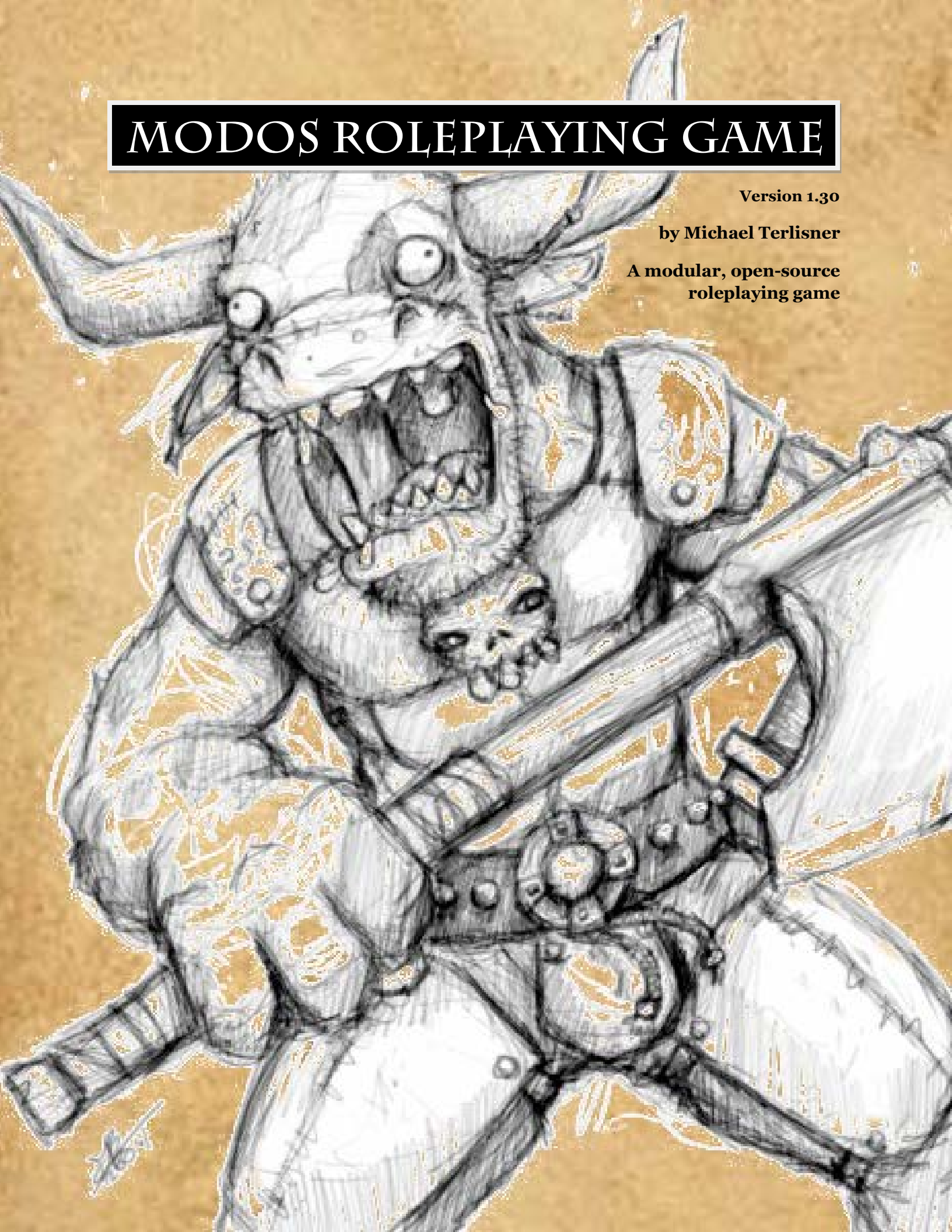


MODOS ROLEPLAYING GAME

Version 1.30

by Michael Terlisner

A modular, open-source
roleplaying game



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Edition 1.30.1 notes:

This revision features important updates to the combat posture and combined action systems. It provides spells, monsters, and special gear to support legendary-level play. Additional revisions have been made to clarify examples and rules, and streamline the necessary die rolling and math processes. Future 1.3 versions will include more artwork, further playtesting, and full expression of the rules catalog content.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Arnold (playing as Merloon the Wizard): I hold the dragon rib up, toward the swirling clouds, and kneel. “Modos, God of Balance, Lord of Life, take my offering. This abomination of order breathes no more. Let its dust return to you, and its chaos be banished from your realm.” Does that seem to appease him?

Greg (playing as the Guide of Modos): The only response Merloon gets is additional lightning coming from the stormy tornado. The winds blow out the braziers near you, and you’d better make a contest to avoid getting blown away!



Merloon, level 1
Attributes: P 8, M 10, MP 13
Skills: cast spell (fire) +0 (+1)
Perks: spell implement (spellbook)
Gear: spellbook, walking stick, longsword d8+1, cloak, brass brooch, straw hat
Hero points: time-related feats, like initiative contests or deceive contests to make him

seem younger.

Concept: A budding wizard, he learned to create fire almost by accident. Once Merloon discovered that secret, no one could stop him from pursuing other arcane secrets. Someday, he’ll learn to age in reverse, or live forever. Merloon’s goals are to discover as many secrets of magic as possible, and to maintain his friendships, since he has so few. His flaw is that his focus on magical lore resulted in a certain neglect of social skills, making him abrasive or offensive to some.

(Designer notes: Merloon’s player is Arnold. Merloon has done some studying, but at level 1 he’s still an apprentice. His spellbook has some essentials in it, like armor and sleep, but his introduction to magic was the flame, so he gets his skill point in that. He carries a longsword for the times when his magic fails him, but he eschews armor since the cast spell skill gains a bonus in the absence of armor.)

Welcome to Modos! Modos RPG is a modular, open-source, roleplaying game designed for fast play, roleplaying flexibility, and simplicity. The rules were written first in outline form, so that anyone playing it could add or subtract rules as desired. This is what’s meant by open-source. Further, the game’s simplicity allows it to take on new personalities by adding sets of rules or adventures. This is why it’s called modular. The end result is, hopefully, the roleplaying game that perfectly meets your needs.

Another important aspect of this game is that it’s a gift to the roleplaying community. Written in a time of video game consoles, phone apps, and computer-graphics movies, this game recognizes that imaginative people have many alternatives to old-fashioned tabletop games. Making it free to distribute and use in other people’s works is an effort to make RPGs more accessible and attractive in a trying time.

This rulebook will tell you what you need to know to play and to make your own content for the game, but if you are brand-new

to roleplaying games, you should make sure that you have a good Guide of Modos (GM) or you should browse the introductory chapters of other roleplaying games to get an idea of what roleplaying is. This rulebook takes the basics (dice use, roleplaying, game mastering) for granted, in order to streamline its presentation.

Reading Guidance

Several features of this book exist to increase your depth of understanding. Each chapter begins with a play example featuring one or more aspects from that chapter. The examples progress over the course of the book, so new concepts are explained only on their first instance.

Following the play examples are character sheets for the characters featured in each example. These characters gain levels throughout the book, and an additional section – designer notes – is included in their character sheets to explain the decisions made in

progressing the character.

Also, you'll find a handful of shaded sidebars throughout the book which provide guidance on, or additional information about, the rules in that section. These are not essential for playing the game, but they can be helpful.

Last but not least, e-users of this material will find that most keywords, and the table of contents, are hyperlinked for quick navigation.

Chapters Preview

The chapters of this rulebook are arranged in sequential order, beginning with this

Introduction ([chapter 1](#)). The first thing you'll need is a Guide of Modos ([chapter 2](#)). The players in your game will then need Characters ([chapter 3](#)), who come equipped with Skills ([chapter 4](#)), Perks ([chapter 5](#)), and Equipment ([chapter 6](#)). Special abilities for those characters are referred to as Magic ([chapter 7](#)), which is the optional and final preparation for Conflict ([chapter 8](#)). If your game is cooperative, you'll need non-player-characters (or monsters) to fight, so a Bestiary ([chapter 9](#)) follows Conflict. These are all the rules. If you'd like to add more, you can introduce Modules ([chapter 10](#)) to the game. Finally, the [appendices](#) address any remaining questions you might have about the game.

Chapter 2: Guides of Modos

Betty (playing as Montana Smith, adventurer): Spider webs? Ha. I push them aside with my hand, grinning behind me at Horacio, and thrust my torch forward into the next chamber. What do I see?

Greg (GM): The torchlight reveals many flickering shadows. A pedestal sits in the middle of a small, circular chamber, but it's hard to make out details. Horacio hangs back; he seems fearful. (Greg rolls some dice. This time, he's only crying wolf, so Betty won't know when he's making an important roll.)

Betty: It's about time we found that thing. What about the Gem of Zaruli? Is it on the pedestal?

Greg: It's hard to tell from where you are. The pedestal is up a few stairs, and bathed in shadow. Roll detect. (Greg asks Betty to roll a contest using the detect skill. Detect is based on the mental attribute, so Betty rolls a d20, adds Montana's mental bonus to that, and adds Montana's skill points in the detect skill as well. Greg then decides that spotting the gem would be difficult for the average person, so he applies the +8 difficulty bonus to the d20 roll that he'll make to oppose Montana's effort. He rolls a 10, for a result of 18.)

Betty: (Not stressed about this contest, Betty decides to take half to speed things up. So instead of rolling her d20, she just assumes that she rolls 10, and adds her mental bonus of 1. Montana has no skill points in detect, so Betty can't add any to his contest.) I get 11. (Greg shakes his head to let her know that she didn't succeed, or beat his difficulty contest of 18.) I get it; it's too dark in there. I walk confidently up to the pedestal. "Horacio, this is it. Your price is paid. Hasta la vista."

Greg: Horacio says in Spanish, "I wish to stay and help, if you please."

Betty: I think I understood the "stay" part of that. I nod and turn back to the pedestal. What do I see?

Greg: The yellow torchlight reveals a dark, finely cut gem on a very dirty pedestal. You recognize it as the lost Frog Gem of Zaruli. You hear Horacio's heavy breathing over your shoulder.

Betty: I heard that the gem is trapped. I'm going to carefully ... look around the pedestal for traps ... my total bonus is 1.

Greg: (Rolls d20 for Betty, since she shouldn't know the difference between searching poorly and finding no traps. Greg adds Montana's bonus, for 8 total. Greg takes half on the difficulty contest to find the trap, for 14.) It looks safe enough.

Betty: I snatch the frog gem quickly, suppressing a shudder of revulsion, and turn toward Horacio triumphantly.

Greg: Horacio smiles in awe . . . and greed. Roll parry. You hear a snap and a short hissing sound, as the pressure plate under the gem slides upward. (He takes half on the fight (missile) contest for the previously undiscovered poison dart trap. The trap is level 3, and gets a total of +5 to its fight (missile) contest, so Greg's difficulty contest is 15. Greg rolls d4 for poison dart damage and gets 3.)

Betty: Aye! Hero point! (Betty spends a hero point to dodge the darts, in line with her character concept. So for her parry contest, she rolls d20, adds 1 skill point in defend (parry), and rolls a d6 for the hero point.) 16!

Greg: A series of darts shoot through the air from the far wall, flying over the pedestal. You take no damage. (Greg doesn't explain where the darts go so Betty can explain her split-second escape.)

Betty: Montana whips around again, bringing the gem up just in time to deflect a dart!

Greg: That's brave. Take your hero point back (Greg rewards Betty with another hero point for sacrificing Montana's goals: in this case, the frog gem). Let's see if the gem breaks. (Rolls defend

(parry) for the gem, against the dart's earlier contest of 15.) One! Ouch. The gem cracks in two, deflecting a dart into Horacio's neck.

Horacio bolts. You can't see him outside the torchlight, but you hear someone collapse down the corridor.



Montana Smith, level 1

Attributes: P 10, M 12, MP 9

Skills: defend (parry) +1, knowledge (scholarship) +4 (+0)

Perks: specialize (scholarship)

Gear: satchel, whip d4-1 M, fedora, wristwatch, six-shooter d6

Hero points: to make really lucky dodges, and perform unbelievable whip-work.

Concept: An archaeologist and professor, he can't tolerate gaps in the historical record, so he goes out to fill them (goal). Montana's luck and knowledge will increase over time, but he'll always be deathly afraid of frogs (flaw), and highly vulnerable to women's charms (flaw).

(Designer notes: Played by Betty, this level 1 (amateur) Montana is still working on his dissertation, but his archaeology knowledge is expert by average-person standards. He'll probably increase defend (parry) and fight (melee) (for his whip), and focus on other luck-related features, like the informed or observant perks.)

A Guide of Modos, or GM, is a special player. His (or her) job is to tell the story of the game, decide the outcomes of many actions, and play every character that the other players are not. This allows the player-characters, the PCs, to focus on playing their characters and on the story that the GM has prepared. A GM is not required, but without a GM, each PC needs to create the story more or less on the fly. This chapter is written for the dedicated GM, starting with some general-use topics, and moving into topics divided by their timing in the game: pre-game, in-game, and post-game.

Adjudication

This rule set is very bare-bones. While this contributes to speed of learning and ease of use, it also means that you have more to do because you must handle every situation for which there is no explicit rule. Adjudication means making and implementing a judgment on how the GM thinks that a situation should turn out. This process happens frequently in the game because many things, like attributes, skills, combat maneuvers, hero points, and even magic spells leave much to the imagination, so it's up to you to make them come to life in a way that makes the game more fun. You have two allies in this quest: the campaign theme and the players.

The campaign theme is a guide to what does and doesn't belong in the game. For example, a character has the profession (healer) skill. The player decides that this character has diagnosed a villager with acute spinal meningitis using that skill. While the player has made a good effort to add interest to the game, the GM recognizes that such a condition doesn't fit well because his campaign theme says that the game takes place in a post-apocalyptic, bronze-age, tribal setting, not a modern hospital. The GM could reward the PC with the standard +2 roleplaying bonus to the character's healing contest to treat the condition, but he also decides that the character's efforts simply reveal that the villager has a fever and requires bloodletting.

PCs are also a great source of adjudication help. The PCs know both what they want their characters to do and how they want the game to feel, so you can explain what happens and ask the players for their choice of response. For example, if the GM has a clever trap planned, one that unfolds like a Rube Goldberg machine, and results in a trapdoor opening, it could be up to the player to decide if his character's physical quickness or mental acuity are more likely to save him from the trap. This sort of player-adjudication help also happens with most initiative contests, discussed in the [Conflict chapter](#).

Segmenting

Closely related to adjudication because it requires GM fiat, segmenting is another important tool for the GM. Segmenting is the process of taking a continuous system and dividing it into as many discrete, useful, equal parts as necessary. The need for segmenting comes up primarily when a player wants new special abilities, skills, or non-damaging spells in the game. Adding such an element is a great way to customize your game, but it can create imbalance between PCs if not segmented properly.

For example, a player wants his vampire character to be able to shapechange into a swarm of bats. The GM and player agree that it's not something that improves with practice (which would make it a skill) and is not limited by metaphysical health (which would make it a spell), so the GM decides to make the shapechange ability into a perk tree. He starts by imagining three new perks in a perk tree: alter face, bat form, and swarm form. These perks are discrete and useful. But the change in significance from alter face to bat form is much greater than the change from bat form to swarm form. They're not equal. So the GM adds another perk between alter face and bat form: grow wings. He now has four perks in the tree, which means the character must be at least level 4 to achieve the swarm form, since characters get one perk per level. Has he created as many useful parts as necessary? He can use the level titles to guide him here: swarm form seems like a power worthy of a "master," and level 5 is called "master" level. So the GM and player discuss the possibility of adding one more perk to the perk tree for swarm form.

Segmenting is a great tool for expanding the game. Whenever it's necessary, remember the considerations: discrete, useful, equal, and necessary.

Environments

What do a trench-filled battlefield, a seething asteroid landscape, and a towering wall of encrypted security protocols have in common? They're all environments you can find

in a game of Modos RPG. Your campaign theme suggests what environments the PCs could encounter, but every environment follows the same basic rules. How many rules is up to you; the PCs can explore freely and not worry about rules, or they can use contests when you want a more concrete outcome, or you can go round-to-round and use extended conflict rules to negotiate the landscape, almost treating the landscape as a character. However you want to run the environment, you should consider light levels, obstacles, and traps before doing so.

Light Levels

Every environment has a light level. There are four levels of light, which are important to different game elements, like equipment, perks, and spells. These are:

- **Bright light.** This is usually daylight or any other lighting bright enough to create shadows and illuminate up to long range or further.
- **Dim light.** Full indoor lighting, twilight, or ambient bright light coming from the outdoors. It casts shadows, and a dim light source (like a fireplace) illuminates up to short range.
- **Shadow.** This is the light level of moonlight, indirect lighting, or weak light sources (like a torch). Everything is in shadow under shadowy light, which limits vision up to close range. In shadow, skills requiring vision can suffer from challenging (-4) difficulty penalties.
- **Darkness.** Darkness is the absence of light, often found in caves and on moonless nights. If a character is lucky, he'll be able to see something up to an arm's length away. In the dark, skills requiring vision can suffer from difficult (-8) difficulty penalties, or worse.

Obstacles

An obstacle is a special part of the environment. Obstacles are events that force characters to make a choice: overcome the obstacle or circumvent it. They're called an

event because an obstacle can be, for example, a sinkhole in the road, an encounter with a former lover, or a Trojan virus attack. The common thread is that what the character decides to do will alter the course of the story. If precise timing is important to the outcome, you should use extended conflict rules for an obstacle. If not, roleplaying and a few relevant contests should suffice to negotiate the obstacle. When you use an obstacle to make a conflict more interesting, like a chain-link fence between two hostile parties, you'll make small alterations to the combat posture and range rules, as appropriate. See the [Conflict chapter](#) for more information on these rules.

Cover

An important environmental detail to consider is that which characters can hide behind, called "cover." Taking cover does not require contests or special actions, and most offensive-posture combatants can simply walk around it. However, in spellcasting and other special situations, cover can partially or fully protect characters from damage or effects, so it's important to know when cover is available.

Cover can take many different forms, and its general requirement is that it is something fairly solid. For example, a graveyard littered with gravestones, a grand hall with heavy tables, or a copse of sturdy trees all provide cover. A paper-walled dojo, house of glass, or field of crops do not. See the [Magic chapter](#) for more information.

Traps

If a sinkhole diverts characters into a bomb in the road, an illicit lover lures a husband into an admission, or a Trojan virus attack contains anti-program weapons, you have a special type of obstacle. This is a hidden obstacle, or for short, a trap. Traps are obstacles that are usually designed to deal damage of one type or another. A trap is like a character: it has attributes, skills, and gear, and can fulfill its purpose quickly or over time.

Because traps are usually hidden from their targets, players can't roll to see how well they avoid the traps; doing so would require

knowledge of them. If a PC has a chance to avoid a trap or asks to detect traps, you should roll that PC's detect contest for him. The [Bestiary chapter](#) gives design guidelines and examples of common traps.

Non-Player-Characters

If player-characters are the protagonists of a play, then non-player-characters (NPCs) are every other character on the stage. An NPC can have any amount of detail, from just a name to the full suite of attributes, skills, perks, and equipment; how much is up to you. There are four basic types of NPCs: generic, monsters, villains, and allies.

Generic

In most cases, you can create a generic NPC with only 2 elements: a name and a concept. Like a teacher, miner, or sprinter, a generic NPC probably focuses his talent on one thing. Main characters are the ones who deserve development and move the plot forward; generic NPCs fill the gaps between the main characters. Give your generic NPC one trait in his concept (a prefabricated table works well for randomly determining these), and if events lead you to need a character sheet for him, look up the one-second monster rules in the [Bestiary chapter](#).

Monsters

Some NPCs are dropped into an adventure only to give the PCs something to fight. These are commonly called monsters, although they can be animals, people, or beasts as well. As the GM, your job is to give monsters a degree of believability; most living creatures have goals and flee before dying.

Villains

One type of NPC you'll want to write up in advance is the villain. The villain is an NPC who gives your PCs a reason to act – the antagonist. Creating villain character sheets is covered in the [Bestiary chapter](#). However, creating villains and playing them are two different beasts.

Every character has a concept. A

villain's concept is where you'll include all the usual villain details: goal, flaws, motivation, assets, allies, henchmen, etc. The other detail on which you'll want to spend some time is the villain point (see hero points in the [Player-Characters chapter](#)). Villain points are bonuses to specific die rolls that a villain gets to use on a per-encounter basis. If your villain is a mini-boss (not the story's main antagonist), he should get one villain point per two character levels. If he is the end-boss (the main antagonist), give him one villain point per character level. To decide how the villain uses his villain points, ask yourself a few questions. What makes your villain special? What are his cool abilities? What would most intimidate your players?

Finally, just like the PCs, the villain is likely to have more than a few allies.

Allies

On the opposite end of the spectrum from villains are allies. They can provide goods or services to the PCs, or sometimes perform a much more important function: good GMs know that sometime allies are needed to keep your PCs alive. Allies are just like regular characters, except they do not get hero points. They come in two important varieties: pets and cohorts.

Pets

Characters with low intelligence that often act as wizard's assistants or traveling companions, pets can be bought or found, and they generally follow orders because they're trained to do so. Making good handler contests can determine how much a pet loves its owner. PCs can increase a pet's level (and that of all subsequent pets) with the heroic companion perk. Pets become a sort of magical creature with the familiar perk, which can give them human-like intelligence or very keen senses. Because pets can advance in level with perks, a PC generally should not be able to acquire a pet that equals or exceeds the PC's level. Several sample pets can be found in the [Bestiary chapter](#).

Cohorts

Perhaps the best kind of ally, the cohort is a PC's right-hand man, his faithful sidekick. You cannot buy a cohort like you buy a pet; cohorts must be earned by using both character concept and campaign theme. Once a PC gets a cohort, he can raise the cohort's level with the heroic companion perk. While cohorts do not get their own hero points, a PC may spend his hero points on his personal cohort as desired. Importantly, if a player's character should die or leave the game, that player can adopt the character's cohort and award the cohort hero points per level, as normal.

Pre-Game

Before you can have a wild and crazy casino adventure or brooding dungeon delve, you must set up the game. The first step is usually deciding on campaign theme. Then you should consult with the players on what features or modules they would like to see in the game. Take the player input, add a few surprises of your own, and when everyone's ready, character creation can begin.

Campaign Theme

To begin a campaign, a series of adventures, you must first establish a campaign theme. This is a broad description of how your game will look. It will address story elements like when the campaign takes place, and in what world. It should also address how the players will play the game: is it a dramatic game in which characters can do whatever the players describe, or is it a detail-oriented, tactical, rules-crawl? Importantly, the campaign theme establishes what sort of protagonists, or PCs, will be leading the story.

A sample campaign theme looks like this: "in 1,000,000 B.C., the creatures of Earth are still evolving into the species that will eventually come to dominate the world. Countless creatures, unknown to modern humans, vie for control over the assets of the day: turf and breeding rights. This campaign will focus on individual cat-, dog-, and rodent-

people. Rules will be loosely observed to allow cartoon-like outbursts and stunts to be performed by the characters, and the Cartoonz for Modos rules module will be used.”

Player Input

Players are an integral part of story-creation in the game, and their input begins before the game starts. Ask the players what they would like to see in the game. Their input might lead you to decide on a different or additional module to include in the game, or it could just lead to ideas on what house rules to include. House rules are rules about anything relating to the game that a game group agrees to use, but aren't part of the core rules.

Character Creation

Once the theme, modules, and house rules are decided, the game group can start making characters. Your first character creation goal is to guide players toward making characters that fit into the theme of the campaign. The resulting character concepts are discussed in the [Player-Characters chapter](#). Let the players know at what level their characters begin. Characters should start at level 2 (professional) by default, but characters can start at level 1 if they are children or inexperienced, or they can start at higher levels if they begin with significant powers. The characters will need attributes, and starting attribute scores should generally range from 7 to 14.

Once characters are drawn up, you're ready to play!

Mid-Game

The game session and what you do in-game are the bread and butter of the game. To run your game as smoothly as possible, the game calls for a few special considerations. You'll use counters to track characters and their actions, make decisions on why to roll dice, when to roll, and when to reroll, and observe some implications of the (previously) unwritten rule, Rule Zero.

Counters

To help tell the story of a conflict, you'll track where characters are and how much they do during conflict. This can be done with counters, and ten-sided dice work well for this purpose. If you want to reference a drawing of where the encounter takes place or draw a map for the PCs, that's fine, but for rules purposes, each character needs only one of two primary postures (positions). Furthermore, each character will have a set amount of actions available each round.

A very easy way to track postures and actions is to set up counters on the game table. Once you've established the initiative order, you can place counters in a row from left to right. The left-most counter represents the character with highest initiative, and initiative descends to the right. To designate posture, simply move a counter to the back row (closer to you) if its character takes defensive posture. Additional postures (flanking, mounted, and flying) can occupy whatever row you like. To count a character's actions, turn its counter to the maximum number of actions available at the beginning of each conflict round, usually 3. Each time that character uses an action, reduce the counter by one point. If your counter does not have a zero (for when the character has used all its actions for the round), turn the counter to its maximum count instead. You can also try giving each NPC gets three specific actions each round: an attack, a defense, and a movement. Your players will be quick to notice, and remind you, which NPCs have taken which actions during the round.

Rolling Dice

You will call for a roll whenever an outcome is in doubt. A roll is a toss of a die, and its result is the number showing on top. Die rolls are commonly used for several purposes, like contests, progress, protection, and luck (hero/villain points).

Why to Roll

Die rolls slow the game down, but they also add excitement by infusing an element of

chance. The following are reasons why someone should or should not roll.

- **Crying wolf.** One of the best reasons to make a roll is to keep PCs guessing. If the GM rolls only when a trap or monster is in a room, PCs will quickly learn to ready weapons and cast spells when the GM starts rolling. However, if the GM rolls frequently, and at seemingly random intervals, the PCs won't know what to expect.
- **Too easy.** The difficulty system (see [Conflict chapter](#)) recognizes that some things are too easy to be considered a contest. Characters succeed automatically when attempting these tasks, unless another character is opposing the ridiculously easy task (and only one can succeed). In this case, a contest should be rolled as normal.
- **Take half.** Sometimes a character doesn't need a high roll to succeed, or doesn't want a high roll. For any die roll, a player or GM can "take half," and his result will equal half of the highest number on the die. You can greatly speed up the game by always taking half. See Take Half in the [Conflict chapter](#).
- **Adding interest.** While the take half rule eliminates the need for most rolls, a die roll can still be desirable to make things more interesting. For example, a PC uses a combat knife to fight a thick-skinned robot. If the GM takes half for the robot's protection roll, the knife will never do more than 1 damage. But if the GM rolls that protection, he could roll a 1 while the PC rolls 4 on damage, resulting in 3 damage to the robot. Or a spellcaster might have almost maximum metaphysical damage. Casting another spell would make him catatonic – if he takes half. He can roll instead, hoping to get a low number on the die and safely squeeze off one more spell.
- **Keeping secrets.** In general, you tell the PCs everything their characters would know. Sometimes, a roll is helpful to

determine what the PCs wouldn't know. For example, several PCs march into a cell, looking for treasure. None of them mentioned looking behind the door on the way in. So when the burly orc behind the door quietly starts pushing the door closed once the PCs are inside, the GM could alert them simply by asking for a detect contest. Instead, he rolls the contest for the PCs, and if a PC succeeds, the GM tells him that he hears the door closing.

When to Roll

Once you've decided if a roll is needed, you must then decide when to roll. The following are reasons to make a roll at a given time.

- **After announcing an action.** In extended conflict, PCs get three actions per round, which can happen at almost any time. When a PC wants to take action he does so by announcing it and rolling his contest. Without a roll, that character is considered indecisive or busy, and the action continues without him.
- **All at once.** If you can roll all your dice at the same time, you'll save time. For example, a spellcaster (who doesn't like taking half) wants to cast a fire spell. He'll need a cast spell contest, a fire damage roll, a casting damage roll, and possibly a metaphysical protection roll. As long as he can tell his dice apart, he's welcome to throw them all at the same time. For another example, a GM is playing a gang of thugs who are itching to fight. The thugs outnumber the PCs 3 to 1, so they're not too worried about counter-attacks. When the thugs act, the GM can roll all of their attack contests and damage rolls at the same time.
- **Tied contests.** In an even match, two opponents will get the same contest result 1 out of 20 times. The GM can call for a reroll, but it's more fun to decide

that the character with intangible advantage (like an Alter spell) wins the tie. Alternatively, the GM can announce the tie, and allow a player to roleplay his way to a success.

Rounding Rule

Some die rolling situations will have a non-whole number result, like when a character in offensive posture deals half damage to a character in defensive posture. In these situations, always round the decimal up.

Rule Zero

GM adjudication is an important part of moving the game forward and making the game world come to life. While playing a game, it has a specific application that often goes unwritten: rule zero. This states that the GM is the player who makes the game world run, so the PCs can make it run smoother by helping him do so. There is a more succinct statement of rule zero: the GM is always right, which means that arguing with the GM isn't, immediately, helpful. Two important uses of rule zero involve the handling of damage (progress), and PC delegation.

Handling Damage

Damage is an important application of conflict progress (its parent rule), and too much of it will significantly change the game for a character. Damage requires slightly different treatment for NPCs and PCs.

While running an NPC, you are responsible for that character's personal goals and his story goals, which can work together or be in conflict. An NPC's personal goals often include self-preservation, so some NPCs will flee combat or surrender when they take damage, and others will avoid combat altogether. As the [Conflict chapter](#) discusses, what damage represents in-game is very subjective. Let the campaign theme and story goals suggest whether partial damage means wounds or injuries to a character, or if the damage only measures progress toward max damage.

PCs have the same amount of control over their characters' damage. When a PC takes

damage, it's up to the player to decide what that damage means to his character. It could be a debilitating wound, which would be worth a hero point award if roleplayed well, or just a measurement of the character's luck running out. The GM should describe the damaging action and announce damage, but let the PC decide what that damage means.

PC damage heals at prescribed rates: one point of physical and mental damage heals daily, and one point of metaphysical damage heals hourly. Again, what this means in-game is up to the player. Your role in PC damage is not only to administer it, but also to facilitate its healing by tracking the passage of time. This can be done on an hour-by-hour basis in-game, or you can divide the day into bigger segments, like half days, and present larger amounts of healing at those times.

Player Delegation

Not all adjudication needs to fall on your shoulders. You are strongly advised to use rule zero to hand some tasks to the players.

The first, and perhaps most important, chance for a player to make adjudications is by interpreting and expressing his character. A character with points in the fight (melee) skill might be a highly-trained knife fighter. You should let that PC use his full skill points on any contest relating to close-quarters weapon fighting, but the player can impose difficulty on himself, and his contest result, when using non-knives. Another example: PCs are responsible for assigning meaning to their hero points. You, on the other hand, need only to recognize that a hero point grants a d6 bonus to a contest.

When combat ensues, you are likely to start keeping track of initiative and actions. Players can help by remembering when their turns are, and by counting down their actions each time they take one.

Finally, you are responsible for the health of every NPC. This includes opponents, villains, and some allies. Players can help the GM by recording their own damage and applying their protection to that damage, in addition to roleplaying the effect of that damage on their characters.

Post-Game

After a game session, some important things need the group's attention. Specifically, you should discuss any in-game issues you had in an after-session review, and then reward everyone for their hard work with character advancement.

After-Session Review

The after-session review is a helpful discussion to have after each game. With the flexibility of the core rules and the chaos introduced through house rules and modules, the after-session review helps to rein things in. After a session, you should ask the players what went right and what could be done better. Specifically, were there any adjudications or applications of rule zero with which the players disagreed? Did all of the rules feel balanced and fair? Were any rules missing that might lead to a smoother game for next session? This is

especially important for any elements that required segmenting.

Character Advancement

Characters get better at what they do, and they learn new things through the course of adventuring. The primary mechanism for this is the level point. Players earn level points after each game session. They can then spend their level point to gain an attribute point, a skill point, or a new perk. Once a character has purchased one of each, he gains another level and a corresponding increase to max hero points.

You can award level points at different times as it suits the campaign. Significant events, plot checkpoints, and training time could also be used as times to award level points.



Chapter 3: Player-Characters

Chris (playing Number 2259, war-bred soldier):
Let me get this straight. The alien brood mother
is motioning for me to approach!?

Greg (GM): That's what it looks like through
your motion-tracking goggles, anyway.

Chris: I'm dying of curiosity. But I can't. My
character concept says I feel the need to
exterminate all forms of alien life.

Greg: Do whatever your character would do.
The brood mother's tentacles keep undulating
inward. A point of rose light begins glowing in
front of the creature. Roll willpower. (Greg

takes half on the creature's cast spell (charm)
contest, for 17.)

Chris: (Rolls defend (willpower)). Ugh, 7. Five-
Nine looks down at his RT-MB. Looks up at the
brood-mother...

Greg: (Adjudicating Chris's willpower failure.)
You feel that the brood-mother really doesn't
mean any harm. The other aliens in the hold are
giving you lots of room.

Chris: Well I hate aliens, but I'm not suicidal, so
I guess starting a fight is out of the question. I
walk up to the mother, RT-MB in hand, and pray
that the distress signal gets picked up soon...



Number 2259, level 1

Attributes: P 13, M 8, MP 10

Skills: fight (missile) +2 (+1), defend (parry) +4 (+0)

Perks: specialize (parry)

Gear: recursive trans-molecular blaster d8, homefront shell armor (spacewalk) d10, motion-tracking goggles, 100K transmitter/receiver, nano-tool

Hero points: knowledge contests to dig up info on aliens, and on parry contests to avoid getting fried.

Concept: a human bred for war, he has instincts and reflexes, but lacks common sense (flaw). The majority of his programming involves exterminating alien species (goal), but Five-Nine harbors a secret love of consumerism (goal), due to the glimpse of an advertisement that he caught between programming sessions, featuring a child holding a beverage-package and a pinwheel and walking happily with his parents.

(Designer notes: Five-Nine is going in the direction of other space-heroes who have miraculous talents for dodging lasers. He'll be looking at the dodge perk and diehard perk in future levels to increase his Hollywood-style survivability.)

