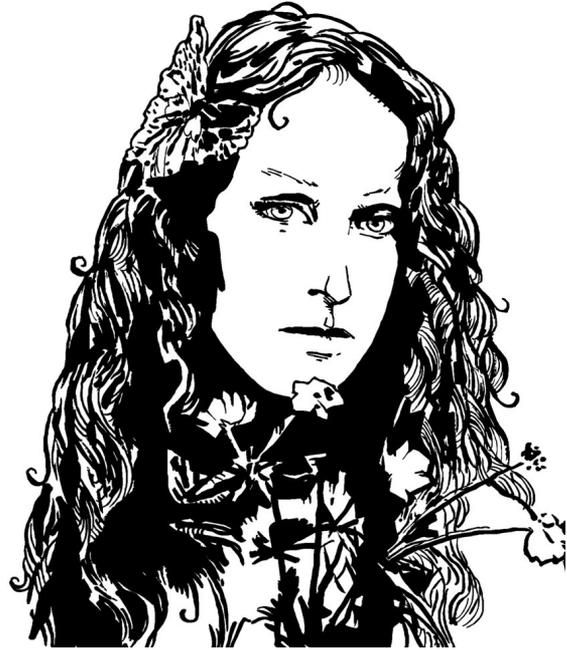
[Wo] World Class: You are the best in the world. Number one in your field. There is no one better outside of myth and legend.

[Le] Legendary: Your ability is almost supernatural. You do things that others never thought possible. Many tell stories about your fantastic deeds, but few believe them.

Unskilled Traits

Anything that a person does about as well as the next person is considered, "average" or "unskilled." You won't even bother to list those things on your character sheet.

Everyone has millions of those kinds of traits. Being an "unskilled" driver, or cook, or tree climber doesn't mean that you can't drive or cook or climb trees. It means that your experience at doing those things is pretty much the same as the majority of other "average" people out there.



Undefined Traits have a Rank of Unskilled.

[Un] Unskilled: You may have done this before (or seen it done on TV) ... but no more or less than anyone else. (Anything not listed on your character sheet is considered, "unskilled.")

Target Numbers

A Target Number is the translation of your Trait Rank into a number that you can roll on the dice. When you want to use your Traits in the game, the GM will ask you to roll dice to determine your success or failure. The table below shows the Ranks in the game and their corresponding target numbers. Roll your Target Number or less when attempting any task in order to succeed.

Trait Rank	-	Un	No	Ap	Jo	Ad	Ex	Ma	Gr	El	Wo	Le	+
Target Number	-	0	2	3	4	5	6	8	10	12	15	20	+

0 = Unskilled (default)

- = no roll (automatic failure)

+ = no roll (automatic success)

Dice

Your character's traits will tell you what your character can do and how well they can do it. When it comes time to attempt to do something where the outcome is uncertain, RPG's use dice to introduce a random element. Dice are generally abbreviated as dX (where "X" is the highest numbered side on the dice.) For example: d6 refers to a dice where the highest numbered side is a 6.

D5 Roll

The Five by Five RPG uses its own special application of a d6 (the traditional cube shaped dice) called the d5. Here's how it works: Roll a d6. Read any result from 1-5 normally. Read a roll of 6 as a roll of 0 (zero) instead. This means that every roll of every d5 nets a result from 0 to 5. The Five by Five RPG uses the d5 for all die rolls.

5X5 Roll



The 5X5 (five by five) roll is the only roll used by the Five by Five RPG. Here's how it works: Roll a d5 twice and multiply the results.

For example: Derek rolls 2 dice. He gets a 4 and a 2. As the GM has called for a 5X5 roll, Derek multiplies the two d5 results (4X2) getting an 8. Barbara makes a 5X5 roll, rolling a 6 and a 3. Since 6 is read as 0, Barbara gets (0X3) a 0.

Hint: Throw 2 dice. If you see a 6, the roll always equals 0. If you don't see a 6, multiply the two dice together to find the result of the roll.

Task Rolls

To attempt any action, decide which Trait possessed by your character is most applicable to the task. If you do not have a Trait that is appropriate, you may still be able to attempt the action (see: All Other Tasks.) Make a 5x5 roll. If the result of the roll is equal to or lesser than the relevant trait's Target Number, then you have completed the task successfully.

Rank Bonus or Penalty

Rank Bonus - the GM may allow you to treat your trait as one rank higher if circumstances are particularly favorable.

Rank Penalty - the GM may require you to treat your trait as one rank lower if the task is unusually tough or circumstances are particularly poor.

Doubles

When making a 5x5 task roll any result of "Doubles" (both dice showing the same number) is an automatic failure. If you roll Doubles you fail. But, your bad luck has earned you the potential for better luck later on. Each time you roll Doubles when attempting an action, you fail at the action, but you gain a Karma Point. Karma Points are recorded on your character sheet and carry over from one game session to the next.

Karma Points

You can spend Karma Points after you roll any task roll to improve your chance for success. One Karma Point grants a Rank bonus to your trait for the completion of a single task. You can spend multiple Karma Points at once to improve a trait multiple Ranks in order to turn a failed task roll into a successful task roll.

You spend Karma after you roll the dice to turn a failure into a success. You cannot spend Karma points to change a roll of Doubles into a success. A roll of Doubles always fails.

Cooperation

Two players with similar traits can work together to complete a task. The first player rolls to assist and the second rolls to complete the task. If the first player's roll is successful, then the second player earns a 2 step rank bonus for completing the task. If the first player's roll fails, the second player still earns a single step rank bonus for the task, unless the failed roll was doubles. In this case the assist accidentally hinders the efforts of the second player who suffers a rank penalty to completing the task.

All Other Tasks

When you attempt to do something that anyone might be able to do, but it's something not recorded on your character sheet, you are using the trait: "All Other Tasks." The trait "All Other Tasks" always has a Rank of "Unskilled" and a TN of "0." Make a 5x5 roll, if you roll a 0, you succeed at the task. Some tasks cannot be attempted unskilled. Your GM will not allow you to attempt to perform surgery with the trait: "All Other Tasks," for example.

Borderline Traits

Sometimes a trait will be "almost" applicable to the task at hand. This trait may share some commonalities with the kinds of skills and abilities that a task requires without being an ideal fit. A GM can at his discretion allow such a trait to be used to attempt a task but may apply a rank penalty.

Choosing Traits

When you create your character, you pick traits to define them. Try not to pick traits that are too specific or too general. A trait in "wine tasting" might not get much use during play. "High society" might work and could include a quality in "wine tasting" under its umbrella. On the other hand, taking a trait like "Jack of all Trades" basically translates into "Good at Everything" and would be too general. The GM won't let you to pick a trait like this.

Trait Balance

If you find that your character always uses the same trait over and over, neglecting the other traits on your character sheet, the trait is probably too general. Consider changing to something more specific to give your other traits a chance to shine. If the opposite is true and you have a trait that you never seem to use, consider changing to a new trait that you will be able to use more often. Talk any changes to your character over with the GM before you make them. The goal is to make a character that is an enjoyable challenge to play.



Double Trouble

Your Trouble Trait is the opposite of all your other character traits. Your other traits show what you can do. Your Trouble Trait shows what you can't. While rolling Doubles means automatic failure for all your other traits, when you make a 5x5 roll for your Trouble Trait, rolling Doubles is the only way to succeed!

Your chance for success when attempting a task with your Trouble Trait isn't very good (1 in 6,) but there are some good reasons to try. Every time you attempt a task that requires you to roll your Trouble Trait, you gain a Karma Point! If you actually succeed at the use of your Trouble Trait, you gain a Karma Point for using your Trouble Trait, and you still gain a Karma Point for rolling Doubles!

