Contents

1. Introduction

Questworlds is a roleplaying rules engine suitable for play in any genre. Its abstract resolution methods and scalable character levels make it equally suitable to any genre, from epic fantasy to satirical soap opera.

1.1 Version

The first version of these rules Hero Wars was published in 2000 (ISBN 978-1-929052-01-1)

The second version HeroQuest was published in 2003 (ISBN 978-1-929052-12-7). We refer to this as HeroQuest 1e to disambiguate.

The third version HeroQuest: Core Rules was published in 2009 (ISBN 978-0-977785-32-2). We refer to this as HeroQuest 2e.

HeroQuest Glorantha was published in 2015 (ISBN 978-1-943223-01-5). It is the version of the rules in HeroQuest 2e, presented for playing in Glorantha. We refer to this as HeroQuest 2.1e.

Questworlds was published as a System Reference Document (SRD) (this document) in 2018. The version of the rules here is slightly updated, mainly to clarify ambiguities, from the version presented in HeroQuest 2e and HeroQuest 2.1e. This makes this ruleset HeroQuest 2.2e, despite the name change. However, to simplify we identify this version as Questworlds 1e.

An Appendix lists changes in this version. As the SRD is updated we will continue to track version changes there.

1.2 Core & Optional Mechanics

We flag some mechanics as Optional.

The Questworlds engine is intended to be rules-lite, so we distinguish between the core mechanics, and optional ones. Previous presentations included all the rules and whilst they suggested some were optional in the text were less explicit in tagging those rules.

To make this SRD as flexible as possible we want to highlight which mechanics are optional; a rule in this section can easily be ommitted in any derived games presentation of the rules here. Lots of variations are possible, even on the core

mechanics, whilst retaining the feel of Questworlds. These ones are highlighted as more detailed or complex options. They add depth to the game, but at the sacrifice of speed of play.

Sub-headings under a heading should be considered part of the optional content.

If this is your first time reading these rules, you may wish to skip reading these sections marked on first reading and return to them once you understand the core mechanics.

Optional mechanics can be brought in individually, they do not have to be all brought in together.

1.3 Why Questworlds?

Questworlds is meant to facilitate your creativity—and then to get out of your way. It is well suited to a collaborative, friendly group with a high degree of trust in each other's creativity. If the members of your group are often at odds and rely on their chosen rules kit as an arbiter between competing visions of how the game ought to develop, Questworlds is not the rules set you need. Stick with your more structured system of choice.

1.4 Numbering

Sections within this document are numbered. This does not imply that implementers need number them. Numbering however makes it easy to refer to rules in this document when page numbers may vary by presentation format for the purposes of error trapping or tracking changes.

1.5 Participants

1.5.1 Players

Each player creates a character or PC. The PCs pursue various goals in an imaginary world.

1.5.2 GM

The Games Master (GM), portrays the imaginary world in which the PCs live. The GM controls other people and creatures, or non-player characters, in this fictional environment.

2. Core Mechanics

Stories consist of a series of obstacles, which the heroes must overcome in order to reach their final goal.

A player's encounter with a plot obstacle presents a conflict which must be resolved, either as a success or a failure.

Whenever the characters try to overcome a difficult obstacle, the GM decides how difficult it will be. The player chooses an ability relevant to the conflict at hand, describes exactly what the PC is trying to accomplish, and how. The PCs success or failure, as determined by die rolls, changes the direction of the story, in either a big or small way.

2.1 Abilities

Anything that a character can use to solve problems or overcome obstacles in a story can be an ability. The player decides how to describe abilities. Some abilities, such as a PC's central area of expertise, can be very broad, entailing a wide variety of related capabilities. Others might be very colorful and specific, granting a PC advantages when entering into a conflict with an opponent using a less directly applicable ability.

2.1.2 Masteries

Questworld abilities are scored on a range of 1–20, but are scalable. When you raise a rating of 20 by one point, it increases not to 21, but to 1M. The M signifies a game abstraction called a mastery. You have now reached a new order of excellence in that ability.

As you progress, you may gain multiple masteries. Multiple mastery is marked with a number to the right of the M symbol. If you have 10M2, you have two masteries. 10M3 means that you have three masteries, and so on.

In summary, to reflect abilities, or resistances, higher than 20, we divide the ability by 20, using a mastery for each multiple of 20 the ability is, and treating the remainder as the target number. So an ability of 27 translates into 1 remainder 7 or 7M; an ability of 43 translates into 2 remainder 3 or 3M2.

Questworlds genre packs may use symbols relevant to that genre to denote mastery, instead of M.

2.2 Hero Points

Each character starts the game with a pool of 3 hero points, and gains more of them at the end of every session. These are a precious resource, as they are used both to boost characters' contest results, and to improve abilities over the long term.

2.3 Procedure

The player chooses an ability relevant to the conflict at hand, describes exactly what his character is trying to accomplish, and how. The GM may modify these suggested actions to better fit the fictional circumstances, and describes the actions of the characters or forces on the other side of the conflict.

If a PC enters a contest for which they have no relevant ability whatsoever, their base target number is a 6. Like ability ratings, it may be subject to modifiers.

2.3.1 Resolution Methods

The core resolution methods are as follows:

2.3.1.1 Automatic Success

The PC simply succeeds. This may indicate that failure would not be interesting (such as finding an important clue, and the PC has an ability that it is credible could help to uncover that clue), or that failure would make the PC appear to be incompetent at a trivial or simple task for someone with that skill (such as a hunter bringing in the evening meal in a forest filled with game animals).

Use Automaric Success when the PC has a relevant ability. If the PC has no relevant ability, they should find an alternate way to overcome the obstacle.

2.3.1.2 Simple Contest

The player rolls a 20-sided die; the GM does the same.

The GM compares the two results, and determines success or failure. Armed with this knowledge, they describes the outcome of the conflict, and any consequences to either participant.

If players enter into conflict with one another, each rolls dice, and the GM interprets the results, as usual.

2.3.2 Framing the Contest

Contests in HeroQuest are more abstract than resolution methods in most other roleplaying games. They don't simply tell you how well a PC succeeded at a particular task: they tell you whether or not the PC achieved their goal.

The player(s) taking part in the contest and the GM start by clearly agreeing on 1) what prize is up for grabs and 2) what tactics they're using to try to get it. This process is called framing the contest.

Naming the prize: GMs start framing the contest by asking the involved player(s) what prize they're trying to win, or what goal they're hoping to achieve.

• This may be a literal prize, like a gold cup, a gun, or a briefcase full of money.

• More often the prize is a metaphorical one, like access to a location—a treasure vault or the database servers containing the secret plans.

• In a struggle for resources, the winner gets control of something: a seat in government, a supply of goods, the assistance of an ally.

• In a fight, the prize may be the opponents themselves, who the PCs are fighting to capture or kill. Just as often they'll be seeking another goal and must incapacitate enemy combatants to get it. In this case, beating the enemy is the tactic, not the prize. For example the prize might be proof of the accused's innocence in a trial by combat, freeing a captive from the villain's lair, or intimidating a group into surrendering.

• The stakes may be defensive in nature, as when the PCs try to stop supporting characters from doing something harmful, like dropping a bomb on a city, or assassinating the king.

2.3.2.1 No Repeat Attempts

A contest represents all of a PCs attempts to overcome an obstacle. If a PC is defeated it means that no matter how many times they tried to solve the problem with their ability, the finally had to give up. THey can try again only if they apply a new ability to the task or the GM agrees that special circumstances exist.

2.3.3 Resistance

The GM chooses a Resistance to represent the difficulty of the obstacle.

Resistance numbers are derived from a base number, which is modified according to the resistance class, as per the following table:

RESISTANCE CLASS TABLE

Class	Value
Nearly Impossible	Base +M2
Very High	Base +M
High	Base +6
Moderate	Base
Low	Base -6
Very Low	Base -M or 6, whichever is lower

By default, the base starts at 14.

All contests use the base number + resistance class, except for contests to determine augments. Augmenting always faces a Moderate resistance—this is always the unmodified base value

2.3.4 Die Rolls

To determine how well a PC uses an ability, roll a 20-sided die (d20). At the same time, the GM rolls for the resistance.

Compare the rolled number with the target number to determine the level of success or failure.

- Critical: If the die roll is 1 (even when the target number is 1), the PC succeeds so brilliantly that the GM may reward them with an extra, unexpected effect.
- Success: If the die roll is greater than 1 and less than or equal to the target number, the PC succeeds, but there is nothing remarkable about the success.
- Failure: If the die roll is greater than the target number but not 20, the PC fails. Things do not happen as hoped.
- Fumble: If the die roll is 20, the PC fumbles (even when the target number is 20). This is the worst result possible, and the PC will suffer a disturbing or entertaining catastrophe.

2.3.5 Victory or Defeat

The degree of success or failure of the PC and GM's rolls are compared.

If the PC has a better result than the resistance the PC has a victory and they gain the prize set out when the contest was framed.

If the PC has a worse result they are defeated and do not gain the prize.

If the PCs both have the same level success or failure, the better roll wins.

if the PC and GMs rolls tie, then it is a standoff.

The GM describes what happens, based on their interpretation of the results.

2.3.5.1 Better Roll

Questworlds supports two options for the 'better roll' the highest roll, or the lowest roll. Some groups prefer lowest roll, some higher. The preference toward 'low is better', is often because because 1 is a critical and 20 a fumble, and toward 'high is better' because the winner has rolled a higher number. Groups wanting higher abilities to win out slightly more often should use higher roll.