Players reach into the world of Modos RPG through their characters, hence the term player-character. The PCs are the main characters of the GM's story, whether heroes or villains. Characters have a small number of details for players to record, called character elements, and the collection of all character elements is called a character sheet. The simplicity of the character sheet frees up the players' imaginations to make their characters more complex through roleplaying and rules interpretation. This chapter will discuss how to build your character and how to play it.

Character Creation Steps

Making a character is a fairly simple process. To do so, you'll follow these steps:

- 1) Design character concept.
- 2) Roll attribute scores.
- 3) Identify starting character level.
- 4) Assign skill points.
- 5) Select perks.
- 6) Identify health.
- 7) Choose equipment.
- 8) Design hero points.

1) Design Character Concept

The player has met the other players and GM, been fascinated by the campaign theme, added his ideas to what the game should be, and is eager to play. If he doesn't have one already, he'll need a character concept.

The character concept is the constitution, source-code, or the soul of your character. It's a description of what the character is, where he comes from, how he behaves, and what he'll be doing in the future. It includes the character's profession or class. The character concept doesn't need to be long, but it should have enough details to help you roleplay your character.

Some of these details should include your character's goals and flaws. Goals help to give your character motivation, to inspire him to go adventuring. Unless you are designing a perfect person, your character will also have flaws. These flaws make your character interesting, and provide opportunities for better roleplaying, which can lead to more hero points (see Step 8).

When writing up your character concept, keep the campaign theme in mind. Your character is yours to create, but following the campaign theme will help everyone in the game to feel more immersed in the game world. Also keep in mind the average person rule: unless a character element says otherwise, you can assume that your character has all of the capabilities and limitations of an average human.

2) Roll Attribute Scores

An attribute is a metagame measurement of a character. Characters have three different attributes: physical, mental, and metaphysical.

- Physical (abbreviated P) is a measurement of a character's body. It represents well-being, strength, stamina, speed, and any other body-characteristics.
- Mental (abbreviated M) is a measurement of a character's mind.

This relates to anything like reasoning, sensing, memory, and focus.

- Metaphysical (abbreviated MP) is a measurement of a character's spirit. This covers a character's charisma, soul, aura, supernatural sensitivity, and fate.

As you can see, the attributes are very abstract concepts. Sharpening the focus of your character's attributes, as guided by your character concept, will give your character more depth.

Attribute scores are the numerical measurement of an attribute. To establish an attribute score, just roll 3d6. Repeat for the remaining two attribute scores. A faster method is to simply assign three scores to your attributes: 8, 10, and 12. Don't worry too much about attribute scores now, because you can improve them later. You'll use your attribute scores to gain contest bonuses and represent your health.

Attributes improve a character's efforts with bonuses. An attribute bonus is an increase to a contest roll. Negative bonuses are called penalties. To find an attribute bonus for an even attribute score, subtract 10 and divide that by 2. To find the bonus for an odd score, subtract 11 and divide that by 2. For example, a mental score of 15 has a bonus of +2, or a physical score of 8 has a penalty of -1.

3) Identify Starting Character Level

General character power is measured in character levels. A level is simply a set of character elements granted to a character – an attribute point, a skill point, and a perk. Because levels measure improvement, you can

Level	Title
1	Amateur
2	Professional
3	Expert
4	Paragon
5	Master
6-9	Legend
10+	Epic

Table 3-1: level titles

refer to specific levels with common terms for power, experience, or achievement, in table 3-1. Before character creation begins, the GM will tell you what level your character is. This level determination

should be based loosely on the level titles above.

For example, if the GM plans to present an adventure to the PCs that would be challenging for treasure-hunting school kids, he'll ask you to begin at amateur level. If he's planning to make you go toe-to-toe against demigods, then a legendary or epic level would be more appropriate.

Each level brings a set of three improvements, or level points, to your character. Use a level point to buy a character element. These are:

- An attribute point to be spent on any attribute,
- A skill point to be spent on any skill, or
- One perk, another attribute point, or skill point. If you choose another skill point, you cannot have total skill points in one skill that exceed your level.

With each level, a character also adds one hero point to his maximum limit.

As you play the game, you gain levels (level-up) in increments. After each game session the GM awards each PC with a level point.

Record where you spend your level points – on attributes, skills, or perks – so that once you have gained one of each, you can increase your level and max hero points.

4) Assign Skill Points

Character attributes affect what characters do in a general way, while skills help characters to conduct more specific activities. Your character gets one skill point per level, and those points can be placed in any skills found in the [Skills chapter](#).

5) Select Perks

If attributes are inherent aspects of your character, and skills are what your character has learned to do well, then perks are your miscellaneous features. Perks can't be measured; you usually have them or you don't. If no perks seems to represent your character well, you can trade a perk for an attribute point or skill point. See the [Perks chapter](#) for more information.

6) Identify Health

Health for characters is the same as health for real people: if you have it, you're not about to die, and if you don't, you're getting close to death. Characters measure health of three types, one per attribute, and health wanes when a character takes damage.

Rather than ask players to subtract from health whenever they take damage, it's easier to ask them to add their damage together in what's called a "damage pool," and then compare it to a number called "max damage." Max damage for an attribute equals that attribute score, plus any perks or spells that might increase max damage, like the toughness perk. When the damage in a damage pool exceeds max damage, a character takes on a special condition depending on which attribute has taken max damage:

- Max physical damage puts a character in a state called "mostly dead." These characters cannot use their bodies effectively and can perform no physical actions. While mostly dead, the character is helpless, has limited mental and metaphysical ability, and often appears dead.
- Max mental damage puts a character in a state called "unconscious." An unconscious character cannot think, sense, or take any mental actions. While unconscious, a character has limited physical and metaphysical ability, and often appears dead.
- Max metaphysical damage puts a character in a state called "catatonic." Such a character has no will or personality and cannot take metaphysical actions. While catatonic, a character usually has limited physical and mental ability, and often appears unresponsive or paralyzed.

Mathematically, a character's health is his max damage minus current damage (what's in his damage pool). Let's say that Number 2259 fails a defend (parry) contest after the brood mother has convinced him to remove his armor, so he

must take full physical damage from an alien attack. Five-Nine's max physical damage is 13, equal to his physical score. An alien deals 4 damage with its claw, so Chris puts 4 damage in Five-Nine's physical damage pool. If the physical damage pool exceeds 13, Five-Nine will become mostly dead.

Effects of Max Damage

In this game, it's best to try to avoid killing a PC. The GM should consider using the event of a mostly dead PC to make the plot or character more interesting. For example, a mostly dead character could return to play with a new scar or missing limb. Or the plot could divert, and the character could become undead, get captured, or send the healthy PCs on a quest to revive the mostly dead character. A character who becomes unconscious might return with a nervous tick, paranoia, or amnesia. Characters recovering from the catatonic condition might see ghosts, hear voices, or become slightly more pious, having almost met their maker.

7) Choose Equipment

Your character will frequently need to get from point A to point B efficiently, safely, and alive. He'll need equipment for this, and depending on the campaign theme, you'll either be able to choose your starting gear or the GM will give you some money to spend. If you get to choose, look for the gear that your character concept and your starting level support. Be sure to grab some armor and one weapon – just in case. If you don't see an item that your character would have, ask the GM for permission to take it. See the [Equipment chapter](#) for more info.

8) Design Hero Points

A very important, and very ambiguous, part of being a hero is using hero points. Simply put, a hero point is a chance to roll a d6 and add the result when rolling a contest. Only one hero point may be used per contest. These are the last character design step because hero points can be used to simulate features that other character elements cannot.

If you decide to use your hero points wherever or whenever you need them, then hero

points can be considered luck, fortune, or fate. However, hero points are what make characters special. Since a hero point can be added to any contest, you have the power to turn them into almost whatever you want. For example, your character concept says that your character is a dark assassin. You might use your hero points on sneak contests or fight contests whenever you're using your signature stiletto. Or maybe your character is a crusader; he would use his hero points on attacks against infidels or on profession (healer) contests used to heal the faithful. A shaman or druid might use hero points on handler contests for which he has no skill points.

Regardless of what superpower your hero points improve, your character can only store a certain amount of them. Each day, your character gets a maximum of one hero point for each level he has, but no more than this at one time. This happens at midnight unless your GM says otherwise. If you have not used all your hero points by the end of the day, you still start the next day off with one per character level.

The following are ways to recover spent hero points from the GM before the day is done:

- Save hero points. You can spend a hero point at any time, but if you resist doing so in order to set your character up for a concept-appropriate usage, the GM can give you that point for free.
- Exploit your flaws. This happens whenever roleplaying your character's flaws results in opposing your character's goals.
- Penalize your attributes. A character can have a high physical score but be clumsy, or a high mental score but be forgetful. Applying a penalty to your contest, or voluntarily failing it, is worth a hero point.
- Limit your skills. The common skills are very broad. You could limit your movement skill to climbing only, or limit the persuade skill to intimidation. When you forfeit your skill points because an action isn't something your

character could do, you can earn a hero point.

- Impress your friends. Recover a point whenever your roleplaying makes a scene more memorable.

Here's an attribute-penalty example: C4PO (the explosives 'droid) is a 4th level character. His movements are a bit on the stiff side, even though he has decent robo-strength, and he has used two hero points earlier today on knowledge (scholarship), to represent his extensive knowledge base on bombs. Now C4PO is carefully wobbling up to the hover-tracks of an imperial shock-tank to place a bomb, when the engine starts and the turret spins, knocking into him. The GM calls for a movement contest to avoid falling and potentially dropping the bomb. C4PO has a decent physical score (13), but his player decides that C4PO falls over anyway, since he's strong, but not very agile. The GM awards him a hero point, and C4PO now has three hero points to use before the end of the day.

Roleplaying Your Character

Roleplaying always comes first. Otherwise you'd be playing a board game. You should look to your character concept for guidance, and enjoy the game by describing what your character would do in the given situation, or by acting it out. Here are several times to choose roleplaying over roll-playing:

- Contest resolution. When your character faces a challenge or an opponent, you might throw a d20 just by reflex. Resist this urge. If you roleplay your character well while being faithful to your character concept, the GM may resolve the contest without dice. If the GM still wants a contest, you could gain a bonus to your roll for roleplaying well.
- Customization. Several parts of the game are flexible for PC needs. The physical ability, for example, can measure strength, agility, or stamina. The deceive skill can be acting, lying, or

sleight-of-hand. Decide what each feature means to your character, then roleplay both the strengths and weaknesses.

- Taking damage. Damage only means one thing objectively: your proximity to taking a time-out. So it's up to you, for example, to decide whether 8 points of war axe damage means that your character took a blade between the eyes, or if he dove out of the way, crashing into a friend, and knocking his breath out in the process.
- Voluntary failure. Your character automatically succeeds on things that are too easy for him. But your character can't be a success at everything! Know when your character might do poorly in a situation and roleplay it when it would enhance the story.
- Motivation. Everyone benefits when all the characters contribute toward the same goal. Find a reason in your character concept to pursue the same storyline as the other PCs.
- Gaining hero points. Although this is roleplaying for roll-playing's sake, when you make your character more interesting by roleplaying his flaws instead of his assets, you create a more realistic experience for everyone, and could recover a hero point for doing so.

Roll-Playing Your Character

When a player wants his character to do something that is not likely to be successful, it's time to roll a contest. Contests are covered in the [Conflict chapter](#), but some general rules about rolling are covered here.

- When to roll. You don't need to roll unless the GM asks you to. And sometimes the GM will roll for you if your character doesn't know he's making a contest. When you need a roll, gather all the dice needed and roll them at the same time. For example, if your character wants to swing a nearby meat

cleaver at the assassin he's fighting (on the floor of a Shanghai restaurant), he'll need to roll a fight (melee) contest, cleaver damage, and a hero point if he wants to boost his chances, all at the same time. If you don't mind the middle result on your rolls, you can take half on any of these ([see Conflict chapter](#)).

- What to roll. Contests are always d20. The die to use for other rolls depends on the progress rating of your tools, but these are usually d4 to d12. D20s should only be used for weapons or armor if those items are legendary in nature, and with GM permission.

- Roleplaying bonus. If you roleplay your actions well, despite needing to make a roll, the GM can grant you a bonus to your roll. +2 is a good rule of thumb.
- Rolls do not replace roleplaying. It's not sufficient to say "I persuade the galactic diplomat," and then roll a persuade contest. You should act out what your character might do or say and then roll, because it will make the game more fun for everyone else, and you might earn a roleplaying bonus or hero point for it!



Chapter 4: Skills

Greg: Merloon finishes his sojourn of study at the Apocryphal Red Library. You get a skill point in knowledge (scholarship), which completes your second level!

Arnold: "Amateur" no more! Maybe now the God of Balance will listen when I make offerings.

Greg: Well, more likely to listen to you are your comrades, with whom you've lost touch since you first stepped into the library.

Arnold: Great, I look around. Do I see anyone who might know the whereabouts of a low-level band of adventurers?

Greg: Er, you see several scholarly folk, a handful of religious types, and a woman sitting in the corner. She wears bright-red regalia, has the beauty of a princess, and is staring directly at you.

Arnold: Does she look like trouble?

Greg: What does trouble look like?

Arnold: (Sigh) Can I just make a detect contest to see if she might have evil intent?

Greg: That sounds "arduous," if not "impossible." (Greg takes half on the difficulty contest and adds the "arduous" difficulty bonus of 12, for 22. Then he rolls Merloon's contest, since Merloon wouldn't know how well he rolled, just whether he got an evil impression or not.) Your mental bonus is zero, plus detect skill of zero...

Arnold: Can I use my MP bonus instead? Since I'm trying to get a feeling, instead of a calculation?

Greg: Even though your concept says you're bad with people?

Arnold: That...means I'm rude. Not insensitive.

Greg: (shrugs) Okay. Plus metaphysical bonus of 2. (Rolls) Wow. You feel no waves of evil coming from the woman in red.

Arnold: Then I confidently stroll up to her and announce, "you know, red is the color of blood!"



Merloon, level 2

Attributes: P 8, M 10, MP 14

Skills: cast spell (fire) +1 (+1), knowledge (scholarship) +1

Perks: spell implement (spellbook), mystic ward d4

Gear: spellbook, walking stick, longsword d8+1, cloak, brass brooch, straw hat

Hero points: time-related feats, like initiative contests or deceive contests to make him seem younger.

Concept: A budding wizard, he learned to create fire almost by accident. Once Merloon discovered that secret, no one could stop him from pursuing other arcane secrets. Someday, he'll learn to age in reverse, or live forever. Merloon's goals are to discover as many secrets of magic as possible, and to maintain his friendships, since he has so few. His flaw is that his focus on magical lore resulted in a certain neglect of social skills, making him abrasive or offensive to some.

(Designer notes: Merloon is one point away from getting an MP bonus action, which will enable him to cast 4th level spells with the spell weaver perk. He added the mystic ward perk to dramatically increase his spellcasting ability, and knowledge (scholarship) is likely to help him find new spells for his spellbook.)

Atttributes enable a character to do anything imaginable; skills just allow him to do some of those things better. A skill is something that a character does well, which improves with training or experience, and commonly relates to

one attribute. The amount of training or experience in a skill is measured in skill points, which you add to contests involving that skill.

Using skills is easy. Whenever your character attempts something for which he has

skill points, you can add those to your contest, if the GM calls for one. If you attempt something indirectly related to one of your skills, the GM can allow you to use all or some of your related skill points.

Skill Points

Skill points are permanent bonuses that a character acquires as he becomes better at a skill. A character can have no more skill points in a skill than he has character levels. The number of skill points that a character has in a skill correspond to the levels of advancement in table 3-1: level titles. For example, if Uugrek has 3 skill points in profession (healer), he might be considered an “expert” at healing. With 1 point, he’s still an “amateur.”

When you gain skill points is up to the GM. Characters can gain a skill point when they level-up, or they can gain a skill point by exchanging a newly-acquired perk for it. The GM has the option of awarding a free skill point if the character does something in-game to earn one.

Specific Knowledge

In some cases there is a skill related to what you want to do, but if you don’t have points in that skill, you’re not allowed to use it. This is because the activity is so specialized that your character has no hope of succeeding without having some minimum amount of training in that skill. Having this training or experience is called specific knowledge, and to have it, you must have at least one skill point, or a specialize perk, in the skill. For example, Uugrek’s companion Fezbi has been stabbed by a wood elf. Fezbi is bleeding profusely and probably infected with a disgusting elf disease. Uugrek wants to use the profession (healer) skill to help Fezbi, but he doesn’t have any skill points in it, so no matter how hard he tries, he can’t heal Fezbi’s physical damage.

Learning Skills

While a list of common skills is provided for you, a PC is welcome to put skill points in any skill he wants, provided it meets the following criteria:

- 1) It meets the definition of a skill. A skill is something that a character does well, which improves with training or experience, and commonly relates to one attribute.
- 2) The skill is not broader in scope than any of the common skills. If it is, it should be segmented down and presented as multiple skills.
- 3) The GM approves the selection.

Skill Archetypes

Here is a list of skills sorted by the types of characters who would frequently use them.

- Warrior/Soldier/Zeronaut: defend (parry), fight (melee), fight (missile), handler, knowledge (nature), movement, profession (craftsman).
- Wizard/Hacker/Decker: cast spell, defend (concentration), defend (willpower), knowledge (scholarship), profession (artist), profession (scientist).
- Shaman/Priest/Nanomancer: cast spell, deceive, defend (concentration), defend (willpower), knowledge (nature), persuade, profession (healer).
- Thief/Investigator/Scoundrel: deceive, defend (parry), fight (missile), fight (unarmed), detect, knowledge (scholarship), larceny, movement, persuade, sneak.

Common Skills

The following is a list of the most common skills. Each skill has a name, related attribute like – P for physical, a description which includes the actions required to use the skill when in conflict, and common opposing skills. Skills requiring specific knowledge are followed by - SK.

Cast Spell (spell name) - SK – MP

Many special abilities (magic, hi-tech, psionics, superpowers, etc.) use this skill. A different cast spell skill must be learned for each spell that a character wants to know. Using this skill while wearing no armor and no shield grants a +2 bonus to contests requiring it. Using the cast spell skill causes 1d8 + (spell level) metaphysical damage, requires one action per spell level, and can require combined actions which are discussed further in the [Magic chapter](#) and [Conflict chapter](#). Opposing cast spell depends on the effect of the spell, but is usually a defend skill or another cast spell.

Deceive - MP

Allows you to seem like you're doing something you're not. Telling a lie, feinting in combat, creating a disguise, and creating forgeries are examples of using this skill. Feinting in combat takes one action and provides a bonus determined by the GM. Opposed by detect or deceive.

Defend (type)

Defend skills prevent damage and reduce spell effects. Each attribute has a defend skill. See the [Conflict chapter](#) for more information on defense actions.

- **Defend (Concentration) - M**
Allows you to focus your mind, whether on performing a task, thinking, or ignoring the outside world. Concentration can also be used to heal metaphysical damage. A successful concentration contest, normally against easy difficulty, allows a character to heal 2 metaphysical points per hour instead of the normal 1 point. If conditions become more stressful, another contest is required. A character heals metaphysical damage during an hour only if he does not fail a concentration contest during that hour. Concentrating this way requires one action per round.
- **Defend (Parry) - P**
Used to dodge, deflect, avoid, or endure attacks. Parrying uses one action per attack.

- **Defend (Willpower) - MP**

Used to resist intimidation or fear, or to test one's spirit in supernatural realms. Willpower cannot be used to prevent spellcasting damage.

Detect – M

Use this skill to gain information with your senses. Spotting a hidden enemy, hearing a conversation through orchestra music, uncovering secret glyphs, and tasting a hint of poison in a goblet are uses of this skill. Detect requires an action when trying to find something that isn't obvious, and the GM can roll this for you if you would otherwise remain oblivious. This skill becomes more difficult when used at range (generally -4 per range category beyond close) and using sight, in particular, takes difficulty penalties when used in light categories lower than bright. Opposed by sneak or deceive.

Fight (type) – P

Used to cause physical damage to characters. All fight skills are opposed by defend (parry). See the [Conflict chapter](#) for more information on attack actions.

- **Fight (Melee)**
Relates specifically to using hand-held, close quarters weapons in battle to attack a foe. Knives, clubs, longspears, and spiked chains are examples.
- **Fight (Missile)**
Use to damage foes at range in combat. A missile fighter is limited in attacks by the number of missiles he carries, and by his actions needed to reload. This skill includes usage of darts, bows, slings, thrown spears, and even holy hand grenades. Attacking with a missile weapon uses one action, but reloading costs more.
- **Fight (Unarmed)**
Using one's body to damage your foe. Unarmed fighters cannot be disarmed and must be able to touch their foes to cause damage. Wrestling, boxing, kung-fu, and the dim-mak are included in fight (unarmed). This fight skill can be opposed by fight (parry) and itself.

Handler (type) – MP

Choose which type of animal you know how to handle. Animal handling is coaxing an unintelligent creature to do what you want. This includes using a tiger as a mount, teaching a giant spider tricks, and training a show horse for performance. Whenever you direct an animal to do something in conflict, it costs you one action. Ornerly animals oppose with defend (willpower).

Knowledge (type) – M

You have gathered much knowledge and can put it to good use. Use this skill to determine if your character knows uncommon facts and to perform tasks related to those facts. Using knowledge for recollection does not require an action unless your character is under some sort of mental distress.

- Knowledge (Nature)
You are learned in the ways, creatures, and geography of the wild. Hunting, foraging, camping, and land navigation are likely uses of this skill.
- Knowledge (Scholarship)
You have spent time studying books or other media. Use this skill to produce information that is most likely found in an old book, or to write a book. This includes, but is not limited to, any topics not covered by the four profession skills (artist, craftsman, healer, scientist) like history, heraldry, and law.

Larceny - P

The business of thievery. If it is designed for safety or protection, larceny is how you overcome it. Use this skill to, for example, pick locks (using lockpicks), rig a trapdoor, lift an item from an unwary owner, or fence a stolen item. One action is required as a minimum, but most larceny activities require several actions or even minutes to accomplish. Opposed by detect, larceny or movement.

Movement - P

When movement gets difficult, you test your success in jumping, swimming, flying, climbing, tumbling, and balancing with this skill. Movement can be used to compare the speed of

two characters. Easy movement requires no contests in conflict, so this skill has three important uses:

- Changing posture. One action is required to move from offensive to defensive posture, and vice versa. If combat terrain is difficult, the GM can apply difficulty or require more actions.
- Fleeing conflict. A character can leave battle with one action from defensive posture, or two actions from offensive posture. A contest is required if an opponent has a means of preventing flight, like a spell, net, tractor-beam, or when the fleeing character is cornered.
- Flanking opponents. Entering flanking posture requires two actions.

See the [Conflict chapter](#) for more information on posture and fleeing. Opposed by movement, fight (unarmed), or other skills that could hamper movement.

Persuade - MP

Alters NPC attitudes. PCs can be persuaded if their goals or flaws come up during persuasion. Persuade covers both using soothing words or swear words. See NPC disposition in the [Conflict chapter](#) for more details. This skill requires at least one action, and is opposed by defend (willpower) or persuade.

Profession (type) – SK – M

These skills encompass several smaller talents that do not, by themselves, measure up to a skill. They can be used to produce many goods and/or services.

- Profession (Artist)
Artists are musicians, painters, sculptors, actors, or dancers. Besides creating inspirational artwork, an artist can use this skill to cast spells using the spell implement perk. An artist applies his skill points in profession (artist) as if they were skill points in cast spell when casting a spell, so these skill points can apply to multiple spells. This contest is treated in all respects as the artist's cast

spell contest. An artist cannot know more spells than he has points in this skill.

- Profession (Craftsman)

Craftsmen repair things and create tools, machines, weapons, armor, and other goods. In general, craftsman products are larger and simpler than scientist products (but the two can work together). General crafting rule: crafting a product requires a workshop, costs one half of the market price in raw materials, and takes one hour per unit of market price to make. The difficulty to make an item is twice the level of the character that would typically make the item (professional, expert, etc.). For example, the GM decides a masterpiece war axe would typically be made by a master (level 5) weaponsmith, so the difficulty contest is +10. Failing a craft contest results in extra crafting time or a flawed, finished item.

- Profession (Healer)

Allows a character to provide hospital/psychiatric care, cure diseases, treat wounds, and make healing substances. Using this skill without a difficulty penalty requires shelter, warmth, and healing supplies. The following table gives the difficulty contest of a given healer task:

- Max Damage. Mostly dead, unconscious, or catatonic characters can be brought back to life with this skill.
- Curse. Curses have a magical or metaphysical nature, but healers can remove them with exceptional effort.

To determine the difficulty of a healing task, add the difficulty of the task to the difficulty of the time period. For example, to heal a disease (challenging 4) in one hour (arduous 12), the difficulty contest is +16. To heal 1d8 physical damage in one minute, the difficulty is also +16. When making a healing contest, the GM should roll for the player if the success of the attempt would not be obvious.

- Profession (Scientist)

Grants a character the ability to make things requiring special alchemy, chemistry, or electronics knowledge, like love potions, nitro-glycerin, or counter-decker programs. In general, scientist products are smaller and more complex than craftsman products. General scientist rule: scientist products require a laboratory, cost one quarter of their market price in raw materials, and take one hour per unit of market price to make. The difficulty to make an item is twice the character level of the character that would typically make the item. For example, a standard receiver-transmitter would typically be made by a professional (level 2) electrician, so the difficulty contest is +4. Failing a scientist contest results in extra crafting time or a malfunctioning or non-functioning item.

Sneak - P

Allows a character to find a good hiding spot, tread silently, or conceal his scent from dogs. Use it to avoid opponent awareness ([see Conflict chapter](#)). This skill does not create sneaky conditions; standing in the middle of a ballroom provides almost no chance to hide. But the skill reflects the character's ability to use what

Easy 0	Challenge 4	Difficult 8	Arduous 12	Impossible 16	Divine 20
Month	Week	Day	Hour	Minute	Action
1d8 Damage	Disease	Substance	Max Damage	Curse	X

Table 4-1: healing difficulty

The table entries are:

- 1d8 Damage. Roll 1d8 to heal that much physical or mental damage.
- Disease. Some diseases can't be cured by normal healing.
- Substance. Prepare a healing substance. These heal either 1d8 physical or mental damage in one action, without requiring the healer to be present.

conditions he has. Sneaking requires at least two actions: the cost of the activity/skill to be performed stealthily, and one sneak action to determine how sneaky the activity is. This skill should be rolled by the GM, because the only

indicator of how well the character sneaks is whether or not someone notices him. Opposed by detect or sneak.



Chapter 5: Perks

Betty: Greg, do you remember how Montana used his whip as a helicopter blade to slow his fall two sessions ago?

Greg: Yeah, that was pretty cool! And a lucky roll...

Betty: Well, instead of rolling for that next time, I want to make that my next perk. Is that cool?

Greg: If it's a general improvement to your character, it's an "attribute." If it improves with use, it's a "skill." Will it do either of those?

Betty: No, I just want it to be a standard bonus, like "if Montana is falling with his whip, he can use it to avoid a lethal fall."

Greg: Are you sure that you don't just want to take the lucky day perk?

Betty: Yes. This is more specific. It requires Montana to have his whip, and only applies if he's falling. But it's not limited by hero point availability.

Greg: I approve. What do you want to call it?



Montana Smith, level 2

Attributes: P 10, M 13, MP 9

Skills: defend (parry) +1, fight (melee) +1, knowledge (scholarship) +4 (+0)

Perks: specialize (scholarship), heli-whip

Gear: satchel, whip d4-1 M, fedora, wristwatch, six-shooter d6

Hero points: to make really lucky dodges, and perform unbelievable whip-work.

Concept: An archaeologist and professor, he can't tolerate gaps in the historical record, so he goes out to fill them (goal). Montana's luck and knowledge will increase over time, but he'll always be deathly afraid of frogs (flaw), and highly vulnerable to women's charms (flaw).

(Designer notes: at level 2, Montana still wears no armor, so like other archaeologists, he'll have to avoid melees and firefights in order to pursue his goals. An increasing mental score, combined with his specialize perk, will allow him to make some useful educated guesses where force or violence might fail him.)

Until this chapter, characters have been growing into heroes and villains who exhibit their powers with easily measured, point-based rules. They're impressive, but a little predictable. Perks allow you to bend the rules, and create some of the more unusual character features.

A perk is any character element that cannot be classified as an attribute, skill, hero point, or equipment. Perks do not grant contest or attribute bonuses with one exception: only the specialize perk can grant a bonus to contests.

Choosing Perks

For convenience, a list of common perks is provided at the end of this chapter. However, a character can take anything as a perk, provided:

- It meets the definition of a perk,

- It is no more useful than any one common perk, or
- It is part of a properly segmented perk tree, and
- The GM approves the perk.

When choosing perks, consider your character concept. If you are a member of a special race, you'll want to choose a racial perk for your first level. Or if your profession is similar to a particular archetype, you'll want to select perks mostly from that archetype.

Gaining Perks

Characters gain a perk at every level. When gaining a perk, a player can choose a new perk, the next perk on a perk tree, or to substitute the perk.

A perk tree is a series of perks that get

more powerful as you take perks higher in the tree. Each higher perk has a lower perk as a prerequisite. Tree perks that become more powerful when you take them multiple times, like the weapon focus perk, are called “stackable” perks. The GM can use perk trees to turn a single, powerful special ability into a series of perks. If you gain a perk but want to improve something else, you can substitute it instead. New perks can be substituted for an attribute point or a skill point. If the player chooses another skill point, his total points in that skill may not exceed his character level.

Perk Archetypes

Here is a list of perks sorted by the types of characters who would choose them.

- Racial: cat's eye, diehard, fearless, large size, longstrider, observant, off the mark, owl's eye, sleepless, small size, specialize, stubborn, toughness.
- Warrior/Soldier/Zeronaut: armor training, diehard, dodge, dual wielder, fearless, heroic companion, martial artist, quick strike, rapid reload, special move, toughness, weapon focus.
- Wizard/Hacker/Decker: enlightened, familiar, heroic companion, mana, mass destruction, mystic ward, spell implement, spell maintenance, spell upgrade, spell weaver, thought shield.
- Shaman/Priest/Nanomancer: divine intervention, enlightened, ki strike, mana, mystic ward, spell implement, spell maintenance, spell upgrade, spell weaver, stubborn, thought shield.
- Thief/Investigator/Scoundrel: backstabber, cat's eye, dodge, dual wielder, informed, lucky day, martial artist, nick of time, observant, off the mark, rage, rapid reload, weapon focus.

Common Perks

The following perks are available to all characters. Tree perks are denoted with a - T.

Armor training (armor type) – T

Choose a type of armor (e.g. chainmail). When wearing this armor, its protection die type increases by one (e.g. d6 becomes d8). Taking this perk again increases the protection die

again, or improves the protection of another armor type.

Backstabber (weapon type) – T

You gain +3 damage when your opponent does not use a parry action against your attack. This can be applied to only tiny or light weapons. Taking this perk again applies the bonus to a different weapon.

Cat's Eye

You can see twice as far as a normal person in bright light, dim light, or shadow.

Diehard

You can use hero points when rolling protection. You must announce this intent before making the protection roll, and you may use only one hero point per protection roll.

Divine Intervention

You can pray for holy power. Make a defend (willpower) contest as one metaphysical action, and choose a spell of which your god would approve. If you win a difficulty contest against the spell level of the spell for which you're praying, you can immediately treat that spell as if you have specific knowledge of the spell. For example, Braffos the Mystic has found a member of the Senate blinded by acid. Braffos doesn't know the sight spell, so he spends an action praying for it. His defend (willpower) contest is 14, against a d20 plus the level of the sight spell (2). If his contest succeeds, he can use his last two actions of the round to cast sight on the senator. Having no skill points in cast spell (sight), Braffos just adds his MP bonus to the contest.

Dodge

You may use the defend (parry) skill as a bonus physical action.

Dual Wielder

When attacking with two one-handed weapons (light or medium) or a double weapon used as two weapons, you gain one extra fight (melee) action each round.

Enlightened

You may use the defend (concentration) skill as a bonus mental action.

Epic Hero

If you are level 10 or higher, your hero points are rolled on a d10 instead of d6 or d8.

Familiar - T

Your pet gains +4 to its mental attribute score. This does not alter its physiology, for example, giving it the ability to speak. This perk transfers to your new pet if your pet dies, and taking this perk again applies the bonus to a second pet.

Fearless

You are immune to fear, even when a spell creates fear.

Heroic Companion - T

Your pet/cohort gains a level. Cohorts and pets cannot earn or use hero points. Your companion's level may not equal yours with this perk.

Informed

You pick up lots of useful information. You may spend one hero point to gain a hint from the GM.

Ki Strike

When you succeed on a fight (melee) or fight (unarmed) attack, you also deal one point of metaphysical damage.

Large Size

You are much bigger than the average person. You may use a movement action to designate one defensive enemy as offensive, relative only to you.

Legendary Hero

If you are level 6 or higher, your hero points are rolled on a d8 instead of d6.

Longstrider

You may use the movement skill as a bonus physical action.

Lucky Day

If taking damage causes you to reach max

damage in any pool, you can spend a hero point as a non-action and remain at 1 health.

Mana - T

Your max metaphysical damage increases by 3 points. Each time you take this perk it grants another 3 points to your max metaphysical damage.

Martial Artist

When attacking with a one-handed weapon or no weapons, you gain one extra fight (unarmed) action each round.

Mass Destruction - T

When you cast any spell that has "multi" listed for its targets, you may increase the number of targets affected by one. Taking this perk again increases your number of bonus targets by one.

Mystic Ward - T

You gain d4 metaphysical protection. Each time you take this perk, the protection die increases by one type, e.g. d4 to d6.

Nick of Time

If you fail a defend (parry) or larceny contest against a trap, lock, or spell, you may spend a hero point to reroll the contest once.

Observant

You have a 1 in 6 chance to notice anything hidden from view. The GM should roll this for your character.

Off the Mark

You gain +4 to all initiative contests.

Owl's Eye - T

You can see 30 feet in darkness. Taking this perk again extends your view another 30 feet.

Quick Strike

You may use any fight skill as a bonus physical action.

Rage

You can spend hero points on damage rolls. You must announce your intent before rolling damage. You can spend only one hero point per damage die in this way.