The GM won't ask you to make a 5x5 roll to attempt the completion of a task unless that task is in some way important within the context of the story either to your character or to the adventure as a whole. Try to pick a Trouble Trait that your character will want or need to use occasionally. If you pick a "throw away" trait that your character doesn't care about where the outcome of the task doesn't matter, the GM won't ask you to roll, and you won't gain any benefit.

[Tr] Trouble: This is something that other people seem to be able to do without much difficulty. But not you. This always gives you trouble.

Creating a Character

To create a character for Five by Five you must select a handful of traits and assign ranks to them. Your character will have five traits ranked from your most defining trait with a high rank of Expert, to something you are just beginning to explore with a lower rank of Novice.

Think about your character – Start by thinking about the kinds of things your character does when not fighting in combat. Are they a scientist, a diplomat, a rock star? Even a mercenary who has dedicated his life to combat in the pursuit of coin has other interests. Maybe they are a gambler or a seductive Don Juan. They could be a pick pocket, a computer expert, or have the stealth like grace of a jungle cat.

Pick some Non-Combat Traits – Come up with your Non-Combat Traits first, then fill in the rest with Combat Traits. After you have thought about the kinds of things your character does when not in combat, you should have an idea of the kind of person your character is. This will help you decide how the character acts in a fight.

Pick some Combat Traits - Combat Traits are tied to the Combat Rolls that they effect. Selecting them is simply a matter of choosing which combat rolls you want to be the most proficient in and giving them a descriptor that matches your character concept.

The Combat Traits are: Interrupt (act before the enemy,) Attack (successfully hit the enemy,) Defend (negate the attacks of an enemy,) and Resist (shake off the effects of damage to keep fighting.)

When you choose a Combat Trait you determine what “flavor” it is ... what it looks like for your character. Your character's Attack trait might be a skill with firearms, or the martial arts. Your character's defend trait might be a precognitive warning of danger, lightning fast reflexes, or a shield that they skillfully place between themselves and the enemy.

Rank Your Traits – Once you have selected which five traits to record on your character sheet, organize them from the most important to your character to the least important and then assign them a rank descriptor (one each) from the array of: Novice, Apprentice, Journeyman, Adept, and Expert.

Pick Your Trouble Trait – To pick a Trouble Trait, complete the sentence, “I have trouble *doing this*.” Remember, you earn Karma when you use your Trouble Trait, so try to make it something your character will be called upon to do on occasion.

Choose a Name – To complete character creation, give your character a name. Pick a name that feels right for the setting and the kind of image that you want to project.

Character Advancement

There is no "winner" in a role-playing game. The object of the game is for each player to evolve a singular character over a period of time, telling the stories of that character's adventures along the way. The game doesn't end after a single session. Each session may see a character achieve specific goals or overcome specific obstacles, but new greater challenges always await the character the next time the players get together to play.

As you tell your character's story, your character will develop new interests, gain new skills, powers, or abilities, and become better at those things they already do well. You track your character's experience with Session Points.

A new character that has never played in a game session has 0 session points. At the end of each game session a character gains one session point. Session points are spent like money and once they are spent, they are gone. You will need to earn more (by playing more) to further improve your character.

Spending Session Points:

It costs **1 Session Point** to add a new trait at Novice or to improve a trait from Novice to Apprentice.

It costs **2 Session Points** to improve a trait from Apprentice to Journeyman or from Journeyman to Adept.

It costs **3 Session Points** to improve a trait from Adept to Expert or from Expert to Master.

It costs **4 Session Points** to improve a trait from Master to Grand Master or from Grand Master to Elite.

It costs **5 Session Points** to improve a trait from Elite to World Class or from World Class to Legendary.

The **Trouble Trait** cannot be improved with Session Points. You could exchange your Trouble Trait for a new one through role-play as the things that trouble us do sometimes change. Be sure to discuss this option with the GM if it's something you want to do.



Character Creation Example

Chris is creating a character for a modern day monster slayer game. He discusses the setting with the GM to make sure he understands the kinds of stories they will be telling, and the sort of characters that will work best in that setting.

Chris begins by thinking about who the character is in his everyday life when he's not fighting monsters and saving the world. Chris decides his character is a college student. A person who has a fascination with the occult and has studied it extensively.

Chris knows that he wants his character to possess traits in, "Computers," and "Occult Knowledge and Research." That's a good start. Now, Chris takes a quick look at the Combat Rolls to see what Combat traits he might choose to round things out.

He doesn't see his character as someone who carries or uses weapons, but he wants to be able to handle himself in a fight all the same. Chris decides to give his character "Martial Arts" for an Attack trait. He also picks "Dodge" for his Defense trait and "Recovery" for his Recovery trait.

That's five traits, easy! Now he arranges the traits in order of importance: 1. Dodge (Chris decides that the best survival tactic is not to get hit.), 2. Occult Knowledge and Research, 3. Computers, 4. Martial Arts, 5. Recovery.

Now, Chris needs to choose something his character is NOT good at doing. Chris sees his character as socially awkward. His trouble sentence reads, "I have trouble talking to people."

A new character's traits have ranks from the array of: Expert, Adept, Journeyman, Apprentice, and Novice. Recording these on his character sheet Chris writes the descriptor, then the trait name, then the target number in parenthesis.

Aaron Reynolds

Expert Dodge (6)

Adept Occult Knowledge and Research (5)

Journeyman Computers (4)

Apprentice Martial Arts (3)

Novice Recovery (2)

Trouble Talking to People (Doubles)

Character Sheet

CHARACTER: _____ PLAYER: _____

Traits	Trouble Trait	Wound Levels <input type="checkbox"/> Shaken (rank penalty to Resist) <input type="checkbox"/> Unharmed <input type="checkbox"/> Charged (rank bonus to Resist) <input type="checkbox"/> Spent (no Interrupt) <input type="checkbox"/> Wounded (only Defend or Resist) <input type="checkbox"/> Incapacitated (can do nothing) <input type="checkbox"/> Dead (only with More Deadly option)
	Preferred Combat Style	
	Armor	
	Karma Points	
	Magic Points	
	Session Points	
		Money

Weapon Rank	Weapon Description	Target Number for Critical Damage by Armor Rank					
		[U]	[L]	[M]	[H]	[V]	[E]

Possessions and Notes:		The 5x5 (Five by Five) Roll Roll 2 Dice If you roll Doubles you fail, but your bad luck has earned you the potential for better luck later on. Give yourself a Karma Point. If you didn't roll Doubles, you have a chance for success. If you see a 6, the roll always equals 0. If you don't see a 6, multiply the two dice together to find the result of the roll. Find the TARGET # for the RANK of the Trait you are using on the table below. If the result of your roll is equal to or lesser than the TARGET # you succeed.

Rank	-	Un	No	Ap	Jo	Ad	Ex	Ma	Gr	EI	Wo	Le	+
Target #	-	0	2	3	4	5	6	8	10	12	15	20	+

0 = Unskilled (default)

- = no roll, automatic failure

+ = no roll, automatic success

Combat

Combat is played out in "rounds." Each round is composed of 5 specific steps played out in order. Each step is called a "segment." When a player takes an action during a segment of the combat, it is said to be that player's "turn."

Combat Sequence:

- (1) All Players with a wound level no higher than "Charged" can roll to Interrupt.
- (2) Any Player who successfully rolled their Interrupt task will take a turn now.*
- (3) The GM takes a turn for all of the NPC's involved in the combat now.
- (4) All Players take a turn now,* even players who already took a turn in segment 2.
- (5) If there are still combatants who wish to fight, return to segment 1.

* Players take turns performing combat acceptable actions that require no more than a few seconds of time: make a single attack, move 10 to 15 feet, draw a weapon, attempt to resist the effects of damage, etc.

