# Version 0.2.5 Playtest Data

Playtest Ideas

* Test skimmability of rulebook: give to unfamiliar GM, quiz them, time how long it takes to find the answer (regardless of correctness).
  + How many items do players start with?
  + Which phase does combat usually start with?
  + What happens if a player wants to persuade a shopkeep for a discount?
  + If 2 players roll *against* each other, who wins a tie?
  + If a player wants to do an RP-Roll during combat, how much AP does it cost?
  + How many times can you move during the Player Phase?
  + How do you level up?
  + How much Health does a level 5 player have?
  + If two players try to do the same thing and tie, who wins?
  + Which Stat can change dice rolls?
* Start letting others GM sessions. Ask them to do whatever theme/world/story they want, but request a minimum of the following:
  + 1 dungeon (I recommend around 4 rooms for brevity)
  + 1 puzzle
  + 2 combat sessions (1 easy, 1 hard)
  + 3 custom Items
* Focus on players needing only their character booklets to know how to play the game, GMs can access rulebook to study before and during their sessions

Feedback Quotes

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Combat

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Rules

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# Version 0.2.5

## 9/11/2023

Update Character Booklet Quick Reference section  
-I updated the roleplaying section. While it is way different than the core book’s wording, I think it’s more succinct and helpful. I originally wanted to avoid differing the two texts too much because I was worried I might forget to update one or the other, resulting in mismatched rules; however, I’d rather have better, mismatched text and have more proofreading work to do.

-Overall font size was reduced in favor of more spacing. Playtesting will tell how much 1 size change in font matters, but I think spacing out the lines of text greatly improves readability and will be very worth it.

-Bold font was used to stand out certain phrases of text. For example, “Roll 1d6 after dealing damage or healing. If you roll a 6, double your damage or healing!” now has certain words bolded to allow players to get the gist of the sentences while quickly skimming. Just the bolded text reads, “after dealing damage or healing. Roll a 6, double” I would like to playtest whether this improves or degrades readability.

Other sentences have keywords bolded so players can quickly skim through larger text boxes for the relevant sentence. For example, the Action Points callout has 5 sentences; the only bolded words include “Ranged actions,” “6 max AP,” and “track.” I hope this allows players to skim for the bolded text relevant to the specific sentence they want to re-read.

-I added spending 4+ AP for Special Items. While that’s covered in the book, players were often confused when picking up loot during playtests, so I think adding this extra sentence will prompt players to ask more about how Items work, facilitating an explanation from the GM.

# Version 0.2.1 Playtest Data

Playtest Ideas

* Test skimmability of rulebook: give to unfamiliar GM/player, quiz them, time how long it takes to find the answer (regardless of correctness).
  + How many items do players start with?
  + Which phase does combat usually start with?
  + What happens if a player wants to persuade a shopkeep for a discount?
  + If 2 players roll *against* each other, who wins a tie?
  + If a player wants to do an RP-Roll during combat, how much AP does it cost?
  + How many times can you move during the Player Phase?
  + How do you level up?
  + How much Health does a level 5 player have?
  + If two players try to do the same thing and tie, who wins?
  + Which Stat can change dice rolls?
* Start letting others GM sessions. Ask them to do whatever theme/world/story they want, but request a minimum of the following:
  + 1 dungeon (I recommend around 4 rooms for brevity)
  + 1 puzzle
  + 2 combat sessions (1 easy, 1 hard)
  + 3 custom Items
* Ask players how they feel about rolling for criticals

Feedback Quotes

\*

Combat

\*

Rules

\*

# Version 0.2.1

## 9/9/2023

Added a Turret to the list of sample items.  
I wanted an example of how a more complex Item might work.

Some minor wording adjustments for clarity, and font changes for consistency.  
I changed some sentences that were very confusing to read based on playtest feedback over the cross-country playtesting.

Adjusted Stat blocks to help “In combat” sentences stand out.   
I want players to be able to quickly glance at the stats to determine combat “builds.”

I’ve adjusted a lot of wording in the Help for the GM section.  
Many sentences were confusing or overly bloated, so I trimmed them down to go more towards the more easily understood format of the player section of the book.