Rapid Reload - T

Reloading any missile weapon takes one less action for you. Reloading times reduced to zero actions are non-actions, and cannot be reduced further. Taking this perk again reduces reload times by another action.

Sleepless

You are immune to sleep spells and effects. You need only 4 hours for a good night's rest.

Small Size

You are much smaller than the average person. You may use a movement action to designate one offensive enemy as defensive, relative only to you.

Specialize (skill) – T

You have extra ability in a particular skill. Choose a skill. Any time you use this skill, you gain +3 to your contest. Treat this as having specific knowledge in that skill. Taking this perk again applies the bonus to another skill.

Special Move (fight skill) – T

Choose a fight skill (melee, missile, or unarmed). You may reduce any fight contest you make by one to add one point to your damage for that contest. You must announce your intent before rolling the fight contest. Taking this perk again gives you the option to reduce your contests by 2, and add 2 damage, and so on. Alternatively, you may choose to use a new perk on a different fight skill.

Spell Implement (object)

Choose a unique object. When you use a physical action with that object, you can use the cast spell skill for a spell in which you have no specific knowledge. Your spell selection is limited based on the object. For example, if your implement is a spellbook, you can cast only spells that you've entered into the spellbook. If your implement is a musical instrument, you can cast only spells that you've learned as performances. The GM decides which spells you've acquired.

Spell Maintenance - T

You gain one extra action each round to be used for maintaining a spell.

Spell Upgrade (spell name) – T

Choose a cast spell skill in which you have skill points. You may forget this spell and transfer the skill points to a similar spell of higher level. For example, if you have 3 points in cast spell (sleep), when you take spell upgrade you can remove the 3 sleep points and take 3 skill points in cast spell (coma). Or, you could lose 5 skill points in cast spell (fire) and put 5 points in cast spell (fire2) instead.

Spell Weaver

You may use bonus actions from any attribute for the purposes of casting a spell. This perk allows you to cast spells over third level, if you have the appropriate action types available. For example, when Merloon gets a bonus mental action at a mental score of 15, he'll be able to use that bonus action on cast spell (sight), which requires a mental and metaphysical action, and still have two more actions to use that round. However, he could not cast a 4th level spell that requires four metaphysical actions, because he cannot substitute his bonus mental action for a metaphysical action.

Stubborn - T

Your max mental damage increases by 3 points. Each time you take this perk it grants another 3 points to your max mental damage.

Thought Shield – T

You gain d4 protection against mental attacks. Each time you take this perk, the protection increases by one die type, e.g. d4 to d6.

Toughness - T

Your max physical damage increases by 3 points. Each time you take this perk it grants another 3 points to your max physical damage.

Weapon Focus (weapon type) – T

Choose a type of weapon (e.g. blaster rifle). When wielding this weapon, your damage improves by one die type, e.g. d10 to d12. Taking this perk again increases the damage by another die type, or increases the damage die of another weapon.

Chapter 6: Equipment

Greg: You wake up in a xeno hold. It's dark, cold, and smelly. It contains leaky pipes, mattresses, and a vending machine.

Chris: Anything's better than sitting in that brood mother's lap. I stretch out on the ground, and pat myself down, taking inventory with my hands.

Greg: Okay, you find your usual gear, in all of the usual places. Except... (rolls a die.)

Chris: Except what!?

Greg: The majority of the stuff you found in the alien hive was stashed in your vacuum-bag, which was shot to bits when the hyperspatial rescue team arrived to save you.

Chris: (Stunned.) You mean, the legacy drive, the cryo-kit, the Emperor's databit...were all destroyed? I don't have them?

Greg: Your shell armor isn't built for cargo. Every pocket has a purpose, and after checking, you realize that each one is currently filling its assigned purpose.

Chris: I knew that rescue team was too good to be true.

Greg: Well, you still have the upgrade chip for your space helmet, which gives you motion-tracking capabilities to your H.U.D. and thermal vision as well. That's worth two perks, which is a little above your level. So consider yourself lucky.

Chris: Woah! That's worth a fortune to a hyper-soldier like Five-Nine. I feel around on the floor for my helmet, and pull it close. Then I make a mental note to go explore the ruins of that alien hive when I get a chance. I think, right now, my rescuers don't need to know that there could be a broken databit with imperial correspondence on it, lying around the hive somewhere.



Number 2259, level 2

Attributes: P 14, M 8, MP 10

Skills: fight (missile) +4 (+2), defend (parry) +5 (+0)

Perks: specialize (parry), diehard

Gear: recursive trans-molecular blaster d8, homefront shell armor (spacewalk) d10, motion-tracking goggles, 100K transmitter/receiver, nano-tool

Hero points: knowledge contests to dig up info on aliens, and on parry contests to avoid getting fried.

Concept: a human bred for war, he has instincts and reflexes, but lacks common sense (flaw). The majority of his programming involves exterminating alien species (goal), but Five-Nine harbors a secret love of consumerism (goal), due to the glimpse of an advertisement that he caught between programming sessions, featuring a child holding a beverage-package and a pinwheel and walking happily with his parents.

(Designer notes: one point away from physical 15, getting the dodge perk next level will allow him to use his bonus physical action for avoiding attacks. His physical score grants a +2 bonus to all physical contests which, combined with 2 fight points and specialization in parry, makes Five-Nine a paragon combatant.)

When equipping a character, you need to consider more than just your budget. It's not like your Last Fantasy game, in which you could carry everything that you could pick up. However, you will find equally epic gear in this game, quite possibly in this chapter!

Ownership Recommendations

The rules allow characters to own anything and everything to which their character concepts entitle them. This is because most

property doesn't affect the game; characters don't sit in plush sky-condos, watching virt-Vs and sipping martinis from their personal wet-bars when they're not at their exciting desk jobs. Modos RPG characters go out and solve problems.

The GM has the responsibility of giving your character everything he deserves, while maintaining a reasonable balance between what game-relevant equipment each PC owns. This is done by comparing what characters can do. At character creation, each character should have the ability to do these things to a similar degree:

- Cause physical damage,
- Protect himself from physical damage,
- Transport himself,
- Acquire new equipment,
- Acquire food and shelter.

These things balance themselves out in indirect ways. For example, a warrior can protect himself from damage with a suit of armor, while a mage could do the same thing with a spell, and a scoundrel might not want armor (too cumbersome), but be happy to use a power shield. Or the scoundrel doesn't need cash for new equipment because he's well equipped to steal everything he needs, while a knight owns much from being nobility, but a wizard might need lots of extra starting gold because magic use is forbidden (along with his earning power) in his game world, and one doesn't acquire assets while studying magic. To summarize, each PC should be able to meet the same survival goals, even if those goals are achieved in different ways.

As characters gain levels, they'll also gain gear. When dispensing gear, the GM should consider that there are three types of gear that directly act like character improvements: weapons, armor, and special gear. Handing this gear out can unbalance the power in the PC party if done without consideration.

Carrying Limits

Sometimes what a character can afford exceeds what he can carry. Characters are

welcome to store excess property elsewhere, like in a family crypt or P.O. box. Let the campaign theme dictate what characters can carry, and what they should store elsewhere. If the campaign is harsh and realistic, every item that a PC carries should have a weight, and more weight could reduce a PC's physical attribute. Or in a cartoon-like campaign, PCs might be welcome to pull whatever they want out of their pockets.

Money

Acquiring and replacing equipment usually requires some money. If your campaign keeps track of such things, your GM will tell you how much money you have at the beginning of the game, and what type of money that is. Sometimes money will be a possession itself, and simply carrying it around will be cumbersome, like the case of silver pieces used in this chapter's equipment tables. Other times, you can store all your money on something small and light, like a credit card, or your identity itself might be directly tied to how much money you own and carry.

If your GM isn't prepared to use money, just use your character concept and campaign theme to decide how much money you have, and what you can buy. Or you could use your skill that best represents your spending capacity (like profession), and roll a contest against the likelihood of your ability to buy an item at any given time.

Note that the silver piece prices used in this chapter are best used to show the relative value between the different items in the chapter. The campaign theme may dictate the use of a different currency.

Armor

Since PCs get into fights more often than not, armor is a very popular equipment type. The armor presented here is by no means the limit of what can be used in the game. The details of using armor in conflict are provided in the [Conflict chapter](#).

An important property of armor to

consider is its encumbrance. Some armor types are heavy and some hinder your movement; some do both. The game emulates this with a temporary penalty to your physical score. Shields don't generally encumber, but most shields do not allow you to carry anything in your shield hand.

- Special. Exceptions and notes.

Weapons

The following is a selection of sample weaponry. The details of using weapons in conflict are covered in the [Conflict chapter](#). The

table has the following entries for each weapon:

- Price. Stated in silver pieces/generic units.
- Size. Generally refers to a weapon's weight. T - tiny weapons are easily concealed. L - light weapons are easily carried at the ready. M - medium weapons are usually one-handed, and usually stowed. H - heavy weapons are two-handed, and too cumbersome to use while mounted.

- Damage. Physical damage dealt per attack.

- Special. Notes about the weapon. Double weapons require two hands, but count as two weapons for the dual wielder perk. The damage listed here is what a double weapon deals when used as two weapons. If an ammunition type is listed, it is followed by the price for 20 shots, and then the number of actions required to reload.

- Range. Weapons can attack anything at the stated range or closer. Longer ranges may be possible, but not useful in combat. See the [Conflict chapter](#) for more on range.

Name	Price	PP	Protection	Special
Buckler	60	0	None	Parry +1, hold tiny weapon or object
Shield, small	60	0	None	Parry +2
Shield, large	130	0	None	Parry +3
Shield, tower	300	-1	None	Parry +4
Padded	50	-1	d4	Soils easily
Boiled leather	100	-1	d4	
Studded leather	250	-1	d4+1	
Spiked leather	350	-1	d4+1	+1 damage to fight (unarmed)
Ringmail	500	-2	d6	
Hauberk	900	-1	d6	
Hide	150	-2	d6	Soils easily
Scale	750	-2	d6+1	
Mail	1500	-2	d8	
Elven mail	3000	-1	d8	Special availability
Banded	2000	-3	d8+1	
Field plate	6000	-3	d10	
Full plate	15000	-3	d10+1	
Dwarven plate	20000	-3	d12	Special availability
Name	Price	PP	Protection	Special
Shield, riot	300	0	None	Parry +3
Flak vest	500	0	d4	
Bulletproof vest	700	-1	d6	
Bomb suit	6000	-3	d10	
Name	Price	PP	Protection	Special
Shield, power	300	0	None	Parry +4
Shield, magneto	1200	0	None	Parry +6
Shell	500	-1	d10	
Shell, homefront	600	0	d10	Spacewalk (negates weightlessness)
Shell, combat	1200	-2	d10	Reactive (negates one lethal blow)
Shell, imperial	2000	-1	d10	Spacewalk & reactive

Table 6-1: armor

Each armor entry has the following information:

- Price. The cost in silver pieces / generic units.
- PP. The physical penalty for using this armor.
- Protection. Physical protection reduces physical damage.

Weapon	Price	Size	Damage	Special	Range
Unarmed	Free	T	d4		Close
Sling	Free	T	d4	Bullet 1 / no action	Short
Sap	10	T	1	Causes mental damage	Close
Bola	10	T	o	Can oppose one flee action	Short
Gauntlet	75	T	d4+1	Free with full armor suit	Close
Dagger	50	T	d4+1	Can be thrown at short range	Close
Blowgun	20	T	d4+1	Poison, dart 10 / 1 action	Short
Club/pick	30	L	d6		Close
Staff	10	H	d6+1	Double, d4+1	Close
Chain, spiked	250	M	d6+1	Double, d6	Close
Javelin	10	L	d6	Missile only	Short
Axe, hand	50	L	d6+1	Can be thrown at short range	Close
Sword, short/rapier	150	L	d6+1		Close
Net	50	L	o	Attack causes movement penalty	Short
Flail	125	M	d8		Close
Morningstar	100	M	d8		Close
Mace	100	M	d8		Close
Bow, short	300	M	d8	Sheaf arrow 10 / 1 action	Medium
Axe, battle	75	M	d8+1		Close
Sword, long	150	M	d8+1		Close
Lance	150	M	d10	Requires mount	Close
Crossbow, light	350	M	d8+1	Light bolt 10 / 2 actions	Medium
Warhammer	40	H	d10		Close
Spear/polearm	70	H	d8+1	Grants +4 initiative	Close
Bow, long	750	H	d10	Flight arrow 20 / 1 action	Medium
Axe, war	150	H	d10+1	Double, d8+1	Close
Sword, great	500	H	d10+1		Close
Flail, great	300	H	d8	Double, bonus to trip/disarm	Close
Crossbow, heavy	500	H	d10+1	Heavy bolt 20 / 2 actions	Medium
Weapon	Price	Size	Damage	Special	Range
Baton	30	T	d4+1		Close
Whip	60	L	d4-1	Mental damage	Close
Six-shooter	100	L	d6	Low power round 5 / semi	Short
Stun gun	200	L	d4+1	Mental damage 40 / 3 actions	Close
Shotgun	200	M	d8	Buckshot shells 15 / 2 actions	Close
Rifle, hunting	200	H	d8	Low power round 5 / 1 action	Medium
Rifle, assault	300	H	d10	High power round 10 / semi	Long
Machine gun	600	H	d12	High power round 10 / auto	Long
Weapon	Price	Size	Damage	Special	Range
Blaster, hand	200	L	d6	Blaster charge 0 / semi	Medium
RT-MB	500	H	d8	Blaster charge 5 / burst	Long

Table 6-2: weapons

Gear

Although the GM decides through establishing the campaign theme what gear is available in the game, anything is possible.

Toothbrushes, wineskins, and auto-apply-compacts can all be found in a game of Modos RPG. Gear is the support material, objects, and tools that don't cost a lot, yet facilitate adventures. Your campaign theme and GM can

provide guidance on what possessions you should record. The following prices are in silver pieces.

Item	Price	Item	Price	Item	Price
Backpack	15	Grappling hook	10	Pot, iron	5
Bedroll	5	Hammer	5	Pouch	5
Blanket	1	Ink	60	Rope, hemp	10
Bottle	10	Ink pen	1	Rope, silk	100
Caltrops	25	Ladder, 12 feet	10	Sack	1
Candle	1	Lamp	1	Scroll case	12
Chain, heavy	35	Lantern	70	Shovel	10
Chest	20	Lock, master	1200	Spyglass	10000
Crowbar	20	Lock, poor	200	Tent	100
Fishhook	1	Oil, pint	1	Torch	1
Fishnet	15	Paper	4	Vial	10
Flask	1	Piton	1	Waterskin	10
Flint and steel	10	Pole, 10 foot	2	Whistle	8

Table 6-3: gear

Special Equipment

Some gear can significantly improve a character's impact in the game. This gear is the special equipment: magic items, hi-tech gadgets, or alien relics that characters use to further their goals. Special equipment improves the elements of a character: his attributes, skills, and perks. In so doing, special equipment actually makes a character more powerful, effectively raising his character level.

Special equipment comes in many different varieties, but each piece requires certain actions for its use, and a concept to offer a brief description of the item.

Each piece also has a level, which corresponds to character levels. To balance the special equipment used in the game between PCs, the GM can convert the power of the equipment into the power of a character. The level of the resulting character-conversion then gives an idea of what characters should be using it, or how the gear might affect the game. For example, Montana Smith finds a grenade in an ammo crate. A grenade deals d8 damage to four

targets, like the Flare spell. The Flare spell is fourth level, requiring four casting actions, and has a casting difficulty of -8. A level 5 character could cast the spell, with some risk. Level 6 or 7 characters would be more likely to use the Flare spell, so the GM will consider a grenade to be a level 6 or 7 item. Since Montana is only level 2 currently, having a grenade represents a big boost in Montana's power.

Sample Special Equipment

Goggles, motion tracking, level 3

Actions: none, touch to activate as non-action

Concept: These are bulky goggles in a modern game, sunglasses or a visor in a future game. They give a faint image of visible, immobile surroundings, and a very bright image of anything moving nearby. If something moves behind cover, even a wall, you get a fainter image of the creature or object moving.

Grenade, flashbang, level 5

Actions: 1 fight (missile)

Concept: This handheld bomb is non-lethal. It takes one action to attack, and it detonates on the following action, on the same initiative as the thrower. Upon detonation, up to four targets take d6 mental damage and a -4 penalty to vision- and sound-based contests during that action. A successful defend (parry) or defend (concentration) negates the effects.

Grenade, fragmentation, level 6

Actions: 1 fight (missile)

Concept: One fight (missile) action delivers this tiny bomb into enemy territory, and it blows up (makes its attacks) on the next action, using the same initiative count as the thrower, producing the effects of a Flare spell: d8 physical (fire) damage to up to four enemies behind partial or no cover, at short range.

Goggles, thermal vision, level 3

Actions: none, touch to activate as non-action

Concept: These are bulky goggles in a modern game, sunglasses or a visor in a future game. They detect only infrared light, so you see a faint image of your surroundings, while anything higher in temperature shows up bright, and anything lower in temperature shows up dark.

These goggles cannot see through solid objects, but fabrics, paper, and glass provide some transparency.

Knife, dancing, level 4

Actions: 1 fight (melee)

Concept: An elegant blade inscribed with flowing, decorative markings. Once during your turn, when you make a fight (melee) contest with this weapon, you immediately gain another action for a second melee contest. This extra action cannot be saved or used for another purpose. Size: T. Damage: d4+1. Range: Close.

Launcher, pulse grenade, level 4

Actions: 1 fight (missile) to attack, 1 physical to reload

Concept: This can be a medium-weight weapon, or attached to another weapon, making it heavy-weight, and it has a magazine that holds 10 shots. The pulse grenade launcher delivers your choice of a single grenade attack or a burst of three grenades, at short range, against targets with none or partial cover. On single mode, the launcher deals d10 P (fire) damage to one target, as a normal weapon with no reload time. This reduces the magazine by one shot. On pulse mode, the weapon deals d8 damage to three different targets, and reduces the magazine by three shots. If extra targets or extra shots are not available, those damage dice are lost.

Ring, invisibility, level 3

Actions: activates once worn

Concept: A small, unassuming gold ring with a tiny inscribed rune. The ring's user spends an action to wear the ring, and then gains the benefits of the invisibility spell (shadow light level). Once anyone detects the user, the invisibility ends until the user spends two actions to remove the ring, and don it again.

Characters not searching for the user are not likely to detect the user.

Rod, change, level 5

Actions: 4 MP, as the spell piggy

Concept: A simple rod that ends in a cloven hoof. This rod grants you specific knowledge of the piggy spell, and one free action each round. This action must be used either for cast spell (piggy), or for defend (concentration) to maintain an existing piggy spell. The rod can be used as a weapon. Size: L. Damage: d6. Range: close.

Scroll of fireball, level 4

Actions: 1 defend (willpower)

Concept: A rolled-up parchment is covered in arcane markings and drawings resembling fire demons. The scroll casts the spell fire2 if the user succeeds on a willpower contest against +3 difficulty. Failure means another action is required. The defender defends against the willpower contest. Fire2 deals d12 P (fire) damage to one target in short range, behind partial or no cover. The scroll takes the casting damage for the caster, destroying itself.

Stimpack, level 2

Actions: 1 physical

Concept: A small clamshell case houses an auto-injector that delivers a small dose of nano-repair bots. Instantaneously heals d8 physical damage.

Sword, darkness, level 3

Actions: 1 defend (willpower)

Concept: A blade that appears to be wrought iron, with the weight and strength of steel. This sword consumes light if its user wills it so. One willpower contest causes the sword to lower the light level in a 15' radius by two degrees, for one round. Use the willpower contest as a cast spell (dark) contest for countering purposes. Size: M. Damage: d8+1. Range: close.

Chapter 7: Magic

Arnold: I don't think I'm going to make it. Merloon staggers a bit, if not from the witch's spells, then from his own psychic exhaustion. Whose turn is it?

Greg: The Red Witch ended her turn. The library looks empty, but beyond the circle that you two have cleared, a mortified onlooker or two pokes his head out to see if either of you is yet dead. You have a brief moment to act, while the witch concentrates on her last spell.

Arnold: Yeah, her anti-fire barrier? I have to break her concentration. She might be protected from my flames, but in this book right here (mimes using his spellbook) I have the power to make her "slumber." (Arnold sweeps his hand out over the table as though casting a spell. From it, he drops a d20 for the cast spell (sleep) contest. He takes half on casting damage and on his mystic ward, so he adds 3 to his metaphysical damage pool.) I rolled 11, plus 2 for no armor, plus 2 for MP bonus, less 4 for spell difficulty. So my contest is 11!

Greg: 11? That spell almost failed! The witch grimaces as she struggles to resist your spell, but...

Arnold: But she takes half and beats my 11.

Greg: ...but she's too busy maintaining her ward, and got caught off guard by your sleep spell. Her eyelids get heavy, and she sets herself on the ground to sleep.

Arnold: I had 1 MP health! Okay, with no metaphysical left, I'm about to completely space out. I stumble for the door, not paying attention to anyone unless they're directly in front of me, and look like one of my comrades.

Greg: (Rolls a couple defend (concentration) contests for the Red Witch.) No one blocks your path. You scatter pages of destroyed books as you go, and the darkness of the grand foyer becomes blinding light as the front doors spread apart. When your eyes adjust, you see your friends, arms bound behind them, surrounded by a dozen watchmen!



Merloon, level 3

Attributes: P 8, M 10, MP 15

Skills: cast spell (fire) +2 (+2), knowledge (scholarship) +1

Perks: spell implement (spellbook), mystic ward d4, spell weaver

Gear: spellbook, walking stick, longsword d8+1, cloak, brass brooch, straw hat

Hero points: time-related feats, like initiative contests or deceive contests to make him seem younger.

Concept: As a budding wizard, he learned to create fire almost by accident. Once Merloon discovered that secret, no one could stop him from pursuing other arcane secrets. Someday, he'll learn to age in reverse, or live forever. Merloon's goals are to discover as many secrets of magic as possible, and to maintain his friendships, since he has so few. His flaw is that his focus on magical lore resulted in a certain neglect of social skills, making him abrasive or offensive to some.

(Designer notes: Merloon's fire spell got a point at 3rd level, making the attack slightly harder to avoid, but a higher level fire spell would do more damage or save him some MP points. Merloon gains a bonus MP action for hitting 15, and the spell weaver perk allows that to be used on any cast spell skill. This gives him a fourth action for spellcasting, allowing him to cast 4th level spells, but Merloon will wait until higher levels when spellcasting gets easier to try these.)

Psionics, super-powers, sorcery, and technology turn a roleplaying game into a fantasy roleplaying game. They are available to all characters because these powers, referred to as "magic" and "spells" in this book, are presented

with the minimum amount of context here; this book gives you the game-rule effects, and lets you, the caster, describe the rest. So the Sleep spell, for example, could come from a witch's incantation, or the neck-chop of a super-spy.

This chapter presents an introduction to spellcasting (detailed rules are in [the Conflict chapter](#)), a list of common spells, and some notes on spell design.

Spellcasting Basics

A magic spell is what happens when a character uses the cast spell skill. Like any other skill, the success of the cast spell skill is determined by the contest ([see Conflict chapter](#)) rolled by the player, or by the GM for NPC contests. If the contest result is higher than the minimum of 10, the spell takes effect, and the caster, the user of the cast spell skill, spends $1d8 + (\text{spell level})$ points of metaphysical health to make the spell happen. This is the same as taking metaphysical damage, and with taking half can be simplified to $4 + (\text{spell level})$.

The target(s) of the spell can immediately use an action to defend against the spell. The appropriate defense skill depends on the spell being cast. This defense contest must exceed the caster's cast spell contest. If it succeeds, the target has avoided some or all of the spell's effects. If it fails, the target suffers the spell's effects, for good or ill. Most spells take effect during their final casting action, and this is when targets may use defenses against them. However, some spells can cause damage while being cast on a per-action basis, and this damage should be treated like multiple weapon attacks: each attack action can be opposed with a defense action.

If a spell doesn't occur instantaneously, it lasts until the first action of the spellcaster's next turn. To "maintain" or continue a spell beyond this time period, the spellcaster must use a defend (concentration) action at the beginning of his next turn, which allows the spell to remain in effect for another round, until his next turn begins.

Acquiring Magic Spells

The simplest way to learn a magic spell (a cast spell skill) is to assign your skill point to it when your character levels-up. Check with your GM though, because there could be other

ways, or in-game ways, to learn spells. This is especially important because magic is handled in different ways by different characters in different campaigns. Your character could learn a spell by seeing one, feeling one, buying one, studying, getting older, or gaining experience. Look to your character concept and the campaign theme for guidance.

Magic Spell Entries

Each spell in this chapter has the following sections:

- **Name.** This spell name is only for reference, you may call the spell whatever you want in-game.
- **Level.** The level of the spell is used to determine the metaphysical damage that the caster takes once the spell is cast, which is $1d8 + \text{the spell level}$, or $4 + \text{spell level}$. If this is reduced by the mystic ward perk (or other metaphysical protection), the caster must always pay a minimum of one metaphysical health to cast a spell. Spell level also equals the number of casting actions required to cast a spell.
- **Actions.** Each of the casting actions listed must be combined (used together during your turn) to cast a spell. A spell with only one action can be cast at any time. Some spells list physical and mental actions as well as metaphysical actions; the cast spell skill can use different attributes for actions, but always uses the metaphysical bonus. The first action type listed is the primary one, and the one that determines what defense skill the targets of the spell will use. These are defend (parry) for physical, defend (concentration) for mental, and defend (willpower) for metaphysical. Metaphysical actions may substitute for any physical or mental actions, but not vice versa. For example, a spell lists its actions as: 3 P, 1 MP. The caster must combine three physical actions and one metaphysical action to

cast the spell, or might use three metaphysical actions and one physical action. Since physical is listed first, targets of the spell may roll defend (parry) actions to defend against it. If a character has only a bonus mental action, he would not be able to cast the spell. Every spell requires at least one MP action.

- **Difficulty.** Some spells are more difficult to cast than others. When a caster rolls his cast spell contest, he applies the casting difficulty to his contest. As long as his contest is still above 10, the spell takes effect. Targets, range, and cover affect spell difficulty. Higher casting difficulty reflects a target's opportunity to avoid a spell. For example, bouncing a chain-lightning spell across only enemies at long distance might take a high difficulty penalty, reflecting the targets' opportunity to get out of the way!
- **Targets.** This describes on whom or what the spell takes effect.
 - **Self.** The spell affects the spellcaster only.
 - **Single.** The spell affects one creature, creature-sized object, or one point in space. A spell that causes damage during each casting action can be redirected toward different targets, but each casting action affects only one target.
 - **Multi.** The spell affects one creature, creature-sized object, or point in space per spell level. Targets must be in the same posture unless otherwise noted. Affecting fewer than the number of targets allowed does not increase the spell's effect.
- **Range.** This is how far from the caster that a spell can take effect. The caster is free to cast his spell closer than this maximum range. Range categories are discussed further in the [Conflict chapter](#).
 - **Close.** Acts the same as close-combat weapons, so an offensive caster can target anyone in offensive posture or defensive comrades, and target defensive opponents for 50% damage. A defensive caster can target comrades in offensive or defensive posture, or offensive opponents for 50% damage.
 - **Short.** Includes any targets in conflict. Damaging spells cast from defensive posture deal only 50% damage to defensive opponents.
 - **Medium.** Includes targets outside conflict, or those fleeing in the current or previous round.
 - **Long.** The spell can affect targets unlikely to enter conflict.
- **Cover.** Sometimes represented by defensive posture, cover is a little more specific with regard to spells. This is because some spells can target much more effectively than missile weapons can. Whether a character in defensive posture has cover and what kind of cover he has depend on the environment. The cover entry refers to the protection overcome or defeated by the spell. The categories are:
 - **None.** The target has nothing thicker than grass or fog between it and the caster.
 - **Partial.** The spell is effective against targets ducking behind small amounts of cover.
 - **Full.** This spell will still affect a target that is fully behind a solid barrier, and out of sight.
 - **Indirect.** This spell requires no line of effect. The caster must simply know the target's general location to hit.
- **Effect.** This is, in game-rule terms, what the spell does. You're the spellcaster; feel free to fill in the details. Spell effects take place with each action for

damaging spells, or starting on the final casting action for non-damaging or multiple-target spells. All effects end at the beginning of the spellcaster's next turn unless the spellcaster maintains them. Healing and damage are permanent; these effects do not require maintaining a spell.

- Half-effect. If casting the spell requires more than one action and the spell is maintained by the spellcaster, then a target who succeeds on one defense suffers this effect instead of the full effect. To end the spell effect on a target, the target must succeed on a total number of defenses equal to the number of casting actions. For example, cast spell (mute) uses two actions, one mental and one metaphysical. A spellcaster gets a cast spell contest result of 15. If the target of this spell uses an action to defend, and gets a defend (parry) contest of 16 or more, the spell's effects on that target become the half-effect instead. If the target wins a second defense, he suffers no further effects.
 - Per action. The spell takes effect after each casting action, so a defense action must be performed during each casting action to be effective.

- No defense. This spell does not directly affect a character, so no defense roll can be made to counter its effects.
- No effect. One defense against this spell prevents all effects.

Spell Archetypes

Here is a list of spells sorted by the types of characters who might choose them.

- Racial: alter, fear, fog, sleep, anti-fire, anti-ice, anti-lightning, float, poison, size, haste, berserk, pure, venom.
- Warrior/Soldier/Zeronaut: armor, cure, fire, harm, lightning, lock, temper, ice, ruse, status, stun, drain, fast, slow.
- Wizard/Hacker/Decker: armor, charm, fear, fire, fog, lightning, lock, sleep, temper, blind, dark, ice, mute, poison, size, stun, dispel, drain, haste, hold, slow, confuse, flare, piggy, psych, venom, warp, bane, bio, death, toad.
- Shaman/Priest/Nanomancer: alter, awaken, cure, harm, lamp, shell, anti-fire, anti-ice, anti-lightning, float, invisibility, mute, ruse, sight, size, status, dispel, fast, hold, berserk, blink, heal, holy, pure, exit, life, wind.
- Thief/Investigator/Scoundrel: charm, fog, lamp, shell, sleep, blind, dark, invisibility, poison, stun, hold, blink.

Common Spells

Name: Alter

Level: 1

Actions: 0 P, 1 MP

Difficulty: +8

Targets: Self

Range: Close

Cover: None

Effect: Caster alters his appearance and shape, with only superficial changes that do not affect attributes, skills, perks, damage, or protection.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Armor

Level: 1

Actions: 0 P, 1 MP

Difficulty: +4

Targets: Single

Range: Close

Cover: None

Effect: Target gains d8 P protection, unless worn armor is higher.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Awaken

Level: 1

Actions: 0 M, 1 MP

Difficulty: +4

Targets: Single

Range: Close

Cover: None

Effect: Target heals 1d4 Mental damage.

Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Charm

Level: 1

Actions: 1 MP

Difficulty: 0

Targets: Single

Range: Short

Cover: None

Effect: Target's disposition toward caster improves two

degrees. For example, a hostile target, failing its defend (willpower) contest, would become indifferent to the spellcaster.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Cure
Level: 1
Actions: 0 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: +4
Targets: Single
Range: Close
Cover: None
Effect: Target heals d8 physical damage.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Fear
Level: 1
Actions: 1 MP
Difficulty: 0
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: None
Effect: Target must move to defensive posture or flee.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Fire
Level: 1
Actions: 0 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target takes d8 P (fire) damage.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Fog
Level: 1
Actions: 0 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: 0
Targets: Single
Range: Close
Cover: Partial
Effect: You create a 15' radius cloud or other visual distortion, causing vision-

based contests to take -2 penalty when entering, exiting, or within the spell effect. This fog obscures what is on its far side.
Half-effect: No defense.

Name: Harm
Level: 1
Actions: 1 MP
Difficulty: 0
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: None
Effect: Target undead creature takes d4 metaphysical damage.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Lamp
Level: 1
Actions: 0 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: +4
Targets: Single
Range: Close
Cover: None
Effect: Target glows like a lamp, raising a dark or shadowy area to dim light.
Half-effect: No defense.

Name: Lightning
Level: 1
Actions: 0 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: 0
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: None
Effect: Target takes d8 P (lightning) damage.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Lock
Level: 1
Actions: 0 M, 1 MP
Difficulty: 0
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: None
Effect: Target takes -4

penalty on parry contests.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Shell
Level: 1
Actions: 1 MP
Difficulty: +4
Targets: Single
Range: Close
Cover: None
Effect: Target gains +4 on defense contests against spells.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Sleep
Level: 1
Actions: 0 M, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target lies down and sleeps, and can use no physical actions. This spell cannot be maintained, and ends when any other action affects the target.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Temper
Level: 1
Actions: 0 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: +4
Targets: Single
Range: Close
Cover: None
Effect: Target weapon gains weapon focus perk, increasing its damage die by one type.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Anti-Fire
Level: 2
Actions: 1 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: +4
Targets: Single
Range: Close
Cover: None

Effect: Target gains d12 protection from fire damage.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Anti-Ice
Level: 2
Actions: 1 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: +4
Targets: Single
Range: Close
Cover: None
Effect: Target gains d12 protection from ice damage.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Anti-Lightning
Level: 2
Actions: 1 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: +4
Targets: Single
Range: Close
Cover: None
Effect: Target gains d12 protection from lightning damage.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Blind
Level: 2
Actions: 1 M, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target loses most vision, and takes -4 on contests requiring vision.
Half-effect: Penalty becomes -2.

Name: Dark
Level: 2
Actions: 1 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: 0
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: None
Effect: 15' radius area around target loses two light levels.

Half-effect: Area loses one light level.

Name: Float
Level: 2
Actions: 1 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: +4
Targets: Single
Range: Close
Cover: None
Effect: Target moves normally, but 1 foot above any surface.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Ice
Level: 2
Actions: 1 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target takes d8 P (ice) damage, and -4 movement penalty.
Half-effect: Defense during the second casting action negates damage, or defense after casting reduces movement penalty to -2.

Name: Invisibility
Level: 2
Actions: 1 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: +8
Targets: Self
Range: Close
Cover: None
Effect: Opponents treat target as though he were in shadow light level.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Mute
Level: 2
Actions: 1 M, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial

Effect: Target cannot speak, and all cast spell and speech-dependent contests take -4 penalty.
Half-effect: Target takes -2 penalty to all cast spell contests.