Roll to Interrupt

In Five by Five combat, normally NPC's act first and PC's act second. Players who successfully roll to "Interrupt" are able to take an extra turn in combat and this turn happens before the GM's turn. This roll is a standard 5x5 roll.

Make an Attack Roll

If you want to target an enemy with the intent to inflict damage, you must "Make an Attack Roll" This is a standard 5x5 roll. If you possess an Attack Trait, use the Trait's Rank descriptor to determine your Target Number. If you roll this number or less with a standard 5x5 roll you have successfully attacked your target and inflicted one wound. If you don't possess an Attack Trait, your Target Number to attack is Unskilled (0).

Combat Styles

There are three standard combat styles in Five by Five, each has its own individual strength. These are: Sword and Board, Dual Wielding, and All out Attack.



Sword and Board

If a character has equipped a shield then they are able to attempt to Defend against a single attack made on them in segment 3 without forfeiting their turn in segment 4. A character may still only Defend against one attack each round.

Dual Wielding

Any character may dual wield. This gives the player a rank bonus to “Interrupt” in Segment 1, improving their chance to make an additional attack each round. The player must declare one weapon as their primary weapon and the other weapon as their off-hand weapon. Their attack in Segment 2 must be with their off-hand weapon, and their attack in segment 4 is with their primary weapon. A character can dual wield any light or medium weapon that can be held in one hand including pistols.

All out Attack

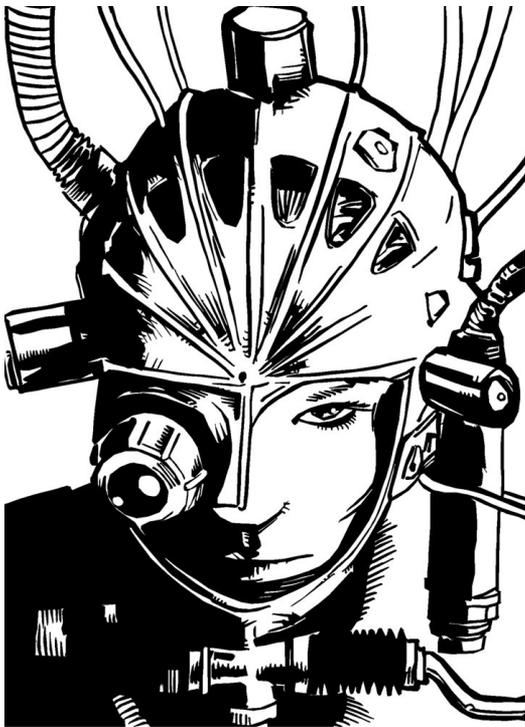
“All out Attack” is fighting without benefit of dual wielding or a shield. The advantage of “All out Attack” is that the attacker is able to concentrate on an effective offense. Their Weapon Rank gains a rank bonus improving their chance to inflict critical damage.

Area Attacks

An area attack is an attack that can potentially harm multiple targets with one "Attack" roll. The attacker suffers a rank penalty to their "Attack" roll for each additional target they wish to hit, but if the roll succeeds, all targets suffer 1 wound level of damage. There is no roll for critical damage with an area attack. Area Attacks always do only 1 wound level of damage to each target.

Roll to Defend

A player may attempt to Defend against a single attack made on them by the GM in segment 3, potentially turning a hit into a miss with a successful 5x5 task roll, but they must forfeit their turn in segment 4 in order to do this. This is a standard 5x5 roll.



Critical Damage

When you strike an enemy with an attack, you have a chance to inflict critical damage.

Normally, a successful attack (that is not Defended) always inflicts one Wound Level of damage. If the attacker successfully rolls Critical Damage with a 5x5 Critical Damage task roll, the attack inflicts two Wound Levels of damage.

The Target Number for rolling Critical Damage is found by referencing the Weapon Rank of the weapon used for the attack and then reducing this Rank based on the Armor worn by the Defender.

Weapon Ranks

Weapons have Ranks and related Target Numbers just like characters have traits. Weapons are recorded as: Weapon Rank Weapon Description (Target Number) ... where "Target Number" is the number needed to score Critical Damage against an opponent that is not wearing any armor.

Weapon Rank	Weapon Description	TN
[U] Unequipped	No Weapon, Unarmed and Untrained	6
[L] Light	Unarmed with Training (Magic Bolt, Kung Fu, etc.) Dagger, Sling, Pistol	8
[M] Medium	Short Sword, Mace, Staff, Pistol, Rifle, Short Bow	10
[H] Heavy	Long Sword, Mace, Rifle, Pistol, Crossbow, Long Bow	12
[V] Very heavy	Great Axe, Great Sword, Maul, Rifle, Great Bow	15
[E] Epic	Siege Weapons, Vehicle Mounted Weapons*	20

*Epic Rank Weapons do not gain the benefits of Combat Styles: Sword and Board, Dual Wielding, or All Out Attack.

Example Weapon Listing: Medium Short Sword (10)

Armor Ranks

Armor is recorded in a manner similar to weapons, but Armor does not have a Target Number. Instead Armor lists a Rank Penalty amount in place of a Target Number. The Penalty is applied to the TN of the attacking weapon.

Armor Rank	Armor Description	Penalty
[U] Unequipped	No Armor, Normal Clothing	0
[L] Light	Heavy Clothing, Padded Armor, Leather Armor	1
[M] Medium	Chain Shirt, Ballistic Vest, Studded Leather	2
[H] Heavy	Chain Coat, Ballistic Jacket, Breast Plate	3
[V] Very heavy	Full Platemail, Riot Gear	4
[E] Epic	Dragon Scale Armor, Powered Space Trooper Armor	5

Ranks listed are examples only and should be scaled to match the range of armor and weapons appropriate to the setting.

Example Armor Listing: Medium Chain Shirt (2)

Using Weapons and Armor

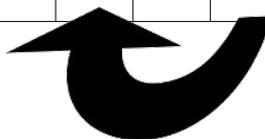
When making an attack against an opponent, find the TN for Critical Damage based on your weapon on the Target Numbers Table. Reduce your Weapon's TN a number of steps on the table based on the armor worn by your target.

Example:

An attacker armed with a *Medium Short Sword* (10) has successfully hit an enemy wearing a *Medium Chain Shirt* (2). The attacker finds his TN of 10 on the Target Numbers Table and moves this number 2 steps to the left because of the Armor penalty for Medium Armor.

Trait Rank	-	Un	No	Ap	Jo	Ad	Ex	Ma	Gr	El	Wo	Le	+
Target Number	-	0	2	3	4	5	6	8	10	12	15	20	+

The attacker's target number to score Critical Damage on this enemy is 6.



Armor Penalty isn't only used to reduce your chance of suffering critical damage. The GM may apply your Armor Penalty to actions that involve movement or grace. For example: it would be more difficult for a person in plate armor to jump over a pit than it would be for a person wearing leather or no armor.

Weapon & Armor Traits

Fantasy and technological settings often place an emphasis on the equipment your character can carry and use. Some genres, like Superhero comic book themed settings, will favor traits over equipment. In this kind of game, your GM may allow you to choose traits that take the place of weapons or armor. In a Superhero game, for example, the GM may allow each player to have a Weapon or Armor Trait of a given rank in addition to those traits granted during character creation.

It costs **1 Session Point** to add a new Weapon or Armor Trait with the Rank of Light [L].

It costs **2 Session Points** to improve a Weapon or Armor Trait from Light [L] to Medium [M].

It costs **3 Session Points** to improve a Weapon or Armor Trait from Medium [M] to Heavy [H].

It costs **4 Session Points** to improve a Weapon or Armor Trait from Heavy [H] to Very Heavy [V].

It costs **5 Session Points** to improve a Weapon or Armor Trait from Very Heavy [V] to Epic [E].