Groups who use higher roll is better may also want to make 1 a Fumble and a critical rolling the Target Number exactly.

2.3.5.1 Confusing Ties

Most tied results are easy to describe—as inconclusive standoffs, in which neither participant gets what they wanted.

In some situations, ties become difficult to visualize. Chief among these are contests with binary outcomes, where only two possible results are conceivable.

The GM can either change the situation on such a tie, introducing a new element that likely renders the original prize irrelevant to both pariticipants, or resolve the ties in favor of the PC.

2.3.5.2 Bumps

A bump affects the degree of success or failure of the die roll. A bump up improves the result by one step, changing a fumble to a failure, a failure to a success, or a success to a critical. Bump ups come from two sources: masteries and hero points (applied in that order). A bump down reduces the degree of success of your opponent. Bump downs come from one source: masteries.

2.3.5.3 Bump Up with Mastery

If you're engaged in a contest against a resistance, and you have an ability of 10M versus a resistance of 10, you enjoy an advantage. You get a bump to your die roll from that mastery.

You get one bump up for each level of mastery your PC has greater than your opponent's. So against a resistance of 14 a PC's ability of 7M is treated as 7 vs. 14 but we bump the result one step in the the favor of the PC; a PC's ability of 3M2 is treated as 3 vs. 14 but we bump the result two steps in the the favor of the the PC.

This reflects the fact that an ability above 20 would always succeed on a D20. Because each mastery represents automatic success (apart from a fumble) on a D20, we roll agains the remainder, and treat the mastery as a bump. So on an ability of 27 is 7M, which means a target number of 7 and bump the result; an ability of 43 means 3M2 or a target number of 3 and bump the result twice.

Opposed masteries cancel out, each contestant reducing their rating by the same number of masteries until only one or neither of them has masteries. A character with two masteries enjoys the same great advantage over one with a single mastery as a character with one mastery has over an opponent with no masteries. If you have an advantage of two or more masteries over an opponent, you can pretty much count on pounding him into the dust.

This allows QuestWorlds to represent large differences in abiilty or resistance.

2.3.5.4 Bump Up with Hero Points

You can spend a hero point to bump up any result by one step. You may only bump your own rolls, not those of PCs or supporting characters—with the exception of sidekicks and retainers, which, as extensions of your characters, you may spend hero points on. You can decide to use a hero point for a bump after the die roll results are calculated (including any bump ups resulting from masteries

2.4 Augments

An augment is a bonus a PC gets to their target number as a result of a prior contest. This can be either a contest they took part in, or one performed by someone else, most likely a PC. Unlike the case of a Benefit of Victory, which is a side effect of a contest conducted for another reason, an augment contest is conducted for the sole purpose of gaining a bonus.

To grant an augment to a PC in an upcoming contest, you engage in a simple contest against a Moderate resistance. The player frames the contest, making it clear how their PC's action will assist the recipient (who might be themselves, or another PC).

In order to work, an augment attempt must be **entertaining** and **memorable**.

AUGMENT RESULTS TABLE

Contest Outcome	Bonus
Complete Victory	+M
Major Victory	+9
Minor Victory	+6

Contest Outcome	Bonus
Marginal Victory	+3
Marginal Defeat	0
Minor Defeat	+0
Major Defeat	+0
Complete Defeat	-3

You get only one chance to receive an augment on any given contest. Failure does not allow other augment attempts.

Augments can, however, combine with other modifiers, including those from benefits of victory and from plot augments.

It is impossible to augment an augment roll.

Augments last for the duration of a single contest, whether simple or extended.

2.4.1 Quick Augments

Although some players like the uncertainty of rolling Game Masters may choose to run their game with calculated augments: divide the augmenting ability by 5 and round up.

2.4.2 Plot Augments

A plot augment is earned by overcoming a particular plot obstacle created by the Game Master. The magnitude of the plot augment is +3, +6, +9, or +M. The more challenging the plot obstacle, the higher the augment.

2.5 Armor and Weapons, Possessions and Equipment

Questworlds models arms and armor like it does everything else: any piece of gear, if sufficiently important to even mention, is treated as an ability the PC uses to solve problems.

The degree to which a PC can overcome an obstacle with their armor and weapons depends not on any qualities inherent to the objects themselves, but to the points the player has allocated to the ability.

The difference between types of armor or weapons lies in the types of actions the player can describe, and what the PC can accomplish in unrelated actions and unusual contests.

Similarly, Questworlds treats your possessions and equipment like it does everything else: as abilities you can use to solve problems, or to augment other abilities, which you then use to solve problems.

Having inappropriate equipment can result in an action being treated as a Stretch.

2.6 Wealth

In most settings, wealth is treated as just another ability you use to overcome obstacles. Your ability is not an objective measure of the size of your fortune, but instead indicates how well you solve problems with money and resources.

3. Character Creation

3.1 As-You-Go Method

1. Concept The concept is a brief phrase, often just a couple of words, that tells the GM and other players what the PC does and how they act. When in doubt, start with a noun or phrase indicating the PC's profession or area of expertise, and modify it with an adjective suggesting a dominant personality trait:

- haughty priestess
- hotshot lawyer
- naïve warrior
- noble samurai
- remorseful assassin
- sardonic ex-mercenary
- slothful vampire

2. Now provide the character with a name.
3. If the series uses other keywords, such as those for culture or religion, the PC may have them for free.
4. When events in the story put the PC in a situation where the player wants them to do something, the player makes up an applicable ability on the spot. The first time the PC uses an ability (including the two the PC starts play with), assign an ability rating to it. This may be a breakout ability from a keyword. The PC is restricted to only one Sidekick.
5. If the player wants, describe flaws.
6. Once the PC has 12 abilities (including the two for character concept), and up to three flaws the player is done creating their character.

3.2 Assigning Ability Ratings

A player has now defined a PC's abilities. These tell everyone what the PC can do. Now the player assigns numbers to each ability, called ratings, which determine how well they do these things.

The player assigns a starting rating of 17 to the ability they find most important or defining. Although most players consider it wisest to assign this rating to their area of expertise, which is also often a keyword, they don't have to do this. All other abilities start at a rating of 13.

Now the player may spend up to 20 points to boost any of the PC's various ability ratings, including keywords. Each point spent increases a rating by 1 point. The player can't spend more than 10 points on any one ability.

Some genre packs may require PCs to have additional keywords that reflect the setting. These additional keywords come from the 12 ability allowance, so in many genres the PCs will have fewer wildcard abilities but better fit the setting.

3.3 Keywords

A player may build a character around one or more keywords. A keyword gives the PC a package deal: the PC gets a number of abilities by selecting a pre-existing character concept, which the player then modifies.

Keywords are best suited for use as the character's core area of expertise.

In certain genres, characters may require multiple keywords: for example, one for area of expertise, another for species or culture, and perhaps a third for religious af liation.

Here are two ways to handle keywords. If in doubt, choose Umbrella.

Keywords as Packages: Treat keywords simply as shorthand for a package of abilities. These can be boosted together during character creation, but are too unrelated to increase together during a game. Players are still free to use the keyword as an ability, and in fact may prefer to write only the specific abilities they've improved on their character sheet.

Keywords as an Umbrella: Treat keywords both as raisable abilities and as a collection of more specific abilities. This approach keeps the character sheet from getting too cluttered but encourages specialization. Players write specialized abilities under the keyword, along with how much they've improved them:

In some settings, an ability may be listed in more than one of a character's keywords. Choose only one to detail it under.

3.3 Flaws

A player may assign up to three flaws to their PC. Common flaws include:

- Personality traits:surly, petty, compulsive.
- Physical challenges:blindness, lameness, diabetes.
- Social hurdles: outcast, ill-mannered, hated by United supporters.

Flaws are assigned a rating equivalent to the PC's abilities. The first flaw is rated at the highest ability, the second shares the same rating as the second-highest ability, and the third equals the lowest ability. Certain keywords include flaws. Flaws gained through keywords do not count against the limit of three chosen flaws. All flaws after the third are given the same rating as the third ability. A player may designate flaws from keywords as their first or second-ranked flaw. When flaws manifest during play, the GM places the PC in a contest against them, rolls their associated ability ratings as Resistances to the PC's efforts. This method applies to flaws that primarily present the character with additional obstacles to overcome.

GMs may decide during play that certain aws are better expressed as penalties to the PC's attempts to overcome other resistances. Divide the value by 5 and round (a flaw of 19 imposes a –4 penalty). This is appropriate where the player specifies that your ability to solve problems drops under certain specific conditions. Examples might include: * Tongue-tied in large gatherings. * Lousy with a stick shift. * Can't stand snakes.

4. Optional Mechanics

4.1 Resolution Methods

An optional resolution method is also available as follows:

4.1.1.1 Extended Contest

Most conflicts should be resolved using the simple contest rules. However, every so often, you'll want to stretch out a resolution, breaking it down into a series of smaller actions, increasing the suspense the players feel as they wait to see if they succeed or fail.

A sequence of die rolls, between one or more PCs and one or more supporting characters, breaks the conflict resolution into a series of actions. This method trades speed for detail.

All contest types can resolve the actions of multiple characters acting at once, on either side of the conflict.