Name: Poison
Level: 2
Actions: 1 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target takes d6 physical damage and cannot use physical protection against this spell.

Name: Ruse
Level: 2
Actions: 1 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: +4
Targets: Single
Range: Close
Cover: None
Effect: Target gains +8 to defend (parry) contests.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Sight
Level: 2
Actions: 1 M, 1 MP
Difficulty: 0
Targets: Self
Range: Medium
Cover: None
Effect: Floating magic-eye sends sight to caster. Move the eye in any direction at walking speed with the maintain action.
Alternatively, this spell ends the Blind spell if its contest is higher.
Half-effect: No defense.

Name: Size
Level: 2

Actions: 1 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target shrinks or grows, and gains a small size or large size perk. This perk is cumulative with other size perks. For example, if the spellcaster applies a small size perk to a target with the large size perk, the two perks cancel each other out.
Half-effect: Target gains +2 on it remaining defense contests against this spell.

Name: Status
Level: 2
Actions: 1 M, 1 MP
Difficulty: 0
Targets: Single
Range: Close
Cover: Partial
Effect: Caster senses damage levels of each target: no damage is "perfect," under half damage is "injured," under max damage is "critical," and max damage is "mostly dead," "unconscious," or "catatonic," by attribute.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Stun
Level: 2
Actions: 1 M, 1 MP
Difficulty: 0
Targets: Single
Range: Close
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target takes d6 mental damage.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Burn
Level: 3
Actions: 2 P, 1 MP

Difficulty: 0
Targets: Single
Range: Close
Cover: Partial
Effect: Caster deals d8 P (fire) damage during each casting action. The caster may change targets for each action.
Half-effect: Per action.

Name: Cure2
Level: 3
Actions: 2 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: +4
Targets: Single
Range: Close
Cover: None
Effect: Target heals d12 physical damage.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Dispel
Level: 3
Actions: 3 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target spell ends if its cast spell contest is lower than the cast spell (dispel) contest. If target spell is permanent, dispel suppresses its effects as long as the caster maintains dispel.
Half-effect: No defense.

Name: Drain
Level: 3
Actions: 2 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target takes d8 physical damage, caster heals d8 physical damage.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Fast
Level: 3
Actions: 2 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: +4
Targets: Single
Range: Close
Cover: None
Effect: Target gains 2 fight actions next round.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Fire2
Level: 3
Actions: 2 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target takes d12 P (fire) damage.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Fog2
Level: 3
Actions: 2 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: You create a 15' radius cloud or other visual distortion, causing vision-based skills, like detect and fight, to take -6 penalty when entering, exiting, or within the spell effect. This fog obscures what is on its other side.
Half-effect: No defense.

Name: Harm2
Level: 3
Actions: 3 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Multi
Range: Short
Cover: None
Effect: Multiple undead creatures take d4

metaphysical damage.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Haste
Level: 3
Actions: 3 MP
Difficulty: +4
Targets: Single
Range: Close
Cover: None
Effect: Target gains one free action next round.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Hold
Level: 3
Actions: 3 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target can use only bonus physical actions. Remaining actions must be mental or metaphysical.
Half-effect: Only two free actions may be used as physical actions.

Name: Lightning²
Level: 3
Actions: 2 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Medium
Cover: None
Effect: Target takes d12 physical (lightning) damage.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Lock²
Level: 3
Actions: 2 M, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Multi
Range: Short
Cover: None
Effect: Targets take -8 penalty to defend (parry) contests.

Half-effect: Penalty reduced to -4.

Name: Sleep²
Level: 3
Actions: 2 M, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Multi
Range: Short
Cover: None
Effect: Targets lie down and sleep, and can use no physical actions. This spell cannot be maintained, and ends when any other action affects the target.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Slow
Level: 3
Actions: 3 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target loses one free action next round, and takes -4 penalty to movement contests.
Half-effect: Target takes -4 penalty to movement contests.

Name: Zap
Level: 3
Actions: 2 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: 0
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: None
Effect: Caster deals d8 P (lightning) damage during each casting action. The caster may change targets for each action.
Half-effect: Per action.

Name: Berserk
Level: 4
Actions: 3 M, 1 MP

Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target can use free actions for only fight skills or defend (parry).
Half-effect: Target can use free actions for only fight skills or defend skills.

Name: Blink
Level: 4
Actions: 2 P, 2 MP
Difficulty: +4
Targets: Single
Range: Close
Cover: None
Effect: Target gains benefits and drawbacks of shadow light level, can pass through doors, windows, and thin walls.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Confuse
Level: 4
Actions: 3 M, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target rolls each time he attempts an action: 1) take intended action, 2) use a defense skill, 3) fight a random character, or 4) use persuade skill.
Half-effect: Target rolls each time he attempts an action: 1) take intended action, or 2) use a defense skill.

Name: Flare
Level: 4
Actions: 3 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: -8
Targets: Multi
Range: Short
Cover: Partial

Effect: Targets take d8 P (fire) damage.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Heal
Level: 4
Actions: 3 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: 0
Targets: Multi
Range: Close
Cover: None
Effect: Targets heal d8 physical damage.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Holy
Level: 4
Actions: 3 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target takes d10 physical damage, no protection allowed.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Ice2
Level: 4
Actions: 3 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target takes d12 physical (ice) damage, and -4 penalty to movement contests.
Half-effect: Defense during the fourth casting action negates damage, or defense after casting reduces movement penalty to -2.

Name: Invisibility2
Level: 4
Actions: 3 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Multi
Range: Close

Cover: Partial
Effect: Caster and 3 allies gain benefit of dark light level.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Piggy
Level: 4
Actions: 3 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target transforms into a barnyard animal of similar size. The target cannot speak well, and takes -6 to all physical contests.
Half-effect: Penalties become -3.

Name: Psych
Level: 4
Actions: 4 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target takes d4 metaphysical damage. Caster heals d4 metaphysical damage.
Half-effect: Damage becomes 1 MP, caster heals 1 MP.

Name: Pure
Level: 4
Actions: 2 P, 2 MP
Difficulty: +4
Targets: Single
Range: Close
Cover: None
Effect: Target heals d12 physical damage, and dispels poison effects if cast spell (pure) contest is higher. Maintaining this spell provides d12 protection from poison damage.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Venom
Level: 4
Actions: 3 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Multi
Range: Short
Cover: None
Effect: Targets take d6 P (poison) damage, normal protection does not apply.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Warp
Level: 4
Actions: 3 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Multi
Range: Short
Cover: None
Effect: Caster teleports self, three animals, and their gear up to 30 feet.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Bane
Level: 5
Actions: 4 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target takes d12 P (poison) damage, normal protection does not apply.
Half-effect: Damage reduced by half.

Name: Bio
Level: 5
Actions: 4 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: 0
Targets: Single
Range: Close
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target takes d6 P (poison) damage during each casting action. Normal protection does not apply.
Half-effect: Per action.

Name: Cure3
Level: 5
Actions: 4 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target heals all physical damage.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Death
Level: 5
Actions: 4 M, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target takes d12 mental damage.
Half-effect: Damage reduced by half.

Name: Exit
Level: 5
Actions: 3 P, 2 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Multi
Range: Close
Cover: Partial
Effect: Caster teleports self, four allies, and their gear back to the last place where they were under open sky.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Fire3
Level: 5
Actions: 4 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target takes physical (fire) damage equal to caster's physical score.

Half-effect: Damage becomes half of caster's physical score.

Name: Harm3
Level: 5
Actions: 5 MP
Difficulty: -8
Targets: Multi
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: 5 undead creatures take d12 metaphysical damage.
Half-effect: Damage reduced by half.

Name: Life
Level: 5
Actions: 5 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target heals one damage point in each damage pool with max damage.
Half-effect: No effect.

Name: Lightning3
Level: 5
Actions: 2 P, 2 M, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Medium
Cover: None
Effect: Target takes d12 physical (lightning) damage and d8 mental damage.
Half-effect: Damage occurs simultaneously. Target may choose defend (parry) or defend (concentration), but not both.

Name: Slow2
Level: 5

Actions: 5 MP
Difficulty: -8
Targets: Multi
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: Five targets lose one free action next round, and take -6 penalty to movement contests.
Half-effect: Targets take -3 penalty to movement contests.

Name: Toad
Level: 5
Actions: 5 MP
Difficulty: -8
Targets: Single
Range: Medium
Cover: Partial
Effect: Target becomes small and helpless. Target gains the small size perk and takes -6 on all contests.
Half-effect: Target has small size perk and takes -3 on all contests.

Name: Wind
Level: 5
Actions: 4 P, 1 MP
Difficulty: -4
Targets: Single
Range: Short
Cover: Partial
Effect: If you are in open terrain, a fierce wind blasts the target away, and the target may reenter conflict after your next turn ends. In closed terrain, the target becomes pinned by wind and cannot take physical actions, except to defend against this spell.
Half-effect: As full effect.

Designing Spells

The spells presented in this chapter are only the tip of the iceberg. Spellcasters, or any characters, wishing to add more diversity to their repertoire are free to invent and use any type of spell with GM approval. These brand-new spells will generally fall into two categories:

- **Damaging.** A spell that causes damage is pretty straight-forward to design. As a spell gets higher in level, it can either affect more targets (one per level) or use a higher damage die. Spells that ignore

protection or attack mental or metaphysical attributes use a lower damage die than spells that attack physically. Damaging spells generally use action types according to the type of damage that they deal.

- **Non-damaging.** A spell with an effect that does not cause damage does not have an easy-to-assign level. You must segment the spell's effect to guide you toward the proper spell level to use.

When designing spells, always compare your new spell to other spells of its level. If your spell is obviously the best choice of that level, it should probably be a higher level instead.



Chapter 8: Conflict

Betty: Oh no. They want to fight, don't they?

Greg: Roll initiative. Greenwald will act before or after you, your choice. (Rolls initiative for the natives, decides that they're acting on gut instincts, so he adds their average metaphysical bonus of 1 to the d20 roll of 4 for a 5 total initiative.)

Betty: (Rolls 10, adds her +2 from mental bonus) 12. I hold an arm out to make Greenwald feel protected.

Greg: Okay, you're first, then Greenwald. You're slightly down the hill in the field, while most of the natives are still crawling out from behind statues and trees. So, there's one row between you and them. (Greg establishes the postures of all combatants: with one "row" between the opposing parties, the first side to move up will take offensive posture and probably put the other side on the offensive as well.)

Betty: I wish I hadn't shot all my bullets...I ready my whip and look around quick for tree branches to swing away on. One action?

Greg: Two, since your glance requires taking attention from your opponents. There are two good candidates, one on your left and one on your right, for swinging away. Neither branch would support both you and Greenwald. While you're looking about, the native champion steps forward. War-paint covers his muscular chest, but it looks strangely like a gumball machine. Greenwald responds as well by backing off. And he picks up a rock.

Betty: So now I'm in offensive (posture)? I'm waiting on Gumball. (Betty has used two actions, one mental to search and one physical to ready Montana's whip, and by waiting she saves Montana's third action for later in the round.)

Greg: Greenwald stoops to protect himself (saves his actions for defenses). The champion pounds his chest ferociously and screams at you. Your limited understanding of Wachatu language tells you he said, "I am great." He...

Betty: I respond by wrapping my whip around his head. Hero point, (rolls d6) for 6! And contest (rolls a fight (melee) contest and d4-1 Mental damage)...argh. 4 plus skill plus hero point is 12. Damage is 2.

Greg: (Allows the champion to defend during his chest-pounding, and takes half on defend (concentration) for a 10 result). Well, he has no physical armor to protect against your whip, so he tries to grin and bear it. He dodges away from your whip, but shortly after he holds his hand to his head, feeling blood. (Marks down 2 mental damage in the champion's mental damage pool.) Now he's aggravated, so he flies at you. (Takes half on fight (unarmed) and rolls d6 for damage, since the champion has the weapon focus (unarmed) perk.)

Betty: I'm out of actions! "Greenwald! Do something!"

Greg: Greenwald...(rolls a fight (missile) contest for the rock, gets 3) throws a rock into the bushes. Gumball pounces on you, fists flying, dealing 3 damage.

Betty: I try to bat the punches away, but get some wind knocked out of me. I thought Gumball can't defend against Greenwald since he's busy attacking me?

Greg: Yes, but Greenwald's throw wasn't a guaranteed success, so he still had to beat minimum difficulty, which he didn't. You're up, next round.

Betty: I shove myself away from Gumball, and whip a tree branch. Then I want to swing.

Greg: You're fleeing?

Betty: No, I'll swing out, swing back, and kick Gumball square in the face!

Greg: Roll it! Gumball attacks while you start your swing, for 3 damage. He'll wait while you're out of range.

Betty: (Tallies another 3 damage in her physical damage pool.) 9 damage. I'm on my last health point. This had better work...

Greg: Just take one movement action. Gravity is doing most of the work for you.

Betty: I use a hero point on the branch-grab, take half, and my last hero point on the kick! (Takes half on the fight (melee) contest to grasp the tree branch, a movement action to swing, and rolls a fight (unarmed) contest for the kick to Gumball's face.) I got 2 on my first hero point, for 14. 3 on the second hero point, and 18 on the kick! So, 21! That's "arduous!"

Greg: Almost! Roll your damage. Gumball stares in astonishment. (Rolls defend (parry)) he gets 9, but your stunt is difficult, so he gets +8 to defend, for 17. You can double your damage for the cool move.

Betty: Okay, 2d4...6. 6 damage. I land, breathing hard, but looking as confident as possible.

Greg: Gumball spins completely around, and looks like he might be gathering his teeth. He starts, as if he's going to run, but then smiles, blood dripping from his mouth. He turns, shoots his hands in the air, and shouts something else in Wachatu. It sounds like, "worthy!"



Montana Smith, level 3

Attributes: P 10, M 14, MP 10

Skills: defend (parry) +1, fight (melee) +2, knowledge (scholarship) +5 (+0)

Perks: specialize (scholarship), heli-whip

Gear: satchel, whip d4-1 M, fedora, wristwatch, six-shooter d6

Hero points: to make really lucky dodges, and perform unbelievable whip-work.

Concept: An archaeologist and professor, he can't tolerate gaps in the historical record, so he goes out to fill them (goal). Montana's luck and knowledge will increase over time, but he'll always be deathly afraid of frogs (flaw), and highly vulnerable to women's charms (flaw).

(Designer notes: Montana substituted his level 3 perk for a point in MP. This raises his MP bonus from -1 to 0, which will come in handy when fast-talking, and possibly make him more charming. It also opens the possibility for spell use, even though he might call them "ancient secrets" to better fit his campaign theme.)

Once a character has a concept, attributes, skills, perks, equipment, hero points, and even a spell or two, he's ready to take them into combat. However, this game is about more than just fighting. Conflicts of any nature can be resolved with the contents of this chapter, broken down into four sections of conflict: general, physical, mental, and metaphysical. The general section covers what conflict is and the rules that apply to all conflicts. The physical section covers material-world conflict, usually called combat. The mental section discusses conflict of the mind, with topics like detection and awareness. Last, the metaphysical section covers spiritual disturbance, involving people and magic.

General Conflict

Roleplaying will not solve all your problems. When your character's quantitative elements are more important in a situation than his qualitative elements, you have a conflict, and some rules to help you resolve the conflict. These general conflict rules provide an opposed die roll called a contest, bonuses for contests called difficulty, a rule for speeding up die rolls, and systems for simple or detailed conflicts.

Contests

Contests are the type of roll used to determine when a character finds more success than his opposition in a conflict. Contests have the following features. They:

- always have an opposing side,
- are always rolled with a d20,
- gain bonuses from attributes and applicable skills,
- are subject to difficulty bonuses,
- grant a better outcome to the higher side of the contest,
- are calculated like this:

$$\text{d20} + \text{attribute bonus} + \text{skill points} + \text{difficulty bonus} = \text{contest result}.$$

The GM calls for a contest whenever the outcome of something is in doubt, or cannot be roleplayed. A contest can be between a character and another character, or a character and fate. For either type, the player making the contest rolls a d20, adds his attribute bonus for the type of contest (physical, mental, or metaphysical), and adds his skill points if a skill applies to the contest. Finally, the GM can add a difficulty bonus to either side of the contest, and grant the PC a roleplaying bonus if he made a good-faith effort to solve the problem without rolling. For example, Montana Smith is being cursed by an evil witch doctor. The GM tells

Betty that she can make a defend (concentration) contest to resist the curse. Betty rolls a d20 and gets 6, adds her mental bonus of +2 since concentration relates to her mental attribute, but can't add any concentration skill points since Montana doesn't have any. Betty's contest result is 8.

Whoever has the higher contest result gets the better outcome from the contest. If the result is a tie, the GM may call the outcome a tie, ask for a reroll, or award success to the PC if he roleplays the situation well. The side that gets the lower result doesn't necessarily fail, because most contests have more outcomes than pass or fail. For example, a car chase features cops and robbers. The GM, playing the cops, wants to keep the plot moving so he asks the PCs to make one contest for the robbers. The GM takes half on his side, and the robbers lose by getting a lower result than the cops. This doesn't necessarily mean that the robbers get arrested, so the GM adjudicates that both the cops and robbers wreck – giving the robbers a chance to negotiate their escape. The margin of the cops' contest over the robbers' contest doesn't affect the outcome unless the GM wants to use it for inspiration.

Remember that contests are a chance to roleplay! Whether you get a good outcome or not, you can let the other players know what your contest result means by roleplaying it. If you win a handler (dogs) contest, you can speak softly to the ferocious guard dog. If you lose a cast spell (stun) contest, you could recoil briefly in pain from the psychic feedback. Do it well, and you could recover a hero point.

Difficulty

There are times when external or intrinsic factors, beyond the two contestants, have an important influence on the outcome of contests. This is represented by the difficulty bonus, or just "difficulty." This is a bonus (negative bonuses are called penalties) to a contest which generally ranges from 0 to 20, with the following bonuses given as a guideline.

Secret Contests

There are times when you need to make a contest, but doing so would reveal more to you than the GM wants. For these situations, it benefits the GM to have some PC information at his disposal. He can then roll a secret contest for you, to determine success without telling you what's going on. These contests are useful whenever a PC might notice something by accident, or the PC's abilities might protect him from harm without his knowledge.

For example, two alien PCs are tracking a human through a rain forest. They are using thermal vision to better spot the human, but this limits other types of vision. When the PCs walk by the guidance device they seek, buried in the ground by the human they're tailing, the GM can roll detect contests for the PCs to see if they notice the device or continue without a clue.

Another example is the hidden attack. If a Brainopath attempts to enthrall a PC and fails, the PC might not know what sort of attack he faces. The GM can give the PC a clue, "you suddenly feel stressed," but make a defend (concentration) contest for the PC, to determine an outcome without alerting the PC to mental attacks.

Difficulty level	Bonus	Description
Too easy	Auto-success	Tasks that always succeed
Easy	0	Only fail under stress
Challenging	4	Some focus is required
Difficult	8	Requires hard effort
Arduous	12	Highly taxing
Impossible	16	One in a million shot
Divine	20	Only gods succeed

Table 8-1: difficulty

The GM applies a difficulty bonus to one side of a contest if there is some factor that would make that side's contest more difficult - to represent the imbalance of the contest. For example, Supraman and Aquifer are having an argument in the Under-Channel Vortex (a massive pool of psychic energy). Since Supraman is wearing a psi-crystal, he is shielded from the psychic disturbance from the Vortex.

Minimum Difficulty

Minimum difficulty sometimes becomes an issue when a defender has run out of actions. If you're attacking an opponent in a way that wouldn't be automatically successful, like throwing a grenade into his bunker, you won't deal damage just because your opponent is out of actions and can't defend. You will still need to beat a minimum difficulty contest with a busy opponent as your opposition. In the above example, your opponent spent all his actions firing a barrage of bullets from his bunker. You're 20 meters away, but your grenade won't do any good if it lands on the outside of the bunker. So you roll a fight (missile) contest, and the GM rolls opposition: d20 plus 4 difficulty for a "challenging" throw. More likely, he takes half and gets 14, so you can damage your opponent if your contest is 15 or higher.

A busy melee combatant is an easy one to hurt. If your opponent has used all his actions or is defending against someone else, then attacking him with a club, for example, can be considered an auto-success. However, if you're trying to shoot him from 50 meters, and he's surrounded by your allies, then minimum difficulty is applicable.

Spellcasting, depending on the campaign theme, is no simple trick. To cast a spell, you must always beat a minimum difficulty of 10.

Aquifer is not, so the GM gives him a -4 penalty to his persuade contest against Supraman. If there are too many complicating factors, the GM can simply decide which side has a general advantage, and grant a bonus to that side of the contest.

If a character has no opponent but is attempting something difficult, the GM applies difficulty to only the opposing contest, called a difficulty contest. For example, Supraman flew out of the Vortex after winning his argument against Aquifer, leaving Aquifer behind to find his own way out. Aquifer must make a mental contest to focus his mind enough to guide himself out. Aquifer's most useful skill in this situation is defend (concentration), so he adds those skill points. Instead of giving Aquifer a penalty to his contest for the difficulty, the GM determines how difficult the effort would be to the average person, and adds that difficulty to his contest against Aquifer.

Average Person

The difficulty levels from the difficulty table are named according to how difficult something would be for an average person. When adding a difficulty bonus or making a difficulty contest, the GM chooses a bonus by asking himself, "how hard would this be for the average person?"

Of course, PCs don't stay average forever, so the difficulty level slides for them. For example, stepping through the Fire Portal into Nembaktu, without being burned, is "difficult" for most people. But a character with an 18 physical score, a specialize (movement) perk, and one movement skill point gets +8 to every movement contest he makes. His total bonus equals the difficulty. In cases like this, the GM can rule that the character gets an auto-success because what's "difficult" for the average person is easy for the character!

Take Half

With contests, damage, protection, hero points, initiative, and lots of actions, there can be a lot of rolling going on. To take half, whenever a die roll is necessary you can announce that you "take half," skip the roll, and assume that the

Difficulty Examples

Assigning difficulty should be quick and painless. Any amount can apply, but it's faster to use 4 point groups, as in the difficulty table.

Condition	Difficulty
Special combat maneuver, like disarming, or impersonating a guard without a uniform	4
Fast movement across ice, or concentrating near a battle	8
Persuading an angry galactic president, or walking a tightrope	12
Scoring a headshot on a hidden target, or hacking security with pliers	16
Hearing a prayer in the next village, or slicing a dragon's head off in one blow	20

result is half of the highest result on the die. This is slightly less than the average die result, but it guarantees that your result isn't low.

The GM, with more than one character to play, can save a lot of time by taking half on most rolls. An exception to this is when a PC is taking half to win contests in which he has a small margin of victory. The GM should roll his contest when there is a realistic and important chance of PC failure. For example, a PC plays a holy warrior advancing through several checkpoints in a palatial hall, each attended by a guardian spirit. The PC gets a +6 bonus to his persuade contests, but the guardian spirits don't get more than +4 on theirs. The PC plans to take half until he has persuaded his way through each checkpoint. The GM can introduce complications by rolling for the guardian spirits, as well as pausing between rolls to encourage some roleplaying from the PC!

You can remind yourself to take half and speed up some rolls by listing your take half result next to the dice on your character sheet. For example, if your physical protection is d8+1, then your take half is 5, and you can write "d8+1/5."

One-Roll Conflicts

Not every conflict deserves careful scrutiny. If a conflict is a particularly simple one, or the GM or players don't want to spend much time on the conflict, they can make one contest and move on. This is called a one-roll

conflict.

Due to its abbreviated nature, the outcome of a one-roll conflict isn't always clear. For example, Jake (Agent 0002's undercover name) and Carl (Super-Snake's alias) are bartering at the flea market. No one wants to spend a lot of time deciding how much discount Jake gets when buying a "Persian rug" from Carl, so the GM decides to use a one-roll conflict. He calls for a persuade contest from Jake. Jake's player asks to use profession (craftsman), since it's higher than his persuade skill and he's trained in making national-security blankets. The GM agrees, and the player rolls. The GM takes half on Carl's persuade contest, and Jake wins by a landslide: about 10 points. The player has won the conflict, but the die roll doesn't dictate how much Jake actually pays. The GM can make an on-the-spot adjudication, or use an extended conflict for greater outcome resolution.

The following table is an example of how this chapter's introduction might look as a one-roll conflict.

	Montana	Champion
Contest & result	Fight (melee) 21, more success	Fight (unarmed) 17, less success

Table 8-2: one-roll conflict

Extended Conflicts

If the players in the flea market example were keenly interested in the details of an episode of bartering, or Jake and Carl decided to argue with fists instead of remaining civilized, they would use extended conflict rules. Extended conflicts are conflicts in which either time or detail become important to the outcome of the conflict. They are a good tool for the GM to use if he wants to increase the stress of a situation or make it more cinematic.

To run an extended conflict, the GM sets up the first round, and asks for an initiative contest. Then all characters may take actions, each action initiated by the character taking his turn. During the round, characters earn progress by succeeding on their contests. Then another round begins, using the same initiative results, until one side of the conflict completes its progress. The following table shows how the

chapter introduction would look as a series of actions, divided into rounds, and then turns.

surprise advantage over other characters may earn +4 to the initiative contests of the faster

First round	Montana	Greenwald	Champion
Montana's turn	Ready whip		
-	Detect	Move to defense	Move to offense
Greenwald's turn		Pick up a rock	
Champion's turn	Fight (melee)		Defend (parry)
-		Fight (missile)	Fight (unarmed)
Second round	---	---	---
Montana's turn	Fight (melee)		Fight (unarmed)
-	Movement		
-	Fight (unarmed)		Defend (parry)
Greenwald's turn		(Pass - save actions)	
Champion's turn			Reward Montana

Table 8-3: extended conflict

Rounds

A round is a conflict cycle. It is a meta-game concept, meaning that it doesn't really exist in-game; its only purpose is to allow all characters to act before another round begins.

At the beginning of a round, every character in conflict gets 3 free actions to use. You may initiate an action if it's your turn, you may use one action in response to another character's action, or you can wait. Once a character has used all of his actions in a round, it's better to see him as busy or in the process of acting rather than standing still, because all actions in a round happen during the same timeframe in-game. Regardless of when or if you use your actions, when the player who has the lowest initiative finishes his turn, a new round begins.

Initiative

In extended conflict, each character has a turn, and turns proceed in order of initiative. Initiative refers to how quickly the characters in a conflict are able to act. To determine the order of initiative (or just "initiative") at the start of conflict, each character rolls a d20 and adds an attribute bonus of his choice that reflects his ability to act quickly. The resulting order, from highest to lowest, is the order in which characters take their turns.

If some characters are not ready to act when the others are (see awareness in the Mental section), they are surprised. A slight

party from the GM. If one party has caught their opponents completely off-guard, the GM can grant one free action to each non-surprised character before the first round of combat begins, taken in order of initiative.

It's not always clear when initiative, or the first round of extended conflict, should begin. When in doubt, the GM should start using initiative when:

- The timing of actions becomes important,
- The details of what happens becomes important,
- A character is in a position to make progress toward ending the conflict.

For example, a barfight is beginning. People are shouting, breaking bottles, and cracking pool cues. The GM can call for initiative if a character wants to flee while people are preparing their weapons, if there are only 5 available weapons and characters scramble for them, or when a character is ready to cause physical damage (make progress).

Actions

Extended conflict is, at its elemental level, a series of actions. An action is something you do that takes time or effort. Anything else is a non-action, and can be done freely as long as it follows rule zero. If an action's outcome isn't clear or is contested, you'll roll a contest for your action.

Actions are always tied to an attribute: physical, mental or metaphysical. Each round, all characters get three actions, and can choose to use one attribute per action. These are "free" actions that can be used with any attribute. Since contested actions sometimes use skills, an action can be named by a skill as well. For example, jumping from one building to another is a physical or movement action, and calming

Counting Actions

Actions are the bread and butter of conflict, and one action can make or break an encounter. This makes counting them very important. The GM is responsible for counting actions and advancing turns and the conflict round, but you can help your GM by counting your actions for him. When you're out of actions, you can announce it if you like, but you cannot take more actions until a new round begins.

An easy way to count actions is to set out an action die: a d10. At the beginning of the round, turn the die to 3 + your bonus actions, if any. Every time you act, turn the die down to the next number, and once you hit zero, your character is busy until the next round.

an angry ostrich takes one or more metaphysical handler (ostrich) actions.

If an activity or effort might take more than one action, the GM should consider the "sword swing" guideline for measuring action duration: the shortest action possible is generally the amount of time required to make a solid sword swing, including footwork. Accordingly, lengthier activities should be divided into a number of actions equal to the number of solid sword swings that could be made during that activity. For example, Montana has minutes to avert a nuclear disaster. He's trying to unlock a code held in an ancient book, but he doesn't know the exact book, and needs a librarian's help to quickly discover which book holds the secret. If Montana has the author's name, the GM might require one action, a knowledge (scholarship) contest. If Montana doesn't know the author's name, the GM could require an action to learn the book's time period, one to learn the author, and one to learn the name of the book. Or if Montana is talking to the wrong librarian, the GM could decide that each action takes a minute, instead of the usual few seconds.

Bonus Actions

Characters gain the ability to use additional actions each round called bonus actions. A character gets one bonus action each round, tied to an attribute and unlocked by a perk, for every five points that his attribute score is greater than 10. For example, a character with physical 15 would gain a bonus parry action each

round for taking the dodge perk, and if that character also had mental 20 and the enlightened perk, he could take two additional concentration actions per round. Having a high attribute score does not by itself entitle a character to an extra action; the character must also have a perk that grants a bonus action to the high attribute.

Turns

A turn is a segment of a conflict round, and it describes when one character performs his most concentrated effort of the round. During his turn, a character's actions take priority over all others, and for this reason he's called the "initiating" character; he initiates each action. A character may act during another character's turn, but only with a single action in response to the actions of the initiating character.

When a character takes his turn, he chooses the actions to which all other characters may respond. The other characters may save their actions for later, or they may make a response right away. If they act and order is important, the GM resolves the actions of the initiating character first, then the remaining

What's An Action?

Here are some examples of what might and might not be an action in extended conflict. Applicable skills are listed if an activity might require a contest.

Character Activity	Action or Non-Action (Skill)
Get out of bed	Action (movement)
Walk to dresser	Non-action (movement)
Notice goblins in window	Non-action (detect)
Pick up/draw tennis racket	Action (fight (melee))
Listen at door for more goblins	Action (detect)
Open door quietly	Action (sneak)
Creep down hallway	Action (sneak)
Jump onto oblivious goblin	2 Actions (sneak and movement)
Recall obscure goblin flaw	Non-action (knowledge (scholarship))
Negotiate goblin surrender	Action (persuade)
Call for help	Non-action (varies)
Swing racket at goblin	Action (fight (melee))
Dodge goblin club	Action (defend (parry))
Cast lightning at goblin	3 Actions (cast spell (lightning2))

actions in initiative order. The initiating character may use any number of his unused actions during his turn or save some as responses during other characters' turns.

During his turn, a character may combine actions. This represents a focused effort, which can achieve a better result. To combine actions, the initiating character takes the same action, using the same skill, as his previous action during his turn. He can keep his previous contest if he chooses, or roll a new one. If he rolls a new contest, he must keep that result. For example, Zsyyylvuyp, the Zorse antitheter, wants to conduct a lunging tail-sweep to trip his opponent. Jon, his player, wants to combine three fight (unarmed) actions on his turn. He takes half on his first action, effectively scoring a 10. Jon rolls tail damage as well, in case his contest succeeds. Then Jon rolls another contest, and must keep his result of 3. Again, he rolls tail damage, though it's unlikely that his contest will succeed. Finally, Jon feels confident that he can roll higher than 3, so he rolls for his third action, and gets 15. Jon tells the GM he's trying to trip his opponent instead of dealing damage, so the GM adds a difficulty penalty to Jon's contest result, and if Jon succeeds, Zsyyylvuyp will knock his opponent to the ground.

To change his initiative, a character can delay his turn. When a character delays, he passes on his turn, and can begin his new place in initiative after any other turn. When the character begins his new turn, the GM records that as his new initiative. A character who

delays beyond the last turn of the round loses any unspent actions that round, but can take the highest initiative position beginning in the next round. If two characters delay for the same initiative position, the character who was previously higher in initiative gets priority.

Progress

Every extended conflict has an outcome, a goal pursued by each opponent. Whether it is destroying a squad of robots, picking a lock, or usurping a king, progress is what measures the path from start to finish.

Each side of a conflict gets a progress pool, and contests that contribute to a side's goal add progress points to its pool. If you are in combat, your progress pool is usually your enemy's physical damage pool. If you're on an interstellar council, the GM might give you a debate pool to fill. Maximum, or max, progress is the capacity of the pool, or the total progress points needed to reach the goal.

Earning progress points requires successful contests. Progress contests come in two varieties: attacks and defenses. An attack is an attempt to earn progress, and a defense is an attempt to prevent an attack. If skills apply, the skill needed depends on the conflict. For example, a shootout would use fight (missile) for attacks, and defend (parry) for defenses. An aircraft dogfight might use profession (pilot), knowledge (scholarship), and deceive for attacks, and profession (pilot), knowledge (scholarship), and detect for defenses.

When you earn progress points with a successful contest, you'll get to roll a progress die that reflects your ability to make progress. In combat, your progress die is your weapon or spell's damage die. When picking a lock, your progress die can depend on your skill points or quality of lockpicks. When arguing with the president of Botswana, your progress die can increase with the size of your military, for example. In general, progress dice should start at d6.

To reduce progress, many opponents will have some means of progress prevention. Also called protection, this prevention has a corresponding die like progress, which applies

Combining Actions Outside Conflict

If a character can keep a high roll in extended conflict by combining actions, can he do the same outside conflict? Yes, but it's up to the GM to allow it. The purpose of action combining is to motivate PCs to focus on their turns. Since there are no turns, or even actions, outside extended conflict, there's no framework for combined actions. It's generally best to take half if you want a safe result out of conflict. However, the GM can choose a number of actions required for your attempt, and let you start rolling if it's appropriate. The combined actions rule stands: you must keep your last roll, whatever it is.

regardless of defense actions, and the result of the protection roll is subtracted from each corresponding progress roll. Protection cannot completely eliminate progress; only successful defenses eliminate progress. If progress minus protection ever equals zero or less, the result is instead one.