Wounds and Resistance

Wound Levels measure your state of health during the game. Recovering from the effects of combat when not in the throes of battle happens almost instantly for adventure heroes unless the character becomes incapacitated.

During Combat characters suffer wounds when successfully hit by attacks and must use one of their actions on their turn to attempt a **Resistance Roll** if they wish to overcome these deficits. A Resistance Roll is a standard 5x5 task roll.

Unharmed – You feel fine.

Charged – The effects of combat fill you with adrenaline. You get a Rank Bonus to attempt Resistance Actions for as long as you are Charged. If you successfully perform a Resistance action, change your status from Charged to Unharmed.

Spent – The effects of combat are wearing you down. You cannot roll to Interrupt as long as you are Spent. If you successfully perform a Resistance action, change your status from Spent to Charged.

Wounded – You're hurt. You can do nothing at all on your turn but Defend or attempt to Resist the effects of damage. If you successfully perform a Resistance action, change your status from Wounded to Spent.

Incapacitated – You can't continue the fight. Your character has been rendered unconscious or otherwise eliminated from combat. You cannot use a Resistance Action. Characters who are Incapacitated suffer a Shaken State until they participate in a recovery scene.

Shaken State

Wound Level "resets" to Unharmed at the end of each combat. "Shaken State" is a special character status that represents the lasting effects of injury or fatigue. While "Shaken" a character suffers a Rank Penalty to all Resistance Rolls to illustrate the fact that the character is already hurt.

To recover from a Shaken State a character must participate in a recovery scene. A recovery scene is a role-play that depicts a period of time for rest and or medical treatment allowing the character to heal.



The Role of the GM

If you decide to take on the role of the Game Manager you will be counted on to know and understand the rules of the game and how they work. You will need to adjudicate proper use of the rules and make reasonable judgments in those instances where the rules just don't seem to fit the situation.

As the GM you will "set the scene for adventure" providing an impetus to the other players so that they can react to the situations you present. The players will take control, responding, acting, and emoting as their characters would. This interaction will serve to tell the characters' stories.

Challenges

As a story teller, the GM plots out a few key scenes to help get the other players involved and engaged. These scenes should challenge the players by asking them, "What do you do?"

Scenes will often include challenges. Challenges are obstacles for the player characters to overcome and will give the players the opportunity to bring their character's traits into play.

The most common challenge is combat, but other challenges could include a social challenge where a player must convince an influential NPC to assist the characters, or a technical challenge where a character must repair a vital piece of machinery. Challenges can be almost anything.

As GM take a peek at the traits your players have chosen for their characters. These are expressions of the things the players are interested in doing. Be sure to include some challenges that will allow the players to use the traits they have chosen.

Understanding the Game

Traits are the bread and butter of this game system. Decide what trait is best suited to a task. Roll the Target Number for that trait's rank or less to succeed.

It's a simple system, but it's one that can be easily abused. Traits that are too general that might be applied to many types of tasks are to be discouraged. As a GM it's your job to nix traits like: "Jack of all trades," or "Omniscient."

If a player picks something like this, try to offer alternatives that narrow things down a bit ... perhaps "Handy-man" instead of "Jack of all Trades," or "Scholar" in place of "Omniscient." Depending on the setting and the tone of the game you may decide that these too are too broad.

Feel free to experiment and don't be afraid to make mistakes. If you decide after play has commenced that a Trait is too powerful, talk it over with the player. The point of this game is to facilitate everyone's enjoyment, but not to make things too easy. Part of being heroic and in telling heroic stories is being able to solve problems bigger than yourself.

Also, if a player has chosen a trait that is simply too specific, or never gets brought into play, allow them to change it to something that they will be able to use more often.

The Setting

Five by Five is designed to be flexible enough to be played in a variety of different game settings. As such it does not contain a setting of its own.

When choosing a setting, get with the other players and talk about your favorite books, movies, and television shows. What sort of world have you always wanted to experience? Who are your favorite adventure heroes? How might your own adventures differ from theirs? What is the tone of your story? Is your story dark and gritty or light and fluffy? Is it lusty and sexual or noble and pure? Players should talk about tone in addition to setting to determine the kind of game that everyone wants to play.

Managing Combat

Combat for the GM has been kept as simple as possible. Generally the only actions you will need to take for your NPC's in combat is Attack and Critical Damage. NPC's don't Interrupt, Defend, or Recover. NPC's will also have different Wound Levels than the PC's depending upon how challenging you want the combat to be.

The opponents that players face during combat come in four categories to reflect the varying difficulties of combat challenges. The weakest enemies are the Peons, followed by Thugs, then Henchmen, then Bosses.

Peons

Peons are the weakest form of challenge that the players will be called upon to fight. They never roll for Critical Damage so their attacks only ever inflict 1 point of damage on a successful hit. Also they have only 1 wound level: "Defeated." (It isn't necessary to record when a NPC is uninjured, this is their assumed status at the beginning of combat.) So once a player successfully hits a Peon, that Peon is down for the count.

If a player successfully rolls Critical Damage against a Peon they may immediately make a free attack against a second Peon if one is within range. (A character may attack a maximum of 2 Peons in a single segment of the combat round.)

Peons generally outnumber the PC's, usually 2 or 3 to 1. Be careful though, as this can make them dangerous. Players are only allowed one Dodge each round of combat, so it can be easy to become overwhelmed.

Thugs

Slightly tougher than Peons, Thugs have 2 wound levels: "Scratched," and "Defeated." A PC can drop a Thug in one shot if they are lucky enough to roll Critical Damage. And unlike Peons, Thugs do get to roll for Critical Damage as well, potentially inflicting two wound levels on a player in a single blow. Often Thugs and Players will meet in equal numbers.

Henchmen

Tougher still, Henchmen will have 3 or 4 wound levels. (For example: 3 levels of "Scratched" and a final level: "Defeated.") A player isn't going to be able to take out a Henchman with one shot. These are tough fights. Players will often outnumber the Henchmen and still find these battles to be a challenge.

Bosses

The Boss is the toughest fight the players will face. The Boss will have more than 5 wound levels. Players will generally only face 1 boss at a time, but the boss is always skilled and well armed, so the players should expect a dangerous challenge when they enter combat against a Boss.

Special Wound States

Some NPC's may have special instructions related to their specific wound levels. Maybe the NPC gains a bonus or penalty to their Weapon or Armor Ranks when wounded, for example.

Example NPC (Henchman)

Troll

Roll to Hit: Expert Pummel (6)

Weapon: Heavy Club (12)

Armor: Heavy Thick Skin (3)

Wound Levels: Scratched,
 Regenerating,
 Defeated.



At the beginning of each combat round, if a troll's wound level is "Regenerating" reduce the troll's wound level to "Scratched."

Vulnerability to Fire: Fire always inflicts Critical Damage to Trolls.



Magic

In adventure fiction, Magic can do just about anything. In a fantasy setting of Wizards and Dragons, the diversity and power of Magic is part of the fun! To balance the use of Magic as a trait without limiting its scope, Five by Five uses Magic Points.

Magic Points

Magic Points are virtual currency that a player can "cash in" to create magic effects. This limits the usage of magic and helps keep it from over shadowing game play. As a player consider the rank of your Magic trait when describing an effect. A Novice Wizard can't create a volcano in the middle of town, but a Legendary Wizard might be able to.

As a GM only "charge" a player for spells that have an effect on the flow or outcome of the story. Minor uses of magic that are done for fun or flavor should never cost a magic point. If the player has an attack trait with a special effect that is magical in nature but otherwise works the same as any other attack trait, this won't cost any magic points to use either.

A player should tell the GM what effect they are trying to create with their magic. The GM will decide if this is plausible given the rank of the characters Magic trait and the overall impact the spell effect will have on the story. Once the outcome has been agreed upon, the player will pay the GM a Magic Point and roll the dice.