4.2 Resistance Progression

After two sessions of play, the base resistance increases by 1. After every subsequent two-session interval, it increases by another point.

GMs may prefer other progression schemes that reflect the rate of advancement in their game, such as every four sessions of play (used in Heroquest 2.1e), or even every campaign.

4.3 Degrees of Success

Often all you need to know to interpret the results of a resolution is whether the character succeeded or failed.

Sometimes, you'll want to know how well a PC succeeded, or how badly he failed. This may be important in providing consequences or benefits, that drive futher story.

All of the resolution methods have an option to yield the degrees of success for the victor. The possible degrees of success, from least to greatest, are: marginal, minor, major, complete. Ties are also possible.

If a PC contests against NPCs or abstract forces, the interpretation of the results reveals whether the PC gains the prize, and any consequences or benefits for the PC, and the GM narrate the fate of the NPCS or other forces depending on what makes sense. However, when two PC are engaged in a contest then a success for one contestant means a corresponding failure for the loser.

So whilst in a PC vs. PC duel the PC would only be killed on a Complete Defeat, an NPC, described as a resistance, might be killed on any victory, depending on how the prize was framed.

Tie: Tie means no result. Effort was expended, but the net result is that nothing consequential occurs, or else both sides lose or gain equally. If this is confusing, the PC gains a Marginal Victory.

Marginal Victory: Yes, but... The PC gets what they want, but there are complications, the effect is more limited than they desired, or they have to make a hard choice between benefits or accept a loss to get one

Minor Victory: Yes... The PC gets exactly what they want i.e. the stakes.

Major & Complete Victory: Yes, and... The PC get the stakes, and something else. The PC gains something, stealing a possession, gaining a new follower, or become renowned in song. If you want to distinguish a Complete the effect is often permanent and no new contests should be framed for this prize.

Marginal Defeat: No, but... The PC doesn't get what they want, they lose, but it's not a total loss. They are able to salvage something from the defeat, a

little more if they sacrifice something other than the prize to their opponent, that the opponents agrees to take instead.

Minor Defeat: No... They don't get what they want, they lose the stakes. Any consequences or complications such as injury or loss of influence are short term and easily shrugged off. Just take the loss and rest up.

Major & Complete Defeat: No and... You don't get what you want, and there are long-term consequences. The situation might grow worse or more complicated or you might suffer adverse consequences that will require other conflicts to resolve: an injury that needs a healer, an insult that requires a formal apology, a loss of influence with the community that requires a triumph to win their trust again etc. You might be dead, or as good as. Or perhaps you lose something, an item is taken from you, a follower deserts you, your reputation lies in ruins as poets mock your defeat. If you want to distinguish, a Complete should be bigger loss than a Major, but you can ignore this distinction often.

Use the degree of success to determine any side effects or lingering consequences, but be sure to describe the success in narrative terms.

If the is using a Stretch, then major or complete victories they might score are instead treated as minor victories.

4.4 Consequences

Contests, in addition to deciding whether the character gets the prize he was after, carry additional side effects, or consequences. These are negative if the character loses, and positive if he wins.

The GM may simply determine these from what makes fictional sense, given the agreed prize for the contest, as described above. Optionally the GM may impose Consequences of Defeat or provide Benefits of Victory if they desire ongoing penalties or bonuses. This rule is used in conjuction with Degrees of Success. The GM should always respond to the flow of the story, if narrative consequences are enough, don't reach for additional mechanical penalties.

4.4.1 The Consequences of Defeat

When heroes lose contests, they may suffer consequences: literal or metaphorical injuries which make it harder for the heroes to use related abilities.

• In a fight or test of physical mettle, heroes wind up literally wounded. • In a social contest, they may suffer damage to their reputations. • If commanding a war, they lose battalions, equipment, or territories. • In an economic struggle, they lose money, other resources, or opportunities. • In a morale crisis, heroes may suffer bouts of crippling self-doubt.

From the least to the most punishing, the five levels of consequences are: Hurt, Impaired, Injured, Dying, and Dead. The first four are possible results of any contest. Dying heroes become dead, unless they receive intervention of some sort.

4.4.1.1 Healthy

PCs who aren't in a state of adversity at all are considered healthy.

It is possible to seem banged up without suffering any measurable penalties. If you get into an extended contest during which you were at a disadvantage for a long time and nally came from behind for the win, you may seem bruised, winded, anxious, or otherwise the worse for wear. Although this apparent harm may yield you useful sympathy, it doesn't actually slow you down at all.

4.4.1.2 Dazed

In some situations, the Narrator may rule that a character is dazed. They are conscious but unable to initiate actions of their own. If another character engages them in a contest, they can snap out of it and defend themselves.

4.4.1.3 Hurt

A hurt PC shows signs of adversity and finds it harder to succeed at contests related to their defeat. Either their flesh or pride may be bruised. Until the PC recovers, they suffer a –3 penalty to all related abilities.

Characters may suffer multiple hurts to the same ability. These are cumulative until recovery occurs.

Unless the GM has a compelling dramatic reason to decide otherwise, hurts vanish at the end of a session, after one day of rest per accumulated hurt, or when in-game events justify their removal.

4.4.1.4 Impaired

An Impaired PC has taken a jarring blow, physically, socially, or emotionally, and is much likelier to fail when attempting similar actions in the future. THey suffers a –6 penalty to all related abilities. Impairments combine with hurts and with other impairments.

As bad as the character's condition may be, there's nothing wrong with him that some prolonged inactivity won't fix. A single impairment goes away after one week of rest, or when an in-game event (like miraculous or extraordinary treatment) occurs to make their removal seem believable.

4.4.1.5 Injured

An injured PC has suffered a debilitating shock to the system, one which renders them all but helpless.

To even participate in a contest, they must succeed at a prior contest of wherewithal to rouse themself to action. Appropriate abilities for contests of wherewithal might include:

• Physical action: Endurance, High Pain Threshold, Grim Determination, etc.
• Intellectual activity: Concentration, Iron Will, Love Of Country (if action to be attempted is patriotic), etc. • Social humiliation: Savoir Faire, Un appable, Stoic Dignity

A contest of wherewithal faces a Moderate resistance. Even if the injured PC succeeds at the contest of wherewithal, they take an automatic bump down whenever they use any related ability in a contest. (The bump down does not apply to the contest of wherewithal itself.) Where it seems apt, the GM may choose to ignore the bump down if the PC scores a major or complete victory on the contest of wherewithal.

Any active hurts or impairments continue to be counted against him as well.

4.4.1.6 Dying

A dying PC will, without rapid and appropriate intervention, soon expire. To save them, the PCs must typically overcome a story obstacle and/or succeed at a difficult contest. According to the conventions of dramatic storytelling, the character typically has just enough time left for the other characters to make this one attempt.

Successful intervention leaves the PC injured. Depending on the narrative circumstances, a complete victory on the intervention attempt may leave them merely impaired.

If intervention fails, the character will die, but not necessarily immediately. Although irrevocably doomed, they may survive long enough to deliver a poignant final speech.The PC is unable to perform any task complicated enough to require a contest.

Like other states of adversity, dying may be literal or metaphorical. Your standing in society, business or politics may be on the brink of permanent extinction. You may be facing mental death—a permanent lapse into madness or senility.

4.4.1.7 Dead

A PC who dies as a result of physical injuries is gone from the game, period.

Death from a non-physical contest will likely be metaphorical. If you die in an economic, social, spiritual, or artistic contest, you permanently lose abilities.

Even only metaphorically dead, the GM may declare that the PC has undergone changes so dire as to make them unplayable. They may be incurably insane, or so socially shamed that they retire to a life of obscurity or religious meditation. They may be shunned by all around them, sent into permanent exile, or sentenced to long-term imprisonment with no hope of escape.

CONSEQUENCES OF DEFAT TABLE

Defeat Level	State of Adversity	Penalty
Marginal	Hurt	–3 penalty to appropriate abilities
Minor	Impaired	–6 penalty to appropriate abilities
Major	injured	Automatic bump down on uses of appropriate ability
Complete	Dying	No actions allowed

4.4.2 Benefits of Victory

Just as PCs who suffer defeat can suffer ongoing ill effects in addition to the loss of the prize at hand, PCs who win can gain extra benefits of victory.

The PC gets a bonus on the selected abilities, or in the specified situation, as determined by their victory level. The bonus remains until the PC suffers a defeat on a contest using either the bonus or the ability with which they won the original contest. A PC can't decline the bonus because they might lose it; they must always use it in any contest in which it ought, in the GM's judgment, to apply.

At the end of a storyline, especially when a significant period of game-world time passes between the conclusion of one episode and the beginning of the next, the GM may declare that all benefits of victory have expired.

A PC may apply bonuses from multiple benefits to a single contest.

BENEFITS OF VICTORY TABLE

Victory Level	Benefit
Marginal	+0
Minor	+3
Major	+6
Complete	+9

4.4.3 Recovery and Healing

Consequences of Injured or less lapse on their own with the passage of time. However, you'll often want to remove them ahead of schedule, with the use of abilities.

4.4.3.1 Healing Abilities

The ability used to bring about recovery from a state of adversity must relate to the type of harm sustained by the victim.

Physical injuries can be healed by medical abilities.

Mental traumas, including those of con dence and morale, may be removed with mundane psychology or through extraordinary abilities. They might also be removed through a dramatic confrontation between the victim and the source of the psychic injury.