For example, Mercury is battling Poseidon in a test of wills on Mount Olympus. Each takes turns making juvenile insults, because that's how gods fight, and the outcome of the insults isn't very clear. So the GM asks Mercury to make a persuade contest against Poseidon. Mercury rolls persuade, adding his metaphysical bonus and persuade points to d20, for 87 total. Poseidon defends with defend (willpower), since his persuade skill isn't very high. Poseidon gets 76. Mercury already rolled progress to save time, and got 18. Poseidon takes half for metaphysical protection, getting 10, so he adds the difference of 8 to his metaphysical damage pool. If Poseidon had a defense contest of 88 or more, Mercury would not make progress. Whoever reaches max metaphysical damage first will lose the test of wills. The GM will likely decide that the metaphysical damage isn't permanent since it's just an argument.

Physical Conflict

It always comes down to this, if your game-group has a little pent-up anger. Physical conflict, commonly known as "combat," is the tactical attack-and-maneuver that determines who loses and who walks away. These rules make combat a little abstract, which blurs some lines but gives players the flexibility to do some creative things with their characters. These rules also utilize and enhance the extended conflict framework, which helps to make combat fair and action-packed.

This section discusses physical damage, postures in combat, special postures, range, and the gear of war (armor and weapons). But first, here's a breakdown on how to conduct combat.

Combat Breakdown

In this example, two legionnaires, the PCs, have met two barbarians, NPCs, and their earlier exchange has made it clear that fighting is inevitable. The general conflict rules will be augmented by the physical conflict rules to manage the speed and detail of the battle. The steps are numbered only to show the general sequence. Steps required in each combat are in **bold**.

1. **Roll initiative.** Each PC rolls an initiative contest for his character, and the GM rolls one or more contests for the NPCs.
2. Establish surprise. If one side had caught the other off-guard, the GM awards an advantage to the prepared characters.
3. **Count actions.** Each character gets three actions per round.
4. **Take turns.** The character with the highest initiative takes his turn first. In this case, a legionnaire draws a gladius.
5. Respond to actions. While the legionnaire acts, the other characters may respond with actions. The barbarians respond by readying their morningstars.
6. Choose posture. The other PC uses his response to climb onto the Roman wagon, changing his combat posture from offensive to defensive. The other characters remain offensive. Simpler movements, like close combat footwork, don't require actions.
7. Attack. Still the first legionnaire's turn, he attacks a barbarian with his gladius. He rolls a fight (melee) contest and his gladius damage. The other barbarian counterattacks with his response, so he also rolls fight (melee) and damage.
8. Defend. The barbarian under attack rolls defend (parry) and his armor protection. His contest beats the PC's fight (melee), so no damage takes place. However, the PC can't defend while attacking, so he takes the damage rolled by the second barbarian. He reduces the

damage by rolling his protection and subtracting that from the damage, and adds the difference to his physical damage pool.

9. **Combine actions.** The legionnaire can combine actions during his turn, so he can choose to keep his previous fight (melee) contest if he wants to take the same action again. He decides that it was too low and rolls again. The barbarian decides that he won't use an action to defend, saving one for later, so he takes damage.
10. **End turns.** The first PC has used all his actions, one to draw his weapon and two to attack. He says he's done.
11. **Take half.** The barbarians take their turns, and the GM decides to take half on their rolls to speed up play. The first barbarian passes on his turn, saving his last action for a defense if he needs it later. The second barbarian attacks the legionnaire in the wagon, and taking half gives him a 10 (out of 20) on his contest roll before bonuses, and 4 on his damage roll.
12. **Round up.** The PC in the wagon is in defensive posture, so after he subtracts protection from the 4 damage, he multiplies the remainder by 50%. If this reduces damage to a fraction, like 1.5, the PC must round up to 2.
13. **Minimum damage.** If the PC's protection roll had equaled or exceeded the 4 damage, a successful or uncontested attack still deals 1 damage.
14. **End the round.** The barbarians end their turns, and the legionnaire in the wagon takes his turn. He readies his shortbow, and the GM allows him to nock an arrow in the same action. Then he attacks the barbarian near him with a fight (missile) contest. That barbarian is too busy to defend, having used all his actions, so he protects against the damage and adds the rest to his pool. The other barbarian has one action left, and he'll lose it if he doesn't use it. So he responds to the legionnaire's bow

attack by attacking the first PC, who is too busy to defend (out of actions). When the legionnaire ends his turn, all remaining actions are lost, and a new round begins.

15. **Flee or die.** On the next round, each character gets three more actions. One barbarian flees, costing two movement actions since he's in offensive posture. The PCs let him go, to focus on the remaining barbarian. The barbarian and a legionnaire attack during the same action, and the damage fills their respective damage pools past max damage. The GM decides that this reduces the barbarian to a bloody mess, who hits the ground and tries, pitifully, to crawl away. The PC decides what max damage means to his character, but whatever it is, he cannot take physical actions until he and the GM agree on how he'll heal at least one physical damage.

Physical Damage

Since damage is a common goal in combat, it is the first thing to discuss. When characters make progress in combat, it takes the form of physical damage. Unlike the standard progress pool, damage pools are recorded on the losing side: that of the character taking damage. Since this can make tracking your progress more difficult, the GM is obligated to give you clues on how well you're doing, like "the guard dog is keeping its distance and looks like it might consider fleeing," or "the droid makes a grinding sound as it moves. Something must be broken in its hull."

Physical damage is abstract. The simple way to understand physical damage is to see it as anything that brings a character closer to physical death. This can include, but is not limited to: injury, exhaustion, freezing, burning, poison, disease, and bleeding. When a PC takes physical damage, he chooses what it means based on character concept, campaign theme, and the damage source, but the GM tells him the numerical amount of damage.

Dealing physical damage is the same as

earning progress. A successful attack contest deals damage. In combat, this is usually a fight or cast spell contest. A successful defense contest prevents all damage from the attack. Without an action to use, the defender cannot prevent damage in this way.

The best way to reduce physical damage is to use protection. Physical protection is normally provided by armor, but whatever the source, it is represented by a die that gets rolled against every physical damage die, reducing the result. When the GM tells you how much damage you take, subtract your protection from it before adding it to your damage pool. If the GM tells you that you take damage, you must always take a minimum of one, regardless of protection. For example, Five-Nine failed a parry, so the GM says, “the sentri-tron levels its arm-cannon at you and fires, for 6 damage.” Five-Nine has 5 physical health left, but his protection is d10, so he takes half and subtracts 5 protection from 6 damage, adding 1 physical damage to his physical damage pool. His player, Chris, says, “Five-Nine does a combat roll, sweating a bit, since that ‘bot will get a good shot in sooner or later.” Since a damage source and protection source don't always match up, like fur armor isn't very good at protecting against fire, a little creativity can go a long way.

The next best way to avoid physical damage is to heal it. Natural healing, the removal of physical damage from the physical damage pool, occurs at a rate of 1 point per day. The GM is free to increase this rate if a character gets full bed rest or has another feature that would help him heal faster. Remember that physical damage doesn't necessarily reflect wounds or injuries, so one point of healing per day doesn't necessarily mean that an individual wound has closed up. When you pass max physical damage, you'll be mostly dead, and then you'll only heal damage when decided by the GM. Spells like Cure are another good way to heal physical damage, but they offer a trade-off: metaphysical damage for physical damage.

Combat Posture

This game assumes that combatants seek and take the best positioning in combat

when it is easy to do so. In other words, you fight near your allies, maneuver to open up strikes, use cover when it's available, and don't let enemies get behind you. So while your location won't be marked with grid coordinates, you'll be tracked by an abstract location instead.

Your location is called your posture, and each character in physical conflict has one. The primary posture is called offensive, the secondary is defensive, and the special postures, flanking, mounted, and flying, define themselves in terms of offensive and defensive posture. Sometimes offensive and defensive posture are called “front row” and “back row” for simplicity, because they can look like rows when represented graphically. See figures 1 and 2 for pictures of in-game and metagame posture at the end of the chapter.

Offensive Posture

Offensive posture describes where a character must be to effectively attack his opponents with martial arts or held (non-missile) weapons. This is the front line, the melee, or the brawl. It is also the default posture; whenever a character has no special reason to be in another posture, he's offensive. This posture is the best for dealing damage, which makes it a dangerous one as well. However, in offensive posture you deal only 50% damage to opponents in defensive posture when you use close range weapons or spells. All other attacks deal normal damage. This benefit applies after protection reduces damage, if any.

Defensive Posture

Defensive posture describes when a character is somewhat sheltered from offensive posture. This represents using teammates for protection, keeping distance from the melee, or using cover that is hard to reach. Because defensive posture requires a certain amount of protection from opponents, it's not always available. Whenever you could reasonably keep your opponents out of reach, you can take defensive posture. If the GM doesn't start a character in defensive posture and it's available, taking it requires one movement action. Moving into offensive posture also requires one

movement action. Defensive posture is a poor choice for attacking; your melee and unarmed attacks deal 50% damage to offensive opponents and no damage to defensive opponents, and your missile attacks, including spells with short range or longer, deal full damage to offensive opponents but only 50% damage to defensive opponents. Again, 50% penalties occur after protection, or just before adding damage to a pool.

Fleeing

Characters who take positions that prevent 100% of damage are considered beyond defensive posture; they are in flight. Fleeing, or leaving combat, is a special and very important action that receives slightly different treatment in each posture. In defensive posture, you can usually just run away. Taking a movement action to do this removes you from conflict. During your action, opponents can try to prevent your flight: with stun guns, bolas, or highly persuasive words. Your movement contest determines how well you avoid them. If they fail, you're gone. In offensive posture, you're already in the thick of things, so it takes two movement actions to disengage from combat. On your first movement action, you try to take defensive posture and any offensive opponents can contest you in a way that might slow you down; fight (unarmed) and movement are good skills for this. On your second movement, you act just like a fleeing defensive character. If enemies try to prevent you and their contests succeed, you're stuck where you failed.

Special Postures

Offensive and defensive postures are sufficient to run the majority of encounters in a game, but if you would like to increase the complexity enough to better represent military ambushes, hover-disc riders, or soaring dragons, you can use flanking, mounted, and flying postures as well. Following these is information on obstacles as they pertain to postures.

Flanking

Flanking posture represents surrounding your enemies, blocking their

escape, or a pincer attack: attacking from both sides. You can take flanking posture if you have defensive opponents, there is a flanking position available, and you have a means to get to this place. To do this, you take two movement actions. The first movement is for leaving your current posture, and the second movement puts you in flanking posture. As in fleeing, your opponents can attempt to interrupt your movement.

Once in flanking posture, you treat opponent postures as opposites: defensive opponents are offensive, and offensive opponents are defensive. Furthermore, defensive opponents treat you as offensive, and offensive opponents treat you as defensive. This allows you to deal full damage to defensive enemies, but it also severs contact with your comrades. Once flanked, defensive characters must spend two actions to flee, as though they were in offensive posture.

Mounted

For those combatants using terrestrial mounts or vehicles, there is a special posture called mounted posture. This posture is only available when there are wide, open spaces in which the mount can move. A character enters mounted posture by 1) having a mount, and 2) spending an action on a movement or handler contest. Until his next turn begins, treat a mounted character as being defensive. Whenever a mounted character makes a close-range attack, both he and his target treat each other as offensive during that action only. Mounted posture ends when a mounted character's next turn begins, at which time he may spend another movement action to remain mounted.

For example, Sir Joustalot has brought his trusty steed, Jacque, into battle against several unruly barbarians. The barbarians did better on initiative, so they're going first. Sir Joustalot is not surprised, so once a barbarian attacks him, he uses an action to take mounted posture. The barbarian's attack succeeds, dealing damage as normal since his actions take priority as the initiating character. However, Sir Joustalot is now mounted, so the remaining

barbarian attacks must treat him as defensive. When Sir Joustalot's turn begins this round, his mounted posture ends. He then spends his second action to stay mounted, which will give him a full round of defensiveness (versus the few turns that his first action bought for him). To finish his turn, Sir Joustalot attacks the first barbarian with his lance, which counts as offensive during that action. Now that the barbarian faces full lance damage, he might choose to parry, or he might try to counterattack since his attack will count as offensive as well.

Flying

Another special posture is for dragon riders, F15 eagles, or airborne mages: flying. A character in flying posture is usually at medium or long range, and non-flying characters treat him as though he is not in conflict. When a flying character takes an action, he chooses whether he will be offensive or defensive during that action only. The non-flying characters may interact with the flying character only while he takes an action, and normal posture interactions apply. Medium and long range attacks can affect flying characters, with an appropriate amount of difficulty applied. If two or more flying characters engage each other, it is easiest to place them in their own conflict, using only offensive and defensive postures as normal.

Obstacles

To add interest to his battlefields, the GM can include obstacles, which add effects that affect postures. Some obstacles slow characters down - which increases the number of move actions to change posture or flee, or might require a certain minimum difficulty for successful movement contests. Some obstacles just provide cover, potentially making offensive posture impossible, or granting difficulty bonuses to parry contests. Others, like chasms or cliffs, could prevent one or both sides of the battle from using fight (melee) and fight (unarmed). Perhaps most dreaded is the dead-end: the defensive posture of one side cannot easily flee, and must instead try to breach enemy ranks as though they were flanked. There are no

hard rules for obstacles, but GMs should include them on occasion to spice up combat.

Range

Distance matters. Spells, missile weapons, and combat postures all rely to some degree on the distance between two points. To save you from spending lots of time on measuring, the game provides four range categories to use. Time needed to move between ranges is up to the GM, but a general rule is to multiply each previous movement by two: one movement action between close and short, two actions between short and medium, and four between medium and long.

- Close. This is the front line of battle. Close range is where melee takes place, where someone could hit you with a weapon at any time. Close range represents the distance between two adjacent rows in combat: defensive to offensive allies, or offensive allies to offensive enemies.
- Short. This is the boundary of most conflict. It's a good distance for using thrown weapons, bows, and pistols. Voices can be heard clearly at short range, and spells with a range of "short" can target anyone in combat.
- Medium. Opponents are just outside combat at this range. This is a good range for some spells and rifles, but held (melee) weapons and thrown weapons are useless. Voices can still be heard at medium range, and this is where characters go when fleeing and flanking.
- Long. Only the most powerful weapons and spells can cause damage at long range. Distance and obstacles make it easy to disappear when at long range. Bows cannot fire past this range, and magic spells effectively become simple light shows. Voices cannot be heard at long range, but high-powered rifles can!

Weapons and Armor

Weapons are physical tools used to damage things. Armor is the natural response,

the protection, used to prevent physical damage. Using either in combat requires some special considerations.

- **Unarmed attacks.** Every character can make unarmed attacks. These are the bites, kicks, punches, claws, and head-butts. Unless otherwise improved, these attacks do d4 physical damage. Unarmed attacks cannot be used as multiple weapons without perks, because extra effort and care are needed to get within striking range of an opponent.
- **Improvised weapons.** Some things are not supposed to be weapons, but they can do some damage if you're desperate. These do d4 damage, or more if they're heavy or sharp. Because they're not designed as weapons, the difficulty to make attacks with these objects should increase with their damage dice.
- **Missile weapons.** These are combat-effective at close and short range. At medium or long range, opponents can easily dodge missile weapons, unless the opponent is unaware or surprised. Difficulty applies to medium and long range shots due to weather, light conditions, cover, and concealment. Missile weapons need reloading and have limited ammunition. Thrown weapons take one action (move or fight) to ready another throwing weapon. Slings need no reload action if your off-hand is holding ammunition. Bows take one action to reload, crossbows take two actions, and simple firearms take three actions to reload. Modern and futuristic weapons are usually semi- or fully-automatic. These weapons do not use reload actions until the magazines are empty.
- **Multiple weapons.** If a character isn't using a shield on his shield-arm, he has the option of using another weapon. Since heavy weapons require two hands, a character can use a medium or lighter weapon in his secondary hand. This

provides the option of using the features of the secondary weapon instead of the primary weapon, or if the character has the dual wielder perk, one free attack action each round. A double weapon requires two hands but gives the wielder the choice of treating the weapon as two weapons, or of doing more damage by using it as a single weapon.

- **Shield usage.** Shields prevent characters from taking damage by increasing a character's defend (parry) skill: his ability to avoid damage. This means that characters get no benefit from shields unless they reserve parry actions for using them. Shields do not provide physical protection.
- **Armor physical penalty.** As armor gets heavier or more cumbersome, it offers more protection in exchange for a lower physical score. Wearing light armor reduces a character's physical score by 1, medium armor by 2, and heavy armor by 3. These losses are restored immediately after removing the armor.

Mental Conflict

Conflict need not be all about swords and shields. Debates, cyber-crime, psionics, and bard songs all follow a different drummer called mental conflict. It can augment physical conflict, adding to the posture and range rules, but the mental damage and awareness rules can make mental conflict a whole new type of battle.

Mental Damage

When a character goes insane, passes out, feels disturbed, or gets groggy, he's taking mental damage. It has different forms, and you're welcome to interpret your mental damage with respect to the campaign theme and your character concept, but when a character passes max mental damage, he becomes unconscious.

Mental damage can come from different sources, but the most common ones are magic spells. The defense skill for the mental attribute is defend (concentration), but you can further gird your mind with mental armor, like the

thought shield perk.

Healing mental damage is similar to healing physical damage: all it takes is the passage of time. Characters heal one point of mental damage every day, unless they're unconscious. Recovering from unconsciousness has special requirements as decided by the GM.

Awareness

The first step in holding a mental conflict (and many physical conflicts) is to establish awareness. Simply put, awareness is knowing that you have opponents. Characters are normally aware of all opponents, but sometimes an opponent will be undetected and gain advantage from it. Two terms describe awareness from two perspectives. "Aware" and "unaware" are statements about a character's knowledge. "Detected" and "undetected" are statements about the knowledge of *other* characters, but all four terms refer to awareness. For example, two PCs walk into a cantina full of invisible tugs. One PC hears an invisible boot scuff nearby; he is aware of a nearby enemy, and that enemy is detected by one PC, but undetected by the other one who didn't hear the sound.

To establish awareness, the GM first decides if there's a good reason for any characters to be unaware of others. In most cases, there is not. However, sneaking, invisibility, and ambushes can all create unawareness in a conflict.

Detection

If characters might be undetected, some contests are in order. Normally, a detect contest opposes a sneak contest for establishing awareness, but other contests can be made under the right circumstances. For example, a PC using an invisibility spell could use his cast spell (invisibility) contest against a security camera if that camera detects only light. The PCs can roll their own contests if the results will be immediately obvious. For example, if a security guard will immediately shout "stop, thief!" if a PC fails his sneak contest, or shout "stop, thief!" in the first round of conflict after the PC succeeds and gets a surprise action, then

it's fine for the PC to make his own contest. If the guard will feign unawareness when he hears the PC, the GM might roll for the PC to maintain the mystery.

Detect is the skill that provides multiple ways to find things. It can represent everything from spotting a note, to searching a crime scene, to sensing an alien presence. Personalizing detect is a good way to convey character concept and earn extra hero points because of its ambiguity, by treating it like keen vision but poor hearing, or good investigative skills but poor paranormal sensitivity. Other skills can be used for detection, like knowledge (nature) to track animals, or fight (melee) to anticipate a feint.

Once you've detected an opponent, you are considered to have awareness. If you remain unaware, your opponent is undetected, and gains certain benefits from this.

Surprise

The most common effect of unawareness is surprise, used when battle is about to ensue. As discussed under general conflict, there are two types of surprise: initiative-bonus surprise, and free-action surprise. You can use awareness to determine which type to use. If you have located alert enemies, or are otherwise ready to fight anyway, you gain a bonus to your initiative contest. When opponents are not alert and don't expect immediate conflict, you gain a free, pre-combat action to simulate your surprise advantage. All such ready characters take their actions before the first allotment of the standard three actions to each character, in order of initiative, while opponents are unable to react.

Unawareness

It is possible for you to have actions available, but not be allowed to respond to your opponent. When you are unaware of an opponent, you cannot target or respond to that opponent's action until he completes an action against you, or until you gain awareness of him. For example, an assassin creeps up on a PC, conducting his daily yoga on a hilltop. The GM asks the PC to roll a detect contest, knowing that he's about to gain awareness of the assassin

anyway. The contest fails, so the assassin gets a free attack against the PC before the PC will have awareness of him or be able to parry an attack.

Penalties

There's a gray area between awareness and unawareness. This occurs when you have some knowledge of an opponent's presence, but not quite enough. In this gray area, the GM applies difficulty to your actions involving your opponent, or your opponent's actions involving you. For example, a high elf who can't see in the dark walks on patrol with several night elves who have the owl's eye perk. Under a thick forest canopy at night, the high elf has no chance to see the nearby trolls, but can easily hear and smell them. To avoid penalties, the high elf can try a detect action before each attack action, to locate the trolls non-visually. But he'll move faster if he just makes his best guesses, skipping the detect actions. So the GM applies -8 penalties to the high elf's attacks.

Weapons and Armor

The GM has the option of basing mental conflict primarily on damage. Accordingly, mental conflict can use weapons and armor just as physical conflict can. The forms of this gear vary, but mental weapons deal mental damage and mental armor protects against mental damage.

Mental weapons typically deal less damage than physical weapons because the mind makes for a trickier target. Weapons like spells, flashbang grenades and stun guns deal mental damage. While spells can directly attack the mind, weapons like stun guns use a physical route to cause mental damage. This creates the possibility of using physical defense, defend (parry), instead of mental defense against these types of weapons.

Protecting the mind becomes important at higher levels, when NPCs gain access to mental attacks, and in campaigns that highlight things like psionics, spells, or cyber-war. The rules provide the thought shield perk for this, but GMs can create spells, gear, or more perks that also provide the needed mental protection. As with damage, mental protection is a slippery

thing, so spells of comparable level will provide more physical protection than mental protection, in the form of a lower mental die type.

The GM can make a distinction between mental damage and mental progress: progress is temporary while damage is permanent. This allows for easy resolution of intellectual matters like debates, investigation, and invention. Skills like knowledge, profession, and persuade can earn progress, opposed by those same skills, or defend (concentration) as a default skill. To determine progress die type, you can use a higher type for each skill point that a character has. For example, Montana Smith's three points from specialize (scholarship) might substitute for skill points, allowing him to make d8 (two greater than the smallest, d4) progress on each contest success. This is, again, for quick resolution. A debate or investigation makes a much better encounter when PCs roleplay their way through it.

Metaphysical Conflict

There is a spiritual, magical, or ethereal realm that ebbs and flows with forces like good and evil. This is the battleground where metaphysical conflict takes place. The truly enlightened can use metaphysical conflict to reach higher levels of Nirvana. But low-level characters just use it to avoid damage, impress strangers, and cast magic spells.

Metaphysical Damage

When you are taking metaphysical damage, it's usually because you are exhausted by heavy spellcasting or assaulted by gnarly undead creatures. This damage represents a weakening of the soul, or a loss of presence. Luckily, healing metaphysical damage can be done naturally; it takes just one hour to heal one point of metaphysical damage. If that's not fast enough, the defend (concentration) skill allows you to double your recovery rate, as long as you can pass a concentration contest for whatever stressors occur each hour. Run out of metaphysical health and you become catatonic, at max metaphysical damage, and you will not

heal metaphysical damage at the normal rate without GM approval.

Preventing metaphysical damage is especially important to spellcasters and characters with low MP scores. A spellcaster can reduce some damage with the mystic ward perk, or increase his max damage with the mana perk. There is no perk for bonus willpower actions because metaphysical attacks are the least common type of attack, but you and your GM can quickly design one if it's appropriate!

NPC Disposition

How PCs react to other PCs and NPCs is up to the players. But how NPCs react to PCs and other NPCs can be a bit more complicated. There are five states of disposition toward other characters:

- **Helpful.** The character tries to help his friends.
- **Friendly.** The character is nice, but not helpful.
- **Indifferent.** The character doesn't lean either way.
- **Unfriendly.** The character dislikes another.
- **Hostile.** The character is out to hurt someone.

The GM should decide at what level NPCs begin feeling toward the PCs when they meet. Several factors should be considered: like the PCs' reputations, their intentions, their appearance, and the NPC's mood - just to name a few. To determine starting disposition randomly, first determine if the NPC is intelligent or unintelligent:

- **Intelligent NPC.** The PC rolls a defend (willpower) contest against the NPC. If the PC wins, the NPC is friendly. If the PC ties the NPC, the NPC is indifferent. If the NPC wins, the NPC is unfriendly.
- **Unintelligent NPC.** These creatures never begin an encounter feeling friendly or helpful. The PC rolls a defend-willpower contest against the NPC. Success means that the NPC is

indifferent, and failure means that the NPC is unfriendly.

PCs can use general conflict rules to alter NPC attitudes. This can be as simple as a persuade contest versus a willpower or another persuade contest. Or the characters can engage in a battle of wills, with each skill they use earning another d6 friend-points (progress points) against the opponent's metaphysical attribute. In this case, losing doesn't cause the catatonic condition; it just indicates which character improves his attitude by one step first.

Magical Conflict

A special kind of metaphysical conflict involves the utilization of magic. Casting spells in combat is just as easy as thrusting a spear for the player. (For the character, spellcasting difficulty is dictated by campaign theme and character concept.) This is because spells use actions, sometimes multiple actions, just like any other skill. However, unlike spear-thrusting, spells are designed in a way that limits their usage over time and can cause the catatonic condition if PCs aren't careful with them. This section discusses the casting of spells in combat and provides a spellcasting example.

Casting Spells

The following are the steps used to cast a spell.

- 1) The caster must have specific knowledge of the spell being cast, gain specific knowledge from an outside source (like a spell implement), or have the specialize perk pertaining to that spell.
- 2) The caster must have an unused action of the correct attribute type for each spellcasting action of the spell. The three free actions gained each round can be tied to any attribute. A spellcaster may use his bonus actions for high attribute scores to cast spells if he has the spell weaver perk. If the caster does not have enough physical or mental actions available, he may substitute metaphysical actions for these, but not vice versa.

3) The caster combines actions if necessary, and rolls a cast spell contest(s). A spell with more than one casting action can be cast only during the spellcaster's turn. If several casting actions are required, the caster keeps his best roll according to the combining actions rules. Subtract the spell's difficulty from the contest. Remember the contest result; it can be used multiple times before the spell ends.

4) A spell's contest must be higher than 10, or it does not take effect. If the contest is not higher than 10, the actions used to cast the spell are lost, but the spellcaster does not incur casting damage. Spellcasters may take half on their last (or any) contest if it will ensure that the contest exceeds this minimum difficulty.

5) A successfully cast spell deals $d8 + (\text{spell level})$ in metaphysical damage to the caster, called casting damage. Metaphysical protection can reduce the casting damage, but the minimum is 1; this loss of MP health is what turns the spell into reality, so damage of 0 or less would not be enough to manifest a spell. If the casting damage puts the caster at max metaphysical damage, the spell may still take effect at the GM's discretion. Taking half accelerates this step; casting damage becomes $4 + (\text{spell level}) - (\text{MP protection})$.

6) The effect of the spell takes place on the final casting action, and this is when casting damage occurs. Some spells deal damage on each casting action; these spells apply casting damage on the first casting action that exceeds minimum difficulty (10), and allow defenses during each casting action.

7) If the spell deals damage, this damage is dealt as though the spell were a weapon, so defenders can attempt to defend against each attack, and undefended damage is still subject to protection. The first casting action listed in each spell description is tied to the same attribute used to defend against the spell. Spell damage is reduced by 50% when the caster is in defensive posture and the spell's targets are also in defensive posture.

8) If the spell has an effect other than damage, targets may defend against the spell when the spell takes effect or on subsequent actions. A successful defense against these spells reduces the spell's effect on that target to the spell's half-effect.

9) The non-damaging spell effects end at the beginning of the caster's next turn unless he starts his next turn with a spell maintenance action to continue the spell. A "maintain" action is a mental contest using the defend (concentration) skill if available, to overcome any exceptional distractions or stressors in combat. This contest is separate from the original cast spell contest. If the spellcaster has

Implicit Spell Information

Several issues in spellcasting are only implied by the rules. Here are some explicit questions and answers.

Q: If casting a spell requires one or more "actions," does that mean spells can only be cast in extended conflict?

A: You can cast spells outside conflict as well. Since multiple casting actions must be combined, and you can only combine actions on your turn, all casting actions must occur within one round. This is a time restraint, meaning that if you can't cast a spell in one round, you can't cast it out of conflict, either.

Q: There's nothing to correspond character levels to spell levels. Can my first level character cast a third level spell?

A: Yes, if your character has enough actions (all characters have three actions by default), can get higher than 10 on his cast spell contest after adding spell difficulty, and can survive the casting damage, then he can cast a third level spell. A fourth level spell, however, will additionally require him to have the spell weaver perk, have the right type of bonus actions available, and impose one more casting damage than a third level spell would.

Q: Can I maintain more than one spell at a time?

A: As long as you have the actions available. Note that maintaining one spell usually reduces your actions for casting another spell, so your next maintained spell will often be a lower level than the first. Also, spending actions on maintaining spells can mean fewer actions for defending, so your odds of taking max damage and possibly losing your spells increases while maintaining multiple spells.

delayed or is delaying his turn, he must take his maintain action on the first action of his previous initiative position. Subsequent maintain actions take place at the beginning of his new turn.

10) A maintained spell continues to affect all targets of the spell unless those targets succeed on a number of defense contests equal to the spell's level. Even if other targets remain affected, a target is generally free from a spell's effects once its defenses have succeeded.

Spellcasting Example

Neon and Morpho are training in the dojo. Morpho pulls a Beretta on Neon, and instructs him to dodge the bullet. The GM starts the round with Morpho, an NPC, drawing the weapon on Neon. Morpho ends his turn, waiting for Neon to be ready.

Neon knows cast spell (ruse), so he rolls a cast spell contest and gets 9 on his d20. Neon adds his MP bonus, skill points, and casting difficulty for a contest result of 17. Satisfied with this result, Neon combines his next casting

action and keeps the result of 17. He also takes his casting damage on the second action, taking half, of $d8 + (\text{spell level}) - (\text{MP protection})$, or $4 + 2 - 2 = 4$ metaphysical damage. The contest result exceeds the minimum of 10, so Neon gains +8 to his parry contests (the spell's effect).

For his last action, Neon raises a hand toward Morpho, dramatically says "no," and takes half on defend (parry). With the +8 bonus from ruse's effect and +2 from physical bonus, his parry contest is 20. Morpho responds to the defend action by firing with fight (missile), and gets a 16 result. Neon takes no damage from Morpho's attack, and his player describes his successful defense.

Neon's spell lasts until the beginning of his next turn unless he maintains it. Since Morpho is a tricky one, Neon will use a defend (concentration) contest at the start of his next turn to keep the ruse in place. If the ruse were somehow contested (as with the dispel spell), with cast spell (dispel) for example, Neon would use the original 17 result for the spell as his contest.



Figure 1: In-game posture





Initiative	Highest						Lowest					
Offensive												
Defensive												
Character	1						4					
	6						3					
	5						2					

Figure 2: Metagame posture

Chapter 9: Bestiary

Greg: There's no sign of the brood-mother. Nor any of her offspring.

Chris: Why am I here by myself again? Oh yeah. No common sense. "Hello?"

Greg: (Rolls a die – red herring.) In the weakly-pulsing red emergency light, you see many dried bits of alien across the floor.

Chris: Motion goggles? (Rolls detect, just in case.)

Greg: Nope. Nothing. You definitely do not detect an alien brood-mother. But you hear some shifting or sliding coming from the airlock in the floor ahead.

Chris: I. Freeze. In. My. Tracks. But I still move my eyes. Any vacuum-bags lying around?

Greg: (Rolls a difficulty contest for spotting the bag in the back of the room. It's difficult for an average person, +8, compared to Five-Nine's -1 total penalty to detect). Nope. Wait. That lump in the back could be your bag. It's sitting on the airlock door, which hasn't opened completely. A slimy tentacle flops out near there, and worms around.

Chris: But! My bag! This pulse-grenade launcher had better be worth the credits. I aim at the tentacle.

Greg: As you do, another tentacle appears on the far right side of the airlock, 80 feet away. The door isn't fully closed on that side, either.

Chris: Woah! There's TWO aliens in there? Okay, I can only shoot the one on the right,

because I don't want to blow up my bag. Aim and fire!

Greg: Roll initiative. (Rolls for NPC initiative.)

Chris: 6?

Greg: Too slow. The two tentacles push, fully opening the airlock door.

Chris: I shoot the tentacle on the right! (Rolls fight (missile) and damage.) 16, and 9 damage!

Greg: The tentacles push the door open. Whatever was sitting on the floor in the corner falls into the airlock, the door having slid away. You fire a grenade at the right and the room shakes. The tentacle splatters. Your opponent's next action is to bodily enter the room (grins).

Chris: Um. What does that mean?

Greg: The Brood-Father raises itself out of the airlock. Its head goes up to the ceiling, its shoulders reach across the entire airlock, and three large tubes sprout from a massive chest growth. The openings of these tubes are about three feet in diameter, and undulating.

Chris: PLEASE let me roll knowledge as a non-action! (Rolls knowledge (scholarship), and spends a hero point on it.) 13 total.

Greg: Why not? That's a pretty weak result, but you vaguely remember something about the Arcovian spawn-shooter from your studies. It wasn't actually called "spawn-shooter," but that was your nickname for it.

Chris: Well, for my second action, I unload the clip on it!



Number 2259, level 3

Attributes: P 15, M 8, MP 10

Skills: fight (missile) +4 (+2), knowledge (scholarship) +0 (+1), defend (parry) +5 (+0)

Perks: specialize (parry), diehard, dodge

Gear: pulse grenade launcher d10 (special), recursive trans-molecular blaster d8, homefront shell armor (spacewalk) d10, motion-tracking goggles, 100K transmitter/receiver, nano-tool

Hero points: knowledge contests to dig up info on aliens, and on parry contests to avoid getting fried.

