

# OTHER SKYLINES

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## INTRODUCTION

Other Skylines is a rules-light roleplaying system created to blend the roles of player and game master and nurture collaborative storytelling. Rather than determining if an action succeeds or fails, dice rolls decide who narrates the outcome of an event and shape the tone the story takes.

## CHARACTERS

The player writes a short three-sentence description of her character. The description can include background, motives and personality, profession, unusual abilities, odd quirks, or anything else the player and game master feel is relevant.

*Merganser grew up in an apartment above a small grocery store. His ability to speak to birds led to a fascination with ecology and nature writing. He currently writes essays for literary magazines and teaches occasional classes at a small college.*

As the character grows and learns the player can add one new sentence to the description that emphasizes a narrow trait gained during recent adventures.

Advancement generally takes place at the end of a story arc, or when a plot point related to the character has been resolved.

*After helping solve the Case of the Cursed Hardware Store Merganser gained a POLICE CONTACT.*

*Merganser spent part of his summer learning how to use a BLOWGUN.*

## ACTIONS

For basic tasks, the player rolls two dice of any type. The higher number determines who narrates the outcome of the action, with the player describing what has happened if the number is even and the GM resuming narration if the number is odd.

The lower number shapes the tone of the attempt. An even number means that something positive has happened, while an odd number represents an unpleasant twist. The exact meaning of the tone roll is up to the player or GM. The tone does not necessarily correspond to overall success or failure: it could be used to determine unforeseen consequences of actions.

*Merganser is trying to quietly follow a faun he saw slip down an alley. The player rolls a d20 and a d8, getting a 14 and a 5. The player explains that the faun made its way down the alley too quickly for Merganser to shadow (the negative tone), but that the PC notices an odd root the creature dropped in the littered passage.*

If the PC has an advantage in a situation due to her background, equipment, or other circumstances, the player gets to call one of the rolls beforehand. The player can announce that she will narrate the event and roll for tone, or decide that the action will have some positive aspect and roll to see who gets to describe the outcome. If the situation is more difficult, the GM makes the call and lets the player roll for the remaining factor. In either case, the call must be made before the roll.

*Merganser eventually finds the faun. He approaches cautiously, and speaks to the creature with the language of birds to help ease tensions. The player decides that the encounter will play out in a positive way and then rolls a d12 to see who gets to describe the details.*

Players and game masters should use the shifting narratives as a way of inspiring one another. The idea of a player taking the reins for a little while gives puzzles to the GM and opens new avenues for the story.

## NOTES

When my best friend and I first played an RPG in second grade we didn't follow the rules in any real sense. We thought of fantastic characters, rolled funny dice, and took turns describing what was happening. It was chaotic and it was beautiful. This system is an attempt to capture that sense of flexibility and shared creation.

Any suggestions or ideas would be welcome. You can contact me directly at shae (dot) davidson (at) gmail (dot) com.