Social injuries must be healed through social abilities. They probably require public expiation of some sort, often including a negotiation with the offended parties and the payment of reparations, either tangible or symbolic.

Damage to items and equipment requires some sort of repair ability. Extraordinary items may require genre-specific expertise: a broken magic ring may require a ritual to reforge.

Healing attempts will almost always unfold as simple contests. An exception might be a medical drama, in which surgeries would comprise the suspenseful set-piece sequences of the game.

4.4.3.2 Resistances

Default resistances to remove states of adversity are as follows:

HEALING RESISTANCES TABLE

Consequence of Defeat	Difficulty
Hurt	Low
Impaired	Moderate
Injured	High
Dying	Very High

4.4.3.3 Consequences of Healing

A successful healing attempt removes one level of adversity for each level of victory. A major defeat increases the subject's consequence of defeat by 1; a

complete defeat adds an additional 2 levels to the consequence of adversity.

4.5 Optional: Modifiers

Where an ability rating represents a general ability to succeed in the narrative, modifiers reflect specific conditions that may make it easier or harder to overcome particular obstacles. They are applied to your ability to get a final target number (TN).

Positive modifiers are called bonuses; negative modifiers are called penalties.

Positive modifiers, or bonuses, may raise an ability high enough to gain a mastery, in which case the character gets the bumps up or down that a mastery would normally supply.

Negative modifiers, or penalties, may lower an ability to the point where it loses one or more masteries. In this case, the character loses the bumps up or down he would normally get.

Modifiers should only be used to alter a PC's target number to respect unusual circumstances he helped to create, or has some control over. If an unusual situation applies to a resistance, change the resistance number.

If penalties reduce a target number to 0 or less, any attempt to use it automatically results in failure. The character must find another way to achieve his aim.

4.5.1 Stretches

When you propose an action using an ability that seems completely inappropriate, the GM rules it impossible. If you went ahead and tried it anyway, you'd automatically fail—but you won't, because that would be silly.

In some cases, though, your proposed match-up of action and ability is only somewhat implausible. A successful attempt with it wouldn't completely break the illusion of fictional reality—just stretch it a bit.

Using a somewhat implausible ability is known as a stretch. If the GM deems an attempt to be a stretch, the PC suffers a –6 penalty to their target number.

The definition of stretch is elastic, depending on genre.

GMs should not impose stretch penalties on action descriptions that add flavor and variety to a scene, but do not fundamentally change what the character can do with his ability. These make the scene more fun but don't really gain any advantage.

4.5.2 Situational Modifiers

GMs may also impose modifiers when, given the description of the current situation, believability demands that a character should face a notable advantage or disadvantage. Assess modifiers of +6, +3, –3, or –6. Modiers of less than 3 don't exert enough statistical effect to be worth the bother. Those higher than 6 give the situational modier a disproportionate role in determining results.

During an extended contest, they should typically last for a single exchange, and reflect clever or foolish choices by the character.

4.5.3 Engaging Multiple Opponents

If more than one opponent engages a PC (or NPC), they take part in a number of contests equal to the number of opponents. For each extra contest they are forced to participate in during a given round, they suffer a cumulative -3 penalty.

A GM should resolve all engagements against a single PC/NPC at once, adjusting the order of action as necessary. A player can choose the order in which their PC engages their respective opponents. It's usually smartest to engage them in order of relative toughness, from highest to lowest rating.

4.6 Optional: Combined Abilities

On certain occasions the GM may rule that a character can only hope to achieve his goal by using two disparate abilities. When this occurs, average the two ability ratings, then apply any modifiers, to arrive at the target number.

Combining abilities, rather than using the best one and augmenting it with other, is always a disadvantage to the character. The GM should only require combined ability use when story logic absolutely demands that the character face a lower chance of success, because he has to do two things at once.

4.7 Mobs, Gangs, and Hordes

Sometimes the PCs will face large numbers of individually inconsequential opponents. The GM can roll for each of them separately, taking note of the multiple opponent penalties they incur against their enemies. More simply, the GM can treat many as one. Divide the number of minor opponents by the number of contesting PCs. Treat each of these sections of the crowd as a single character with one ability rating. They don't impose a multiple opponent penalty; instead, their numbers are factored into the ability rating the GM assigns to them. When the mob loses an exchange, the GM describes individuals within it as being hurt or falling away. When it wins, describe them overwhelming the PC, or swelling in numbers.

4.8 Mass Effort

Clashes of massive forces resolve like any other contest, simple or extended, solo or group. These include:

- Military engagements
- Corporate struggles for market share • Building competitions
- Efforts to spread a faith or ideology • Dance competitions

If the PCs are not participating in the contest and have no stake in its outcome, don't bother to run a contest. Just choose an outcome for dramatic purposes.

Otherwise, start by determining the PC or PCs' degree of influence over the outcome. They are either:

- Determining factors: The success of the effort depends mostly on their choices and successes. For example, they might be military leaders facing a force of roughly equal potency. As all else is equal, the better general will win the day. In this instance, the PC or PCs contest a relevant leadership ability against those of opposing leaders.
- Contributors: One of the forces enjoys a clear advantage over the others, but the PC's efforts may tip the balance in favor of a chosen side. A player or players contest with a rating representing the strength of the force, but can augment its rating with a PC ability.
- Acted Upon: The PCs have little in uence over the outcome, but are stuck in the middle of the conflict and must struggle to prosper within it. The GM predetermines the outcome of the overall competition on dramatic grounds. Each PC contests against a rating determined by the GM. Contest winners gain lingering benefits, while losers suffer states of adversity

4.10 Pyrrhic Victories

In a Pyrrhic victory, players boost their chances of success in a contest by accepting negative consequences at its end, even if they win the prize around which it is framed. The PCs each gain a mastery in the abilities they're using to prosecute the contest. At the contest's end, they suffer the following states of adversity, as per the Pyrrhic Victory Table.

As with any proposed action, the players must convincingly describe the potentially suicidal risks the PCs are taking to achieve their objective. They must also show how these risks can bring them the awful victory they seek.

PYRRHIC VICTORY CONSEQUENCES TABLE

Outcome	State of Adversity
Any Defeat	Dead
Marginal Victory	Dead
Minor Victory	Dying
Major Victory	Injured
Complete Victory	Impaired

4.11 Mismatched and Graduated Goals

Sometimes, the two sides in a contest may have goals that do not directly contract one another. A huntsman pursues a nurse, who is trying to escape through the forest with two small children. The huntsman wants to kill the nurse. The nurse wants to save the children.

When encountering mismatched goals, the GM should determine whether the mismatch is complete, or partial.

In a complete mismatch, neither side is at all interested in preventing the other's goal. A complete mismatch does not result in a contest; the GM asks what the PCs are doing, and then describes each participant succeeding at their goals.

In most instances, the contest goals are not actually mismatched, but graduated. One or more participants has both a primary and a secondary goal. In this case, the GM frames the contest, identifying which goal is which. To achieve both, the winner must score a major or complete victory. On a minor or marginal victory, he achieves only the primary goal.

Two distinct methods allow you to create a sense of difficulty without allowing for the prospect of failure: the arduous automatic success, and the costly suUse a costly success where failure offers no entertaining plot branches, but when you still want the group to work for victory, and to feel a sense of suspense over the outcome. In a costly success, the PCs succeed—but at a price. ccess.

4.12 Difficult Auto-Success

Two distinct methods allow you to create a sense of difficulty without allowing for the prospect of failure: the arduous automatic success, and the costly suUse a costly success where failure offers no entertaining plot branches, but when you still want the group to work for victory, and to feel a sense of suspense over the outcome. In a costly success, the PCs succeed—but at a price. ccess.

4.12.1 Arduous Auto-Success

Use an arduous automatic success when your primary concern is pacing. Simply allow the characters to succeed without a contest, and then describe in

sweat-inducing detail their hard-won victory. Unlike the standard automatic success, the objective here is not to make the group feel powerful and competent (though it may do that as well) but to emphasize the rigors of their grueling task, preserving suspension of disbelief.

4.12.3 Costly Auto-Success

Use a costly success where failure offers no entertaining plot branches, but when you still want the group to work for victory, and to feel a sense of suspense over the outcome. In a costly success, the PCs succeed—but at a price.

Even if the players suffer a defeat, they still achieve the prize around which the contest is framed. They also, however, suffer a state of adversity to one or more abilities, in keeping with the defeat level, as per the Consequences of Defeat Table.

The state of adversity might apply, as in an ordinary contest, to the abilities used in that contest. Usually, though, they apply to some other resource-related ability, which may come to haunt the group later on. When in doubt, ask yourself if the penalty will cripple the group in dealing with contests

4.13 Optional: Alternative Character Creation Methods

Two optional cahracter creation methods are available as follows:

4.13.1 The List Method

This is like the As-You-Go method but PCs spend all their points before the game begins. This is possible with the As-You-Go method as well, but the list method allows players to signal what they want the game to be about from the abilities they pick, as opposed to reacting to material once the game begins.

4.13.2 The Prose Method

This is the most different method as the player writes a piece of prose and the pulls abilities from that. It's intent is to emulate a character description in fiction, and indeed PCs can be built by copying text from a story and then identifying keywords. It is the least 'fair' of the character creation options.