Concept: a human bred for war, he has instincts and reflexes, but lacks common sense (flaw). The

majority of his programming involves exterminating alien species (goal), but Five-Nine harbors a secret love of consumerism (goal), due to the glimpse of an advertisement that he caught between programming sessions, featuring a child holding a beverage-package and a pinwheel and walking happily with his parents.

(Designer notes: Five-Nine is now well equipped to handle physical threats, but the nastier aliens in the galaxy can make mental attacks as well as physical attacks. As he encounters the weaker ones, he can start training his body and mind to confront new, mental threats, with perks like stubborn and enlightened. Next level, he could also branch out to a spell like awaken, to recover mental health quickly.)

Wherever you find heroes, you'll find monsters. The term is used loosely here, because you'll find more than just beasts. Warmechs, villains, household pets, planar entities, allies, and gods are all fair game here. And if you don't find it here, this chapter provides rules on drawing it up yourself. A vocabulary note: monster, creature, enemy, and opponent are all used more or less interchangeably in this chapter. Whatever the term, they all refer to NPCs. In this chapter, you'll find out how to design monsters and build traps, and then find a list of examples of each.

Designing Monsters

If you're not a GM, there are two big reasons why you might like to be one. The first, discussed in the next chapter, is that you get to design adventure modules. The second, discussed here, is that you get to design monsters. From goblin hermits to Omnicron the Planet-Eater, anything you can imagine is fair game for this privilege!

There are several ways to design monsters, and this section discusses reskinning monsters, generating monsters from scratch, details on villains, and making monsters in a hurry.

Reskinning Monsters

In 3D computer graphics, artists wrap the image, or "skin," of their characters around a model or frame to give the skin shape. To reskin a monster in Modos RPG is to take a character sheet and write up a different character concept for the elements on that sheet. The model doesn't change, but the players don't have to know.

Let's say that you need a werebull for

tonight's game, but haven't generated one yet. And your PCs are about to roll initiative against it. You want your werebull to stand up well in a fight, and it'll be all alone. To challenge all the PCs, your werebull will need almost as many levels as they have, which for four 2nd level PCs is 8 levels. You know that a goblin warchief is level 6, which is close enough for now. It has a good physical attribute and can do decent damage, and you're free to bump its physical score a little higher to make the upcoming fight more interesting.

So you take the warchief character sheet and apply a new concept, without changing the elements (the attributes, skills, etc.). Your new concept says that the werebull is a ferocious, hairy, half-man and half-bull. It bashes opponents with its maul (you use a warhammer for this) and can disguise itself as a normal bull (you use rule zero to add this at the last minute).

Instead of stalling your game, you've reskinned a sample monster. If you've done it smoothly, your PCs won't even notice.

Monster Generator

Character creation rules can be used to create any monster, but leveling-up is a step-by-step process. This monster generator allows you to create NPCs with a more thematic approach. Here is the seven-step process, followed by an explanation of each step, and a sample monster generation.

- 1) Create monster concept.
- 2) Determine attribute type.
- 3) Design based on primary features.
- 4) Distribute level points.
- 5) Use perks for balance.
- 6) Determine level.
- 7) Review and finish.

1) Create monster concept. Just like PCs, every monster needs a concept. Describe, in three words or more, how the monster is different from an average human. You don't need every detail here, but enough of an idea to quickly get a feel for the monster and hint at its capabilities.

Example: werebull. A big, furry humanoid with bull horns and a bad attitude. It has the ability to shapechange into a bull or human. In three words: bullish, strong, and stupid.

2) Determine attribute type. Monsters fall into three attribute types:

- **Minmax.** This monster has one outstanding ability or power and one attribute score will be much higher than the rest to support that element. Its starting attribute scores are 16, 7, and 7. Minmax is good for unnatural monsters, like undead, magical creations, robots, and traps.
- **Balanced.** This monster has strengths and weaknesses, and it compensates for its weaknesses. Its starting attribute scores are 12, 10, and 8. Balanced is good for evolved and carefully designed creatures, like people, animals, cyborgs and some aliens.
- **Average.** This monster has no strengths or weaknesses, and only simple features. Its starting attribute scores are 10, 10, 10. Average is a good default attribute type, and can be used for supernatural creatures, programs, or divine beings.

Example: werebull attribute type: minmax. Attribute scores: P 16, M 7, MP 7.

3) Design based on primary features. Turning the monster into a character begins with one character element: attributes, skills, or perks. Look at the monster concept and decide if the monster's features are best represented by attributes (the inherent characteristics of the monster), skills (things the monster does well naturally or has learned), or perks (metagame features, or things not represented by attributes

or skills). Improve this primary area to best represent your monster.

Example: strong and stupid translate almost directly to attributes, which is closely modeled in the first set of P 16, M 7, MP 7. Since the werebull is probably stronger than most men, we'll bump his physical up to 18. The mental and metaphysical scores are good for now.

4) Distribute level points. Take the number of level points in the character element used for step 3, and spend that many points in each of the remaining two elements. A level point is an increase in an attribute score, a skill point, or a perk.

Example: we increased the werebull's physical score by two. That's two level points to distribute to skills, and two to perks. As a minmax type monster, he'll have one really good feature, which is most likely goring as the fight (unarmed) skill. So let's put his two skill points in fight (unarmed). He'll also have some weaknesses as a minmax, which is currently his low mental score. He'll need some big, ugly horns for fighting, probably d8 damage. That's two perks: weapon focus (horns) twice. We'd also like to give him some natural armor, probably d4, but we've spent all of our level points. And we don't yet have enough level points for any shapechanging, either.

5) Use perks for balance. Perks are character creation wildcards, because they can be used for skill points or attribute scores as well as normal perks. If the monster you're creating has more attribute points or skill points than perks, buying those extra points with perks can help to finish off the monster without making its level excessively high. For example, you've assigned 6 points to skills, but only came up with two perks to use. If you used two more perks to buy skill points, then you could get the same number of skill points (6) by using 4 level points on skills, and 4 level points on perks. So your monster could be a more streamlined level 4 instead of the level 6 that you started.

Damage and protection require special attention in this process. If a creature naturally

has high damage or protection, then the weapon focus (unarmed) perk and armor training (natural) perks are fine to use. However, giving gear to the creature can increase damage and protection without increasing level points or perks. This is acceptable because this equipment has inherent balancing features; recall that wearing armor (not natural armor) reduces a character's physical score. Also, external, non-natural weapons can be broken or disarmed, unlike natural weapons.

If the monster's level still seems too high at review (step 7), you can use anti-perks. An anti-perk is a hindrance-like perk that allows a monster to take an extra normal perk, without using more level points. These can be used in extreme cases when creatures have significant flaws or things that represent weaknesses that an average human wouldn't have. A good example of anti-perks are special weaknesses best represented by perks, like taking extra damage from silver weapons, or always recoiling when a holy symbol is first presented. Use anti-perks sparingly, because their intent is to generally make your monster weaker (which is best represented by low level), while providing some sort of balance in the form of another perk.

Example: if the werebull were vulnerable to silver weapons, or had animal-like intelligence, we'd consider using an anti-perk. But it's not necessary for our monster concept.

6) Determine level. Count the level points in attributes, skills, and perks. Each attribute point above a total of 30, each skill point, and each perk counts as a level point (anti-perks are a negative point). Divide total level points by 3 (or count how many are in one category) to find the monster's current level. As a rule of thumb, a monster's level title (amateur, professional, etc.) should describe the effort used by average people to overcome it.

Example: the werebull has two points in ability scores, two skill points, and two perks. He's currently a level 2 monster, to be challenged by professionals (or their superiors).

7) Review and finish. Look at the monster you've created and ask, "does this fit the monster concept?" Another important question is, "does this monster compare, as an appropriate challenge to PCs, to other monsters of the same level?" If the answer to both questions is "yes," then monster generation is successful. If either answer is "no," then go back to step 3 and add features necessary to help the monster measure up.

Example: the werebull doesn't yet have shapechanging ability, which will require some skill points in cast spell, and it still needs natural armor. So we'll cycle through the steps again, adding these features, and then compare the werebull to other monsters of the same level before finishing the process.

Creating Villains

The [Guides of Modos chapter](#) discusses using a villain concept and creative use of villain points. Here are some more game rule-related considerations for creating villains.

Before using a villain, you should decide how significant he is to the game. If the story can survive without him, consider him a mini-boss, place his level 2-4 levels higher than the average PC level, and give him a villain point for every two levels he has. If the story hinges on his existence, consider him an end-boss, make sure he has minions, place his level from 2 to 4 times that of the average PC level, and give him a villain point for each of his levels. The increase over the PCs' levels is just to encourage the villain to be challenging; otherwise they might brush him aside as if he were just an annoying insurance salesperson.

The GM writes up a villain in the same way that a player writes up a character, except villains get villain points instead of hero points. There are two differences between villain points and hero points. One is that villain points do not refresh daily like hero points; a villain gets his points back in each scene, or for each new encounter that the PCs have with him. The other difference is that villain points can be rolled after the roll to which they apply, whereas hero points must be rolled before or during

other rolls. The purpose of this is only to add drama to an encounter! For example, if the PC halfling is about to sneak past your end-boss dragon, and your dragon's detect contest was pretty weak, add a villain point. Or if your mad scientist mini-boss needs his monster to protect his escape, but the scientist rolled a very poor flee contest, let him add a villain point. If your bosses still fail on their contests after adding a villain point, the PCs have probably well-earned their successes. Do not abuse villain points by, for example, increasing a fight contest against a PC when that PC is already near death.

One-Second Monsters

It seems that your players want to attack your werebull shopkeeper instead of haggling with him. Roll initiative!

It can happen that fast. When you need a monster, or more importantly, some elements to represent a monster, sometimes it's better to use something quickly instead of stopping the game to make or look up a monster. This is when you need a "one-second monster," which can actually take a few more seconds to make, but is designed to be a quick and painless process, with steps as follows:

1) Determine monster level. The monster already has either a name or concept. Otherwise the PCs wouldn't be trying to fight it. Choose a level, using the level titles (table 3-1) for guidance, or set the monster's level equal to the average PC level.

2) Choose the good skill. Like a teacher, monk, or sprinter, your one-second monster probably does one thing really well, like knowledge (scholarship), defend (concentration), or movement. Figure out what that is, and put all of the monster's skill points (equal to its level) in that skill.

3) Choose the good attribute. Your monster's low attribute scores are 10 and 10. But its high attribute score is equal to 10 plus its level. Its bonus in that ability is, in a pinch, half of its level. If the good ability is 15-19, give it a related bonus action. If your monster's good ability is

20 or higher, it's likely that you should be spending more than one second drawing it up.

4) Equip and go! Your monster's weapon and armor each do d8 physical damage and protection, whatever they might be. If you have an extra second, increase the die type for every two character levels, starting with d4. For example, a one-second, level 7 snickersnatch uses d10 for damage and protection.

The one-second monster is far from perfect. But now you have features for rolling, and when you need a perfect monster, you'll take the time to prepare it before the game.

Sample Monsters

The following are character sheets for sample monsters, arranged in order by level, and then by name. The monster names are arranged by monster type, then the specific kind. The values given are the ready-for-combat numbers which include all bonuses. If a value appears in parenthesis, it indicates the original value, without bonuses. Cast spell bonuses include the special +2 armorless bonus where appropriate, as well as the casting difficulties of each spell.

Monster Categories

With few exceptions, the monsters of this chapter are all compatible or multipurpose. To help you search through them, here are the monsters that fit well in particular categories.

- Fantasy races: dwarf, elf, goblin, human.
- Modern classes: artist, intellectual, ruler, soldier, worker.
- Future species: aquan, avian, terran, xeno.
- Machines: android, starfighter.
- Animals: cat, dog, owl, rat, wolf.

Artist, musician, level 1

Attributes: P 8, M 10, MP 13

Skills: persuade +2 (+1), profession (artist) +4 (+0)

Perks: specialize (artist)

Gear: guitar, guitar case, harmonica, Swiss army knife d4

Concept: Likely a street performer, he has some skill at swaying people's opinions with his persuade skill, and a knife for those who try to take his tips. Profession (artist) contests are good for creating distractions, i.e. difficulty penalties to detect.

Cat, house, level 1

Attributes: P 11, M 10, MP 10

Skills: sneak +1

Perks: cat's eye

Gear: claws d4

Concept: House cats are the easiest type of cat to purchase, and to convert into a loyal companion.

Dog, retriever, level 1

Attributes: P 11, M 12, MP 8

Skills: detect +5 (+1)

Perks: specialize (detect)

Gear: bite d4

Concept: Retrievers are excellent at following orders, but you must teach them to do so (with handler (dog)). Most of their detect skill comes from their noses.

Ghoul, starving, level 1

Attributes: P 16, M 7, MP 8

Skills: cast spell (fog) +2 (+1)

Perks: owl's eye

Gear: loose limb d6, claw/bite d4

Concept: This undead creature has removed its own arm, to chew on it and use it as a weapon. If it loses its arm, it bites or claws. If it feels threatened, it casts off its stench-cloud (fog spell), maintaining it until the threat ends.

Goblin, thief, level 1

Attributes: P 13, M 10, MP 8

Skills: larceny +2 (+1), sneak +4 (+0)

Perks: specialize (sneak)

Gear: knife d4+1, crowbar, hooded cloak

Concept: A slippery little man, more likely to become a prisoner than rich. This goblin prefers to flee from danger instead of using his knife.

Owl, sorcerer's, level 1

Attributes: P 11, M 12, MP 8

Skills: fight (unarmed) +1

Perks: cat's eye

Gear: claws d4

Concept: A pampered owl, it spends most of its time flying around a study. It may take flying posture with two movement actions when enough space is available, otherwise its movement is penalized.

Rat, tavern, level 1

Attributes: P 12, M 11, MP 8

Skills: movement +2 (+1)

Perks: owl's eye

Gear: infectious teeth d4

Concept: Bigger than mice, these rats are still small enough to scuttle across tavern floors without always being noticed. They sometimes carry disease, which contributes as much to their damage as the size of their teeth. Rats flee combat unless cornered.

Slime, green, level 1

Attributes: P 11, M 10, MP 10

Skills: fight (unarmed) +1

Perks: weapon focus (acid touch)

Gear: acid touch d6

Concept: These small, unnatural creatures scoot along in the wild much like inchworms. They subsist by dissolving organic matter from the ground, and freeze when confronted, hoping that their attackers will lose interest or be dissuaded by their acidity. A green slime that's under attack springs at its opponent, burning with its acidic body.

Terran, prole, level 1

Attributes: P 11, M 8, MP 12

Skills: movement +1

Perks: stubborn

Gear: work tools d4

Concept: The proletariat is mostly comprised of hard-working, apathetic terrans (people). They work for 12 hours per day, commute via hover-tube for 2 hours, and are lucky to get 6 hours of sleep after watching their telescreens. Their movement training comes from sloshing through muck and climbing through treacherous work conditions.

Worker, factory, level 1

Attributes: P 11, M 10, MP 10

Skills: profession (craftsman) +1

Perks: toughness

Gear: work tools d4, protective clothing d4-1
Concept: Workers are the second-lowest economic class, next to slaves. Most are fairly decent at creating one type of product, or part of a product.

Artist, illustrator, level 2
Attributes: P 8, M 11, MP 13
Skills: deceive +4 (+0), profession (artist) +5 (+2)
Perks: specialize (artist), specialize (deceive)
Gear: tablet, memory stick
Concept: When CEOs need to persuade the masses, one handy professional is the illustrator. This artist carries a PDA tablet, which provides him with easy access to whatever text or graphics he needs to quickly distract a protester, or assuage an angry investor.

Cat, alley, level 2
Attributes: P 12, M 12, MP 8
Skills: sneak +3 (+2)
Perks: cat's eye, specialize (movement)
Gear: claws d4
Concept: Alley cats adapt well to their city environments, with enough movement skill to escape most dangers, and the stealth to surprise prey.

Dwarf, miner, level 2
Attributes: P 12, M 12, MP 8
Skills: profession (craftsman) +3 (+2)
Perks: toughness, owl's eye
Gear: mining pick d6, filthy clothes
Concept: Whistling or not, this dwarf spends most of his time in a mine. As a craftsman, his product is ore. The owl's eye perk makes him a good candidate for labor in the underground.

Elf, reaper, level 2
Attributes: P 10, M 10, MP 12
Skills: knowledge (nature) +2, detect +3 (+0)
Perks: sleepless, specialize (detect)
Gear: scythe d8, spade, whistle
Concept: This farm worker carries a scythe before sunrise and after sunset. The scythe, a farming tool, suffers a difficulty penalty of -4 when used as a weapon.

Human, peasant, level 2
Attributes: P 12, M 8, MP 12
Skills: profession (craftsman) +1 (+2), knowledge (nature) +2 (+0)
Perks: stubborn, specialize (nature)
Gear: pitchfork d8, torch
Concept: Peasants attack in hordes when a monster lives in the village, or when they can't eat. The pitchfork, a farming tool, suffers a difficulty penalty of -4 when used as a weapon.

Owl, striped, level 2
Attributes: P 10, M 12, MP 10
Skills: fight (unarmed) +2, detect +4 (+0)
Perks: cat's eye, specialize (detect)
Gear: claws d4
Concept: Few rodents escape the watchful eye of this owl. It may take flying posture with two movement actions when enough space is available, otherwise its movement is penalized.

Rat, sewer, level 2
Attributes: P 12, M 12, MP 8
Skills: movement +3 (+2)
Perks: weapon focus (bite), owl's eye
Gear: poisonous bite d6
Concept: Sewer rats use their movement skill to climb walls, scale slick mounds, and even swim away from danger. They'll run for safety unless someone stands between them and food.

Soldier, regular, level 2
Attributes: P 13, M 10, MP 9
Skills: knowledge (nature) +2, fight (missile) +4 (+0), defend (parry) +4 (+0)
Perks: specialize (missile), specialize (parry)
Gear: assault rifle d10, flak vest d4, 2 fragmentation grenades
Concept: Regulars are trained to shoot, move, and communicate. They always move to cover, reserve at least one action to defend, and throw their frag grenades as soon as they can make a good throw. Regulars with grenades represent a threat greater than 2nd level.

Terran, trooper, level 2
Attributes: P 13 (14), M 10, MP 8
Skills: cast spell (cure) +5 (+2), fight (missile) +4 (+0), defend (parry) +5 (+0)
Perks: specialize (missile), toughness (max

Physical damage +3)

Gear: shell armor d10, hand blaster d6, power shield (parry +4)

Concept: Terran troopers are the staunch defenders of whatever land they take. A trooper that gets hit spends an action mustering its resolve to use cast spell (cure), and continues to fight bravely.

Wolf, prairie, level 2

Attributes: P 12, M 12, MP 8

Skills: detect +4 (+0), fight (unarmed) +3 (+2), movement +4 (+0)

Perks: specialize (movement), specialize (detect)

Gear: bite d4

Concept: Prairie wolves catch prey by hunting in packs. They use fight (unarmed) to knock an opponent down as often as they do to cause damage. These wolves don't parry – they flee when in danger.

Aquan, sehag, level 3

Attributes: P 10, M 10, MP 13

Skills: fight (melee) +2, movement +1, cast spell (lightning) +6

Perks: weapon focus (trident), specialize (lightning), gills

Gear: trident d10+1, seashell charms

Concept: The sehag is a water-breathing creature, yet its gills perk allows it to spend short amounts of time above the water. Sehags naturally charge with electricity, and release it (cast spell) for intimidation and to subdue large threats. Sehags that get into trouble above water are quick to dive below.

Dwarf, sentinel, level 3

Attributes: P 12 (14), M 11, MP 8

Skills: detect +4 (+1), fight (melee) +3 (+2), defend (parry) +7 (+0)

Perks: owl's eye, specialize (detect), specialize (parry)

Gear: large shield (parry +3), scale armor d6+1, battle axe d8+1, plumed helm

Concept: Wherever dwarf nobles need protection, you'll find dwarf sentinels. These sentinels use most of their actions on defend (parry), attempting to permit defensive posture for their charges.

Elf, archer, level 3

Attributes: P 11, M 10, MP 12

Skills: sneak +2, movement +1, fight (missile) +3 (+0)

Perks: weapon focus (longbow), specialize (missile), cat's eye

Gear: longbow d12, 20 arrows, dagger d4+1, small shield (parry +2)

Concept: Step into the wrong grove, and you'll never know it. Elven archers have keen eyesight which they use to attack enemies at long distance. They hide when enemies are close, and only employ their daggers and shields once discovered. This elf's defend (parry) bonus is +2 when using his shield.

Ghost, spectre, level 3

Attributes: P 7, M 7, MP 19

Skills: persuade +6 (+2), cast spell (invisibility) +15 (+1)

Perks: incorporeal, ki strike, owl's eye

Gear: ghostly touch 1 metaphysical damage

Concept: The spectre is a manifestation of fear and injustice. As an incorporeal creature, it can neither take nor deal physical damage. It normally maintains an invisibility spell, ending the spell when it wants to ruin someone. Its fight (unarmed) attacks cause 1 point of metaphysical damage.

Goblin, shaman, level 3

Attributes: P 8, M 10, MP 15

Skills: deceive (+3), defend (concentration) +3 (+0)

Perks: specialize (concentration), small size, spell implement (staff)

Gear: shaman's staff, knife d4

Concept: The shaman's best trick is to convince other goblins that they're cured by lying to them. His real magic, which comes from his staff, focuses on utility and defense. He can cast fear, lamp, sleep, temper, blind, ruse, and sight. He uses his small size perk to avoid the biggest, closest opponent.

Horse, riding, level 3

Attributes: P 16, M 10, MP 8

Skills: movement +6 (+3)

Perks: weapon focus (hooves), armor training (natural), physical point

Gear: hooves d6, horse hide d4
Concept: A riding horse is fast, but flees at the first hint of danger.

Intellectual, biologist, level 3
Attributes: P 8, M 15, MP 10
Skills: profession (scientist) +7 (+2), knowledge (nature) +7 (+2)
Perks: specialize (scientist), specialize (nature), skill point
Gear: lab coat, notepad, pens
Concept: The biologist is a very valuable asset to take on an expedition, archaeological dig, or covert-ops industrial espionage. His skill at producing biological weapons is nigh-legendary.

Rat, unusually-sized, level 3
Attributes: P 13, M 12, MP 8
Skills: movement +4 (+3)
Perks: weapon focus (unarmed), owl's eye, armor training (natural)
Gear: diseased bite d6, rat hide d4
Concept: These rats are bigger and badder than sewer rats. They can climb and crawl into most small spaces, and show some bravery in battle, especially in the dark. Their bite spreads disease (weapon focus).

Ruler, politician, level 3
Attributes: P 10, M 11, MP 12
Skills: persuade +6 (+2), deceive +5 (+1), defend (concentration) +3 (+0)
Perks: specialize (persuade), specialize (deceive), specialize (concentration)
Gear: Blackberry, day planner
Concept: These low-level rulers use persuade or deceive to win arguments, and have good skill in mental defense. For physical defense, they hire bodyguards.

Wolf, mountain, level 3
Attributes: P 13, M 12, MP 8
Skills: detect +5 (+1), fight (unarmed) +3 (+2), movement +4 (+0)
Perks: specialize (detect), specialize (movement), weapon focus (bite)
Gear: bite d6
Concept: These wolves can detect anything upwind of them, with enough movement skill to cross the rough terrain between them and prey.

They use fight (unarmed) to knock an opponent down as often as they do to cause damage.

Worker, truck driver, level 3
Attributes: P 13, M 8, MP 12
Skills: fight (unarmed) +3 (+2), fight (parry) +4 (+0), deceive +2 (+1), persuade +4 (+0)
Perks: specialize (parry), stubborn (max Mental damage +3), specialize (persuade)
Gear: 18-wheel truck, shotgun d8
Concept: This worker can brawl and has lightning reflexes, but is often full of hot air.

Dwarf, cleric, level 4
Attributes: P 10 (12), M 8, MP 14
Skills: knowledge (scholarship) +0 (+1), defend (willpower) +7 (+2), defend (parry) +4 (+1)
Perks: divine intervention, armor training (scale), mystic ward d4, specialize (willpower)
Gear: scale armor d8+1, mace d8, large shield (parry +3), beard-ring, holy symbol
Concept: A sturdy-looking soldier wearing religious garments over his armor. He prays for healing spells when in defensive posture (usually cure or awaken), and fights viciously when on offense.

Horse, war, level 4
Attributes: P 16 (17), M 8, MP 10
Skills: movement +5 (+2), defend (willpower) +2
Perks: weapon focus (natural) d8, armor training (natural), physical point
Gear: barding d6, tackle, hooves and bite d8
Concept: Warhorses are trained to go into battle, instead of away from it. When a warhorse takes damage, it uses its willpower to resist the urge to temporarily flee, versus a difficulty equal to the damage taken.

Human, knight, level 4
Attributes: P 10 (12), M 10, MP 12
Skills: knowledge (scholarship) +5 (+2), handler (horse) +3 (+2), defend (parry) +6 (+0)
Perks: specialize (parry), weapon focus (long sword), specialize (scholarship), armor training (mail)
Gear: long sword d10+1, large shield (parry +3), mail armor d10, spurs, riding horse, lance d10
Concept: This lord of the land backs his word with a sword. He's great at fighting in

tournaments and gossiping with other lords, but not the best survivalist. He prefers to fight from mounted posture, dismounting only to avoid being crushed by a dying mount.

Mutant, model, level 4

Attributes: P 16, M 8, MP 10

Skills: cast spell (charm) +4 (+2), movement +5 (+2)

Perks: specialize (parry), owl's eye, fearless, dodge

Gear: tiny cell phone, pocket comb, brass knuckles d4+1, pocket hair gel

Concept: Some mutants don't just fight crime with their good looks; they do some modeling on the side. This model can dodge bullets, and turn critics into fans at will.

Soldier, specops, level 4

Attributes: P 11, M 11, MP 12

Skills: sneak +2, knowledge (nature) +2

Perks: toughness (max physical damage 14), stubborn (max mental damage 14), specialize (missile), sleepless

Gear: M4 SOPMOD d10, rucksack, 4 canteens, 10 magazines, binoculars

Concept: This soldier does exactly what he's supposed to do, in all conditions. His MO is to go undetected first, and ask questions later. In combat, he engages from defensive posture, and disappears into the landscape (flees) if enemies try to close with him. His thought shield perk represents resistance to torture and harsh conditions.

Starfighter, light, level 4

Attributes: P 15, M 8, MP 11

Skills: fight (missile) +4 (+2), defend (parry) +4 (+2)

Perks: armor training (hull), dodge, specialize (movement), owl's eye

Gear: assault blasters d6, integrated hull armor d4

Concept: Light fighters move well and strike lightly. They have limited photon enhancement (owl's eye), and are best used to harass non-combat vessels and engage other light fighters. EM attacks (mental) work well against light starfighters. Note that pilots may add their fight

and defend skill points to the starfighter's skill points when making these contests.

Xeno, prostetnic, level 4

Attributes: P 8, M 14, MP 12

Skills: knowledge (scholarship) +4 (+2), profession (artist) +4 (+2)

Perks: specialize (persuade), armor training (natural) d4, thought shield d4, spell implement (poetry book)

Gear: blubbery hide d4, book of poetry

Concept: These creatures learn evil poetry (cast spell (stun) utilized with profession (artist)) which they tend to use on captive, enemy audiences. Their thick hides can be used against the insults of other xenoes, at GM discretion. They spend the rest of their time commanding interstellar construction ships. The prostetnic's poetry book contains two exceptionally bad poems which cast stun and sleep spells.

Elf, mage, level 5

Attributes: P 8, M 12, MP 15

Skills: detect +3 (+2), knowledge (scholarship) +3 (+2), cast spell (fog) +5 (+1)

Perks: mystic ward d6, spell maintenance, spell implement (crystal ball), familiar

Gear: crystal ball, blue mage robe, short sword d6+1, house cat (familiar)

Concept: Elves know magic. This elf knows only magic. He's hard to surprise with his keen elf-ears and pet cat, so one can't fight him unless he wants to fight. If there's too much danger, he disappears in a puff of smoke (fog spell). He casts the following spells with his crystal ball: armor, fear, fire, lock, dark, ice mute, and stun.

Ruler, private, level 5

Attributes: P 8, M 13, MP 14

Skills: knowledge (scholarship) +4 (+3), persuade +6 (+1), deceive +6 (+1)

Perks: thought shield d4, mystic ward d4, specialize (persuade), specialize (deceive), observant

Gear: Swiss bank account, familiar (accountant), gyro-scooter

Concept: Once called aristocrats, these independently wealthy citizens pull everyone else's strings. They often hold titles like "CEO," "president," or "majority shareholder." Master

manipulators, private rulers have entire organizations to solve their problems for them.

Werebull, level 5

Attributes: P 18, M 7, MP 10

Skills: cast spell (alter) +11 (+1), defend (concentration) +2 (+4)

Perks: longstrider, large size, weapon focus (unarmed) d8, armor training (hide)

Gear: horns d8, bull's hide d4

Concept: This big, hairy beast gores with its horns and charges back and forth while staying away from dangerous weapons, by using its bonus movement action and large size. Its magical nature gives it a tough mind, and it disguises itself as a man or bull when necessary (alter).

Troll, bridge, level 6

Attributes: P 18, M 8, MP 10

Skills: cast spell (cure) +7 (+1), fight (unarmed) +5 (+1), movement +7 (+3), detect +0 (+1)

Perks: large size, weapon focus (claws), owl's eye, armor training (natural) d6, quick strike

Gear: gnarled branch with spike d8+1, claws d6, troll hide d6

Concept: Bridge trolls prefer to hunt at night, when they have a sight-advantage over many other creatures, which aids in gaining surprise. They use their bonus fight action to directly counterattack one attacker each round, preferring the spiked branch, which often frees up an action for casting the cure spell. Bridge trolls often have advantageous obstacles nearby, namely bridges, which they can put between themselves and their opponents. This can require a challenging (+4) movement contest for changing posture, which the bridge troll can overcome with its large size perk.

Android, shapeshifter, level 7

Attributes: P 16 (17), M 12, MP 8

Skills: cast spell (alter) +8 (+1), movement +5 (+2), fight (missile) +8 (+2), defend (parry) +5 (+2)

Perks: toughness (max physical damage 19), thought shield d6, spell maintenance, cat's eye, sleepless, specialize (missile)

Gear: shell armor d10, hand blaster d6, air freshener

Concept: A front-line android who specializes in blasting enemies. When he needs to move, he shapeshifts and becomes a car or jet, which gives him tremendous speed but limits his actions to movement and severely hampers his ability to engage targets (fight (missile) penalties).

Xeno, brood mother, level 7

Attributes: P 15, M 12, MP 10

Skills: movement +4 (+2), fight (unarmed) +3 (+1), detect +3 (+2), cast spell (charm) +4 (+2),

Perks: armor training (hide) d8, weapon focus (natural) d8, martial artist, owl's eye

Gear: alien hide d8, claws, tentacles or bite d8, birthing apparatus

Concept: Alien broods come from *somewhere*, though an unlucky few have actually seen a brood mother. It's big, black, and ugly, and likes to use telepathy (charm) while birthing, since the apparatus makes it relatively immobile. Charmed opponents immediately recognize that birthing is a painful process, and depending on their new disposition, seek to help the poor mother through her trying time. And get eaten. This xeno uses its extra fight (unarmed) action to represent its multiple dangerous appendages.

Dragon, mist, level 9

Attributes: P 16, M 10, MP 13

Skills: cast spell (fog) +4 (+1), cast spell (ice) +1 (+2), movement +5 (+2), fight (unarmed) +5 (+2), detect +2

Perks: spell weaver, weapon focus (natural) d8, spell maintenance, armor training (natural) d8, martial artist, thought shield d4

Gear: claws & bite d8, dragon hide d8, treasure horde

Concept: In misty valleys, behind waterfalls, and sometimes cloudy mountaintops, these dragons live solitary lives. They do not fly; they use their wings to move their fog clouds to useful places. The ice spell can be used to freeze opponents, but can also be used to freeze a small area of ground, like any inclined ground that lies between a dragon and its opponents. Their hordes consist of tribute from peasants and the goods that adventurers drop when they die.

Designing Traps

For the purposes of the bestiary, a trap is any non-monster that could hurt or hinder a character. Traps are included here because they use the same creation rules as characters. The main difference is that, while it's not required, most traps attack once and must be reset afterward.

To design a trap, first create its concept. Ask yourself questions like who created the trap, what is its purpose, and how does it accomplish this purpose?

Next choose a trap level. This is often the same level as the trap's creator, or the GM can set traps at or near the levels of the PCs for a more relative level of challenge.

Now create your trap as if it were a character. If you want a hidden trap, give it some deceive skill points. A hard-to-disable trap will likely have points in defend (parry) or armor/protection based on its size, and a hard-to-dodge trap will have points in fight (melee) or fight (missile).

Give your trap the gear it will need to work. Common choices are nets, spikes, darts, or metal housing. As a general rule, as the equipment used by the trap gets bigger, going up in damage die type, the traps becomes harder to conceal.

Finally, deploy your trap! Tell your allies about it so they won't stumble into it, make sure you remember how to bypass the trap, and add some camouflage to it if that will help you catch your quarry. Perhaps most importantly, check your trap on occasion to see if it has caught something or needs to be reset.

Sample Traps

Covered pit, level 1

Attributes: P 7, M 16, MP 10

Skills: deceive +3 (+0), detect +4 (+1)

Perks: specialize (deceive)

Gear: 10 foot drop d6 damage

Concept: This trap's false floor collapses once it detects its prey. Nearby victims have a good chance to fall in with whoever set the trap off. A movement contest against the trap's detect contest can save a victim from falling.

Net trap, level 2

Attributes: P 16, M 9, MP 7

Skills: movement +6 (+0), detect +1 (+2)

Perks: specialize (movement), longstrider

Gear: 15 x 15 net, weighted at corners

Concept: A primitive trap, this is pretty easy to spot – if you're looking for it. If you're not, the net uses its movement actions to contest those of its victims, and if it succeeds, the victim can't move.

