

# **A Fistful of Frenchmen**

**A 24-Hour RPG**

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Version 0.9 Alpha

## **Fistful of Frenchmen**

The year is 1844. Following their successful defense against Mexican forces, the Republic of Texas faced a new foe. Quick to take advantage of their weakened position, French forces moved in by sea, seeking to regain a foothold in North America. Their forces were more disciplined, more determined, and better equipped than the forces of the Mexican Army, and soon France was calling Texas a French Territory. The United States of America, while wary of their new neighbors, had no cause for war, and left the Republic to their own devices. No Texan was comfortable living under French Rule, however, and the native tribes were divided, some siding with the French and others preferring the devil they knew to this new invader.

Texans began to fight back. Not all at once, but slowly and surely, the movement began. Gunmen, drifters, and bandits from nearby territories heard of the profit to be made fighting off the French Occupancy.

In this swirl of native warriors, French soldiery, and Texan roughnecks, any enterprising man (or woman) can make their mark. Will you?

## **Authors Note...**

This is the first RPG system I've ever *completed*. Plenty of ideas live on in notebooks scattered between Pennsylvania and Rhode Island, ranging from rules for designing mechs for combat to a game based on making stats and playing out a wargame on a chessboard, using different pieces depending on faction. Anyways.

This booklet contains everything you need to run a game of *Fistful of Frenchmen*, barring some six-sided dice (referred to throughout as d6's). Included are character creation, sample characters along with a blank character sheet, ideas and examples for gear, and a 'beastary' of sorts, showing both simple and complex enemies and allies, with guidelines for creating more.

The next version (0.9 Beta) will hopefully include some finer balancing, more gear, more sample characters, and possibly a sample adventure.

The 24-Hour RPG Contest will hopefully be a great incentive for getting this done, and might prove a useful model for future endeavors. My thanks to 1KM1KT for putting it on, and to Rob Lang for advertising it and running a blog of free RPGs for inspiration (I referenced his guide to RPG organization several times over the course of this project). I'd also like to thank my apprentice, Iz'tel Cloud'unta, for the ideas she threw at me, whether or not they made it into the final product.

## Character Creation

When building a character for *A Fistful of Frenchmen*, you will start with a concept for how you want your character to turn out. For instance, maybe you want to be a proud native warrior, adept with a lance in the saddle. Perhaps you'd rather be a cattle-rustling bandit. You could even be a 'professional entertainer' at a local saloon. Your concept will help you choose your Qualities, Training, Skills, and Talents. Most of character creation in *FOF* is point-buy; your Qualities, Skills, and Talents are bought with points, although the exact manner does differ.

### Qualities

Each character in *A Fistful of Frenchmen* has four qualities. Guts, Reflexes, Intuition, and Tact. Guts is a measure of the physical strength and toughness of your character, Reflexes are their coordination and speed, Intuition is a grab bag of cunning, smarts, and perception, while Tact is your general manner with others.

Your Qualities are purchased with 8 points, on a one-for-one basis. No Quality may be higher than 3 on a brand-new character, although they may rise higher over the course of your adventures.

Your Qualities help determine other things about your character. Your Hit Points are equal to your Guts+3. You have two wound levels, and once the first is exhausted you begin to take a -1 penalty on all rolls. Your defense is equal to your Reflexes+Intuition+6.

For example, Jim has decided he wants to play a cold-hearted vigilante, riding across Texas looking for people to avenge. He wants his character to be sturdy, and quick on the draw. With his eight points he puts 2 into Guts, 3 into Reflexes, 2 into Intuition, and 1 into Tact. This gives him 5 hit points per wound level, and a defense of 11.

### Training

This is where your character chooses the skills they are most familiar with in life. There are 11 skills in all, ranging from Explosives to Gambling. You choose three of these skills to be Practiced, one to be Forbidden, and one to have a free Specialization in.

A practiced skill costs one point less per rank. Since the cost of a rank is usually equal to the rank itself (first rank costs 1 point, second rank costs 2) this gives you one rank in each of these skills for free.

A forbidden skill costs an *extra* point per rank, raising the price of the first rank to 2, the second to 3, and so on. Some things come more naturally to people than others.

