



CHAPTER 6: PLAYING THE GAME

SYSTEM FUNDAMENTALS

You've made your character, chosen a starting Pokémon, and you're ready to start playing the game. What now? First of all, we're going to establish a few basic guidelines that will help you read PTU's rules.

1. When working with decimals in the system, round down to the nearest whole number, even if the decimal is .5 or higher. 3.9999 would still round down to 3.
2. Percentages are additive, not multiplicative. For example, this means if you gain a 20% boost somewhere and a 30% somewhere else, you gain a 50% boost in total rather than gaining a 20% boost and then 30% more off of that total, which would result in a total 56% boost.
3. Specific rules trump more general ones. Basically, there are a lot of general rules in the system, and then there are a lot of specific uses or exceptions to those rules within certain parameters.

TAKING ACTION

Now, it's time to learn how to have your character act in the game. As you play the game, you simply narrate your character's actions, and your GM will narrate the way the world around them reacts.

Your character can do most basic actions without a problem. However, when there's a good chance of failure with interesting consequences, the dice will come into play to decide success or failure. When this happens, most actions will be resolved through **Skill Checks**.

Don't roll the dice if the action is trivial or putting a chance of failure on it isn't interesting. If you're roleplaying a scene about simply chatting in a park, and you want to climb a tree while talking, then you climb the tree! Now if you're running from a pack of Mightyenas and scrambling for a hiding spot, then that would be a time to roll for climbing the tree!

Making a Skill Check is easy. Simply roll a number of d6s equal to your Rank in the appropriate Skill and then add your modifiers from equipment and other bonuses. If you meet or exceed the GM's set **Difficulty Check**, or DC, for the task, then you succeed. If not, then you fail, and the GM narrates the results of your failure.

Your GM will usually tell you which Skill to roll for a Skill Check. For example, you might tell your GM you're searching the room for traces of fur, feather, or scales that a Pokémon's left behind, and your GM would tell you to make a Perception Check.

Don't be afraid to suggest a Skill as you declare your action, especially if there's a bit of nuance to your action. For example, if you simply tell your GM you're trying to sneakily tail someone through town, it's likely you'll be thrown a Stealth Check. This may not fit if your intention was not to remain unseen but to blend in with the crowd and act like a passerby, which would be a Guile Check. Don't get too crazy with this. Remember that your GM has the last word on this, and any disagreements should be settled after the game session and not during it.

Finally, your GM may also decide to impose **Circumstantial Penalties** on your Skill Check. GMs, see page 465 for details on setting DCs and using penalties.

OPPOSED CHECKS

Not all Skill Checks are rolled against a static difficulty. Much of the time, you will attempt an action that is directly opposed by someone else's, such as sneaking by a watchful guard or lying to someone. In that case, both you and your opponent make Skill Rolls and compare the results. In the above examples, Stealth vs Perception and Guile vs Intuition would be tested. Whoever rolls higher wins the **Opposed Check**. On a tie, the defender wins. The defender is whoever maintains the status quo, so in the examples above, the guard keeping watch and the person trying to detect a lie count as the defenders.

COOPERATIVE ACTIONS

Trainers and Pokémon can and often should cooperate on Skill Checks. There are two ways this is done.

The first way is through **Team Skill Checks**, which are used for activities where multiple participants can contribute equally to one task without a primary actor. Often, these Skill Checks are too difficult for one person or Pokémon to handle alone. A good example of this would be having multiple Trainers and Pokémon hold back a boulder about to roll down a hill.

The GMs set a DC as they would for a normal Skill Check, and then multiplies it by the number of people they would normally expect to be necessary for the task. This becomes the **Team DC** for the Skill Check. Each Trainer or Pokémon participating rolls their Skill, and the total sum of all the Skill Checks is compared to the Team DC to determine success or failure. In some cases, you will need to make adjustments to this process. For example, a very large and strong Pokémon with a Power

Capability much higher than the other participants may count their Athletics Check twice when summing up the Skill Checks to hold back a boulder.