Dart overwatch, level 3

Attributes: P 13, M 10, MP 10

Skills: fight (missile) +5 (+1), detect +4 (+1), deceive +1

Perks: specialize (missile), specialize (detect), off the mark

Gear: 1 volley of poison-tipped darts d8 damage

Concept: One way to scare an intruder away is to stick him with 16 poisonous darts. This device must, by design, be close to what it's protecting unless the protector wants to risk using a long, hidden-wire system. Triggering the mechanism could be adding or removing pressure from a plate, turning a handle, or pulling a tripwire. The darts are aimed at where the triggering takes place, and a defend (parry) success saves the target from damage.

Stair-to-chute, level 3

Attributes: P 16, M 7, MP 10

Skills: movement +8 (+2), deceive +4 (+1)

Perks: specialize (movement), specialize (deceive), off the mark

Gear: metal hardware d6 protection

Concept: The stair-to-chute is a small set of steps that collapse downward, turning stairs into a slide and depositing enemies at the base of the trap. The purpose is to buy time for escape, buy more time to shoot at enemies, or simply embarrass insolent subjects. Victims may use detect to spot the trap or movement to oppose it, and victims who fail their movement contests lose their footing and slide to the bottom.

Spike-in-a-chest, level 5

Attributes: P 17, M 10, MP 8

Skills: fight (melee) +8 (+2), detect +5 (+2), deceive +3 (+1)

Perks: weapon focus (spike), specialize (melee),

specialize (detect), off the mark, specialize (deceive)

Gear: spring-loaded 6-inch spike d10

Concept: This trap is dreaded by all treasure hunters. Few things are worse than being stabbed in the chest by a spring-loaded metal

spike, just after opening a large, beautiful treasure chest. This trap is bypassed by unlatching its tripwire after opening the chest's lid by only 1-inch, which requires a larceny contest versus the trap's detect. Incorrectly unlatching the tripwire sets off the trap.



Chapter 10: Modules

Greg: The god's altar looks a bit different than you remember. Somehow cleaner and less...stormy.

Arnold: Merloon pushes himself up tall, with the help of his walking stick, and turns to his friends. A sort of, "it's been nice knowing you" glance.

Greg: They nod in approval. Except for Spurnli, who's still bitter that you left him in jail for so long. He fluffs his beard at you.

Arnold: That's probably the most support I can expect. I'll send the Red Witch his way the next time I see her. Or maybe make her appear with my new dragon magic?

Greg: Sure, if you think you have enough dragon blood.

Arnold: Well, it says (reading the rules module), "campaign themes and character concepts determine." Can my character concept say that I

can use metaphysical damage to power dragon magic?

Greg: (Looks up the rule.) Well, we agreed on using the module, and here, in the 400s section, it says that your dragon blood pool is what powers your dragon magic spells. We can house-rule it later, but let's not make everyone else wait while we figure it out, okay?

Arnold: Alright. Rule zero. Okay, here we go again: I use the alter spell to create the rune, "Selvillissor," on the altar. Then, I take Selvillissor's bone shard from my pack. Then I hold the dragon-rib up, toward the sky, and kneel. "Modos, God of Balance, Lord of Life, take my offering. This abomination of Order breathes no more. Let its dust return to you, and its chaos be banished from your realm." Does it work this time?

Greg: Roll initiative.



Merloon, level 4

Attributes: P 8, R 10, M 11, MP 15

Skills: cast spell (fire) +2 (+2), knowledge (scholarship) +2

Dragon magic: alter

Perks: spell implement (spellbook), mystic ward d4, spell weaver, armor training (natural)

Gear: dragon hide d4, spellbook, walking stick, longsword d8+1, cloak, brass brooch, straw

hat

Hero points: time-related feats, like initiative contests or deceive contests to make him seem younger.

Concept: As a budding wizard, he learned to create fire almost by accident. Once Merloon discovered that secret, no one could stop him from pursuing other arcane secrets. Someday, he'll learn to age in reverse, or live forever. Merloon's goals are to discover as many secrets of magic as possible, and to maintain his friendships, since he has so few. His flaw is that his focus on magical lore resulted in a certain neglect of social skills, making him abrasive or offensive to some.

(Designer notes: Arnold has implemented some new rules from the rules module, Greg's Dragon Magic. This allows him to learn a dragon magic spell at 4th level, and the module recommends that Merloon enhance his natural armor with the armor training perk.)

Community-designed content, new, sturdy rules for next week's game, and plug-and-play adventures are all made possible with Modos RPG's modular design, and this chapter. Two types of modules, rules and adventure, offer metagame and in-game content for expanding your game experience.

Each module should have a credits and revisions page. Here, the original author will record when the module was first written, and whether it is available for community revision. If it has been revised, each new author will record his name, the revision date, and a summary of the revisions made.

Even the coolest modules won't get used much if they're hard to read. Before you share your module with the world, check your spelling and grammar, remove unnecessary text, and reread it to make sure everything makes sense.

Rules Modules

This game is a core-rules system, designed to be short and simple for a reason: so it can adopt and adapt to any new rules you want to use. A set of new rules is called a rules module, and these follow some pretty simple rules of their own.

Rules Module Concept

The concept is where you explain why you've created new rules, what they are, and what to do with them. If your rules are very technical, then this is also where you explain, in common parlance, how to use or implement your rules.

Designing Rules

The rules in a rules module each do one of three things: they add new rules, alter existing rules, or remove other rules. Despite having different purposes, these three functions always have the same considerations. Ask yourself:

- What is the purpose of this rule?
- Is this purpose already fulfilled by a different rule?
- Does this new rule or changed rule, after interacting with the rest of the system, fulfill its purpose as intended?

When altering or removing a rule, consider the effects of your change on the rule's dependencies. These dependencies are the other rules that give meaning and usage to a rule. If you alter a rule's dependencies, you can inadvertently change a rule or make it obsolete. It's also worthwhile to do a search for a rule's code in the dependencies of other rules to see which rules your change will be affecting. For example, if you're removing R202, you'll want to consider the effect on the dependencies of R202, and the effect on other rules that depend on

R202.

Each rule is numbered for use in the [rules catalog](#). Rules are numbered according to what module they fall under: under 100 is for core rules, 100-199 character rules, 200-299 extended conflict rules, 300-399 combat rules, and 400-499 is for spellcasting rules. If your rule is a new one, give it the first unused number in the appropriate module. If it replaces or changes a rule, give it the same number as the old rule. If your rule is part of a new module, assign it a new number above 499. Each of your rules will have their own prefix of your choice.

Once your rules are fully prepared, arrange them in numerical order, tag each rule with the abbreviation of your module name, like GDW for Greg's Dragon Warrior Module, then list them in a table like the one used in the rules catalog appendix. This makes them easier to read, and easier to cut, paste, and sort for digital file users.

Sample Rules Module

Greg's Dragon Warrior Module

These are dark times. We would once look to the skies for warming sun and nourishing rain. Now, we cover our heads with hoods, stare at the ground, and hide from the sky. We fear not just the presence of dragons, but also the mere sight of them.

Yet, we have hope. The gods send us dragon warriors. Men and women with the courage to defend us, the skill to fight dragons, and the power to slay them. Some warriors bear almost no armor, while some bear extraordinary suits of dragon hide in their battles. Yet each seems to carry a charm, a personal magic, that both likens him to dragons and protects him from them.

A world with dragons is a special world, and a special world requires special rules. This module provides rules for new attributes for dragon warrior characters, assembling their armor, and imbuing them with magic.

Attributes

Dragons and dragon warriors have four attributes instead of three. They retain the mental and metaphysical attributes, but instead of a “physical” attribute, they have “power” and “reflex”:

- Power (abbreviated P) is a measurement of strength and durability. The skills related to power are: fight (melee), fight (unarmed), and movement. The longstrider perk awards a bonus action for a high score in this attribute.
- Reflex (abbreviated R) is a measurement of reflexes, quickness, and speed. The skills related to reflex are: defend (parry), fight (missile), larceny, and sneak. The dodge and quick strike perks award bonus actions for a high score in this attribute.

Determine the scores for these attributes in the same way as you would the physical score – usually by rolling 3d6 or by assigning scores to each attribute so that all scores average 10.

PCs retain their physical damage pools and get a new damage pool: dragon blood.

- The physical damage pool takes on a new max damage equal to either the power attribute score or the reflex attribute score – you choose when you create your character. The toughness perk increases this pool. Physical damage sources, like weapons and some spells, continue to add damage here, as normal.
- The dragon blood pool has max damage equal to the other attribute: power if physical damage is reflex, or reflex if physical damage is power. A new perk, Blooded, adds 3 points to your dragon blood max damage. Damage in this pool heals one point daily. There is no max damage condition related to dragon blood – a character at max damage simply cannot use any more dragon magic.

Note that the physical penalty for wearing armor applies to both the power and reflex attributes.

Piecemeal Armor

When fighting a dragon, the most protective armor one can wear is that of the beast itself: dragon armor. However, even master armorers are lucky to create one serviceable piece of armor from one dragon carcass. These rules allow a character to improve his armor, one piece at a time.

Characters have four armor “slots” to fill when wearing armor. These are the head, arms, torso, and legs. Each slot contributes a number of points toward a character’s total protection die, as follows:

Armor type	Leather, padded	Scale, ring, mail	Plate	Dragon, hide or bone
Protection bonus	+1	+2	+3	+4

Table 10-1: piecemeal armor

To find your character’s protection die, add up the number of points contributed by each armor slot, according to the type of protection there. If the total is an even number, it represents the die you will use for protection. If it is an odd number, subtract one to find the die type, and add +1 to each of your protection rolls. If your total protection bonus is higher than 12, each point above 12 represents a bonus you’ll be adding to each protection roll that you make with a d12.

For example, Skjor wears mail on his arms, a boiled leather skirt over his legs, no helm, and a dragon-bone cuirass on his torso. His bonuses for each slot are, in order: +2, +1, +0, and +4. His total protection bonus is +7. Skjor’s protection die will be d6+1.

Adding this level of detail to a character’s armor provides roleplaying opportunities, which also means hero point opportunities. Since Skjor wears no helmet, Skjor’s player can react to high damage rolls as though they were attacks or injuries to his head, or other weak points in his armor. Low damage rolls could mean strikes to Skjor’s dragon-armor, or if he has a good reflex score, they

could represent Skjor's ability to dance away from such attacks. Skjor's leather skirt leaves his legs vulnerable to fiery dragon-breath, so Skjor could self-impose a movement penalty when a dragon breathes fire at him, and his GM should award a hero point for good roleplaying.

Dragon Magic

Dragon warriors have great bravery, magic weapons, and even armor made of dragon hide and bone. Some have yet another weapon at their disposal: dragon magic. Campaign themes and character concepts determine whether dragon magic comes from draconic heritage, dragon souls, divine providence, or somewhere else.

Whatever the source, dragon magic is powered by dragon blood. Whenever a character casts a dragon-magic spell, he takes damage in his dragon blood pool in the same way that a normal magician takes damage in his metaphysical damage pool: $d8 + \text{spell level}$. Unlike normal magic, there is no perk for reducing this damage, so dragon warriors recover their dragon blood in a different way: killing dragons.

When characters slay a dragon, each character contributing to the dragon's death (i.e. all PCs) heal a number of dragon blood points equal to the dragon's level. At the GM's discretion, characters can also gain a new perk, skill point in a dragon spell, or gather dragon parts usable for armor, weapons, or magic potions.

Dragon warriors gain one extra action each round for casting dragon magic when their max dragon blood damage is 10, a second action when max damage equals 15, and so on every 5 points. This differs from normal bonus actions: a perk is not required to unlock the action, and the number is based on max damage instead of the attribute score.

Knowledge of dragon magic spells is linked to dragon magic actions: a character knows one at max damage of 10, two at 15, and so on. Characters can learn more spells at the GM's discretion. A dragon magic spell is a normal cast spell skill, but instead of using

metaphysical as the related attribute, the character uses his dragon blood attribute.

Greg's Dragon Warrior Rules

Categorized rules appear as follows:

GDW 000 Core

GDW 100 Characters (Power and Reflex)

GDW 200 Extended Conflict

GDW 300 Combat (Piecemeal armor)

GDW 400 Spellcasting (Dragon Magic)

Adventure Modules

The second type of module, the adventure module, is what you use to make a rules module or core rules come to life. An adventure module contains story material and rules, as well as the usual author and revising author information. In addition, each adventure module must contain a concept and a map.

Concept

Besides a name, every adventure module needs a statement of what it is and why it's interesting. The adventure concept is essential for turning the other required adventure module component, a map, into something worth playing. After it has described the general idea of the adventure, the concept section can go into detail on the shape of the adventure, the background of the story, how to string together all the adventure elements, or whatever else the adventure requires.

Map

Adventures must happen somewhere. With a limitless game at your disposal, an adventure map could be a 20-miles-square hex grid, a 400-feet-square dungeon, a flowchart of story events, or a series of improv scenes. Whichever form the adventure takes, the map (or maps) is the skeleton or the backbone of the module.

Additional Elements

Common adventure elements include new rules, encounters, NPCs, and rewards. If

you've written adventures for your own game before, then you'll notice that writing adventure modules is essentially the same thing. Include whatever you like, especially if it makes your adventure more interesting. The key difference is that you're writing an adventure for others to use, so your module needs to be clear, polished, and complete before other gamers will adopt it.

Sample Adventure Module

The Temple of Friends

Adventure Overview

This is an adventure for PCs of 1st or 2nd level. One PC must take the role of Farmboy, the object of Cynthia's seemingly perpetual torment. Cynthia is the farmer's daughter, who will ask the Farmboy to recover a precious gem from the nearby, ruined temple.

The temple is occupied by bandits who also seek the precious gem, and are keen to avoid waking the dragon that lives beneath the temple. To complete the adventure, PCs must defeat the bandits, discover the final resting place of the gem, and return to Cynthia, ready to acquiesce or negotiate with her demands.

Adventure Layout

The adventure is comprised of six encounters, each with its own page and map. Relevant information that is not critical for each encounter is listed between encounters, and all information has a page number and an element number (p.# e.#) to use for easier reference. Page numbers are omitted for references on the same page. Each encounter begins with the "encounter" box.

Some text is written to be read directly to the players, or represents common knowledge. This text appears in a white box, like this.

Three element types are provided for the GM to use at his discretion. The first type, the static elements, is the people, places, and things of the adventure. These elements can be moved, multiplied, altered, and removed to suit the

GM's needs. Dynamic elements account for the passing of time or changing of a situation. These add another level of complexity to an encounter. The third type, plot elements are necessary for the progression of the narrative. GMs can alter or ignore plot elements, but this might require the creation of new plot elements to account for the changes made and to keep the story flowing smoothly.

Some elements contain quick contests. These are a skill, bonus, and result. The skill represents an option that the PCs can take in the given situation. The bonus is what the GM adds to his difficulty contest against the PCs skill contest. The result is generally a boon that the PCs gain for succeeding on the contest.

Any elements not listed are for the GM to create. For example, the resources and people of Winderbough are mostly left out of the module. The GM can include other watchmen to accompany the PCs on their errand, or the house of a healer if the PCs are prone to getting hurt.

Character Setup

Recommended PC level is 1 or 2. Recommended PC backgrounds are peasants, or lower-class friends of the Farmboy. A male PC must fill the role of Farmboy, who can be anyone who has spent a year or more helping on the farm. Cynthia is happy to exploit Farmboy's "willingness" to help. Characters may have greater resources, but this reduces the significance of Encounter 2: Getting Help.

Adventure Elements

1. Adventure Introduction. PCs begin play at dawn in the stable of Lilus's (p.89 e.10) farm. They've gathered at the request of the Farmboy (see character setup), to hear a special demand from Cynthia (p.87 e.2). Cynthia gave no indication of her intent, so the PCs are likely carrying no arms. After reading the introductory text aloud, proceed to encounter 1: Cynthia's Request.

The village of Winderbough lies just south of a vast sea. On the village's north end sits a large farm, the largest and newest. Across the fields of

this rolling farmland there often rides a charming girl, named Cynthia. Not a lady, though she aspires to be one. And toiling on this farm are several peasants, but only one who gets special attention from Cynthia. She doesn't call him by name; she calls him "Farmboy."

2. Cynthia, level 1.

All Contests: +1

Concept: A pretty, blonde maiden. She's the farmer's daughter, and angry that she's prettier than the merchant daughters who treat with the reeve (p.88 e.8), yet the reeve will be choosing one of them as his new wife, not her. Goal: Cynthia wants to be loved by a man with resources, so she plans to gain the reeve's attention with wealth, and the only "easy" wealth she knows about is the legendary "Demon's Eye" (e.5). Flaws: Cynthia is immature, so she considers herself superior to all peasants, and is very vain.

3. Plot: Cynthia's Request. "Farmboy, my 15th year approaches, and if I am ever to wed the shire reeve, I will need my dowry. Go to the Temple of Friends, fetch me the Demon's Eye, and I'll free you from serfdom once I'm wed. And...you'll get a kiss," Cynthia says with a smirk.

PCs can speak to the farmer, Lilus (p.89 e.10), Heinrich the watchman (p.89 e.12), and Lord Willard, the shire reeve (p.88 e.8) for help. Only Heinrich will offer more than words. Cynthia can be convinced to offer greater rewards. If the PCs seek assistance, go to Encounter 2. If they go straight to the temple, go to Encounter 3.

4. Dynamic: Cynthia's Reward. Cynthia's offer of a kiss and freedom might not be enough for the PCs. She will also make the following offers in a sequential order, as the PCs become more convincing: her horse (Sugarplum), positions in the village watch, and a personal room in the farmhouse. Cynthia will also offer her hand in marriage, but only after certain conditions are met (see Dynamic: Increasing Returns (p.96 e.33)). To earn the promise of greater rewards, PCs must appeal to Cynthia's goals or flaws, and she will try turning her

affection to other PCs before granting greater boons.

5. Demon's Eye. A very large red gem, set in the head of a demonic statue that was once revered by the region's lost ancestors. The statue is the centerpiece of the Temple of Friends.

A large (fist-sized) sanguinite – a type of red gem. It takes its name from the demon-statue (p.91 e.21) in which it once sat. Its sister was stolen long ago by a famous thief called the Bat, who barely escaped alive after the dragon (p.94 e.28) tried to eat him. The Demon's Eye remains in the temple; it fell through the grate that once held the dragon, and has since become the centerpiece of a bridge troll's home.

6. Temple of Friends. This is a ruined, rectangular temple with collapsing towers on each corner, and a large hole in the center where a grand dome once stood. The woods have attempted to retake the temple, with trees pushing up the stone walkways and crawling up the temple walls in vines.

The temple is 50 feet high, 120 feet across, and composed of four short towers surrounding a tall sanctuary, each of which have collapsed to one degree or another.

- Ancient ruin was once a grand temple.
- Gets its name from the term for the local ancestors. These people built highways, ditches, and the temple before disappearing, so they're called the "Friends."
- Lately, it's been rumored to be populated with lizardmen (), probably descendents of the dragon () that lives inside.
- Located north of Winderbough, on the far side of the Willard's Wood.
- Inside stands a demonic statue, with a large gem for an eye.

7. Winderbough.

- A farming community subject to Baron Rohrbach (Beldam Barony).
- Safe from war, but not sea-borne raiders.
- Benefits from ancient architecture: aqueducts, roads, some statues.
- Is surrounded by farmland, except by Willard's Wood to the north.
- Has a small voluntary and part-time watch, run by Heinrich (p.89 e.12).

8. Lord Mortimer Willard, Shire Reeve, level 2

Skills: persuade +2, knowledge (scholarship) +2
 Concept: The local reeve recently lost a wife when she mysteriously disappeared, having given him no children. Now he seeks another wife to continue his house, preferring to woo the daughters of merchants since they are often wealthier and more comely than aristocrats.
 Goals: marry a beautiful, rich maid, and maintain his lifestyle. Flaws: overweight and bossy, he has little respect for peasants.

Encounter 1: Cynthia's Request

Plot: Cynthia's Request (p.87 e.3):
 "Farmboy, my 15th year approaches, and if I am ever to wed the shire reeve, I will need my dowry. Go to the Temple of Friends, fetch me the Demon's Eye, and I'll free you from serfdom once I'm wed. And...you'll get a kiss."

Farmboy: any male PC who gets picked on by Cynthia (p.86 e.1)

PCs seek assistance, directions, or gear

Haggle with Cynthia

Dynamic: Cynthia's Reward

Actions (p.87 e.4)	Rewards
Negotiate	Horse
Intimidate	Watchmen
Bribe	Lodging
Decline/Bluff	Marriage

Go to **Encounter 2: Getting Help**

Negotiate with Cynthia

Go to **Encounter 3: the Temple**

Winderbough Common Knowledge

- A farming community subject to Baron Rohrbach (Beldam Barony)
- Safe from war, but not sea-borne raiders
- Benefits from ancient architecture: aqueducts, roads, some statues
- Is surrounded by farmland, except by Willard's Wood to the north
- Has a small voluntary and part-time watch, which Heinrich runs

Temple of Friends Common Knowledge

- Ancient ruin was once a grand temple
- Gets its name from the term for the local ancestors. These people built highways, ditches, and the temple before disappearing, so they're called the "Friends."
- Lately, it's been rumored to be populated with lizardmen (), probably progeny of the dragon () that lives inside.
- Located north of Winderbough, on the far side of the Willard's Wood.
- Inside stands a demonic statue, with a large gem for an eye.

9. Encounter 2: Seeking Help. After receiving Cynthia's request, the PCs have two options: go straight to the temple (encounter 3), or seek help. They can seek help from Lilus (e.10), who offers information and possibly a greater reward, Heinrich (e.12), who can offer assistance and gear, or Lord Willard, who doesn't like to associate with the common folk.

10. Lilus. A tall, burly farmer in charge of the north-side farm. He is Cynthia's father, and a dour widower. He cares little for Cynthia's adventures, as long as she stays safe. Lilus will give Cynthia as a wife if he thinks the husband will be good to her and profitable. Goals: maximizing harvest, keeping Cynthia happy. Flaws: greedy, uncaring (but loves Cynthia). Brother to Heinrich (e.12).

11. Plot: Meeting Heinrich. "So I finally meet the Farmboy and his friends! Hi, I'm Heinrich! You'd best not leave for the Temple of Friends without arming yourselves with friends first!"

By "friends," he is talking about both arms and his personal assistance, if the PCs request it. Heinrich can be found patrolling the village, maintaining equipment at the armory (e.14), or training watchmen in the yard. If the PCs convince him that they're acting in Cynthia's best interests, he'll offer them gear and he'll ask to go with them. If the PCs leave Cynthia out of negotiation or fail to convince Heinrich that they're helping her, he offers only gear, with the warning that he gives to everyone borrowing gear outside of war (e.14).

12. Heinrich, level 2

Attributes: P 12, M 9, MP 11

Skills: profession (craftsman) +0 (+1), defend (parry) +4 (+1), detect +2 (+0), fight (melee) +4 (+0)

Perks: specialize (detect), specialize (melee)

Gear: longsword d8+1, leather armor d4, small shield (parry +2)

Concept: Heinrich is Cynthia's uncle. He looks like a younger, slimmer version of Lilus. He's a

friendly man who maintains the village armory, and serves as a watchman. Goals: protect the village, be a good uncle. Flaws: alcoholic, curious.

13. Bort the Bodyguard, level 3

Attributes: P 16 (17), M 8, MP 8

Skills: fight (melee), fight (unarmed), defend (parry)

Perks: toughness x 2 (physical max damage 22), off the mark

Gear: studded leather d4+1, morningstar d8

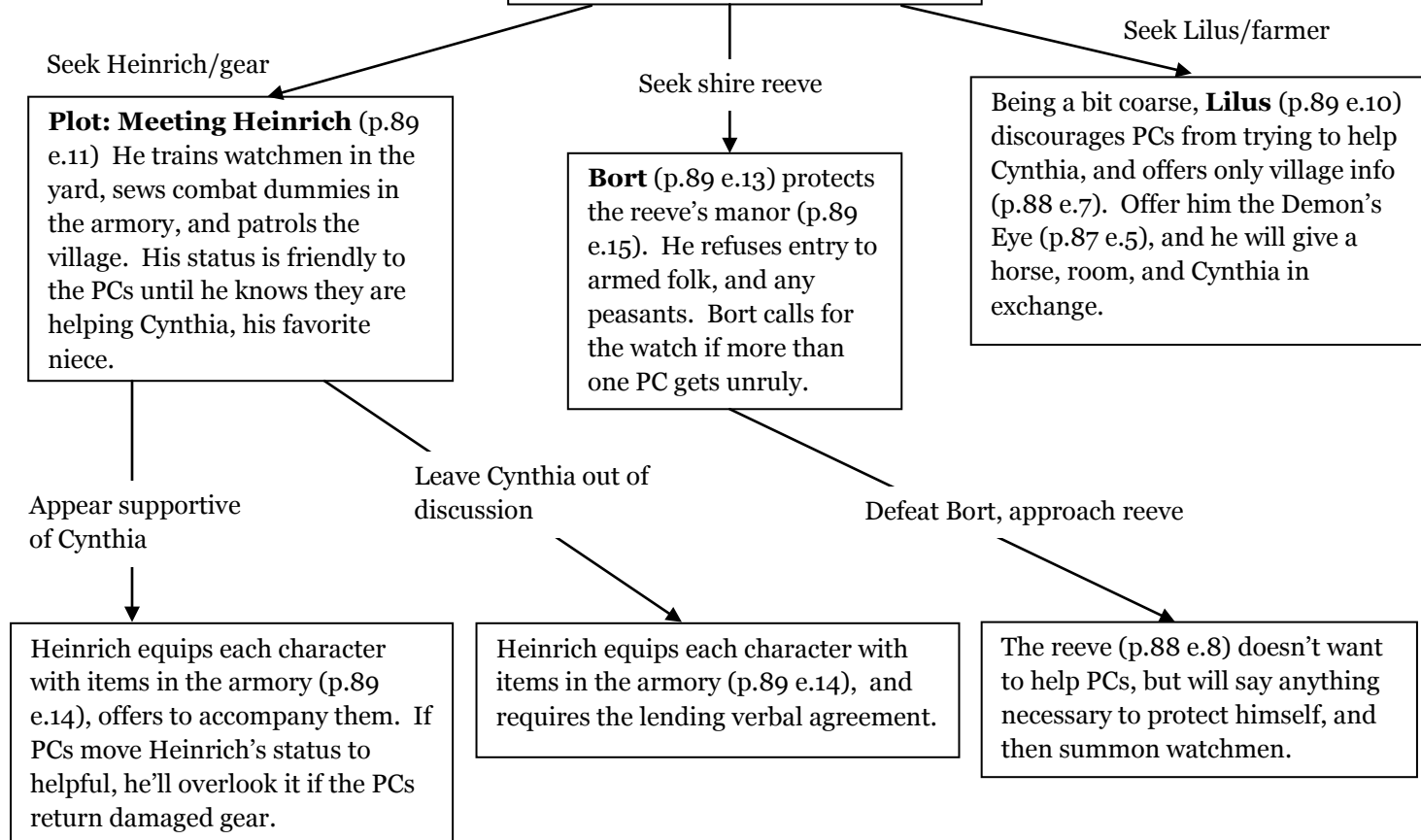
Concept: A big watchman who became a big bodyguard. He is somewhat single-minded, and has a secret desire to ride horses. Goals: protect the reeve, ride horses. Flaws: slow, but not gullible. Also physically slow, which he makes up for with durability.

14. Armory. The armory is the only stone building in the village. It has narrow, horizontal windows to admit light, but only one entrance: an iron door to which only Heinrich has the key. The armory contains simple, cheap arms and armor, like spears, axes, wooden shields, and boiled leather, which Heinrich distributes to the village men in case of attack. Whenever a villager (and only villagers) borrows equipment, he must agree to return all gear in one week, and to repair any damage or serve the watch for a week if he cannot repair the damage. Failing to return gear is a crime against the baron (p.88 e.7).

15. Willard's Manor. This is a large, two-story, wooden house in the shape of an L. A wooden curtain wall surrounds the yard, a small stable, and the manor. The left wing of the house contains the bedrooms, and the right wing serves all other functions.

Once every two weeks, Lord Willard holds a feast for merchants and their daughters. This tradition will continue until Mortimer meets his future wife, although most merchants are unimpressed by his bossy attitude and meager holdings.

Encounter 2: Seeking Help



16. Encounter 3: the Temple of Friends.

The temple (p.87 e.6) lies two miles north through forest, on the peninsula that helps to protect Winderbough from the sea. A small trail leads indirectly to the temple.

A small band of outlaws has been led to the temple to search for the lost Demon Eye (p.87 e.5). They dress in alligator skins to appear as lizardmen and hopefully to scare away investigators. Their leader is a man called Troll (p.91 e.23) who has a treasure map (p.91 e.25), but has yet to find the treasure.

Here, the PCs will encounter two lizardmen outside the temple who are unlikely to be prepared to fight, and a larger group inside the temple that is likely to surprise them.

17. Lizardmen, level 1

Attributes: P 10 (11), M 10, MP 10

Skills: fight (melee) +1

Perks: toughness (max Physical damage 13)

Gear: spear d8+1 (+4 initiative), alligator hide d4

Concept: Green outlaws, wearing lizard disguises, who follow the orders of Troll (p.91 e.23), seeking easy riches. They always save at least one action for parrying or retreat/fleeing. Goal: make easy money. Flaw: disloyal.

18. Dynamic: Guards Outside. Two lizardmen outside the temple are taking a break to build a campfire, or warm up by one, when the PCs approach, so the PCs can easily surprise them. The lizardmen will need one or two actions to ready their weapons and choose a formation. These lizardmen don't like being outnumbered (or killed), so convincing them to flee is not difficult. If one or both of the guards escape, one of them may go inside the temple to bolster, and alert, the force inside.

19. Dynamic: Guards Inside. The lizardmen in the temple number one fewer than the PCs. If a lizardman fled the first attack, their number equals that of the PCs. They will attempt an ambush, if they heard a battle or other noise outside the temple. To do so, they'll hide in

shadows or behind columns until the PCs are fully within the antechamber. If all PCs fail a detect contest against +4, the lizardmen gain a surprise action. If one or more succeed, the lizardmen gain instead +4 to their initiative contests.

20. Dynamic: Lighting. The light level outside the temple varies by time of day. Inside, the light level is shadow (-4 to vision based contests). However, the lizardmen light a few braziers for warmth and light, which provides dim light in small areas.

21. Demon statue. This statue stands behind the large altar in the middle of the sanctuary. Each foot has three claws – each second claw acts as an unlocking handle for the grating (e.26) near its foot.

A horrible statue looms far above you. It is man-shaped, but huge horns jut from its head, bony ribs surround an angry serpent's head, great bat-wings stand wide, and its feet resemble bat-claws. Its eyes are holes that look to be hewn to a particular shape.

22. Encounter 4: the Altar. Once the lizardmen (p.90 e.17) are defeated, Troll (e.23) waits at the altar. He won't fight the PCs directly, but he'll try to manipulate them into helping him get the Demon's Eye (p.87 e.5). This encounter is about making a deal with Troll, and discovering the dragon's lair (encounter 5).

23. Troll (rogue leader), level 3
Attributes: P 12 (13), M 8, MP 12
Skills: deceive +4 (+0), fight (unarmed) +2 (+1), detect +1 (+2)
Perks: weapon focus (scimitar), specialize (deceive), toughness (max Physical damage 15)
Gear: Trollsfire (scimitar) d8+1, treasure map, padded armor d4
Concept: Troll (real name: Trel of Nobitton) has a peg leg, unrelated to his current adventure. He

is trying to open the grates (e.26) under the altar (e.27), because he suspects that the other Demon Eye (p.87 e.5) fell through them. But since he's protective of his prize, he will lie and divert attention until he feels he can control the situation, and the PCs. Troll can increase Trollsfire's damage to d10+1, but he'll only do so if he's under attack. Goals: steal riches to gain the wealthy lifestyle he deserves, and buy a boat. Flaws: considers himself above the law, winces slightly when lying.

24. Trollsfire. Weapon type: light. Damage: d6+1. Range: close. Once per day, saying "Trollsfire" (a non-action) while wielding this scimitar in combat changes its damage die to d8+1, and lasts until the end of combat. On the magic word, the sword becomes engulfed in green flame. This short, curved blade, made centuries ago in an elven forge, began glowing green each time it killed a troll. Now, with over 50 trolls killed, the green glow has become its fiery green aura.

25. Treasure map. A weather-beaten parchment that gives what could be a cross-section of the temple's altar. Near the grate is a drawing of the demon statue's bat-claws, one claw (the secret lever) extending longer than the others.

26. Grates. Two large grates sit in the floor on either side of the altar. Floor stains suggest that something dark once flowed into these grates. The gaps in the bars are about large enough for someone's head to pass through, and the grates themselves are 10' by 5' long. The handle that unlocks them is the middle statue claw that stands over either side.

27. Altar. A large limestone altar stands in the center of the room, as demonic as the statue standing behind it. Its surface is concave, with fluting running off each of the four sides. A sacrificial table stands in its center.

Encounter 3: the Temple of Friends

Temple of Friends (p.87 e.6): an ancient ruin, 50 feet high, 120 feet across, and composed of four short towers surrounding a tall, domed sanctuary, each of which have collapsed to one degree or another. (Modos-Rose points to dungeon-north.)

Dynamic: Guards Outside (p.90 e.18)

Two lizardmen (p.90 e.17) outside the temple build a fire or warm themselves near fire.

Sneak +4: lizardmen are surprised, PCs gain a surprise action.

Persuade +4: lizardmen stand down to stay alive

Approach lizardmen

Avoid lizardmen

Sneak contests if PCs get noisy, otherwise lizardmen don't hear them.
Movement +4: windows accessible
Movement +8: climb to roof/dome

Dynamic: Lighting
Inside the temple, light level is shadow, -4 to visual contests. Choose a point where a campfire burns, providing dim light in the area.

Obviously not lizardmen, the bandits try to scare away trouble, even fighting if they have a chance of winning. They flee if they take half damage.