A failed Magic roll means that the spell was cast but that the desired outcome was not achieved. The player still loses the Magic Point. This means that spell casting characters of low rank are not going to be able to utilize the power of their Magic Points as consistently or as effectively as spell casters of a higher magic rank. Magic as a trait cannot be attempted Unskilled.

Every Magic using character has 5 Magic Points when at full power. However this total is subject to the Armor Penalty of the Armor worn by the magic using character. So, a character in Medium Armor (2) will only have (5 - 2 =) 3 Magic Points. A Magic Using character regains lost Magic Points at the rate of 1 Magic Point per night of rest.

Bat in the Belfry

Bat in the Belfry is an introductory adventure for the Five by Five RPG designed to be played in a High Fantasy style setting of Wizards, Elves, and Dragons. If you are not going to be the GM, don't read this part of the rules until after you have had a chance to play through this scenario. Reading this adventure before you play it can ruin the fun of the game for you. If you are the GM, read the next few pages over a couple of times to get a feel for the events of the adventure.

The Purple Unicorn

The Purple Unicorn is a small traveler's inn on the outskirts of the remote community of Lakewood. "Bat in the Belfry" assumes that the characters are brand new Five by Five characters that have just been created. Tell the players that they have traveled here in search of their fortunes as adventurers. Explain that they have scant belongings right now, only the clothes on their backs, a travel pack with food and a blanket, and a knife.

The Purple Unicorn is named for a painting on canvas of a Purple Unicorn that hangs over the fireplace. The painting is very primitive it looks as if it was done by a child. It was in fact painted by the inn keeper's little girl, Sally when she was six years old. Sally is now a young woman of twenty. She works here at the Purple Unicorn with her father.

Sally's father, the inn keeper, is Ollie Brewsky, a jolly, portly, older man with a bald head and a bushy gray beard. He polishes glasses behind the bar and greets the PC's with a smile.

Aside from the PC's there is only one other patron at the Purple Unicorn today. A small bipedal creature, not human at all, he looks more like a 3 foot tall anthropomorphic rat in trousers and suspenders. The Ratling's name is Templeton.

Tell the players that they have heard of Ratlings and might have even seen one before. The race is well reputed as traveling venders who trade and sell wares any place they go.

Templeton is friendly and welcoming to the PC's. He has got a collection of adventuring gear on his wagon outside and will happily take the PC's out to do some shopping before it becomes dark.

In Fantasy RPG worlds characters don armor and wield weapons. Newly created fantasy heroes often have limited access to such equipment, but will improve their weapons, armor, and other such trappings as they adventure and grow in experience.

Tell the players that their characters each have 100 gold coins to spend.

Templeton's Store

Dagger	Light Melee Weapon (8)	5 gold
Short Sword	Medium Melee Weapon (10)	20 gold
Warhammer	Medium Melee Weapon (10)	20 gold
Long Sword	Heavy Melee Weapon (12)	40 gold
Pole Arm*	Heavy Melee Weapon (12)	25 gold
Maul*	Heavy Melee Weapon (12)	25 gold
Staff*	Medium Melee Weapon (12)	5 gold
Great Sword*	Very heavy Melee Weapon (15)	80 gold
Leather Sling	Light Ranged Weapon (8)	5 gold
Short Bow*	Medium Ranged weapon (10)	30 gold
Long Bow*	Heavy Ranged Weapon (12)	60 gold
Crossbow**	Heavy Ranged Weapon (12)	45 gold
10 Arrows	5 gold
10 Crossbow Bolts	5 gold
Lantern	(4 hours of light per fill).....	15 gold
Lantern Oil	(pint flask, will fill the lantern twice)	5 gold
Torch	(1 hour of light)	1 gold
Leather Armor	Light Armor (1)	20 gold
Chain Shirt	Medium Armor (2)	70 gold
Breast Plate	Heavy Armor (3)	200 gold
Shield	10 gold

* Weapon must be wielded with 2 hands, cannot Dual Wield or use a Shield.

** You must spend an action loading the crossbow, but you gain a Rank Bonus to your attack roll.

Ollie's daughter Sally is a pretty young woman with long curly red hair, a pale freckled complexion and bright blue eyes. She has a warm welcoming smile and chats openly with the PC's and Templeton as she brings them food and drink.

The Haunted Church

On the other side of Lakewood there exists an old abandoned church. Lately there has been talk of sightings of the undead on the old church grounds. The people of Lakewood are fearful of such supernatural things and have stayed well clear of the old church.

If the players ask about local rumors or mysteries, Ollie will tell the PC's about the church. If the players decide to investigate the old church proceed to, "Investigating the Church."

Otherwise, that night while everyone sleeps, Ollie's daughter, Sally disappears. Ollie will then ask the PC's to investigate the church because he fears that the strange sightings and his daughter's disappearance may be somehow connected.

Ollie will offer the PC's 250 gold (total, not each ... though he can be haggled to 300 ... it's all he has) to find Sally and return her safely to him.

Investigating the Church

The church is made up of three encounter areas:

- 1) The Cemetery
- 2) The Auditorium
- 3) The Bell Tower

1) The Cemetery

There is a small gated cemetery beside the church and as the PC's approach they can see some figures moving about among the tombstones.

"There are four human figures standing among the tombstones of the old church cemetery. They lumber aimlessly, moving in slow circles seemingly without purpose or direction."

The hope is that when the figures in the cemetery are described, the players will imagine that they are seeing zombies. This is what the people of Lakewood believe and that fear has kept them well away from the old church.

The "zombies" are townspeople who have gone missing. (Players investigating Sally's disappearance, do not see Sally among the zombies here.) The players don't know it, but these people aren't really zombies at all, although they certainly aren't themselves.

If the players approach the figures in the cemetery they will see people with blank vacant expressions as if in a trance. The people cannot be made to leave the cemetery although if someone were to pick them up and carry them off, they wouldn't resist. If attacked, they will not fight back or attempt to avoid injury.

The Secret of the Zombies (Don't tell the players, yet!)

A Harpy (also known as a Siren) has taken up residence in the belfry of the church. Harpies are fearsome creatures with the head and wings of a vulture and the body of a beautiful young woman. Under cover of night, Harpies will hide their faces beneath a hood and hunt for food. Harpies capture and eat humans by entrancing them with their song.

In the cemetery are people entranced by the Harpy's song that she has gathered to feed herself. The Harpy has intentionally placed some of her entranced victims in the cemetery to frighten people and keep her nest in the belfry of the church a secret.

Once entranced, the effects of the Harpy's song last for 24 hours. As long as the Harpy sings to her "food" every day, the "zombies" will remain under her spell.

2) The Auditorium

The main room inside the church is a big worship hall. Many broken pews and other debris clutter the floor inside the hall, but more obvious to the PC's will be the presence of a half eaten human body in the middle of the floor.

(A "zombie" was left here to frighten people away, but fell prey to a swarm of rats. The rats scattered when the door to the church was opened and have hidden in the debris.)

When the players enter the auditorium and approach the body, the swarm attacks.

The Rat Swarm

The swarm rolls once to Hit for each player. A successful Hit does one wound level of damage. The rats don't do critical damage.

Swarm Wound Levels; Roll to Hit; and Armor Ranks

- Full Swarm – Master Attack (8), but easy to hit: Unequipped Armor (0).
- Half Swarm – Journeyman Attack (4), but harder to hit: Medium Armor (2).
- Quarter Swarm – Unskilled Attack (0), but really hard to hit: Very Heavy Armor (4).
- No Swarm – the remaining rats scatter in defeat.

Because of the nature of the swarm, the rats attack less and less effectively as the swarm takes damage, but inflicting critical damage on the swarm becomes more difficult as the swarm's size is diminished.