Enemy Health Adjustment: Easy is now half the PSP.  
I want to experiment with running Easy combat encounters, which should only take 1-2 rounds.   
Normal encounters should take 3-6 rounds, depending on extra mechanics/puzzles.   
Hard encounters could take much longer; these should be fit for boss fights and important story fights.

Roll Costs have been adjusted slightly, and a new rule for buying rolls has been introduced.  
Playtesting showed that GMs had way too many d6s, and they rarely bought d3s (they tended to do PSP/d6 cost, then spend the remainder on d3s and Combat Points, often leading to having too many d6s and 1-2 d3s and Combat Points).   
To remedy this, I added a rule where GMs cannot buy additional dice of any type until they buy the opposite type (so if a GM has 1d6, they cannot buy a second d6 until they buy 1d3). With this new rule, I aim to prevent overpowered encounters.

For clarity with the new roll buying rule, I added a quick calculation to determine how many of each dice GMs can get: PSP/16 (the cost of 1d6+1d3).   
This is to simplify the math behind creating combat encounters.

I filled the previously blank Combat page with guidance on buying and using Rolls.   
With playtesting, I noticed GMs just ignored the blank page meant for notes and used their own devices. Rather than waste a page, I decided to provide guidance on buying rolls (as mentioned in the last paragraph). I also advised the GM to use caution when spending more than 1d6 per player level, to avoid GMs using all rolls against one player. I also listed some examples of how to spend Rolls. I noticed GMs would hit a creative block on how to use rolls outside of simply attacking players, so I added some examples of various actions they could use in the case of writer’s block.

Enemy Movement now costs 1d3 or 1CP per Zone.   
I noticed GMs often had leftover d3s and CPs throughout combat. To make it feel like the GM wasn’t wasting resources, movement now costs resources; this shouldn’t actually affect combat balance, but I want to playtest if this makes running combat *feel* more dynamic and involved.

## 8/3/2023

Players get static amount of SP instead of rolling for them.   
Instead of rolling for SP, players get a static amount. Rolling low numbers could lead to an unbalanced party (which I avoided by introducing static Health amounts). Players could still potentially be in much lower tiers than other players, but this would be due to their choice when levelling up, not poor chance.

I chose 4 as the amount of SP that players get on level up.  
Players start with 3 SP in each tier, getting 4 SP on a level up means that players can immediately start working towards a character build, reaching tier 2 at level 1. I hope this means players feel unique from each other very early.   
3 SP could make this feeling, but I worry that players would feel frustrated at *almost* getting access to the next tier.

# Version 0.2.0

## 7/21/2023

I reworked AP and Actions. I’ve decided to move away from “infinite” levels. This quickly gets unbalanced and will eventually cause combat to go on for ages. While they might be fun for some, I don’t think that’ll be fun for my target audience.

First, I reduced the number of AP players have.   
I did this because I noticed players rarely used all of their AP during combat, and instead of waiting for them to come up with stuff to do, thus dragging on combat, I decided to just reduce their AP, so there’s less for players to track. From here on out, I won’t focus on making combat shorter by having fewer rounds of combat, but instead by making those rounds go by quicker. From the GM perspective, the enemy phase goes by very quickly, preventing me from getting bored, so I’d like to emulate that feeling for players. Because of this change, I’ve adjusted the AP cost of all actions.

I also changed damage to be based on the player’s level instead of a roll of the dice.   
Although players like not having to roll to hit, it still feels bad spending AP and rolling 1 damage or 1 health. It also took more time than I’d like for players to remember what dice to roll (even though it’s always a d6), and what to add to it, so having a more consistent basis for damage should speed up player decision-making.

I was worried about removing rolling from combat, so I added critical rolls.   
A lot of players who play TTRPGs *like* rolling dice, so I didn’t want to remove that aspect entirely. I like the idea of players always dealing the damage they expect to deal, but to avoid excluding the feeling of rolling dice for *more* damage, I added a rule for criticals: Players roll to see if they *double* their damage/healing. I predict this will feel much better to players, since rolling low doesn’t cause them to lose anything or deal less damage.