Living bandits provide information on Troll:

- He is bandit leader
- Also seeks the Demon's Eye
- Has a magic sword

Dynamic: Guards Inside (p.90 e.19) Lizardmen wait inside the temple. Their number depends on what happened outside the temple:

Guards escaped: guards = PCs

Guards avoided/defeated: guards = PC -1

Detect +4: PCs detect an ambush, otherwise surprised

Lizardmen, level 1

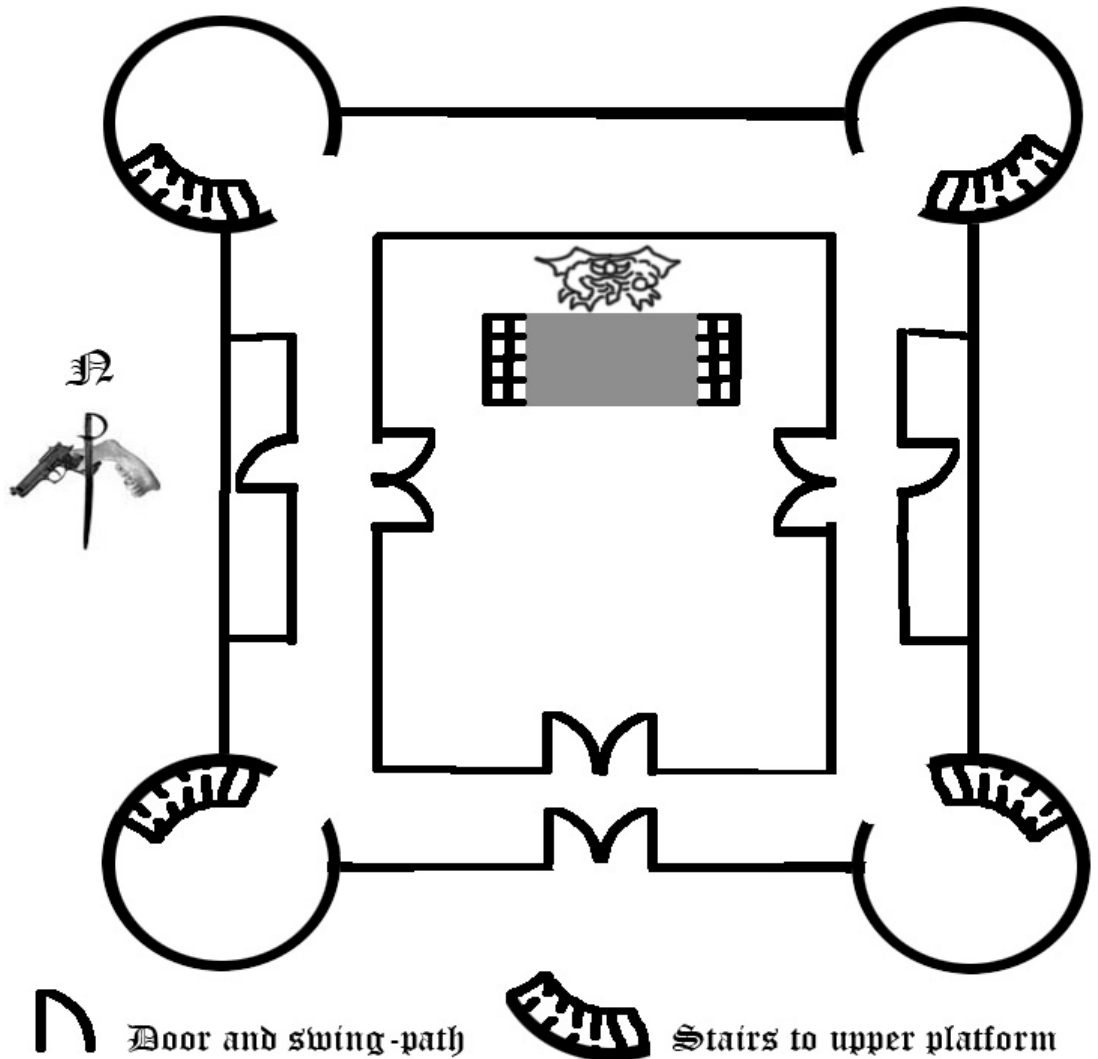
Attributes: P 10 (11), M 10, MP 10

Skills: fight (melee) +1

Perks: toughness (max P damage 13)

Gear: spear d8+1 (+4 initiative), alligator hide d4

Concept: Green outlaws, wearing lizard disguises, who follow the orders of Troll, seeking easy riches. They always save at least one action for parrying or retreat/fleeing. Goal: make easy money. Flaw: disloyal.



Encounter 4: the Altar (p.91 e.22)

The altar (p.91 e.27) stands in the center of the sanctuary, with floor grates (p.91 e.26) on either side, and a demonic statue (p.91 e.21) behind it. On the side of the altar sits a middle-aged man with a peg-leg, wearing brigandine armor, and holding a parchment.

Dynamic: Meeting Troll (p.91 e.23)

Bandit leader, Troll, seeks the Demon's Eye. He has a few different tactics:

Lie to PCs – “the gem is gone. My bandits just use this as a hideout.”

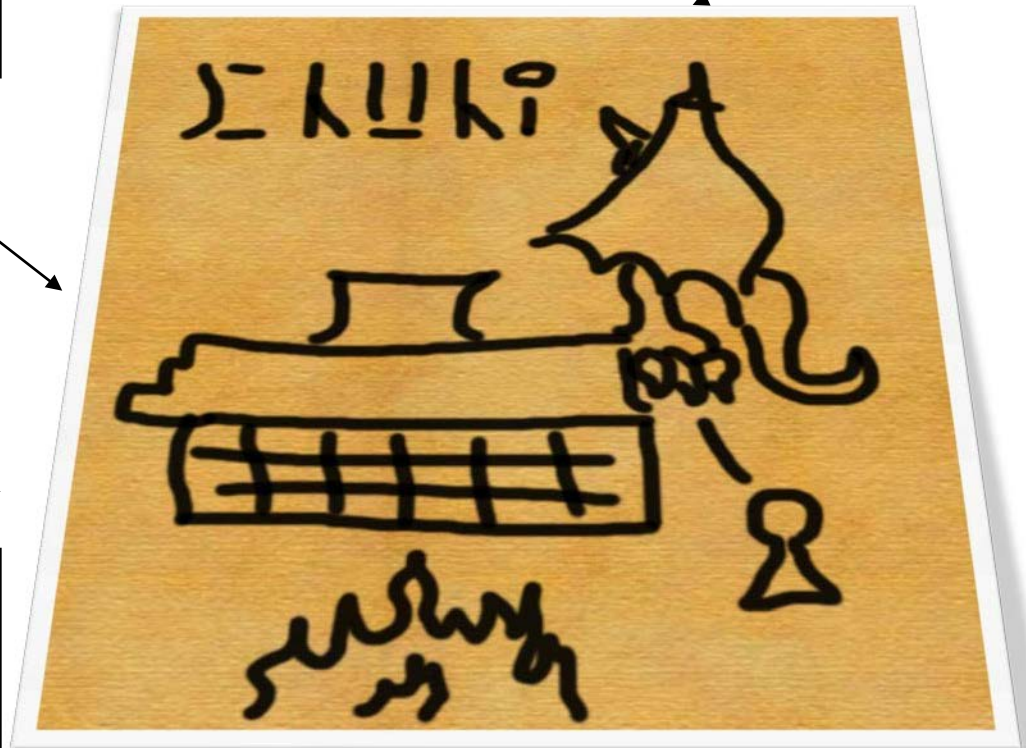
Leave the PCs – he agrees to “leave” the PCs while they enter the grates (where they'll get eaten by the dragon).

Join the PCs – he'll share the treasure until he can catch a PC and hold a sword to his throat.

Altar (p.91 e.27). Demonic carving, fluting at edges, topped with a sacrificial table.

Statue (p.91 e.21). Bat wings, serpent tail, horned head, reptilian feet and claws. Each middle claw is an unlocking latch for the grates. Both eyes are missing.

Grates (p.91 e.26). Large iron grates sit in the floor on either side of the altar. Their locking mechanism is hidden. Detect +8: the lock is likely connected to the statue's foot.



Troll's Treasure Map (p.91 e.25)

Troll (bandit leader), level 3 (p.91 e.23)

Attributes: P 12 (13), M 8, MP 12

Skills: deceive +4 (+0), fight (unarmed) +2 (+1), detect +1 (+2)

Perks: weapon focus (scimitar), specialize (deceive), toughness (max P damage 15)

Gear: Trollsfire (scimitar) d8+1, treasure map, padded armor d4

Concept: Troll (real name: Trel of Nobitton) has a peg leg, unrelated to his current adventure. He is trying to open the grates under the altar, because he suspects that the other Demon Eye fell through them. Troll can increase Trollsfire's damage to d10+1, but he'll only do so if he's under attack. Goals: steal riches to gain the wealthy lifestyle he deserves, and buy a boat. Flaws: considers himself above the law, winces slightly when lying.

28. Encounter 5: the Dragon's Lair. Under the grating is a dark and intimidating space. Growls and grunts come from below, and a dragon's head is barely visible through the gloom. The first chamber, **the dragon pit**, is charred black from dragon-fire and blood that once ran down from the altar. It reaches between both gratings, making it much larger than the altar itself. In its middle, the pit connects with the cistern.

A smaller chamber, **the cistern** is where the dragon curled up and died, long ago. Since it was too big to escape through the drainage tunnel below, the dragon starved to death after being abandoned. Even dead, it looks alive enough, and is likely to scare away all but the bravest explorers.

A small ledge in the cistern drops into the smaller **trollgruve** – where the real monster sleeps. The bridge troll (e.29) has keen senses, and likes to ambush prey in the dark. Since this is the troll's home, it's likely to fight to the death, but it can slide down the small tunnel behind its lair or reach its arm out of the grating to unlock it if it has need. The tunnel runs 50 feet out of the north side of the temple, ending in a rent-open grating. Since the troll has a bonus attack action, it can use cast spell (cure) to heal itself without missing an opening to attack.

Behind the troll is his hoard, which is mostly body parts, some shiny temple items, and the Demon's Eye (p.87 e.5).

29. Troll, bridge, level 6

Attributes: P 18, M 8, MP 10

Skills: cast spell (cure) +7 (+1), fight (unarmed) +5 (+1), movement +7 (+3), detect +0 (+1)

Perks: large size, weapon focus (claws), owl's eye, armor training (natural) d6, quick strike

Gear: gnarled branch with spike d8+1, claws d6, troll hide d6

Villain points: 6, for detect and sneak contests. Concept: This bridge troll has been living under the temple for many years now, having moved in after the dragon died of starvation. It prefers to hunt at night, when it has a sight-advantage over many other creatures, which aids in gaining surprise. The troll uses its bonus fight action to directly counterattack one attacker each round, preferring the spiked branch, and casts cure at half damage or below. Trolls survive with fury over prudence, so this one is likely to fight to the death. This troll uses its movement skill and large size perk to attack hard-to-reach opponents, like anyone standing above the grating instead of below.

30. Troll-hoard. Behind the troll and near a drainage tunnel, is the troll's hoard, which is mostly body parts, some shiny temple items, and the gem(p.87 e.5).

31. Encounter 6: The Road Back. The PCs can search the temple to find small amounts of treasure in dark, dusty corners, or in lizardman pockets, but after defeating the bridge troll, it's time to return home.

The PCs have options regarding where to take the gem. It's worth 750 gold, but only to a PC who has bartering in his background or can win the gem negotiation (p.96 e.32). This amount could buy the PCs good favor with the reeve, or a piece of Lilus' land from Lilus. Otherwise, they can deliver it to Cynthia to fulfill her quest.

If the PCs borrowed any gear from Heinrich, they'll have to return it, or be labeled thieves (p.89 e.14). Also, if they didn't reveal that they're helping Cynthia, Heinrich will expect A) the damage repaired or B) work as watchmen to repay the damage.

Encounter 5: the Dragon's Lair (p.94 e.28)

After unlocking the grating, the PCs must overcome their fear of a (dead) dragon to find the real threat below: a sneaky bridge troll. Hiding in the troll's cache is what the PCs seek: the Demon's Eye (p.87 e.5).

Dynamic: the Troll Situation

Troll (the bandit) wants the gem to himself. If the PCs are injured after the bridge troll fight, Troll tries to finish them off. Otherwise, he tries to escape the lair and close the grating (p.91 .26) on the PCs. He'll open it if they hand him the Eye ...

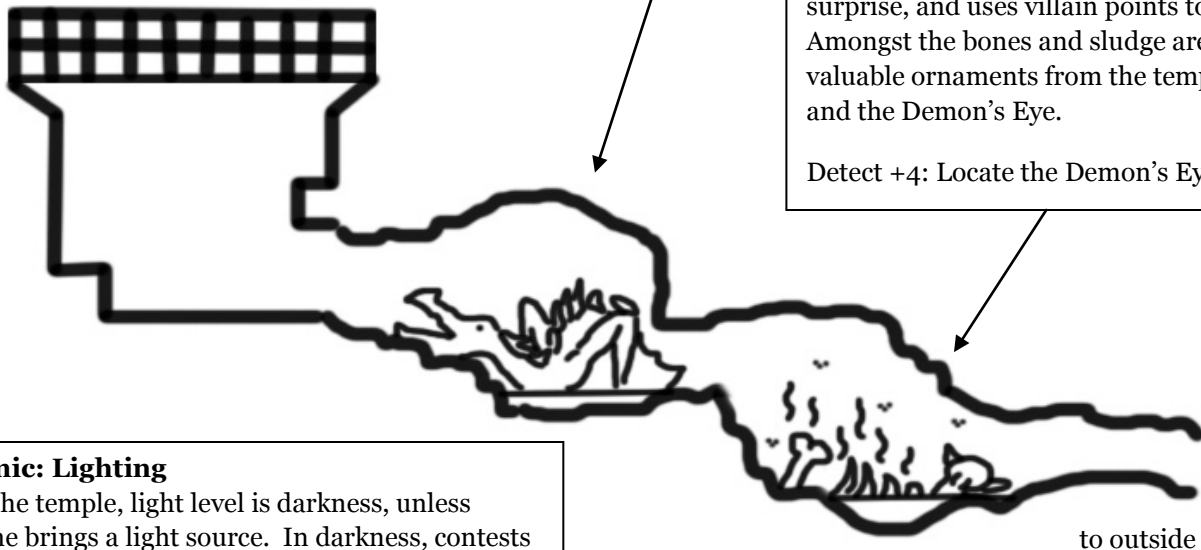
Dragon pit. This stone-and-mortar pit is charred black, and descends 10 feet below the temple. There is a faint hint of roast animal, gone stale, in the air.

Cistern. A large, dead dragon crouches in the pool here. It stopped decaying long ago, but the water is still foul.

Detect +0: Recognize that the dragon is dead. Fail: "the dragon's eyes glimmer as they follow your movements."

Trollgruve. The bridge troll lairs here. It hides amongst the bones to gain surprise, and uses villain points to assist. Amongst the bones and sludge are some valuable ornaments from the temple, and the Demon's Eye.

Detect +4: Locate the Demon's Eye.



Dynamic: Lighting

Below the temple, light level is darkness, unless someone brings a light source. In darkness, contests based on vision suffer -8 difficulty.

Troll, bridge, level 6 (p.94 e.29)

Attributes: P 18, M 8, MP 10

Skills: cast spell (cure) +7 (+1), fight (unarmed) +5 (+1), movement +7 (+3), detect +0 (+1)

Perks: large size, weapon focus (claws), cat's eye, armor training (natural) d6, quick strike

Gear: gnarled branch with spike d8, claws d6, troll hide d6

Villain points: 6, for detect and sneak contests.

Concept: Prefers to hunt at night, when it can use cat's eye to gain surprise. The troll uses its bonus fight action to directly counterattack one attacker each round, preferring the spiked branch. Likely to fight to the death. It uses its movement skill to quickly exit the open grating, or vault the rocky slope between the cistern and trollgruve, as needed.

32. Dynamic: Selling the Demon's Eye.

Besides the obvious hazards of transporting a large gemstone, it won't be easy to maximize the amount of coin received in exchange for the gem (p.87 e.5). This can be run as an extended conflict, provided the PCs find someone who can afford the gem. In Winderbough, the only person who can do this is the reeve (p.88 e.8). If the PCs want to seek a larger settlement, a jeweler or jewelry house of middle or upper class, or an untrustworthy black marketer, can pay as much as 750 gold pieces.

The three types of propositions and their progress dice are: facts d10, feelings d8, and diversions d6. Each player assigns his choice of skill to each proposition: detect, persuade or deceive. Attacks and defenses use the same skills and progress dice. PCs get a +2 bonus for witty attacks or defenses.

To make an attack or defense, each character says something during his action. Use the die type for the closest type of statement. Statements about the gem itself are facts. Statements that bolster or hurt someone are feelings. All other comments and questions are diversions. The jeweler has three actions/statements to make each turn, so he'll feel overwhelmed if the PCs make more than three actions each round. For each additional action, a PC can attack or defend, but he also gives the jeweler 4 additional progress points to simulate his loss of respect for the noisy PCs.

Max progress for the PCs is equal to the jeweler's mental or metaphysical max damage, whichever is higher, and the jeweler's max progress is equal to the mental or metaphysical max damage of the chief PC negotiator. If PCs reach max progress first, the jeweler will pay 750 gold. If the jeweler reaches max progress first, he takes a percentage off what he will pay equal to twice the number of progress points that the PCs had remaining. For example, if the PCs had to earn 6 points to reach max progress, the jeweler will pay only 88% of 750, which is a discount of $6\% \times 2$.

33. Dynamic: Increasing Returns. How Cynthia rewards the PCs varies based on what

the PCs accomplish and how they treat Cynthia. The PCs get a point for making friends with Heinrich, for returning borrowed gear and repairing it if necessary, for giving the Demon's Eye to Cynthia, and for selflessly wanting Cynthia to marry the reeve, if that's her desire. Each point earns them additional rewards (despite Cynthia's promises from Encounter 1) as follows: 1 point gets them a horse, 2 points earns a horse and full-time watch positions, 3 points adds room & board in the farmhouse, and 4 points gains them all rewards, plus Cynthia decides to marry the Farmboy instead of the reeve. PCs should receive one level point each for concluding the adventure.

34. Plot: Cynthia Marries the Reeve. PCs can find Cynthia eagerly awaiting them at whatever location is most dramatic: the stable, the farmhouse, or on her daily ride.

After impatiently listening to whatever the PCs have to say and receiving the Demon's Eye, Cynthia gives the Farmboy his kiss, and caresses his cheek.

"Thank you, sweet servant! I fear that you will not see me on the farm for a time – I'm off to court the reeve! I'll miss seeing your simple face before my rides. But have a heart; when I am able, I will free you from farm servitude! And perhaps you may serve me yet again, but next as the wife of the reeve!"

35. Plot: Cynthia Marries Farmboy/PC. PCs can find Cynthia eagerly awaiting them at whatever location is most dramatic: the stable, the farmhouse, or on her daily ride.

After impatiently listening to whatever the PCs have to say and receiving the Demon's Eye, Cynthia gives the Farmboy his kiss, and holds him in her arms.

"Dear Farmboy! Such a fool I was, to mistake such love as was right before me! I will marry you, and with this gemstone, we will buy the supplies we need to gather many more

gemstones, and live a life greater in love and wealth than ever the reeve could hope to offer!"

Encounter 6: the Road Back
(p.94 e.31)

Take gem to Cynthia

Earn 1 reward point for:
Befriending Heinrich
Returning gear
Delivering Demon's Eye
Choosing Cynthia's joy

Increasing rewards:
Horse

Watch positions
Rooms in farmhouse
Cynthia's marriage

Less than 4 points:
Cynthia marries the reeve.

4 points: Cynthia marries
Farmboy.

Return armory gear

Impress Heinrich: he takes
gear back, no questions
asked.

Heinrich unimpressed:
repairs or labor required
for the borrowed gear.

Avoid Heinrich: he alerts
the watch, who seek to
apprehend the PCs on
sight.

Sell the gemstone

Extended conflict vs. jewel
merchant (p.96 e.32):

Weapons/armor:

Facts d10

Feelings d8

Diversion d6

Attack/defend skills:

Deceive

Detect

Persuade

Merchant max progress =
PC mental or metaphysical

PC max progress =
merchant's mental or metaphysical

Appendix A: Fast Play Rules

1) Create a character ([chapter 3](#)).

Give your character a name, occupation, and a quick explanation of why he's a hero or will be a hero. He'll start as a level 2 character, called "professional" level.

2) Add attribute scores ([chapter 3](#)).

Your character gets three attribute scores: physical, mental, and metaphysical, 10 in each. If you'd rather roll, put 3d6 in each. Then add two points to one score, or one point to two scores.

3) Add skills ([chapter 4](#)).

Pick two things that your character does well, and give him a skill point in each. Choose these from the Skill Archetypes sidebar in the Skills chapter. There are three defensive skills, and each defends one attribute: defend (parry) for physical, defend (concentration) for mental, and defend (willpower) for metaphysical.

4) Add perks ([chapter 5](#)).

Pick two things that make your character interesting, but aren't an ability or skill. Choose these from the Perk Archetypes sidebar in the Perks chapter.

5) Get hero points ([chapter 3](#)).

Hero points allow you to do things better. Twice a day, you can add d6 to your contest to improve the result. You can regain hero points by roleplaying well.

6) Buy some gear ([chapter 6](#)).

Ask the GM for whatever gear your character would have. On average, his gear should allow him to do as much damage and protection as the other PCs can.

7) Get special abilities ([chapter 7](#)).

If there's still something cool that your character can do that hasn't been covered yet, trade one of your skills for one of the spells in the Magic chapter. The new skill is called "cast spell (X)" where the X is the spell you've chosen.

8) Roleplay.

Tell your group what your character says and does, and remember that these rules are abstract to allow you lots of room to interpret your character. Decide what each element means in terms of your character as you play the game.

9) Contest ([chapter 8](#))!

When the GM doubts a character's ability to do something, he'll ask for a contest. Roll d20, add the

bonus of your attribute needed to perform the task (ask your GM for your bonus), and add the skill points of a related skill if you have one. The result is your "contest." If it's higher than the GM's opposing contest, you'll succeed. If it's not, your outcome will be less than ideal.

10) Battle ([chapter 8](#)).

If you're getting into a conflict that will take more than one contest, roll initiative (d20 + your highest attribute bonus) to see how quickly you spring into action. You can use an action to respond to any action when it's not your turn. On your turn, you can combine actions, doing things that take a bit longer, or more than one action, to accomplish. You get three actions each round.

To attack an enemy, roll a contest using a fight skill, and roll the damage die of your weapon. Tell the group how you attack, and the GM will describe your opponent's defense.

To defend yourself, respond to an enemy's attack with a defense action. Roll a defend (parry) contest and roll your armor's protection die. Describe your defense. You'll take damage if your defense fails or if you don't defend. When the GM gives you damage, subtract your protection from the damage, and add the difference to your physical damage pool. If the damage in that pool exceeds your physical attribute score, the GM will give you a time-out.

11) Cast spells ([chapter 7](#)).

If you took a spell in step 7, you can cast that spell. During your turn, spend the actions listed in the spell's "actions" entry. Roll a cast spell contest for each action, keep the highest, and apply the spellcasting difficulty to your result. If your result is below 11, the spell fails. If your result is over 10, roll d8 and add the spell level. This is the metaphysical damage you take in exchange for making the spell manifest. Then your spell happens.

12) Defend against spells ([chapter 8](#)).

If someone casts a spell at you, the GM will tell you which defense to use. If you have an action available, you can use it to defend against the caster's contest. If you succeed against a damaging spell, you avoid one action's worth of damage. If you succeed against a non-damaging spell, you don't suffer the spell's effect; you suffer the half-effect. If the caster maintains his spell, you can end the half-effect with a total number of successful defenses equal to the spell's level.

Appendix B: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What makes my character a hero, if all characters use the same generation rules?

A: Two things: hero points and levels. Non-heroes are generally amateurs, professionals, and experts (levels 1-3), and only heroes and villains get hero points.

Q: Can my character be rich? At first level?

A: Yes, if your character concept explains it. Your character's possessions must still be balanced against those of the other characters, in one way or another.

Q: What's my max physical damage? Is that my damage pool?

A: Your max physical damage equals your physical attribute score. You can increase max physical damage (but not your physical score) with the toughness perk. Your physical damage pool is just where you collect the physical damage you've taken, but when it exceeds your max damage, you'll be mostly dead (or whatever the GM has in mind for you).

Q: Can I upgrade my damage/protection die to a d20?

A: Permission to use the d20 for anything other than contests is up to the GM.

Q: Can I get more skill points? My character's skills aren't well represented.

A: The GM is free to award extra level points, especially if they are in line with his campaign theme.

Q: Can I concentrate to regain metaphysical health while in combat?

A: Totally. Just be sure to spend an action for concentrating each round. The difficulty is up to the GM. An easy fight in which you don't get hurt might have a +4 difficulty, or a near-lethal fight might have difficulty contests of +12 or more. If you fail one contest, you'll only heal 1 MP point during that hour.

Q: Why is shell armor so cheap?

A: The prices listed are relative to each other and to the genre. So in a futuristic setting, you could buy 40 suits of shell armor (unimproved) for one

suit of dwarven plate. However, you'd be unlikely to find shell armor in a medieval setting.

Q: If my heavy armor protects d12 and the anti-fire spell protects d12 (fire), which is better?

A: The d12 heavy armor protects you from all physical damage, even damage with a subtype like fire or lightning, but it also reduces your physical score. The anti-fire spell protects against no damage other than fire-subtype, physical damage, but it doesn't reduce your physical score.

Q: Why does a whip do mental damage? Doesn't a whip cause tissue damage?

A: There's no game rule for tissue damage, but a whip's purpose is to cause pain which can cause more mental trauma than physical trauma. Since a whip is a physical weapon, it's fair to let a PC defend against one with his choice of defend (parry) or defend (concentration).

Q: My spell doesn't seem to have any mechanical benefits. What's the point?

A: Besides the in-game effects, your GM is welcome to grant you the benefit of the doubt in tied contests, or even when you fail a contest by one (if he's feeling gracious). Roleplaying the spell well could also earn you a hero point.

Q: Is my contest success better if I roll 20? What if I roll 1?

A: There are only three outcomes to contests. If your contest is higher than your opponent's contest, you succeed. If you tie, you reroll or the GM decides. If your contest is lower, you do not achieve your goal, but may still find some success.

Q: Can I use degrees of success to adjust my outcomes?

A: Sure. This would make a great house rule!

Q: My initiative is higher than my opponent's. Can he still parry my attack?

A: Yes. The purpose of the defend (parry) skill is to avoid attacks, so as long as someone parries

(defends) during the same action as an attack, it has a chance of success.

Q: Can I be attacked anytime I take an action in combat?

A: Yes. Combat is dangerous.

Q: Can I attack my opponents anytime I want?

A: If you have unspent actions in a round, you can attack at any time during your turn, or in response to another character's action.

Q: How do I disarm my opponent?

A: Find a rule for it in a rules module, make up a house rule, or make a fight (melee) contest against a difficulty determined by your GM.

Q: I'm responsible for keeping the king's son out of trouble, but he keeps running away! How do I pin him?

A: Use a fight (unarmed) contest. If he doesn't respond successfully, he'll probably take a difficulty penalty to most of his physical actions (like fleeing), depending on your physical attribute and rule zero. As long as you keep using an action to wrestle, he could face penalties.

Q: Can my teammates assist me to give me better results?

A: If a teammate uses an action to help you, it could create a better situation for your character. Beneficial situations are indeed simulated with difficulty bonuses.

Q: I'd like to defend, but if I parry, I don't get to do anything else! How do I avoid taking damage, and still attack?

A: You could move to defensive posture if the situation permits. Wear armor. And if you have friends, they could try parrying for you, but that might involve a challenging difficulty penalty.

Q: I want to be a bow-fighter, but my opponents just walk up and kill me! What do I do?

A: If you have a comrade in offensive posture, he can try to hold off an attacker so that you can take defensive posture. If you ride a horse (or something more modern) you can spend an action to mount-up, and enjoy defensive posture while mounted.

Q: What if my spellcaster takes damage while casting a spell?

A: As long as he's alive (no damage pools past max damage) on the last casting action, he casts his spell normally. You and your GM can decide that damage has a greater effect on spellcasting.

Q: How do I, as GM, run lots of NPCs quickly in combat?

A: Try running one NPC per PC. If you have more NPCs than PCs, divide the NPCs into groups attacking each PC. If multiple NPCs are facing off against one PC, just run the most important NPC, and give him a +1 or +2 bonus to all contests for each NPC backing him up. Leave the remaining NPCs in the background, as bonuses, until their turn to fight comes up.

Q: My character died! What do I do?

A: Create, with your GM, an in-game reason for him to reenter play, cast the life spell on him, resume play with your favorite cohort, or roll up a new character. But first, make sure your character isn't just "mostly dead."

Q: If I attack my foe and he responds by moving to defensive posture, do I deal full damage or half damage?

A: Rule zero. But use initiative as a guideline, and remember that your actions take priority over all others during your turn.

Q: Can my mount attack while I'm charging enemies with it?

A: That depends on what your mount is. If it's a horse, then it's a character, and gets at least 3 actions per round. If it's a flying carpet, it might not have actions, but it could provide the option of mounted posture, and possibly increase your speed or movement bonus. The mount's function is to augment your actions, so instead of acting as another character in combat, it might be better used as a source of options for your character.

Q: Why do the monsters in the bestiary have abilities that aren't in the rules?

A: The rules are just half of the game. Your imagination is the other half. Cool abilities occur where these two meet.

Appendix C: Glossary

Action: a behavior requiring the time or effort of a good sword swing.

Attribute: an abstract measurement of a character: physical, mental, or metaphysical.

Attribute score: the numerical measurement of a character's attribute.

Bonus: an addition to a die roll.

Bonus action: an extra action usable each round, available with an attribute score of 15 or higher, which requires a perk to use.

Catatonic: the condition of a character at max metaphysical damage. Catatonic characters have severe metaphysical limitations.

Character: the persona that a player takes in the story.

Character element: attributes, skills, and perks – the building blocks of a character.

Character sheet: the collection of a character's concept, elements, and inventory.

Contest: a d20 roll with bonuses that, when compared to an opposing contest, determines a character's success in a task or situation.

Contest result: the sum of the die roll, attribute bonus, skill points, and difficulty for an action. Sometimes just called the “contest.”

Cover: stationary objects that can stop projectiles and some spells.

D#: the abbreviation for one die with the max roll of #. D10 means roll a ten-sided die. 3d6 means roll three six-sided dice, and these rolls are usually summed to get one die result.

Damage: any condition or effect that brings a character closer to death. Damage accumulates in damage pools.

Damage pool: the accumulation of one type of damage – either physical, mental, or metaphysical.

Die result: either the number showing on a die roll, or the result from taking half. Also called a “roll.”

Difficulty: how hard a task would be for the average person, with a corresponding bonus number.

Difficulty bonus: points awarded to a roll based on difficulty.

Difficulty contest: an opposing contest consisting of only a d20 and difficulty bonus.

Difficulty penalty: points deducted from a roll based on difficulty.

Encounter: a situation that requires roleplaying, roll playing, and interaction between PCs and the GM.

GM: Guide of Modos, or Game Master.

Game master: the player with the task of storytelling and facilitating game play.

Guide of Modos: see game master.

Hero point: a daily contest bonus of d6. These represent special abilities, and are only available to PCs.

In-game: also “in the game.” Differentiates between the story that the GM describes, and the real world.

Level: a general measure of a character's progress. An attribute point, skill point, and a perk together equal one level.

Level point: an increase in one character element.

M: abbreviation for mental attribute.

Max damage: the amount of damage that can accumulate in a damage pool before the character becomes handicapped . . . or worse.

Mental: the attribute that pertains to thoughts and ideas.

Metagame: pertaining to the rules on which the game runs, instead of the story.

Metaphysical: the attribute that pertains to the spiritual and supernatural.

Mostly dead: the condition of a character at max physical damage. Mostly dead characters have severe physical limitations.

MP: abbreviation for metaphysical attribute.

P: abbreviation for physical attribute.

PC: abbreviation for player-character.

Penalty: a negative bonus, or subtraction from a die roll.

Perk: a non-attribute, non-skill character element that grants a discrete benefit.

Physical: the attribute that pertains to the physical world.

Player: refers to anyone playing the game who is not the GM.

Player-character: refers to both a player and his character. Because the two interact so closely, they are often combined.

Posture: the strategic position of a character in extended conflict. Offensive or defensive posture are also called the front or back row.

Protection: anything that reduces damage. Protection cannot completely avoid damage.

Range: an abstract measurement of distance between things.

Roleplaying: assuming the persona of a character, akin to acting.

Roll: both the act of rolling a die, and the number indicated by the die roll.

Row: refers to a character's posture, because offensive and defensive postures resemble front and back rows of combat. However, postures and rows do not designate an absolute position.

Skill: any inherent ability that a character improves with training or experience.

Skill point: the measure of a character's progress in a skill.

Unconscious: the condition of a character at max mental damage. Unconscious characters have severe mental limitations.



Appendix D: Rules Catalog

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Sample Character Sheet

Modos RPG Character name **Merloon** Level **3**

Character concept: A budding wizard, he learned to create fire almost by accident. Once he discovered that secret, no one could stop him...

Goals & Flaws: to discover magic secrets, maintain his friendships. Flaw: abrasive / offensive.



Score P8	Bonus -1	Actions	Defense -1	Protect -	Max Damage 8
M10	0		0	-	10
NP15	+2	+1	+2	d4/2	15



Skills: Name, points, attribute bonus, specialize

Cast (fire) 2, 2, armor 2, dif -4, tot +2
Knowledge (Scholar) 1

Hero Points

-Time related feats (initiative, deceive)

Perks: Mystic ward d4, Spell weaver

Spell implement (Spellbook): armor, charm, sleep
dark, mute, size

Equipment, inventory, notes on reverse.

Blank Sample Character Sheet

Modos RPG

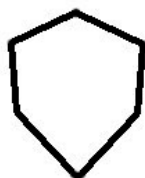
Character name

Level

Character concept:

Goals & Flaws:

Score	Bonus	Actions	Defense	Protect	Max Damage
P					
M					
PM					



Hero Points

Skills: Name, points, attribute bonus, specialize

Perks:

Equipment, inventory, notes on reverse.

