

## 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.

## 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.

## 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 omitted 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.

## 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.

## Participants

### Players

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

### 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.

## 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.

## **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.

## **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.

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

## **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.

## **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.

## **Resolution Methods**

The core resolution methods are as follows:

### **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).

### **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.

### **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.

### No Repeat Attempts

A contest represents all of a PC's 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, they 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.

### 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

### 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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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 participants, or resolve the ties in favor of the PC.

## **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.

### **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.

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.

You get one bump up for each level of mastery your PC has greater than your opponent's.

### **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).

## **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
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.

#### 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.

#### 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.

#### 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.

## 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.

## Character Creation

### 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.

## 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.

## 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 affiliation.

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.

## 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 flaws 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.

## Simple Contest

### 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. 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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 Degree of Success 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.

## Group 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: Degrees of Success

#### DEGRESS OF SUCCESS TABLE

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

### 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.

### 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.

## 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.

### 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.

### 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

### 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).

### 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.

## Relationships

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

## 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.

## 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.

## Patrons

Patrons enjoy greater access to resources than the PC, either through personal ownership (as in a Merchant Prince) or authority (as in the governor 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.

## **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.

### **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.

## **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.

### **Sidekick**

A sidekick is a secondary character under the player's control. Most of the time they stay 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 continue 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.

### **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.

### **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.

## **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.

### **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.

### **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.

## **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.