5. Simple Contests

5.1 Simple Contest

5.1.1 Procedure

1. Frame the contest.
2. Figure the PC's target number (TN) using the ability rating and any modifiers. The PCs TN is the rating of their ability, plus or minus modifiers the GM may give the PC.
3. The GM determines the resistance. The GM opposes the PC with a resistance—the harder the task or tougher the opponent, the higher the resistance.
4. Roll a d20 to determine the PCs degree of success or failure, then apply any bumps. The GM does the same for the resistance. Compare your rolled number with your TN to see how well you succeeded or failed with your ability. Remember to apply any bumps from masteries or hero points.
5. Determine victory or defeat
    1. Optional: Determine Degrees of Success. Compare the PCs success or failure with the GM's on the Simple Contest Results table.
    2. Optional: Determine Benefits of Victory or Consequences of Defeat.
6. Describe the result based on the agreed prize.

5.1.2 Optional: Degrees of Success

SIMPLE CONTEST RESULTS TABLE

Roll	Critical	Success	Failure	Fumble
Critical	High roll = Marginal Victory, else tie	Minor Victory	Major Victory	Complete Victory
Success	Minor Victory	High roll = Marginal Victory, else tie	Minor Victory	Major Victory
Failure	Major Victory	Minor Victory	High roll = Marginal Victory, else tie	Minor Victory
Fumble	Complete Victory	Major Victory	Minor Victory	Tie*

- In a group simple contest (see below), the Game Master may declare that both contestants suffer a Marginal Defeat to indicate that, although their results cancel out with respect to each other, their situation worsens compared to other contestants.

5.2 Group Simple Contest

In the group simple contest, multiple participants take part in a simple contest. Each of the participants conducts an individual simple contest, and the results for each side are collated to determine the victor.

A group simple contest may pit all of the participating PCs against a single resistance, representing one obstacle. Alternatively, a group simple contest may be a series of paired match-ups between two groups of contestants. PCs forced to participate in more than one contest face the standard multiple opponent penalties.

5.2.1 Procedure

1. Frame the contest.
2. Figure each PC's target number (TN) using the ability rating and any modifiers. The PCs TN is the rating of their ability, plus or minus modifiers the GM may give the PC.
3. The GM determines the resistance. The GM opposes the PC with a resistance—the harder the task or tougher the opponent, the higher the resistance.
4. For each PC, Roll a d20 to determine the PCs degree of success or failure, then apply any bumps. The GM does the same for the resistance. Compare your rolled number with your TN to see how well you succeeded or failed with your ability. Remember to apply any bumps from masteries or hero points.
5. Determine the number of RPs scored by the victor in the contest from the Group Simple Contest Results table. On a tie the victory goes to the Better Roll.
6. Sum the RPs gained for each side.
7. The side with the highest number of RP is the victor in the contest.
    1. [Option] Determine Degee of Succes based on the difference between the winner and loser's resource point totals on the Group Simple Contest results table.
    2. [Option] Determine Benefits of Victory or Consequences of Defeat.
8. Describe the result based on the agreed prize.

5.2.2 Groupe Simple Contest Resource Points

GROUP SIMPLE CONTEST RESULTS TABLE

Roll	Critical	Success	Failure	Fumble
Critical	1	2	3	5
Success	2	1	2	3
Failure	3	2	1	2
Fumble	5	3	2	N/A

OPTIONAL: DEGRESS OF SUCCESS TABLE

Difference Between Results	Winning Group's Degree of Success
1	Marginal
2	Minor
3-4	Major
5+	Complete

5.2.4 Optional Consequences and Benefits

Depending on which approach seems to grow from the story, Consequences of Defeat or Benefits of Victory from Group Simple Contests may be assigned to the entire group, or to individual members who performed either especially well, or especially poorly. Default to rewarding or penalizing everyone. Resort to individualized repercussions or benefits only when a group reward defies dramatic credibility, or when competition within the group is a pivotal dramatic issue.

5.2.5 Optional: Boosting Results

Because they average together the results of multiple participants, group simple contests tend to flatten outcomes, making victories more likely to be marginal or minor than major or complete.

To overcome this flattening effect, players can, at the beginning of a group simple contest, to spend one or more Hero Points to purchase a boost. A boost assures a clearer victory, should they prevail.

The cost varies by the number of heroes participating:

- 1 Hero Point for 1-3 heroes;
- 2 Hero Points for 4-6 heroes

- 3 Hero Points for 7-9 heroes.

- and so on...

Groups may spend twice as many Hero Points as required to gain a double boost. The points may be spent by any combination of players. They remain spent no matter how the contest resolves.

On a tie or a victory, the boost increases the collective victory level by one step. A double boost increases it by two steps.

6. Hero Points

Hero points are a resource that players must carefully allocate. They allow you to heighten your victories and dull your defeats. They are the price you pay to improve your abilities over time. They are also used in a few unusual adjudications—resolving tied results between PCs.

6.1 Gaining Hero Points

You get 3 hero points at the beginning of every session. During the session, all Hero Points must be spent, either on improving contest results or character improvement. At the end of the session, unspent points are lost.

6.2 Improving Your Character

You may improve any ability by 1 point per session, at a cost of 1 hero point.

It costs 1 Hero Point to raise a single breakout ability under the keyword, or 2 points to raise the entire keyword or runic affinity by a point.

You can add a new ability by spending 1 point; it begins with a rating of 13.

You can add a new breakout ability by spending 1 point; it begins with a rating of +1 to the keyword it modifies

6.3 Catch-Ups

A package deal, called a catch-up, applies whenever you acquire a new mastery, up to three abilities or keywords of your choice also increase by 3 points apiece. Only abilities or keywords with values 5 or more points behind your newly adjusted rating in the raised ability qualify for a catch-up.

You can't raise abilities under a keyword, nor gain a catch-up when the effective value of a subability reaches a mastery (since it's the keyword, not the abilities under it, which has a rating).

6.4 Directed Improvements

On occasion a Narrator may increase one of your abilities, by 1 to 3 points, or give you a new ability, usually rated at 13. These are called directed improvements.

Ability increases are usually rewards for overcoming particularly important or dramatic obstacles. They happen immediately, rather than at session's end.

7. Relationships

Abilities may represent the relationship of the PC to supporting characters.

7.1 Supporting Characters

Many relationships connect the PC to supporting characters controlled by the Game Master.

When the PC tries to use one of these relationships to solve a problem, they contest with their relationship ability. The PC can't simply go to the supporting character they have a relationship with, stick them with the problem, and expect to see it solved.

If the PC succeeds, the supporting character helps them solve the problem. If they fail, they don't. As with any ability, the player must still specify how the contact goes about overcoming the obstacle. Calls on relationships are almost always simple contests.

In crucial situations, it may seem dramatically inappropriate for a PC to solve a problem indirectly, by working through others. The Game Master can expose the supporting character to serious risk. If the character dies or otherwise suffers a change of status that renders him useless to the PC, the PC permanently loses the relationship ability.

Before putting supporting characters at serious risk, Game Masters should make sure the players understand the magnitude of the possible consequences.

When supporting characters undertake significant risk, the supporting character may suffer a consequence of defeat commensurate with the level of the defeat in the contest. Or it may simply be the PC's relationship with that is damaged or destroyed.

7.2 Allies

An ally is a character of roughly the same level of accomplishment as the PC, often in the same or a similar line of work. For every favor a PC asks of them, they'll ask one of them. These reciprocal favors will be roughly equivalent in terms of risk, time commitment, difficulty, and inconvenience.

7.3 Patrons

Patrons enjoy greater access to resources than the PC, either through personal ownership (as in a Merchant Prince) or authority (as in the governnor of a province). They may lend the PC advice or provide them with resources but are too busy and important to personally perform tasks for them. They may hire the PC to do jobs, or issue orders within a command structure to which they both belong.

When a PC rolls their Patron relationship, the Game Master adjusts the difficulty depending on what the PC has done for them lately.

7.4 Contacts

A contact is a specialist in an occupation, skill, or area of expertise. Contacts provide information and perform minor favors, but will expect information or small favors from the PC in return.

You can describe a contact as being a particular individual, or as a group of similar individuals.

7.4.1 Occupational Contacts

Any occupational keyword can be treated as a source of contacts. However, using an occupational keyword as a source of contacts will always be a stretch. To more reliably draw on particular contacts associated with a profession, a PC should take an explicit ability.

7.5 Followers

A follower is a secondary character that travels with the PC and contributes on a regular basis to their success.

There are two types of followers: sidekicks and retainers.

Followers need not be people, or even sentient beings: you can write up a spirit guardian, trusty robot, or companion animal as a follower.

7.5.1 Sidekick

A sidekick is a secondary character under the player's control. Most of the time they stays at the PC's side to render assistance, but they can also go off and perform errands or missions on their own.

The PC should give their sidekick a name. They should, when asked, explain how the sidekick came to be the PC's follower, and why they continues in that role.

Sidekicks start with three abilities, one rated at 17 and the others at 13. Any of these abilities may be a keyword. At least one of them should indicate a personality trait.

If the sidekick is nonhuman or a member of an unusual culture, one of its three starting abilities must be its species or culture keyword.

Once the PC has determined the sidekick's base abilities, they allocate 15 additional points between three of them, spending no more than 10 on any one ability.

These abilities, like those of the PC, can be improved through the expenditure of Hero Points.

A player may use any of the sidekick's abilities as they would their PC's. The companion can go off and do things without the PC.