3) The Bell Tower

A long wooden ladder at the back of the church leads up into the church's belfry. The trap door entrance to the belfry is open. Players who climb the ladder will come up through the trap door. If the players are looking for Sally, then she is here. If not, then an unknown woman is here instead. She is entranced like the people in the cemetery.

No one else is here. There is a bed of straw in the corner of the room and it seems that various baubles are hidden in the makeshift mattress. A large bell hangs from the ceiling filling the majority of the room. The four walls of the tower each have expansive openings that expose the belfry to the outside. It is through one of these "windows" that a winged woman in a hooded cape flies to land near the players.

The Harpy

In the first round of combat, the Harpy throws back her hood revealing her Vulture head and begins to sing. In the second round of combat, the Harpy's song will begin to effect the players and they will need to make a resistance check to avoid becoming entranced.

The players have a round to act freely before the Harpy song starts to take effect. The song targets and effects one player each round. Once one player fails their Resistance Roll, the Harpy will try to effect the next. The Harpy does not need to "Roll to Hit" with her song.

If players have a magic user who thinks to cast a spell to silence the song, that could work. Another option is to ring the bell. If players think to ring the bell, the sound of the bell will drown out the harpy's song and prevent it from effecting them.

Reduced to melee combat, the Harpy can be defeated, but if the players don't think to counteract her song in some way, they could fall under her spell and this adventure will end in tragedy.

Harpy

Roll to Hit: Journeyman Scratch (4)

Weapon: Light Claws (8)

Armor: Unequipped Normal Clothing (0)

Wound Levels: Scratched,
 Scratched,
 Scratched,
 Defeated – the Harpy

flies out the window attempting to flee.

If the Harpy is defeated she tries to escape. If the PC's have a means of Ranged Attack they may take a final shot at the Harpy. If this shot hits, the Harpy is slain, otherwise she escapes and may return to haunt the players another day.



If the Harpy dies, her "zombies" are immediately freed of her spell. If the Harpy escapes, her victims will remain entranced for about 12 hours before returning to normal.

The Harpy's nest contains various "shiny" valuables she took from her victims, including jewelry, that can be sold for a total of 300 gold. There is also a magic silver dagger.

Light Magic Silver Dagger (10) – Players gain a Rank Bonus to their "Roll to Hit" when attacking with Magic Silver Dagger. Notice that although the Magic Silver Dagger is a light weapon it has the TN of a medium weapon for inflicting critical damage.

Example Fantasy Characters

Sir Edgar

Attack: Expert Swordsman (6)
Weapon: Medium Short Sword (10)
Armor: Medium Chain Shirt (2)
Preferred Combat Style: Sword and Board.
(Edgar carries a Shield)

Gold: 0

Unspent Session Points:
Total Session Points:
Karma Points:

Traits:

Expert Swordsman, Attack (6)
Adept Shield Bearer, Defend (5)
Journeyman Knight of the Realm (4)
Apprentice Muscle (3)
Novice Toughness, Resistance (2)
Trouble Being Stealthy (Doubles)

Leeta the Witch

Attack: Journeyman Magic Bolt (4)
Weapon: Light Magic Bolt (8)
Armor: Normal Clothing (0)
Preferred Combat Style: All out attack.
(Leeta carries a Staff)

Gold: 95

Unspent Session Points:
Total Session Points:
Karma Points:
Magic Points: 5

Traits:

Expert Spell Caster (6)
Adept Seductress (5)
Journeyman Magic Bolt, Attack (4)
Apprentice Dodge, Defend (3)
Novice Running and Jumping (2)
Trouble biting my tongue (Doubles)

Bergo the Hunter

Attack: Journeyman Archer (4)
Weapon: Heavy Longbow (12)
Armor: Light Leather (1)
Preferred Combat Style: All out attack.
(Bergo carries a Short Sword)

Gold: 20

Unspent Session Points:
Total Session Points:
Karma Points:

Traits:

Expert Raised by Wolves (6)
Adept Animal Friendship (5)
Journeyman Archer, Attack (4)
Apprentice Animal Reflexes, Defend (3)
Novice Animal Instincts, Interrupt (2)
Trouble Acting Civilized (Doubles)

Jenny the Elf

Attack: Apprentice Knife Fighting (4)
Weapon: Light Dagger (8)
Armor: Light Leather (1)
Preferred Combat Style: Dual Wielding.
(Jenny uses a dagger in each hand)

Gold: 70

Unspent Session Points:
Total Session Points:
Karma Points:

Traits:

Expert Sneaky (6)
Adept Reflexes, Interrupt (5)
Journeyman Thin but Wiry, Defend (4)
Apprentice Knife Fighting, Attack (3)
Novice Song and Dance (2)
Trouble Saying "No." (Doubles)

Robo-A-No-No

ROBO-A-NO-NO is an introductory adventure for the Five by Five RPG designed to be played in a Comic Book style setting of spandex clad super powered heroes. If you are not going to be the GM, don't read this part of the rules until after you have had a chance to play through this scenario. Reading this adventure before you play it can ruin the fun of the game for you. If you are the GM, read the next few pages over a couple of times to get a feel for the events of the adventure.

CREATING A SUPERHERO!

In many other RPG settings one of the primary goals could be said to be the accumulation of wealth to purchase goods and services for the betterment of the characters. Superhero RPG's are different. Your character's are heroes driven to right wrongs and correct injustices. Your character may be a billionaire playboy or a down on his luck cub reporter, but put on your costume and all of that doesn't matter.

Equipment in a Superhero themed RPG doesn't really exist as “goods” you can purchase from the local blacksmith (or techno wizard.) Instead, you will have TRAITS that take the place of your equipment. Your weapon might be an actual physical weapon that one could find in an RPG of a different genre, like dual pistols, or a bow that fires trick arrows, or it might be something spectacular like laser vision eyes, or something more ordinary, like simply your fists. Whatever your weapon is, in a Superhero themed comic book universe it is defined just like any other trait.

PICK WEAPON AND ARMOR TRAITS

To create your superhero pick a Weapon Trait, and an Armor Trait (see Weapon and Armor Traits on page 24) for your character and give each a Rank of [M] Medium. Alternatively, you may choose to take either a Weapon Trait or an Armor Trait (but not both) and give that single trait a Rank of [H] Heavy.

PICK A GRAND MASTER TRAIT

Superheroes are ... well, super! To reflect this, create your new character with one trait that is of Grand Master Rank! Describe a superpower or something spectacular to explain this trait. This trait is your hero's key power and will help define your hero's overall flavor.

PICK SOME OTHER TRAITS

Choose three more traits, and assign them the ranks of: Apprentice, Journeyman, and Adept respectively. Now would be a good time to think about what your character does when not in costume. Tie at least one trait to your character's civilian identity.

PICK A TROUBLE TRAIT

You will also need to pick a Trouble Trait. Superheroes are just like everyone else. They can't do everything well. Pick something your character has trouble doing.

PICK A CIVILIAN IDENTITY

Your superhero should have a “civilian identity” someone to be when he isn't wearing the costume. Many superheroes choose to keep their civilian identities secret and separate from their hero identities to protect the people they love.

PICK A CHARGE

Speaking of people we love, every superhero character needs a “charge.” A charge is a special NPC character whom the superhero cares about, that connects them to the real world, and motivates them to make the world a better place. Decide who your character's charge is and why they are important to your character.

TECH FEST!

"Tech Fest" is Hero City's premier technology convention. New technologies, computer games and electronics are all showcased.

Hero's might all have different reasons for attending Tech Fest. Maybe it's the latest computer game that attracts them, or a super advanced sound system. Maybe they just want to find one of those cooking machines that works like an old style turntable/record player to cook pizza (The Pizza Player 5000).

