



Cogent Roleplay

Core Rulebook

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I INTRODUCTION			3
1	WELCOME TO COGENT ROLEPLAY		4
1.1	Cogent Roleplay		4
1.2	A Message From the Authors		4
2	AN INTRODUCTION TO ROLEPLAYING		6
2.1	What is Roleplaying		6
2.2	How is Roleplaying Done?		6
3	A QUICK OVERVIEW OF COGENT		8
3.1	Dice Pools and Challenge Levels		8
II CHARACTER CREATION			9
4	IDENTITY		10
4.1	Creating a Character		10
5	ATTRIBUTES		12
5.1	Attributes and Skills		12
5.2	Attributes		12
6	CORE SKILLS		14
6.1	Core Skills in Detail		15



INTRODUCTION



1. WELCOME TO COGENT ROLEPLAY

1.1. COGENT ROLEPLAY

Cogent is a Tabletop Pen and Paper Role-playing game that's easy to learn, but has the depth and sophistication for the most demanding of role-players. The Cogent Roleplay System aims to provide you with the tools you need to experience adventures as any character you can imagine, such as a great hero, scoundrel, villain, thief, rogue or any other. Your stories will unfold in all kinds of worlds and settings, such as classic medieval fantasy, science fiction, space opera, zombie apocalypse, steampunk, superhero – or something of your own unique creation. Have fun, be fearless, and create your own stories worthy of the greatest myths and legends!

1.2. A MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHORS

Let us introduce ourselves – we are Josiah Brooks (**Jazza**) and Shad Brooks (of **Shadiversity**), two nerdy brothers who have always enjoyed role-playing and all it has to offer. We created Cogent Roleplay to address the rampant problems in many PnP (Pen & Paper) RPGs (Role-playing Games), such as:

- Poor game structures that are kept purely for traditions' sake, preventing innovation.
- Huge, overly complex rules, that make it extremely difficult for new players, and bog down gameplay with redundant processes.
- Things that prevent player creativity. In Cogent, we want to empower players to attempt anything their characters could reasonably try, and not respond with, no, that's not allowed in the rules.
- Role-playing games that put their mechanics before the true purpose of a pen-and-paper RPG, the narrative you create with your friends.

For these reasons we feel you'll have a more rewarding experience with Cogent as it resolves all these issues while providing new and innovative ways to experience tabletop role-playing.

Cogent Roleplay is currently in its late Alpha phase, Beta soon, where the rules are being updated and improved regularly, as will the tools we create to accompany them – but even so, we believe Cogent has the potential to be the Tabletop RPG for the next generation – for these reasons:

- Cogent Roleplay is simple for beginners and easy to learn – but has a depth that can be mastered and explored by experienced players.
- In the new age of content, where video content, audiobooks and podcasts reign supreme – Cogent is uniquely structured to enable the best storytellers to tell interesting and diverse stories, naturally suited to every setting, genre and play style, and share them with the world.
- We understand that to build an RPG system that will cater to the widest range of stories and personalities, we need to be extremely community-oriented as we develop the rules and tools for Cogent – and we will build Cogent from the ground up to serve the community that builds and contributes to it.

We hope that Cogent provides you with endless hours of fun. If you have any suggestions regarding the rules or how the Cogent Roleplay system could be improved, please send us your feedback through our discord group and social media pages. With your help, we'll polish and refine these rules to make Cogent the best pen-and-paper RPG system in the world.

Thanks for checking out Cogent Roleplay, we hope you have a blast!

2. AN INTRODUCTION TO ROLEPLAYING

2.1. WHAT IS ROLEPLAYING

As the term implies, roleplaying means to take on the role of someone else, specifically, a character you will play the role of in your game. **Roleplaying** is by far the most important aspect of the **Cogent Roleplay** system. Everything in this game is made to promote better, more immersive and satisfying Role-play. That being said, the ultimate thing that'll enable you to experience this is your own imagination and creativity.

Any character you take the role of could be yourself in a fictional setting; an alter-ego who just so happens to be a heroic knight, daring space captain or cunning super spy. On the other hand, the character you play could be someone completely different, which will often open up role-play experiences previously unimagined! In any case, being consistent and true to whatever character you're playing will prove most rewarding.