In the rulebook, I replaced the section about Custom Abilities with the information on critical rolls.   
I did this because this system will be advertised as “homebrew-friendly,” so the section seemed very redundant.

This is the final change I’ll make before my slew of playtesting.

## 7/16/2023

I updated my formatting. Now all body text is Arial size 12. Standout information is Arial Black. All headers are Georgia. All body text inside callout boxes is also in Georgia. This saved a ton of space and made the book appear more presentable overall.

## 7/15/2023

I did some research on printing and selling just the rulebook through Barnes&Noble.   
With this, I could sell the book for $6.45, making $1.00 profit per book.

I also researched selling through TheGameCrafter, which would include 5 character booklets, the rulebook, 5 d6s, 5 d3s(d6 with double numbers printed), 5 pencils, and the box for everything.   
This would sell for $30, and I would make $0.29 profit per box.

I could also sell a version that just includes the rulebook, 5 character sheets, and 5 of each dice for $24.20 and make $1.00 per game.   
I researched that buying the Barnes&Noble book (*without* character sheets) and buying 6d6 and 5d3 (from Amazon) would cost about $20.50, so I think this is a well-justified price to include some dice and pre-printed character sheets.

I could *also* sell a similar version that includes a pencil for $24.57 and make $1.00 per game. I’m not sure if the 37 cent increase would justify the pencil that would come from TGC, so I’m ordering my own proof copy to see if it’s a pencil I’d like to use as a GM.

## 7/14/2023

I began working on a rough prototype for how the app would look.   
I focused on prototyping the main pages I’d want to start on, including the home page, which has a list of all characters and a button to go to the rules pages; the character home, which contains buttons to access other parts of the character sheet, including skill pages, an AP tracker, and ways to track HP, Stat points, etc; and a page of Actions for each Skill.

# Version 0.1.9

## 7/6/2023

Balancing damage and healing using total Stat Points was insanely unbalanced, and Skill abilities were massively overpowered by increasing AP.

In response, I made damage scale off the points in that ability’s tier and healing scale off of levels (since Health increases with player level).

Skill abilities were reworked to exclude changing AP. New abilities include Focus, which allows a reroll for cheap AP (similar to Scharisma’s Ultimate Roller, but this costs AP) and Embolden, which spends 1 AP to give two other players 1 AP (similar to Support’s entrust, but weaker).

Tier 6 abilities have been removed or moved to other tiers.  
Tier 6 is now reserved for +6 to RP-Rolls and adding PIT damage to all damage/healing.

I adjusted the character sheet so players only hve to track Points they gain from leveling up.

I also added a quick reference section for common rules to the character sheet.

## 7/8/2023

I updated the Help for the GM section to more accurately reflect the current rules and ease readability of the overall document.

# Version 0.1.8

## 7/1/2023

I iterated on the Character Sheet.

To remedy the confusion about Actions that can be used during Enemy Phases, I changed the text from “This can be done during the Enemy Phase” to “This can be done during any phase.”

I’m trying out Circles instead of squares, and I made other formatting shapes to make the character sheet more polished. I utilized the hex code of pencil lead to signify the Tier bubbles get filled in. I’m also leaning into user heuristics of bubbling in answer sheets with circles.

Instead of keeping Tiers separated by thick lines, tiers are isolated in their own squares. Now, thick lines *connect* these isolated squares to each other.

A heart icon is now included on the character sheet to break up the chunks of text and provide opportunities for players to personalize their character sheets. This was a success, as some players wrote their health in the heart, some colored it in based on their current health, and some simply colored it in and wrote their Health elsewhere.

Based on playtest feedback, I’ve adjusted the starting experience for players to include two Points to increase stats. This is to give level 1 players a sense of individuality from other level 1 players. It also “skips” the first level up experience, which has a strong chance of not changing the player’s build at all.

To support this idea of making player builds feel more unique, *and* to help make balancing combat more streamlined (and balanced), I adjusted all abilities that deal/heal damage. Now abilities do some kind of dice roll and are affected by the Points put into that ability’s Stat. For example, an ability that used to do 1d6 damage now does 1d6 + the amount of Stat Points damage.