7.5.2 Replacing Lost Sidekicks

As a consequence of defeats in which they participated, sidekicks can be killed or leave the PC's service permanently.

Defeat in physical contests can lead to literal death. Metaphorical deaths from non-violent contests indicate a break with the PC. The sidekick may angrily withdraw from service, but is more likely to sorrowfully retire. A PC may be able to bring a sidekick back from metaphorical death by overcoming story obstacles.

If a player loses a sidekick, they may create a new one without needing to spend a Hero Point. They must explain how the new sidekick has come to be their new follower.

PCs with retainers may find it convenient to promote them to sidekick status, giving them names and personalities, with a sudden boost in abilities and ratings to match.

7.5.3 Retainers

A retainer is a more or less anonymous servant or helper. The PC may specify a single retainer, or, where appropriate to the character concept, an entire staff of them.

Like any other ability, a retainer ability allows the player to overcome relevant obstacles by engaging in a contest. To model the contribution of retainers to the PC, where the PC is the primary actor, the player can use them to augment their ability. The GM can rule that consequences of defeat apply to retainers.

Retainers generally regard the PC with all the affection and loyalty due to an employer or master. If the PC treats them more poorly than is expected for their culture, the GM should increase the difficulty level of attempts to make use of their talents.

If the PC loses retainers for any reason, they can replace them simply by providing a convincing explanation of how you go about it.

7.6 Relationships as Flaws

Certain relationships with supporting characters act as flaws. They impose obligations on the PC, prompting the GM to present the PC with obstacles they have no choice but to overcome.

7.6.1 Dependents

A dependent is a person, usually a family member or loved one, who requires the PCs aid and protection. The GM should periodically create storylines in which the dependent is endangered.

Rather than taking a dependent as a flaw, the player may find it more fruitful to specify the nature of the PC's relationship as an ability, such as Love for Wife or Love for Son.

7.6.2 Adversaries

An adversary is a rival, enemy or other individual who can be relied upon to periodically disrupt the PC's plans.

THe adversary's goals are probably the opposite of the PC's, although he could be a bitter rival within the same community, organization, or movement.

To treat an adversary as an ability, rather than a flaw, describe the PC's emotional response to them. Examples: Hates Leonard Crisp, Fears the Electronaut, Sworn Vengeance Against Heimdall. That way, you still inspire the Narrator to

add the plot elements you desire, but can use your antipathy toward the enemy to augment your target numbers against them.

8. Optional: Extended Contests

8.1 Extended Contest

8.1.1 Procedure

1. Frame the contest.
2. Figure the PC's target number (TN) using the ability rating and any modifiers. The PCs TN is the rating of their ability, plus or minus modifiers the GM may give the PC.
3. The GM determines the resistance. The GM opposes the PC with a resistance—the harder the task or tougher the opponent, the higher the resistance.
4. Carry out one or more rounds, repeating as necessary.
    1. An extended contest unfolds as a series of simple contests. At the end of each simple contest, the winning character (or resistance) scores a number of resolution points (RPs) to his tally, which varies between 1 and 5, depending on the result. Tied results leave the score unchanged.
    2. The number of resolution points the winner garners at the end of each exchange depends on the degree of victory they scored. They get 1 point for a marginal victory, 2 for a minor victory, 3 for a major victory, and 5 for a complete victory.
    3. The first of the contesting characters to accumulate a total of 5 points wins; their opponent is knocked out of the contest and loses the prize.
5. Determine Degee of Succes based on Rising Action of Climax (below).
6. Determine Benefits of Victory or Consequences of Defeat.
7. Describe the result based on the agreed prize.

8.1.2 Rising Action

Rising action refers to all of the many plot events and complications that occur between the beginning and the climax of a story. During this phase of your story, use the Rising Action Consequence table to assess results.

Find the difference between the winner and loser's resolution point scores as of the contest's conclusion. Determine the outcome for the PCs either winner or loser and cross-reference with the following table to find the benefits of victory or lasting consequences.

GROUP SIMPLE CONTEST RESULTS TABLE

Difference Between Results	Negative Consequences for Loser	Victory/Defeat Level
1	Hurt	Marginal
2	Hurt	Marginal
3	Impaired	Minor
4	Imparied	Minor
5	Injured	Major
6	Injured	Major
7	Dying	Complete
8	Dead	Complete
9	Dead	Complete

8.1.3 Climax

For the final, climactic confrontation that wraps up your story, use the following, more punishing method of doling out consequences.

Take into account all resolution points scored against all participants. Winners and losers alike add up all resolution points scored against them by any opponent. Then the losers add 1 to their totals. The result is then cross-referenced against the Climactic Consequence table.

To determine the winning side's victory level for a climactic scene, cross-reference with the second-worst consequence among the defeated opponents on the Climactic Scene Victory Level table. If there is only one opponent, use their consequence of defeat.

CLIMACTIC CONSEQUENCE TABLE

Total Resolution Points Scored Against PC	Consequence
0	Unharmed
1	Dazed
2	Hurt
3	Hurt
4	Impaired
5	Imparied
6	Injured
7	Injured
8	Dying
9	Dead

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CLIMACTIC SCENE VICTORY LEVEL TABLE

Consequence	Victory Level
Hurt	Marginal
Impaired	Minor
Injured	Major
3	Hurt

8.1.4 Parting Shot

In the round immediately after a PC takes an opponent out of the contest, they may attempt to increase the severity of the consequences the opponent suffers by engaging in a parting shot. This is an attempt (metaphoric or otherwise) to kick the opponent while he's down:

• Striking an incapacitated enemy • Attacking a retreating army • Attaching one more punitive rider to a legal settlement • Demanding additional money from a business partner • Delivering one last humiliating insult

Only PCs should use a Parting Shot

If you succeed in your parting shot roll, you add the result from your roll to the final number of Resolution Points scored against the opponent in the exchange that removed him from the contest.

However, if the opponent succeeds, he takes the number of Resolution Points he would, in a standard exchange, score against you, and instead subtracts them from the number of Resolution Points scored against him in the exchange that removed him from the contest. If the revised total is now less than 5, he returns to the contest, and may re-engage you. The Game Master describes this as a dramatic turnaround, in which the victim's overreaching foe has somehow granted him an advantage allowing him to recover from his previous misfortune. The provisional consequences he suffered now go away, and are treated as a momentary or seeming disadvantage.

The ability the use must relate to the consequences the opposition will suffer, but needn't be the same one you used to win the contest. If the loser is a PC use a suitable ability to resist; otherwise the GM rolls a suitable resistance value.

Where it makes sense in the narrative, unengaged characters may attempt parting shots against opponents taken out of the contest by third parties. Characters may not revive their teammates by using their lamest abilities to make parting shots on them; this, by definition, does not pass a credibility test.

8.1.5 Asymmetrical Exchanges

A PC may choose to briefly suspend their attempt to best their opponent in an extended contest, in order to do something else. An instance where one contestant is trying to win the contest and another is trying to do something else is called an asymmetrical exchange. In an asymmetrical exchange, a PC pursuing an objective other than victory does not score points against the other if he wins the exchange. Instead, he gains some other advantage. He still loses points if he fails. Often he will be using an ability other than the one he's been waging the contest with, one better suited to the task at hand. This becomes additionally dangerous when the rating associated with the substitute ability is significantly lower than the one used for the rest of the contest. In addition to secondary objectives, as in the above example, heroes may engage in asymmetrical exchanges to grant augments (see above) to themselves or others.

8.1.6 Disengaging

A PC can always abandon a contest, but, in addition to losing their prize under contention, they may also suffer negative consequences. Many contests will have no stakes other than the mutual intent to harm one another—each contestant is trying to attach negative consequences to the other. In such instances, the PC will always suffer negative consequences if they simply withdraw, unless they successfully disengage.

To disengage, a PC makes an asymmetrical exchange, usually using the ability relevant to the contest they're trying to wriggle out of. If they fail, their effort is wasted and the score against them increases, as it would have during a normal exchange. If they succeed, they escape the clutches, literal or metaphorical, of their opponent, without further harm.

If a PC disengages from a contest during the rising action, they suffer no consequences from it. In a climactic scene, however, Resolution Points scored during contests the PC disengaged from are still taken into account when determining consequences. In the case of a group contest, consequences against a PC are determined as soon as they disengage.

8.2 Group Extended Contest

Group extended contests proceed as a series of extended contests between pairs of PC and opponents, interwoven so that they happen nearly simultaneously.

As in an extended contest between a single PC and an opponent, only one exchange per pair of adversaries occurs each round. Usually the PCs make up one team, and their antagonists the other.