The actions you attempt while role-playing is governed by simple rules and character statistics, where the roll of the dice determines the results. This dice rolling simulates the chaotic unpredictability and suspense of real life, there's always a chance of failure – but failure isn't a bad thing! Often it's the failures that unlock the most suspense in your game, and result in some of the most hilarious stories.

The core structure of any Tabletop Role-Playing game is made of two components:

- Players who take on the role of the **player characters** (sometimes referred to as **PCs**), and act out the character's dreams, goals and aspirations.
- A **Narrator** (traditionally referred to as a Game Master or Dungeon Master), who acts as a referee and drives the game and story forward by controlling the world that the players are interacting with.

2.2. HOW IS ROLEPLAYING DONE?

Players take on the role of their character, meaning that regardless of their own ambitions or desires as a player, they should act how that character would act. Ideally, players at the table are trying to create a fun immersive experience, and how you approach character interaction will drastically affect that.

Example of Non-Immersive Roleplaying:

***Marcus** (played by John)*

"My character says to Tim's character that we should be careful of an ambush."

The problem with interactions like this is that it's impersonal. The players should attempt to step inside their own character and speak as that character. Therefore, if John's character Marcus is a selfish and impatient rogue, the role-play might proceed something like this:

***Marcus** (played by John)*

I say to Garath, "Hey meatbag, tread carefully! Bandits roam these parts and I wouldn't be surprised if some may be lying in wait to ambush us..."

John would then wait for Tim to respond in character. For example, if Tim's character is a hot-tempered thick-headed warrior named Gareth, the role-play might proceed something like this:

Gareth (*played by Tim*)

"Foolish bandits, why would they be lying in wait if their intent is to ambush travelers? Surely it would take too much time to stand up!"

Speaking freely as your character (warts and all) will enhance the immersion of the game and make it a lot more fun. Not only should the player try to speak as their character, but they should speak the same way their character would speak. You can even speak in an accent if you want!

The player characters will come across many other characters controlled by the Narrator. These are called "non-player characters" and are often referred to as "NPCs."

The Narrator is the most important person in any tabletop Role-playing game as you can't play without one. They describe everything in the game's world and setting to aid the players in visualizing the adventures. They run the game through the rules of the system, informing the players when they are required to make dice rolls, which will then determine the success or failure of their actions.

Ultimately, a well-crafted Pen and Paper Role-playing game provides structure and immersion to something humans have done for literally thousands of years; communal storytelling.

3. A QUICK OVERVIEW OF COGENT

In the following chapters you will find all the rules for creating your own characters in Cogent Roleplay and everything you need to get started playing a game. The rulebook will first introduce you to Character Creation, Skills and Attributes, and then go through the game rules in detail.

While most people who have a passing knowledge of video games or tabletop roleplaying will have an innate understanding of many of the concepts presented here, we do not assume everyone has such knowledge from the get-go.

When playing a tabletop RPG, you create a character and tailor their abilities and skills by spending a pool of points you start the game with. This allows you to create anyone you would like, from a super-smart detective to a brawling boxer.

The in-depth game rules will be explained in Chapter 2, but before you read about creating your character it is worth mentioning the two core mechanics used in Cogent Roleplay.

3.1. DICE POOLS AND CHALLENGE LEVELS

In games of Cogent, player characters must overcome challenges during gameplay. When asked to, they will create **Dice Pools** by combining the total number of points between their skill and attribute, adding three, and collecting that number of dice into a **Dice Pool**. The dice used in Cogent are six-sided dice, commonly known as **D6**'s.

While explained in far more depth later, in general, you roll these dice, looking to roll the numbers **4**, **5** and **6**. Which count as "**Wins**".

The Narrator – That is, the person facilitating your game will set a **Challenge Level** (denoted **CL**) , which will be a number between **1** and **8**, that you need to equal or beat with your dice roll.