This might also mean that I can increase enemy Health (and make balance easier by making the Health pool 10 per player level) so players feel more powerful, but this will need playtesting to confirm.

To remedy the fear of using the blank pages, I added some simple squares to divide these pages into arbitrary sections. I’ll see how players use this space to see if/how I adjust these blank pages.

## 6/30/2023

I conducted a playtest with Keegan, Gunnar, Sam, and Diana.

The overuse of square shapes is confusing, and all the similarities makes a lot of the information on the character sheet to blend together.

One idea most players supported was the idea of filling in *circles* instead of squares to show level up progression. One player seemed apprehensive about the idea, preferring the squares. Pay attention to larger playtest data.

Players tracked AP by either writing down how many they had and changing a number or by writing down their max and tracking the AP they’ve used in their heads.

One player asked if they were allowed to do Actions that said “This can be done during the Enemy Phase” during the Player Phase.

One player mentioned that all players felt too similar to each other at level 1. After this was brought up, other players agreed. This player also brought up the idea of asymmetric tiers (maybe Tier 1 is shorter than Tier 2). This is an interesting idea that I might adjust after doing some long-term campaign playtesting.

After talking about my desire for accessibility, multiple players suggested using Comic Sans for dyslexia accessibility.

Some players also mentioned that adding pictures to the rulebook would help break up the text and make the book more enticing to read through.

Players mentioned that the dashed line for the first Stat Box in each tier was confusing. Many assumed that each tier had 5 boxes (since it’s a more “rounded” number) and they thought they weren’t supposed to fill it in because of the dashed, vertical line.

Players also were afraid to use the blank pages of the character sheet because “they didn’t want to ruin the clean page.”

# Version 0.1.7

## 6/28/2023

I reformatted SimpleTop based on my conclusions from yesterday’s playtest. I also decided to change my font to Avenir for normal text and Georgia for boxed text.

I made text boxes have ¼ weight outlines when considered part of a section (like the box describing starting equipment), and 2¼ when used as standalone boxes.

Boxed text is also increased to 12 pt font (excluding the Action point boxes due to limited space).

All header font size has been increased.

Stat description texts have been adjusted for clarity, especially concerning combat description.

The old SimpleTop file is renamed to SimpleTop Printer Friendly.  
The Print Book version is renamed to simple SimpleTop.

I have decided to primarily work on the Print Book as the “main version” for SimpleTop.

I have also decided that version 0.1 will be dedicated to designing the player experience.   
Version 0.2 will be dedicated to designing the GM experience.  
Future versions don’t have any specific goals as of now.

## 6/27/2023

I conducted a “quiz” playtest with Darrel Leong.

Q: How much AP does it cost to move?  
A: 1 (given within 10 seconds).

Q: How many Items do you start with?  
A: 1…wait, no, however many your GM says (given within 10 seconds).

Q: Which of your Stats can increase Health?  
A: Scharisma?...I don’t know…oh wait, Strength. (Around 2 minutes to find this answer)

* Darrel first assumed Scharisma would increase Health because it said it has “healing capabilities,” and Darrel associated increasing Health with healing. I told him he was wrong
* Then Darrel looked past that page and gave up, saying he didn’t know, so I rephrased the question as “which Stat can increase your *max* Health?
* Darrel then quickly answered with Strength.

Q: When does your AP regenerate?  
A: During the Player Phase (given within 5 seconds)

Other Feedback

* The larger chunks of example text made Darrel skip past the roleplaying information. This wasn’t an issue with shorter example texts, like that with the levelling up section. He also mentioned how confusing the example text for roleplaying was because the examples were different scenarios.
  + This made me refactor the roleplaying example texts to be MUCH shorter (1-2 sentences instead of entire paragraphs).
  + I also made all example text italicized, so players associate italics with example text and can easily skip them, if so desired.
* Darrel was confused why game terms weren’t bold, especially since Strength was bold as a header but not when used in text. He said that italicized text made him more likely to skim past words. He also said that the bold for the reference text helped, but he also often missed it because it doesn’t stand out enough against the surrounding text
  + This made me adjust reference text to be bold, underlined, and increased by one font size.
  + I’m also considering bolding and italicizing game terms, but for now I kept them simply italicized unless they’re part of reference text (I don’t want them to confuse players and draw their attention unnecessarily).
  + I also added separation lines between the different stats because it seemed like Darrel skimmed past most of the Stats and read the last Stat on the page to hurry and get his answer. Hopefully this sections each Stat a bit better.