A specialization gives +1 to rolls that make use of it, but -1 to all other rolls using the skill. For example, a character with the skill Herding (Cattle) would have +1 when herding cattle, but -1 when herding sheep or goats. Usually, a Specialization costs 2 skill points.

Jim looks over the list of skills and makes his choices. He wants his character to be practiced in Perception, Riding, and

Tracking, marking Charm as a forbidden skill and taking the specialization Revolver on the Ranged Weapon skill.

### Skills

Once you've chosen your character's training, you move on to fleshing out their skill list. You have 9 points to do this with, using the rules referenced earlier (point cost equal to rank). Favored skills cost one less, forbidden skills cost one more, and Specializations cost an extra two points (one time expenditure). The highest a skill can be for a starting character is 3.

Jim's vigilante is shaping up. To give him some more breadth of skill, Jim chooses to put 6 points into maxing out Perception and Riding, dropping a single point each into Tracking and Stealth, and bringing Ranged Weapons up to 2 by spending three more points.

### Talents

There are things some folk can do a bit better than others. There are other things some folk can do a *lot* better than others. Talents cover these extremes of skill, allowing characters to squeeze off multiple shots in the blink of an eye, clear their holster in record time, or pick a railroad man's pocket, watch-chain and all.

Some talents have a Skill or Quality prerequisite, but not all. Some function like Specializations without the drawback, others allow performing certain special moves in combat.

Each character may choose one talent at character creation. Others may be added later.

After taking a brief look over the list, Jim selects one that closely serves the concept of his vigilante; Slap Leather.

The final character looks like this...

Charles Keeton

Guts 2: Reflexes 3: Intuition 2: Tact 1:

Wounds      [] [] [] [] []      Defense 11

                 [] [] [] [] []

Skill	Rank	Quality	Misc	Total
Perception	3	2	0	+5
Ranged (Revolver)	2	3	0	+5
Riding	3	2	0	+5
Stealth	2	2	0	+4
Tracking	1	2	0	+3

Talents: Slap Leather (+2 attack during a quickdraw contest)

## Mechanics

Everything in *FOF* is resolved through use of one of the simplest of life's little random number generators: The d6. There are two types of roll in *FOF*: the opposed roll and the target number.

An opposed roll takes place whenever somebody is trying to stop someone from doing something, or when two people are contesting a particular goal. Two merchants haggling, two riders racing, a cowboy trying to hide his tracks from a pursuing brave, all are opposed rolls (business vs. business, riding vs. riding, and stealth vs. tracking, respectively). An opposed roll doesn't always mean immediate defeat, but may just mean an advantage has been scored by the winning roller.

A Target Number is set whenever a character has a task to perform and is not being actively opposed (the exception to this is combat, where despite being actively opposed, the attacking character is rolling against a target number set by the defenders Defense score). Running a herd of cows into town, spotting a French army patrol, and throwing a knife at a target are some examples.

In either of these rolls, the mechanic is the same.  $2d6 + \text{stat} + \text{skill} + \text{bonuses}$ . Taking Jim's character from earlier, if he were to attempt to outrun Jacques, the French scout, in a horse-race to the nearest outpost, he would roll  $2d6 + 3$  (ranks in Riding)  $+ 2$  (Guts, the Quality determining Riding), for a total of  $2d6 + 5$ . If, on the other hand, Rough Ol' Al, the town's notorious outlaw boss, challenged him to a showdown in the town square, he would roll  $2d6 + 2$  (ranks in Ranged Weapon)  $+ 3$  (Reflexes, the Quality determining Ranged

Weapon)  $+ 1$  (Specialty: Revolver)  $+ 2$  (Talent: Slap Leather), for a total of  $2d6 + 8$ .

## Combat

At the start of combat, each character rolls 2d6 and adds their Reflexes or Intuition, whichever is highest. This determines initiative for the combat.

Each round, a character has two actions. Actions include...

- Moving ten paces
- Firing a single shot from a revolver, shotgun, or rifle
- Making a melee attack
- Drawing a weapon
- Reloading two shotgun shells, three rifle bullets, or six pistol rounds
- Mounting a horse
- Riding 30 paces

Certain things may be done for free, like waving, shouting, loading an arrow, etc.