8.2.1 Procedure

1. Frame the contest.
2. Figure the PC's target number (TN) using the ability rating and any modifiers. The PC's TN is the rating of their ability, plus or minus modifiers the GM may give the PC.
3. The GM determines the resistance. The GM opposes the PC with a resistance—the harder the task or tougher the opponent, the higher the resistance.
4. Allow the PCs to choose their opponents in order of their TN where it makes sense. Otherwise allocate opponents to the PCs dependent on what makes narrative sense.
5. Establish an order of the paired contests. There is no significant advantage to going first, but use the PC's TN from highest to lowest if no other option presents itself
6. For each pairing carry out one round. Then repeat by carrying out more rounds in order, as necessary. The group extended contest ends as soon as there are no active participants on one side of the conflict. The side with one or more participants left standing wins.
    1. An extended contest unfolds as a series of simple contests. At the end of each simple contest, the winning character (or resistance) scores a number of resolution points (RPs) to his tally, which varies between 1 and 5, depending on the result. Tied results leave the score unchanged.
    2. The number of resolution points the winner garners at the end of each exchange depends on the degree of victory they scored. They get 1 point for a marginal victory, 2 for a minor victory, 3 for a major victory, and 5 for a complete victory.
    3. The first of the contesting characters to accumulate a total of 5 points wins; their opponent is knocked out of the contest and loses the prize.
        1. As one of a pair is eliminated from the group contest, their victorious opponents may then move on to engage new targets, starting new contests, which are then added to the end of the existing sequence.
        2. If participating in multiple pairings, each pairing is the first to 5 points, points already scored do not count. But the accumulated points do count when determining consequences in the Climatic phase.
7. Determine Degee of Succes based on Rising Action of Climax (above).
8. Determine Benefits of Victory or Consequences of Defeat.
9. Describe the result based on the agreed prize.

8.2.2 Unrelated Actions

A PC not currently enmeshed in an exchange—either after a successful disengagement, or after winning an exchange—may take actions within the scene that do not directly contribute to the defeat of the other side. These unrelated actions may grant an augment to themselves or to a teammate. They may achieve a secondary story objective. They resemble asymmetrical exchanges, except that; as they are performed by PCs who are not targeted by any opponents, they impose no additional risk.

8.2.3 Assists

A PC may take an unrelated action to grant an assist to a teammate enmeshed in an exchange. To make an assist, a hero engages in a simple contest, either against a suitable difficulty, or an applicable ability of an affected opponent.

Assists are subject to the same restrictions as augments: they must be both credible and interesting.

By default, a PC making assists face Moderate Difficulty. Each subsequent assist attempt to the same beneficiary, steps up by one factor on the table: high, then very high, then nearly impossible.

The difficulty escalation occurs even when a new hero steps in to make a subsequent assist. In rules terms, this escalation allows the occasional dramatic rescue but makes it difficult for the players to prolong losing battles to excruciating length.

Dramatically, it emulates the constant raising of the stakes inherent in a suspenseful scene. Like other HeroQuest Glorantha rules structures, the limitation mirrors a literary conceit, not a literal reality. The Game Master makes it seem credible by justifying the increasing difficulties with descriptions of ever-escalating countermeasures on the part of the opposition.

Game Masters should feel free to adjust the starting difficulty up or down by one step to account for campaign credibility or other dramatic factors. If an assist as proposed seems too improbable or insufficiently useful, Game Masters should collaborate with players to propose alternate suggestions which would face Moderate Difficulty.

The assist alters the score against your teammate according to the result of a simple contest

ASSIST RESULTS TABLE

Contest Outcome	Change to Score Against Recipient
Complete Victory	-4

Contest Outcome	Change to Score Against Recipient
Major Victory	-3
Minor Victory	-2
Marginal Victory	-1
Marginal Defeat	0
Minor Defeat	+1
Major Defeat	+2
Complete Defeat	+3

Scores in exchanges can never be reduced below 0.

8.2.4 Followers

Players may choose to have their PC's followers take part in group extended contests in one of three ways: as full contestants, as secondary contestants, or as supporters.

Contestant: The follower takes part in the contest as any other PC would. Players roll for their followers as they would their main characters. However, followers are removed from the contest whenever 3 Resolution Points are scored against them in a given exchange. An additional 2 Resolution Points are then scored against them, increasing the severity of any consequences they suffer.

Secondary contestant: To act as a secondary contestant, the follower must have an ability relevant to the contest. The follower sticks by the hero's side, contributing directly to the effort: fighting in a battle, tossing in arguments in a legal dispute, acting as the ship's navigator, or whatever. Although the player and GM describe this, the player does not roll for the follower. Instead, these efforts benefit the main hero in two ways:

- When confronted by multiple opponents, the main hero may ignore the multiple opponent penalty for one foe for each follower acting as a secondary contestant.
- The main hero may, at any point, shift any number of Resolution Points to a follower acting as a secondary contestant. Followers with 3 or more points lodged against them are removed from the scene. When a follower is removed from the scene, an additional 2 Resolution Points are lodged against them, increasing the severity of consequences they suffer. The main hero loses the protection against multiple opponents afforded by the follower.

Supporter: The follower is present in the scene, but does not directly engage the main hero's opponents. Instead he may perform assists and other unrelated actions.

Followers acting in any of these three capacities may be removed from the contest by otherwise unengaged opponents. To remove a follower from a scene, an opponent engages the follower in a simple contest of relevant abilities. On any failure, the follower is taken out of the contest. For consequence determination purposes, the follower has X+2 Resolution Points lodged against him, where X is the usual number levied by the Resolution Point table.

8.2.5 Risky Gambits

During an extended contest, a hero can attempt to force a conflict to an early resolution by making a risky gambit. If the PC trying a risky gambit wins the exchange, they lodge an additional 1 Resolution Point against their opponent. However, if the PC trying the risky gambit loses the exchange, their opponent lodges an additional 2 Resolution Points against them.

If both contestants engage in a risky gambit, the winner lodges an additional 2 Resolution Points against the loser.

8.2.6 Defensive Responses

In an extended contest, a PC can make a defensive response, lowering the number of Resolution Points lodged against the losing party to an exchange. If the hero wins the exchange, the number of Resolution Points lodged against his opponent decreases by 1. If the hero loses, he lodges 2 fewer Resolution Points against his opponent. The total number of Resolution Points assigned by an exchange is never less than 0; there is no such thing as a negative Resolution Point.

8.2.7 Joining Extended Contests In Progress

When a PC wishes to join an extended contest in progress, the Narrator determines whether the player accepts the current framing. If so, he can participate. In an extended contest, he simply selects an opponent and enters into a new exchange. A new contestant who wants to achieve something other than the goal established during framing may instead perform unrelated actions, including assists and augments.

8.3 Extremely Extended Contests

There's no particular time scale associated with contests. But some contests may by their very nature be a drama that can't be resolved at one point in the narrative. Examples include political campaigns, construction projects, or seductions. These can be resolved by extended contests where each round is

conducted at an appropriate moment in your game, rather than sequentially. You'll need to keep track of the resolution points and the resistance, though this might change as the context changes (a civil war started by the players could impede their castle-building plans). The challenges of each round will vary, and the player will use a different ability or augment the next time.

9. Optional: Alternative Character Creation Methods

HeroQuest offers two optional methods of character creation: prose and list.

9.1 List Method

1. Concept The concept is a brief phrase, often just a couple of words, that tells the GM and other players what the PC does and how they act. When in doubt, start with a noun or phrase indicating the PC's profession or area of expertise, and modify it with an adjective suggesting a dominant personality trait:

- haughty priestess
- hotshot lawyer
- naïve warrior
- noble samurai
- remorseful assassin
- sardonic ex-mercenary
- slothful vampire

2. Now provide the character with a name.
3. Note their main area of expertise, which may be a keyword. The player probably already picked this when they came up with their character concept.
4. If the series uses other keywords, such as those for culture or religion, the PC may have them for free.
5. Pick 10 additional abilities, describing them however the player wants. Only one of these abilities may be a Sidekick.
6. If the player wants, describe up to 3 flaws.

9.2 Prose Method

The player writes a paragraph of text like they would see in a story outline, describing the most essential elements of their character. Include keywords, personality traits, important possessions, relationships, and anything else that

suggests what they can do and why. The paragraph should be about 100 words long.

Compose the description in complete, grammatical sentences. No lists of abilities; no sentence fragments. The GM may choose to allow sentences like the previous one for emphasis or rhythmic effect, but not simply to squeeze in more cool things the PC can do.

Once your narrative is finished, convert the description into a set of abilities. Mark any keywords with double underlines. Mark any other word or phrase that could be an ability with a single underline. Then write these keywords and abilities on your character sheet.

There is no limit to the number of abilities a PC can gain from a single sentence, as long as the sentence is not just a list of abilities. If your GM decides a sentence is just a list, they may allow the first two abilities, or they may tell the player to rewrite the sentence. Note, however, that the player cannot specify more than one sidekick in their prose description.

10. Optional: Community Resources and Support

Some series revolve around the relationship between a band of influential figures and the community they protect. In defense of the community, they can bolster, expend, and juggle its various resources.

It is possible for PCs to belong to several communities. Some societies nest communities within communities. Although characters may have community abilities related to any or all of these, the GM should model only one level of community. Pick the level of community that provides the greatest dramatic potential from its competition for resources, friendly or otherwise, with its rivals.

10.1 Community Design

10.1.1 Defining Resources

Communities can have any set of abilities the GM defines. The GM should Focus on no more than five or so broadly-labeled resource types, so that the characPCsters can care about (and have a chance of successfully managing) all of them.

Most communities have variants of the following resources, perhaps with more colorful names:

- Wealth — measures the community's material resources, whether counted primarily in dollars, credits, or cattle

- Diplomacy — the ability to extract favors from other communities, while minimizing the cost of its reciprocal obligations
- Morale — the community's belief in its ability to achieve its goals, and willingness to follow the directives of its leaders The following abilities might appear, depending on setting:
- Military — its ability to defend itself from outside threats, and to aggressively achieve its own aims through force of arms (for settings where communities of the size you're tracking eld their own armed units)
- Magic — the collective ability of its people to perform supernatural acts (for fantasy worlds)
- Technology — its access to specialized, rare or secret devices or scienti c knowledge not shared by its rivals (for post- apocalyptic or SF worlds)

Similar communities in the genre, should have the same set of resources.