## 6/26/2023

I decided to print the 5x8 version of SimpleTop as the “default” printed version, and I reformatted another, even smaller version as the “Pocket Book” edition. This version will be printed on 4x6 inch pages.

## 6/21/2023

I’ve began working on formatting, since most rules seem pretty solid.

Speaking of solid rules, I decided to completely overhaul the action economy.   
Instead of having action categories, players can use actions by spending Action Points.

I made a starting point for AP values by giving the existing action categories AP values   
(Reactions were 1 AP, Movement was 1AP per move, Bonus Actions were 2 AP, and Actions were 3 AP).   
I initially thought that reactions should have a separate currency, or that abilities should have text saying they can be used during the Enemy Phase, but I decided to keep it simpler and allow more flexibility for player behavior by implementing a rule that any action can be used on the Enemy Phase for double the AP cost.   
I also increased the cost of previously-actions to 4 AP, so they don’t get overused.   
I wanted to give players enough AP to do 1 Movement, 1 Action, 1 Bonus Action during the player phase and 1 reaction during the enemy phase, so players start with 9 AP. This means that players can attack multiple times at level 1, but they can’t do much else, so it seems like a good starting point for balancing this economy.

I definitely want to involve a systems designer (or few) and get them to tear my numbers apart.

To improve UX, I added some abilities to the character sheet.  
I added **Hold** to the Strength action list as an example *Interaction*.  
I added **Movement** to the Skill action list so players can remember how movement works without having to reference the Player’s Guide.   
Players often forget that *damage rolls* count as a *roll* that can be reduced by React, so I simply added **Block** to reduce the damage a player takes. It’s functionally the same, but hopefully this helps players remember that they can reduce damage. This also allowed me to keep both React and Quick Help to Scharisma, to better represent how this skill can affect dice rolls.

## 6/22/2023

I conducted a “quiz” playtest with Michael Lesaca (NOT a First-Time User, he also looked over the book for a bit before the playtest).

I asked various questions and timed how long it took him to *find* the answers (even if he knew the answer immediately, I asked him to search for proof within the rules).   
On average, he found answers in 15-25 seconds.   
He took about 1 minute and a half to find out that he could increase his AP to a max of 16 (this longer time is okay, since I don’t specifically call this out in the rules; I asked this to see how one could figure out how to min-max their characters).

Michael also gave some general feedback, which resulted in some iterative changes.

I added Item categories with suggested AP cost, to replace the previous rule where GMs had to clarify AP cost in every Item’s description. This hopefully makes it much easier for GMs to prep.   
I also removed the rule of doubling AP cost during Enemy Phase in favor of adding “This can be done during the Enemy Phase” to specific Action descriptions.   
This was done to prevent confusing/overwhelming players.   
I reduced players’ starting AP to 8 as a result of this.

As a result of Michael’s feedback, I also reworded some phrases for clarity, like Movement’s description.

## 6/24/2023

I started working on a Pocket Book edition through Barnes & Nobles.

This version is mostly the same as the regular version, but the formatting has been vastly adjusted to accommodate a smaller print size (5x8). Extra blank pages have also been added for note-taking.

I also made some minor universal changes to the PB edition and the regular edition, like changing the shorthand for halved rolls from Xd6h to Xd6½.

I reworked the player’s character sheet on Figma into a format that works better for a 5x8 sized printing.

During this time, I printed out multiple iterations on multiple sizes that I reworked, and I finally decided on this 5x8 size.

I researched various companies to print this pocketbook edition.

I originally looked into this to get price quotes for how much this should cost; I want this game to be accessible, so I want to charge less than $20 for the book edition.

I also want to see how feasible it would be to playtest the pocketbook edition for GM playtesting.