The second way cooperative Skill Checks are conducted is through **Assisted Skill Checks**. There is one primary actor in the task, and someone else may assist them in minor ways. The DC for the Skill Check is set as normal, and the primary actor rolls their Skill Check, adding half the Skill Rank of their helper as a bonus to the Check. The helper must have at least a Novice Rank in the Skill being tested to assist in this way.

MARGIN OF SUCCESS

Not all successes (and failures!) are created equal. The amount by which you exceed or fail to meet the DC for a Skill Check should factor into the outcome of your action. If your GM sets a DC 12 Acrobatics check to cross a rickety bridge without falling, then a result of 12 to 14 on your Skill Check probably represents you barely making it across, nearly falling one or two times. A result of 16 to 18 might represent confidently striding across the bridge, and on 20+ you might even do cartwheels to the other side. The same applies for failure. A result of 11 would represent barely falling off near the end of your trek, while a 2 might correspond to tripping over the edge as soon as you step on.

Your GM may decide that succeeding by a large margin of success nets you additional gains, though this isn't a guarantee. While succeeding particularly well on a Perception Check to find a hidden switch in a wall might also reveal signs that someone else has used it recently, it's difficult to succeed more in the rickety bridge example above. At most, you succeed while looking cooler, but you don't gain anything more concrete from it.

In general, succeeding by a margin of at least 4 or 5 is probably worth a little extra oomph, if the situation allows for it.

On the other hand, if you fail by a very small margin, your GM may decide that rather than fail the task entirely, you succeed – but at a cost. You may cross the rickety bridge, but a slip near the end causes you to drop one of the ancient relics you had just found in the Unown ruins on the other side.

HOW LONG DO ACTIONS TAKE?

In most cases, it'll be up to your GM to determine how long an action takes, and your result on your Skill Check may affect that as well. A higher Stealth Check would allow you to pick a lock faster or more quickly sneak through a guarded facility, for example.

However, the types of actions listed in Features do give rough guidelines. **Standard Actions** take no more than a few seconds to execute. **Swift Actions** and **Free Actions** are usually even quicker. **Extended Actions** take at least enough time to be impossible in the middle of combat, though the specific amount of time is up to the GM. A Chronicler putting away a record may only take a minute or two, but attempting to repair a Poké Ball may take much longer, up to 15 minutes or half an hour.

Many Features also refer to **Scenes**. Scenes do not have a fixed duration but are defined by the narrative. Think about how scenes work in television. If you cut to a transition, have a time skip, or everyone is leaving the location after a dramatic event, it's probably a change in Scene. Battles are often a Scene, though a Scene can sometimes contain multiple battles.

Examples of Scene transitions include: when the party splits up to do shopping in town or visits a Pokémon Center, when wrapping up a wild Pokémon battle and speeding through some mundane travel time, when finishing up an investigation of a crime scene and leaving for another location, and when entering a new city after a journey through the wilds.

EXTENDED SKILL CHECKS

Skill Checks can take place over a longer period of time, such as a complex repair job on a car. In this case, **Extended Skill Checks** are used. The DC for the task is set as usual and then given a multiplier from 2 to 5 based on how long and complex the task is. A multiplier of 2 represents a simple but tedious task, such as carefully harvesting parts of a plant. A multiplier of 3 or 4 represents more complex and difficult tasks, such as repairing broken machines and carefully canvassing a large crime scene. A multiplier of 5 is reserved for the most complex and elaborate Skill Checks, such as disassembling a criminal Team's experimental superweapon. The normal DC multiplied by this multiplier creates the **Extended DC** for the Check.

Next, the GM decides how long each Skill Check to work on this task will take. This may be anything from a few minutes per Skill Check to limiting a character to rolling once a day to spend their evening downtime hours working on a project. It could be even longer for more advanced tasks. This is the **Time Interval** for the Extended Skill Check.

Finally, the GM decides whether this task is one that will be eventually completed as long as the time is put in, or whether it is possible for a character to hit a wall in their progress. In the former case, a character working on this Extended Skill Check simply rolls a Skill Check every Time Interval and adds together their results until they meet the Extended DC. However, in the latter case, they must reach the Extended DC within a number of Skill Checks equal to half their Rank in the Skill being tested. Failing to meet the Extended DC within this number of rolls represents reaching the limit of one's knowledge or expertise, such as an engineer realizing the manufacture of a weapon is beyond their current understanding no matter how long they spend repairing it.