When a character is reduced to 0 hit points in their second wound level, they are considered dead.

## Gear

Characters in *FoF* are assumed to start with whatever gear their profession requires. You may keep track of ammunition or not – if you do, a bandolier holds 20 shotgun shells, or 24 rifle bullets, or 36 pistol rounds.

Feel free to add to this list. It is by no means exhaustive, and is hopefully a good example of how equipment in *FoF* should look.

Saddle	Riding checks made without at -2 penalty
Pistol	Range 30 paces, 6 shots, 2 damage
Shotgun	Range 30 paces, 2 shots, 4 damage (+1 attack and damage within 10 paces)
Rifle	Range 60 paces, 12 shots, 3 damage
Bow	Range 40 paces, 1 shot, 2 damage
Knife	Range 10 paces (thrown), 2 damage
Tomahawk	Range 10 paces (thrown), 3 damage
Boilerplate	Absorbs 1 damage, -1 to reflexes
Telescope	+2 to Perception checks
Lasso	+2 to Herding checks
Deck of Cards	Allows for Gambling

A character can carry a number of items equal to 5+Guts. Of course, this doesn't account for what he might have in his saddlebags (horses follow the same rule, and usually can carry around 8 items, not counting the saddle and rider).

## Skill List

Skill (Quality)	Uses
Business (Tac)	Haggling, Selling, Buying
Charm (Tac)	Bluffing, Persuasion, Intimidation
Explosives (Int)	Dynamite, Nitroglycerine
Gambling (Tac)	Poker, Blackjack, Dice
Hand Weapons (Gut)	Knife, Tomahawk, Spear
Herding (Ref)	Cattle, Goats, Sheep
Perception (Int)	Spotting, Listening, Searching
Ranged Weapons (Ref)	Pistols, Bows, Shotguns
Riding (Gut)	Horses, Races, Mules
Stealth (Ref)	Sneaking, Ambushing, Shadowing
Smithing (Gut)	Shoeing Horses, Making Tools
Tracking (Int)	Following a Trail, Surviving

## Talent List

Talent	Effect
Quick Draw	Free to draw weapon: +2 quickdraw init
Born on Horseback	Does not require saddle
Frontier Scout	+3 to Tracking for survival purposes
Solid Hand	+2 to Herding
Steady Shoulder	May fire both barrels of a shotgun simultaneously, with a +2 to hit and damage
Fanhammer Shooter	May fire two shots of a pistol per action, provided only one pistol is used and the free hand is empty. -1 to hit.
Marksman	Weapon range increased by 10 paces
Crossguns	May fire two pistols simultaneously. -2 to hit.
Diehard	+2 HP per wound level
Old Prospector	+1 to Mining and Explosives
Riding Shot	May make a single ranged attack during a riding action, at a -4 penalty.
Slap Leather	+2 to attack during quickdraw contests
Knife Fighter	When a 6 is rolled during a knife attack, reroll the die and add the second result.
Silver Tongue	+2 when persuading or haggling
Forceful Presence	Opposed Intimidation check for -2 to attack
Artful Dodger	Make a Stealth check (-2 penalty, opposed by Perception) to pick a pocket as a free action during a movement.

## Sample NPC's

Wallace Keaton, Town Lawman

HP:    [] [] [] []      Defense: 12

     [] [] [] []

Charm (Intimidation) +3, Riding +4, Ranged Weapons +6,  
Tracking +4, Business +3

Talent: Silver Tongue

Marshal Quiton, French Commander

HP:    [] [] [] [] [] []      Defense: 11

     [] [] [] [] [] []

Charm +4, Riding+4, Hand Weapons (Saber) +3, Perception  
+3, Business +2

Talent: Forceful Presence

Hunting Dogs

HP:    [] [] []      Defense: 13

     [] [] []

Tracking +6, Stealth +4



# Character Sheet

Name

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Qualities

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HP    □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Defense:

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Initiative:

Skills

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Talents

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Gear

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# Character Sheet

Name

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Qualities

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HP    □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Defense:

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Initiative:

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