I found out that Barnes & Noble has an incredibly easy process (so far) and very reasonable pricing for book printing, selling, and publishing, so I’ve decided to go ahead and go through the entire process and do a playtest with a printed version of the book.

Because of the surprising accessibility of printing and selling books, I’ve also decided to make a pocketbook edition for character sheets.

Since the character sheet by itself isn’t enough content to warrant the murder of so many trees, I’ve decided to release this as a “Book of Characters,” which will include 10 character sheets.

Each of these character sheets will have the character description on the first page (like the cover to a mini-book), followed by 4 pages for the Stats (1 page for each Stat), which is then followed by 5 blank pages for note-taking and as a buffer between other character sheets. This will make for a total of 80 pages.

## Playtest Data

Data

### Feedback Quotes

### Testers

So far, Cole Williams, Michael Lesaca, Addie (get name), Keegan Logan, Kaleb Brown, Sam Friedman.

# Version 0.1.6

## 6/12/23

I worked on formatting throughout the entire document. I started using more consistent visual language; game terms are now all Capitalized and *italicized*. I also used **bold** to highlight important phrases in each section of the rulebook in an attempt to make it skimmable; playtest this by quizzing someone unfamiliar with the game and timing them.

I also updated the Enemies in the Sample Content section to more accurately reflect the current rules.

## 6/18/23

I worked on adding visual guides throughout the rulebook to aid in readability and help create a consistent visual language.   
Callout boxes that are part of another section use thin borders, while callout boxes that are self-contained use thick borders.   
All boxes use shades of gray to avoid needing colored ink for printing (for accessibility).   
I added some icons to the stats from game-icons.net, and provided attribution.

I also changed Bonus Action to Auxiliary Action, to try and clear up confusion about having multiple types of Actions.   
I also asked players about Actions and Quick Actions when doing vague actions, and players assumed Quick Actions would be used for quick tasks; mechanically, I want players to be able to interact with the environment using either their main action or bonus action, with the bonus action simply halving the roll.   
This renaming will hopefully prevent association between the types of actions and time an action would take.   
I also refer to vague actions as “Interactions,” to hopefully provide a name players can ask about, instead of a vague idea.

I halved the amount of Health enemies have to help make combat shorter, but I also made it easier to buy higher damage rolls, to increase the stakes of combat.   
Instead of adding a cost to “combine” half rolls, I simply made a higher cost for a full roll to make it easier for the GM to create combat encounters.

I removed the healing effect from Quick Help because players still forget it exists, and even after being reminded, they rarely *want* to use it.

## Playtest Data

### 6/17/23

* Players *never* used Quick Help to heal anyone
* Players tried to use ranged attacks, but did not inherently understand that range doesn’t matter for attacks (this may need to be called out specifically)
* 5/6 Players filled out character details in the empty space to the right of the Who, What, Where, When, Why text. The 1 player that didn’t instead wrote a blurb explaining that their character is “as depicted in [movie]
* 4/6 players drew their character on the bottom-left of the character sheet, 1/6 player did not draw a character portrait, and 1/6 player drew their character portrait directly underneath their character details.

# Version 0.1.5

## 6/3/23

I created version 0.1.5.

I reorganized the player pages to more easily find information.

I renamed Speed to Skill, and renamed Shelter to Support (I thought of Skill being used for RP, like lockpicking), and Shelter didn’t seem to have any RP use, but Support could with teamwork checks.

I added colored-in checkboxes Tier 1 in each Stat, so players don’t get confused at the starting stats.

## 6/11/23

I moved the character sheet onto Figma so I could more easily work on formatting.

Progression checkboxes are now vertical and sectioned off to show a better sense of progression.

I’ve also moved some tier 4 abilities into tier 3 to provide a more even levelling experience.

## 6/11/23

I adjusted the formatting of the player section of the book, and I refined the information to represent the most recent ruleset. I changed some wording for clarity, and I utilized bolding to point out the TL;DR information in sections.

I adjusted the ***Help for the GM*** section to remove out of date content and teach the most recent ruleset.

## Playtest Data

No playtesting sessions have been held with sufficient data.