ACTION POINTS

Action Points, or **AP** for short, are a special resource used to fuel many special actions through Features. Without Action Points, these Features cannot be used.

Trainers have a maximum Action Point pool equal to 5, plus 1 more for every 5 Trainer Levels they have achieved; a Level 15 Trainer would have a maximum of 8 Action Points, for example.

Action Points are completely regained at the end of each **Scene**. However, some effects may **Bind** or **Drain** Action Points. Bound Action Points remain off-limits until the effect that Bound them ends, as specified by the Feature or effect. If no means of ending the effect is specified, then the effect may be ended and AP Unbound during your turn as a Free Action. Drained AP becomes unavailable for use until after an Extended Rest is taken.

Action Points are best used through Features; it does not cost any special action to use Action Points except the Action required by the Feature. In a pinch, any Trainer may spend 1 Action Point as a free action before making an Accuracy Roll or Skill Check to add +1 to the result. This cannot be done more than once per roll. This can be used to modify your Pokémon's Accuracy or Skill Checks as well as your own!

BASIC CAPABILITIES

Aside from Skill Checks, Capabilities are probably the biggest determiner of how you take basic non-combat actions in Pokémon Tabletop United, and even when you or your Pokémon use Skill Checks, you may need to consult your Capabilities to determine the limits of your actions. The main Basic Capabilities are **Power**, which measures how much weight you can lift, **Throwing Range**, which is how far you can throw, **High** and **Long Jump**, which measure how far you can jump, and **Movement Capabilities**, which determine your movement speed using various methods like running or swimming.

There are also **Special Capabilities** which represent the various elemental powers and other special talents Pokémon have. These are too numerous for this chapter on basic gameplay and are instead included in their own section in Chapter 10: Indices and Reference on page 303.

POWER

Power represents a Pokémon or Trainer's physical strength. The chart below shows how much weight a Pokémon or Trainer can bear, depending on their power value.

Power Value	Heavy Lifting	Staggering Weight Limit	Drag Weight Limit
1	2-5 lb.	10 lb.	20 lb.
2	20-30 lb.	60 lb.	120 lb.
3	35-50 lb.	100 lb.	200 lb.
4	45-70 lb.	140 lb.	280 lb.
5	60-90 lb.	180 lb.	360 lb.
6	75-115 lb.	230 lb.	460 lb.
7	100-140 lb.	300 lb.	600 lb.
8	120-190 lb.	380 lb.	760 lb.
9	150-240 lb.	480 lb.	960 lb.
10	200-300 lb.	600 lb.	1200 lb.
11	250-375 lb.	750 lb.	1500 lb.
12	350-450 lb.	900 lb.	1800 lb.
13	450-525 lb.	1050 lb.	2100 lb.
14	500-600 lb.	1200 lb.	2400 lb.
15	550-675 lb.	1350 lb.	2700 lb.
16	600-750 lb.	1500 lb.	3000 lb.

The Chart above shows various weight limits based on Power Value.

Heavy Lifting: A Pokémon or Trainer bearing weight within their Heavy Lifting range takes a -2 CS penalty to Speed, and a -2 penalty to Evasion and Accuracy, but may otherwise move and take actions. Actions may be restricted; if you're carrying a Growlithe in both arms, you can't very well use attacks that depend on your hands.

Staggering: While lifting weight higher than their "Heavy Lifting" range and up to their Staggering Weight limit, Pokémon or Trainers are able to move only 1 Meter per Shift Action, and cannot take Standard Actions. While lifting Staggering Weight, a target also suffers a -4 CS penalty to Speed, and -4 to Evasion and Accuracy. Each round of carrying Staggering Weight requires an Athletics Check with a DC of 4.

Drag Weight: Pokémon and Trainers can push or pull objects that are heavier than their Staggering Weight Limit but lighter than their Drag Weight Limit at a rate of 1 meter per round. Beneficial conditions may greatly increase the drag weight limit; wheels on the dragged object, for example, can multiply the drag weight limit considerably.