As the GM, spend a moment with each player role-playing a reason for them to be attending Tech Fest. Whenever possible, include the Hero's Charge. Heroes should be here in their civilian ID's with friends and/or family.

After everyone is established as attending Tech Fest, read the following to the players:

“You are about to go home and leave the bustle of Tech Fest behind, when one of the exhibits catches your attention. Not that you are the only one drawn here...the exhibit is huge....a robot. Made of plastic polymers and colored in pink and silver chrome, the giant is in the form of a shapely young woman nearly 20 feet tall.”

The fem-bot dances in place to whatever music is piping in and smiles as she waves to the crowd. Occasionally, she will stop and speak in a sultry voice.

“Remember Tam Robotics for all your robot desires.”

A sign beside the exhibit talks about Tam Robotics and reveals that they robot giant's name is Janice.

Abruptly, Janice stops and twists around. Her eyes glow red and the glow seems to wash over the crowd as the robot suddenly begins to gurgle and growl in a deep strained voice...

“Destroy, Kill... Destroy, Kill...”

With this, the robot smashes a fist violently into the crowd as people scream and scatter....

Give the players time to react. They need to consider the safety of their Charges and also the other people here at the Tech Fest. Further, those who have secret identities to protect will need to find an opportunity to slip away and change into costume.

Ultimately, the only way to deal with Janice the Giant Robot is to destroy her.

Janice

(Rampaging Giant Fem-Bot)

Roll to Hit: Expert Punch (6)

Weapon: Heavy Giant Fem-Bot Fist (12)

Armor: Heavy Giant Fem-Bot Metal Body (3)

Wound Levels: Scratched,
 Banged,
 Dinged,
 Dented,
 Defeated – Janice

shorts-out and stops moving.

Vulnerable to Lightning / Electricity:

Janice always suffers Critical Damage from electrical based attacks.



After the combat, if the players wish to investigate the reason for the attack, they may be drawn to check out Tam Robotics.

TAM ROBOTICS

An Internet search for Tam Robotics reveals that it was a cutting edge robotics company founded in the late 1950's. Then at the peak of its power, the company's founder and key designer, "Douglas Tam" died in an automobile accident. Tam Robotics fell to bankruptcy shortly thereafter as news of the inventor's death caused the Tam Robotics' stocks to plummet.

There is an address for the original factory/offices of Tam Robotics and a picture of the building clipped from a newspaper article.

Tam Robotics is a large, unimpressive warehouse of a building. The building sits in a veritable ghost town of old, run-down warehouses and factories. The building is falling apart. Many of its windows have been broken in and the interior has been ransacked. A search of the building will turn up an old, aging letter in an envelope, that has somehow survived, buried in the debris.

If the players read the letter:

My Dearest Janice,

I have never been good with words. I am more comfortable around machines than people. I try every time that I see you to tell you how I feel...I think that you know already, but I still can't bring myself to say the words.

This letter is meant to say the things that I cannot say. If you are reading this, then I even found the courage to mail it. That is a big step for me.

Please, after you read this, take a moment ... please, just take a moment to consider what a life with me could be like. Consider me as a woman might consider a man and not as a secretary considers her employer.

Janice, I love you.

Yours forever,

Doug

Players might remember that the fem-bot that attacked Tech Fest was named Janice. Janice McGillicutty still lives in Hero City, and a bit of detective work (or a phone book... there aren't a lot of McGillicutty's) can lead the Heroes to her.

Janice was just as much in love with Doug, but she never saw his letter. Douglas died in an automobile accident before he could mail the letter. After his death, Janice was heartbroken. She never married. If the Heroes find Janice and give her Doug's letter, she will be overcome with emotion, but she will help the Heroes in anyway that she can.

"Douglas had a secret lab." she will explain...
"A place where he could work on new inventions
without being bothered by the stock holders."

THE HIDDEN LAB

Douglas has a family home outside of the city. When Doug died, he left the home (and a sizable family fortune) to Janice in his will. Janice moved into the home and lived there for several years. As she got older, the home was just too big for her and she moved out. She could never bring herself to sell or rent the home and so it has set empty for the last few years. She pays people to maintain the grounds, but has not been back to the place otherwise.

She gives the Heroes the keys to the home and explains that in the main study, in a book shelf near the fireplace, there is a book... "Robots of the Future" by Douglas Tam. This book is a trigger which will cause the bookcase to slide open...revealing a stairway down into the secret lab.

Upon entering the house, the Heroes will find the front door unlocked and the study occupied.

A speaker box in the center of a long conference table addresses 4 costumed super Villains who sit here in the study...attending some sort of meeting. If they are stealthy, Heroes can overhear part of the meeting:

“... I have tested my control over Tam's robotic constructs and the control is sufficient for my needs. Now, what I require is capital. This is where you come in, my colleagues. Work with me and my fool proof plan will make us all rich!”

“WAIT...the monitors! Superheroes! You fools were followed!!!”

There are 4 super powered villains here: Puma-Girl, Atomic Waste, Streaker Girl, and Muscle Head ... all brought here to participate in the grand scheme of the mega super villain: Overload!

When it is discovered that their secret meeting has been breached the villains leap to action. There is nothing else to do but...FIGHT!!!



Puma-Girl

(Cat-girl Assassin)

Roll to Hit: Adept Scratch (5)

Weapon: Light Cat Claws (8)

Armor: Epic Agility (5)*

Wound Levels: Scratched,
 Scratched,
 Defeated

*Because of Puma-Girl's super cat like reflexes it is very difficult to score a substantial enough hit against her to inflict critical damage.



Atomic Waste

(Radioactive Alien)

Roll to Hit: Journeyman Radiation Grab (4)

Weapon: Medium Radioactive Touch (10)

Armor: Medium Radiation Suit (2)

Wound Levels: Scratched,
 Scratched,
 Defeated

Special Damage Effect: If Atomic Waste inflicts critical damage on a hero, that hero must roll an immediate resistance check or become incapacitated.

Streaker Girl

(Insane Super Speedster)

Roll to Hit: Expert Fast Punch (6)

Weapon: Light Fist (8)

Armor: Unequipped Skin Tight Costume (0)

Wound Levels: Scratched,
 Scratched,
 Defeated

Special: Streaker Girl can take two turns in segment 3, or Streaker girl can ignore one attack made against her in segment 2, turning a successful hit into a miss.



Muscle Head

(Strong but dumb ...)

Roll to Hit: Master Punch (8)

Weapon: Heavy Super Strength (12)

Armor: Heavy Invulnerability (3)

Wound Levels: Scratched,
 Scratched,
 Scratched,
 Defeated



The captured villains will admit that they were contacted via a static filled voice through their TV sets. The voice told them to come here and learn of a heist that would make them rich. They know nothing more about the job because they were interrupted during their meeting.

With the villains defeated, the heroes are able to explore the hidden lab that is below the study. The lab is full of a variety of high tech equipment and one final obstacle, a robot. Unlike the Janice-Bot, this robot is about 6' 2" and male with an athlete's build.

This robot is the image of the perfect 1950's man. It is dressed in a light blue knit sweater, worn over a white dress shirt, white slacks and tan loafers. On its plastic face is a permanent wide smile, and its eyes glow an eerie, evil red.

... Interlopers! You have ruined my plans... now I must find a new vehicle from which to orchestrate my conquest of your pitiful world. But, before I abandon this body that the late Professor Tam was so kind to leave behind for me to discover ... Over Load has one final game he wants to play with you!!!



Doug-Bot **(Possessed Robot)**

Roll to Hit: Grand Master Punch (10)

Weapon: Very Heavy Robo-Fist (15)

Armor: Medium Robo-Body (2)

Wound Levels: Scratched,
 Banged,
 Dinged,
 Dented,
 Defeated (see below.)