10.1.2 Specify an interval.

Choose a suitable interval to mark changes in resources. For genres bound by the agricultural season, this is usually a season, for a military genre it might be a campaign, for a ship a voyage.

10.1.3 Assigning Ability Ratings

Distribute the following ratings between the ve abilities: 12W, 9W, 18, 18, and 12. Note that the size of the group doesn't affect the ratings.

A GM may create a questionnaire that asks the players to make choices about the history of their community. They can choose their multiple-choice answers by consensus, majority vote, or take turns. Each question secretly assigns a score to one or more resource types. When you're done, rank the resources in the order of the scores, assigning the high ratings to the highest questionnaire results and the lowest to the low.

The questionnaire introduces your setting in a punchy, interactive format, and tailors the community to your players' desires, increasing their investment in it.

10.1.4 Resource Notation

Keep track of modifiers to community resources with a copy of the following record sheet. Use a pencil, because the numbers will fluctuate.

List the names and ratings of your chosen resources in the first row. Under the total column for each, list the total current modifier. Under the PC column, list bonuses resulting from PC activities (as opposed to uncemented background events.) When PCs cement a background benefit, add its bonus to the PC column.

When PC activity reduces a penalty but does not eliminate it, alter the entry under the Total column to reflect the reduction, but leave the PC column blank.

RESOURCE NOTATION TABLE

Total	PC	Total	PC	Total	PC	Total	PC	Total	PC

10.2 Drawing on Resources

PCs can use resources as their own after convincing their people to let them expend precious assets. This requires a preliminary contest using a social ability, most likely the character's community relationship. Use a Moderate resistance as your baseline, with higher resistances when the PC's proposals seem selfish or likely to fail, and lower ones when everyone but the dullest dolt would readily see their collective benefits. Increase resistances if the group draws constantly on community resources without replenishing them.

The lobbying effort and the actual resource use require framing, a clear description of what the characters are doing, and other details to bring them to ctional life. PCs can use resources directly, or to augment their own abilities.

Unlike character abilities, each use of community resources temporarily depletes it.

On a victory, the characters win the prize specified by contest framing, and a penalty is applied to subsequent uses of the resource.

On a defeat, the characters lose the prize and an even more severe penalty is applied to subsequent resource uses. If the PCs fail to secure the prize they were seeking, the depletion penalty is also applied to the PCs' social and community abilities when interacting with members of their community. This reflects community displeasure at their fruitless expenditure.

Penalties from the Resource Depletion Table replace standard penalties for defeat, not add to them.

Like other modifiers to resources, depletion penalties end at the end of the current interval. These include depletion penalties applied to character abilities. However, a depletion penalty left unattended at the end of the interval can result in a permanent drop in the relevant resource.

Narrators who want resource depletion to lead to longer-lasting social penalties can, at the cost of some extra bookkeeping, have the characters shed a 3-point penalty at the end of each interval.

RESOURCE DEPLETION TABLE

Contest Outcome	Depletion Penalty
Complete Victory	0
Major Victory	-3
Minor Victory	-3
Marginal Victory	-3
Marginal Defeat	-6
Minor Defeat	-6
Major Defeat	-6
Complete Defeat	-9

10.2.1 Required Resource Use

As part of your setting design, you may specify that certain actions in a setting always require the use of a community resource. Because the resource use is obligatory, it need not meet the usual criteria for entertainment value. Also, when the resource is used as an augment, the PCs can also add a second augment from some other ability, adjudicated according to the standard rules, including entertainment value criteria. (This way, the required resource use doesn't penalize you by forcing you to augment with a low-rated resource when you could otherwise use a higher-rated ability.)

10.2.2 Penalities to Resources

Threats to community resources act as a spur to PC action. The Narrator may rule that the penalty from any contest outcome may be applied to a resource. (It might at the same time be applied to one or more PC abilities.)

When choosing a penalty arising from a player defeat in a simple contest, use the Consequences Of Defeat table. For an extended contest, the penalty corresponds to the second worst state of adversity suffered by a defeated group member.

If groups voluntarily concede a contest by withdrawing, their communities suffer a Major Defeat.

10.2.3 Bolstering Resources

PCs can add bonuses to community resources by seeking out and overcoming relevant obstacles, specifying in the contest framing that the proceeds of victory go the community. If they succeed, bonuses from the Consequences Of Victory table are applied to a resource instead of one or more character abilities. (The Narrator may rule that the bonus also applies to PCs in social situations that

involve community members, re ecting gratitude for their efforts on behalf of the community.)

10.2.4 Background Events

Changes to resources brought about by PCs take center stage in a series, but in the background all sorts of other events periodically alter the community's prosperity. These include the actions of other community members, who are depleting and replenishing resources all the time, as well as the unexpected intrusion of outside forces.

At the beginning of each interval, ask one of the players' to perform a simple contest of each resource against a resistance equal to the average value of all resources. These contests simulate events outside of the PCs' control or in uence; they can't be augmented or bumped up with hero points.

The result of the contest may apply a modifier to a resource, as per the following table:

RESOURCE FLUCTUATION TABLE

Contest Outcome	Depletion Penalty
Complete Victory	+9
Major Victory	+6
Minor Victory	+3
Marginal Victory	0
Marginal Defeat	0
Minor Defeat	-3
Major Defeat	-6
Complete Defeat	-9

Except where the group is exceptionally keen on tracking resources, the GM should skip the background events process when the PCs are long absent from home. The GM should rejigger them to serve their plot purposes when they return. The GM may also want to shuffle this process offstage when the PCs are occupied by epic events. This prevents them from having to flee from a climactic plot development to go home and tend to the beet crop.

10.2.5 Crisis Tests

When resources endure penalties, the Narrator conducts a crisis test at the beginning of each game session to see if trouble strikes the community. A high

but penalized rating can still lead to crisis, because people have adjusted to the equilibrium it offers and feel squeezed when it shifts on them.

A crisis test is a simple contest (one for each penalized ability) of the Resource rating against a resistance equal to the average of all resource ratings. Like background event checks, these can't be augmented or bumped up by player action. On any defeat, the community starts to visibly suffer.

Invent specific reasons for each fluctuation and narrate them to the players.

Resource crises spur the PCs to action, challenging them to find ways to bolster the affected resources (see above). When bolstered, the crisis is reversed. If the PCs neglect their duties or fail, the crisis worsens.

Use crisis tests only as needed, as a tool to generate story elements. If the group already has enough story on its hands, suspend them until you next need a new plot hook.

10.2.6 Cementing Benefits of Background Events

Bonuses from background events are temporary, unless the PCs take steps to lock in their benefits. Doing so requires the group to achieve a major goal, perhaps taking focus for an evening's worth of play. If the PCs succeed, the background event bonus may, as per the next section, later solidify into a permanent increase in the resource's rating.

When PCs cement a background bonus, the Narrator changes her notation of that bonus, attributing it to them.

10.3 Changes to Resource Ratings

At the end of your chosen interval, review your resource notation table.

Any resource with a bonus of 3 or more in its PC column increases by 1 for each 3 points of bonus, for a maximum increase of 3.

Any resource with a penalty in its Total column decreases by 1 for each 3 points of penalty, for a maximum loss of 2.

Any remaining modifiers are now reduced to 0.

Now start a new Resource Notation table, with resource ratings altered to re ect any changes from the above process.

Having made permanent changes to the community's resource ratings, you then restart the cycle by again testing for a new set of background events.

10.4 Changes from Plot Events

You may decide that certain remarkable triumphs or horrifying catastrophes may directly alter a resource rating, independent of the resource tracking system given here. The possibility of a dramatic swing in community fortunes should be made clear by the Narrator during contest framing, so that the players know the stakes and can pull out all the stops to secure victory or stave off defeat.

Appendix

Version Changes

Version 2.2

- Uses of he/she changed to they/their
- Flagged some rules that are not required, as optional to allow those using the SRD to safely omit them if not required.
- Clarified that contest results are only reciprocal between PCs. When the contest is against a resistance set by the GM, the results indicate whether the PC gains the prize, and the GM narrates the result for the resistance based on this.
- Rephrased the contest results to emphasise: Yes, No, And…, But…, This change is designed to dissuade GMs from misunderstanding that the prize is obtained on a marginal victory, one of the most common result types, and instead encourage GMs to allow PCs to fail forward on such a result by introducing downstream complications.
- Provided clarity that consequences of defeat and benefit of victory are optional and the GM should focus on using the prize to narrate the outcome of a contest, only applying mechanical benefits if they make sense.
- Specific Ability Bonuses are dropped. They were hard for the GM to adjudicate and the same intent is better served by using a stretch on a broad ability when contesting against a PC with a more specific ability.
- A winning group in a Group Simple Contest does not suffer a Consequence of Defeat as a result of a low RP difference victory any more, the GM should narrate consequences from the level of victory, if appropriate.
- Dropped the negative consequences for the winner in an Extended Contest during the Rising Action. If the winner is a PC the degree of success already suggests consequences in addition to the prize on a marginal victory. So this rule is over-complication.
- Made it clear that only a PC should use a parting shot, not the resistance.