THROWING RANGE

Trainers have a **Throwing Range** that determines how far they can throw Poké Balls and other small items. This Capability is equal to 4 plus their Athletics Rank in meters.

JUMPING CAPABILITIES

There are two kinds of Jumps – **Long Jumps** and **High Jumps**. Long Jumps measure how far a Pokémon or Trainer can Jump, while High Jumps measure how high. Each Pokémon or Trainer has a specific value associated with each of these; this value is represented in meters and measures how far they can jump without making a check (assuming the jump is not particularly tricky; jumping onto a narrow ledge might require a check even if the distance isn't particularly far).

Pokémon or Trainers may attempt to increase their High or Long Jump value by +1 by making an Acrobatics Check with a DC of 16.

MOVEMENT CAPABILITIES

There are many different kinds of Movement Capabilities. The most basic Movement Capability is the Overland Capability, which measures how fast a Trainer or Pokémon can walk or run on a surface. Movement Capabilities don't generally need to be tested, although the **Sprint Action** may be taken as a Standard Action to increase Movement Speed by 50% for a turn.

Burrow: The Burrow Capability determines how much a Pokémon can shift each turn while underground. The holes dug are only as large as the Pokémon who burrows. If a Pokémon learns the Move Dig and does not have the Burrow Capability, they gain Burrow 3. If they already have the Burrow Capability, the Burrow value is raised 3. A Pokémon or Trainer ending its turn underground must spend a Standard Action to remain underground. If a Pokémon or Trainer has already spent its Standard Action on a round it ends underground, it instead forfeits its next Standard Action.

Overland: Overland is a Movement Capability that defines how many meters the Pokémon may shift while on dry land. Most Pokémon and Trainers will use Overland as their primary movement capability.

Sky: The Sky Speed determines how many meters a Pokémon may shift in the air. If a Pokémon learns the Move Fly and does not have the Sky Capability, they gain Sky 4. If they already have the Sky Capability, the Sky value is raised by 4.

Swim: Swim is a Movement Capability that defines how quickly the Pokémon can move underwater. If a Pokémon learns the Move Dive and does not have the Swim Capability, they gain Swim 3. If they already have the Underwater Capability, the Swim value is raised 3.

Levitate: Levitate is a Movement Capability that defines how quickly the Pokémon moves while floating or levitating. When using the Levitate Capability, the maximum height off the ground the Pokémon can achieve is equal to half of their Levitate Capability. If a Pokémon gains the Levitate ability and does not have the Levitate Capability, they gain Levitate 4. If they already have the Levitate Capability, the Levitate value is raised 2.

Teleporter: Teleporter is a Movement Capability that defines how far the Pokémon can travel by teleportation. Only one teleport action can be taken during a round of combat. The Pokémon must have line of sight to the location they wish to teleport to, and they must end each teleport action touching a surface (ie it is not possible to 'chain' teleports in order to fly). If a Pokémon also has the Sky or Levitate Capability, they may Teleport into Sky spaces (only to spaces within their maximum height for Levitate). Teleporter cannot be increased by taking a Sprint Action. If a Pokémon learns the move Teleport and does not have the Teleporter Capability they gain Teleporter 4. If they already have the Teleporter Capability, the Teleporter value is raised 4.

PLAYING WITH POKÉMON

Players typically do not exercise direct control over their Trainer's Pokémon except in combat. Even putting mechanics such as Loyalty aside, we find there are more interesting roleplaying opportunities to be found when the GM controls all Pokémon, and the players simply control their Trainer characters.

Pokémon can make Skill Checks and use Capabilities just as Trainers can, and while Pokémon aren't directly controlled by a player, the process is quite similar when it comes to taking action. Simply roleplay your Trainer asking your Pokémon for help or giving it instructions, and then your GM narrates the result, calling for dice rolls if necessary.

While Pokémon should definitely exercise their own agency and display their own personality, we recommend that Pokémon generally be amenable to a Trainer's instructions, except in the case of low Loyalty and perhaps in extremely dangerous situations or when it heavily goes against their nature or moral code.