Vulnerable to Lightning / Electricity:

Doug-Bot always suffers Critical Damage from electrical based attacks.

When the Doug-Bot's wound level reaches "Defeated," it speaks to the Heroes:

... CURSE YOU, Heroes! You have made an enemy this day... Over Load will remember your faces... and when you least expect it ...
I will come for you... Bzzzz!

At this, the glowing eyes of the Doug-Bot flair an intense red and the Doug-Bot Explodes!!

All heroes in the lab must roll an immediate Resistance Action or suffer damage from the explosion. Any hero wounded in the explosion has their wound level set to “Shaken.”

Damage to the lab itself is superficial. If this game was a “one-shot” damage to the heroes won't really matter, but if your group plans to play more superhero adventures with these characters in the future, any hero who has taken damage in the explosion will start the next game battered and bruised and wrapped in various bandages until they have had sufficient time to heal.

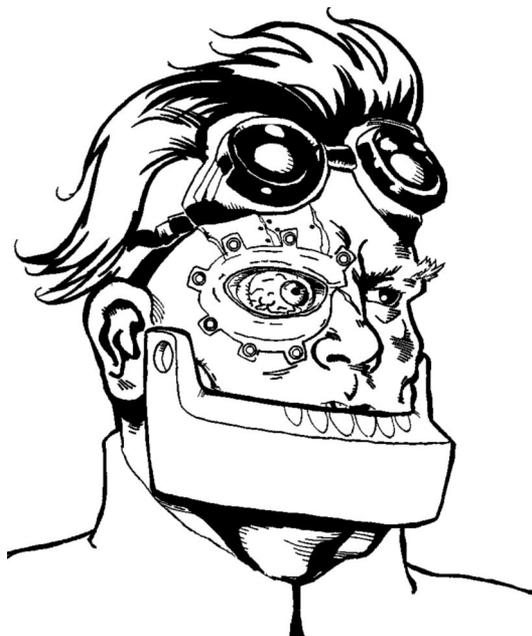
If the Heroes return to Janice with news of what has transpired, she offers to allow them to move into the Tam Mansion and use it and Doug's secret lab and all its technologies. This will enable the Heroes to come together in an official headquarters for future adventures!

Flow of the Adventure

The setup and structure of Robo-A-No-No is very linear. It assumes that after the fem-bot attack at Tech Fest the players will wish to investigate Tam Robotics. It assumes that this will lead them to the discovery of the love letter, which will then lead them to seek out Janice. Janice will in turn guide them to the Tam mansion and the hidden lab. Things may indeed play out this way ... or they might not.

If the heroes don't successfully follow-up on the fem-bot attack at Tech Fest, then Overload's plans will proceed accordingly. Overload will send his super villain henchmen out on a “bank heist.” Here the heroes will have a new opportunity to confront the villains and learn of the hidden lab. If this happens however, it is unlikely that the heroes will ever meet Janice or obtain her patronage.

Overload does not appear in this adventure, but his presence should serve as the promise of a future threat and could evolve into a recurring menace in an ongoing superhero campaign.



Example Superhero Characters

Power Ball

Attack: Grand Master Throw Ball of Energy (10)

Weapon: Medium Energy Ball (10)

Armor: Medium Costume (2)

Preferred Combat Style: All out attack.

Unspent Session Points:

Total Session Points:

Karma Points:

Traits:

Grand Master Throw Ball of Energy, Attack (10)

Adept High School Football Quarterback (5)

Journeyman "Luckily I landed on my head."

Resistance (4)

Apprentice Dodge, Defend (3)

Trouble controlling his temper (Doubles)

Civilian ID: Bobby James, High School Student

NPC Charge: Penny Topps, Cheerleader
Girlfriend

Anvil

Attack: Martial Arts (5)

Weapon: Light Martial Arts (8)

Armor: Heavy Metal Skin (3)

Preferred Combat Style: Dual Wield.

Unspent Session Points:

Total Session Points:

Karma Points:

Traits:

Grand Master Metal Skin, Resistance (10)

Adept Martial Artist, Attack (5)

Journeyman Stuntman (4)

Apprentice Dodge, Defend (3)

Trouble making decisions (Doubles)

Civilian ID: Mark Majors, Stuntman

NPC Charge: Holly Fields, Girl Next Door

Pop-Up

Attack: Apprentice Punch in the face (3)

Weapon: Medium Fist (10)

Armor: Medium Costume (2)

Preferred Combat Style: All out attack.

Unspent Session Points:

Total Session Points:

Karma Points:

Traits:

Grand Master Surprise Move, Interrupt (10)

Adept Short Range Teleport – "Pop" (5)

Journeyman Stunningly Beautiful (4)

Apprentice Punch in the face, Attack (3)

Trouble operating technology (Doubles)

Civilian ID: Amanda Keller, Fashion Model

NPC Charge: Drake Madison, photographer

Dollbaby

Attack: Apprentice Tiny Doll Tackle (3)

Weapon: Heavy Tiny Doll Tackle (12)

Armor: Unequipped Tiny Doll Body (0)

Preferred Combat Style: All out attack.

Unspent Session Points:

Total Session Points:

Karma Points:

Traits:

Grand Master Tiny Size, Defend (10)

Adept Computer Genius (5)

Journeyman Stealth (4)

Apprentice Tiny Doll Tackle (3)

Trouble talking to boys (Doubles)

Civilian ID: Rebecca Horowitz, Comp. Nerd

NPC Charge: Hammond Massey, Boy Nerd who
doesn't realize she "likes-him" likes him.

Appendix - A: the Math of 5X5

Growing up, I didn't have access to a game store, or money to buy games. I raided my boardgames for what few dice I could find, and those dice all had 6 sides. That experience has stayed with me through the years, and as a game designer one of my goals has been to make the most of ordinary 6 sided dice.

The 5X5 roll is a testament to what the simple "six-sider" can do.

For those who need to know the math behind the die rolls, this appendix dissects the 5X5 roll and shows the exact odds for success at each Rank.

5x5 Die Roll Table

	1	2	3	4	5	6 (0)
1	Doubles	2	3	4	5	0
2	2	Doubles	6	8	10	0
3	3	6	Doubles	12	15	0
4	4	8	12	Doubles	20	0
5	5	10	15	20	Doubles	0
6 (0)	0	0	0	0	0	Doubles

There is a 1 in 6 chance to roll doubles. That's a 16.66% chance of rolling an automatic fail and gaining a Karma Point. (It's also a 16.66% chance for success with the Trouble Trait.)

There is a 5 in 18 chance of rolling 0. That's a 27.77% chance of rolling a success when testing an Unskilled Trait.

Rank / Target Number to Percentage Table

	Target Number	Chance in 18	Percentage Chance	Rank
-2	Doubles	3 in 18	16.66	Trouble
-1	No roll. Automatic failure.			Unskilled with a Rank Penalty
0	0	5 in 18	27.77	Unskilled (Default)
1	2	6 in 18	33.33	Novice
2	3	7 in 18	38.88	Apprentice
3	4	8 in 18	44.44	Journeyman
4	5	9 in 18	50.00	Adept
5	6	10 in 18	55.55	Expert
6	8	11 in 18	61.11	Master
7	10	12 in 18	66.66	Grand Master
8	12	13 in 18	72.22	Elite
9	15	14 in 18	77.77	World Class
10	20	15 in 18	83.33	Legendary
11	No roll. Automatic Success.			Legendary with a Rank Bonus

The 5x5 roll does not produce a bell curve. Each Rank above 0 adds a consistent 5.55% to your chance of success. The much lauded d20 boasts a 5% improvement with each number increase. The behavior of the 5x5 roll is comparable, but it utilizes the most common die type available. Plus, you can't roll doubles with a 20 sided die, and doubles are fun!