As you might expect, a number of activities with specific developed gameplay mechanics revolve around Pokémon. Most of these have already been outlined in Chapter 5: Pokémon: Breeding (page 213), Capturing Pokémon (page 214), befriending them in the wild (page 215), finding Pokémon fossils (page 216), Fishing (page 217), and using Pokémon as Mounts (page 218). In addition, Chapter 7 covers everything about Combat.

Outside of the mechanical actions outlined previously, we also recommend time be given to simply roleplaying with Pokémon and developing their personalities. This is one of the biggest advantages playing Pokémon as a tabletop RPG has over the video games, after all! Pokémon Amie is adorable, but it can't beat the depth of character development you can express in a roleplaying game. A GM has plentiful room to develop Pokémon into compelling characters in their own right with their own desires, goals, and inhibitions.



TIPS FOR PLAYERS

Here are a number of miscellaneous tips that we think will help new players of Pokémon Tabletop United.

CHOOSE FAVORITES!

Maybe this seems unintuitive, but you should choose one or two Pokémon to focus on more in on-screen roleplaying opportunities. This doesn't have to mean your character prefers those Pokémon over others. Off-screen, they could be giving equal attention to their whole team, but in a roleplaying game setting, it's much easier for a GM to flesh out the personalities of a small handful of Pokémon and give them ample screentime than a full six or more per player.

USE POKÉMON YOU LIKE!

This isn't the competitive battling scene, so you don't have to worry about a metagame or Pokémon tiers. Not only do the mechanics of Pokémon Tabletop United make the differences in stat totals between Pokémon much less important compared to the video games, but many strategies from the video games simply don't work, or must be adjusted. The fact ubiquitous and powerful moves in the video games such as Earthquake, Draco Meteor, and Overheat can only be used once a Scene in PTU means you'll often be seeking out other staple Moves for your team and not simply relying on a narrow set of the "best" Moves.

That aside, your GM is the one creating the challenges you'll face. Unless all of the players seek out hyper-optimized teams, there's little reason for a GM to go all out with incredibly difficult to deal with strategies for every encounter. Both you and the GM will have more fun if you play loosely and choose Pokémon you like rather than what you think will be the absolute best.

STATE CLEAR INTENTIONS!

If you simply tell your GM you're walking on to a route outside of town without being clear on why, your GM may not know if you simply want to move on or if you're looking for a wild Pokémon encounter to add to your team. You don't want to come up short when you're searching for wild Pokémon, and your GM doesn't want to spend time thinking of Pokémon they think you'd want on your team when you aren't looking to catch any.

BE READY TO ACCEPT LOSSES!

One of the fantastic parts of roleplaying in a Pokémon setting is that it's easy for characters to face both soaring triumphs and crushing defeats without the threat of permanent loss like death. Unlike in the video games, you won't even automatically lose half your money if you lose to a Gym Leader. GMs will naturally feel much more comfortable creating challenges that won't guarantee a player victory when it comes to League matches because a "party wipe" in that case doesn't lead to death and new characters being rolled or the end of a campaign.

TALK TO YOUR GM!

We don't take a hard-line stance in the system about a lot of things, from general Pokémon behavior to even the genre of the game. The tabletop isn't the video game, and you should be careful about the assumptions you might unconsciously bring in from your experiences with the games. Be sure to talk to your GM about how their world works and what you can expect.

More than likely, it doesn't make sense to challenge everyone you see on the road to a Pokémon battle or to catch everything in sight just to leave it in a box somewhere. Nor would your Pokémon appreciate being treated as just tools or weapons (though if you're playing a Lasher this may be appropriate!). Your GM probably has an idea of how the typical Trainer operates and the rules and regulations surrounding them. The video games leave a lot unsaid about how the world of Pokémon works, and you should pay attention to how your GM fills in the gaps.

Additionally, note that many of the guidelines we give in this book are meant to be flexible and change based on the campaign, such as Pokémon's social and knowledge Skills, the Mountable Capability, and how Shiny Pokémon are handled. These aren't hard and fast rules, and you shouldn't be afraid to discuss with the GM how they'll work in their campaign.