And that's it – it simply boils down to collecting a number of **D6**'s based on your character's statistics, rolling them, and looking to score enough **wins** to beat the **Challenge Level**! If you manage to do that, you pass the check, and your character succeeds in the task they set out to do.



CHARACTER CREATION



4. IDENTITY

Tabletop roleplaying begins for the players with Character creation. Here you must think of a character you wish to play. This could be an alternate version of yourself or someone completely different. The possibilities are endless and you'll always be able to find a character you want to play.

A real and well-rounded character can't just be summarized into a morality archetype. A real person generally does both good things and bad things, motivated by core characteristics. This doesn't mean that your character can't be wholly good or wholly evil, just that a character's actions shouldn't be structured by the player character or Narrator around a pre-set archetype, as this will most likely produce a boring character. A wholly good character is still capable of bad things if they have a powerful enough reason or motivation to do so.

The key is being consistent with who your character is and you determine who they are at the very beginning.

Remember that in settings with action, swords, magic, guns or lasers, Characters die. Cogent Roleplay is a game with rules – rules that are there to provide an appropriate level of challenge. Sometimes failure will simply lead to your character's death. This can (believe it or not) be fun. Your character may even opt to go out in a blaze of glory. Of course, sometimes it's not particularly fun, but if the dice decide it's your character's time to die then there's not much that can be done about it! We suggest you always have a second character concept ready to make a new character in case your current character dies.

A Few Words on Playing as a Group

Something that's quite important to keep in mind before you dive into making your character is the "party", the other characters your fellow players will be controlling. The Party needs to have a reason to at least stick together. They don't necessarily have to get along; though it helps the party achieve their goals, getting along in-game isn't necessarily more or less fun. A character that doesn't mesh well with the other characters can actually add a lot of fun and realism in role-play, though it needs to be handled with maturity so players don't take offence to things the character does in game when the player is simply being true to their character. It's only difficult to play a character that doesn't get along with other characters when they don't get along so much that it's unrealistic for the characters to stay together. As mentioned before the party needs at least a reason to stay together otherwise it defeats the purpose of the game. You can't play as a group if one of the characters leaves the party for in-game reasons. Still if a player does this out of being true to their character, there is nothing stopping them from making a new character that can join the party soon after.

4.1. CREATING A CHARACTER

When making a character, try to match the seriousness and realism of them to the setting and genre you're playing in. Make them real, give them goals and history. Indeed on the

Cogent Roleplay Character Sheet, there are several Core Characteristic requirements to be filled out:

4.1.1. Character Disposition

Are they happy, sad, moody, funny, cautious, untrusting, stupid, smart, tactical, shy, or boisterous? The list can go on and on. This doesn't mean that they can't be in any other mood, just that generally a person's standard disposition is quite consistent throughout their lives. It is often wise to base these dispositions on a character's history and beliefs/morality, to build a character with depth and motive.

4.1.2. Character History

A good history can help shape who your character is in great ways. You don't have to write a novel but generally the more detailed the better – of course, there isn't a lot of room on the character sheet for detailed character history, but you may choose to write one elsewhere. A good history can make your character feel much more real which will then, in turn, help your role-play be more convincing, rewarding and fun.

4.1.3. Beliefs / Morality

It's hard to find a person without a specific worldview, with defined things that they see as good or evil. So a realistic character should also have these things. Even having no morals or beliefs is a morality and a belief. No matter what you chose for your character you should always answer why your characters believe the things they do and **why** they see things as evil and things as good. This will define your character, even more.

4.1.4. Goals / Aspirations

Everybody has goals or aspirations. They're one-way people give purpose to their lives, so what purpose does your character see for themselves? This specific characteristic will very much guide what your character will do in-game. It's recommended that you choose several long-term and short-term goals and aspirations.

Following these suggestions will guide you to make a very well-defined character. The next step is to define them through their statistics.

5. ATTRIBUTES

Characters statistics in Cogent Roleplay can be broken down into two categories which determine the bonuses (or penalties) you receive when rolling against Challenge Levels (**CL**) encountered in the game, whether **Actions** and **Conflicts**. These categories are:

5.1. ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS

By default, in **Fast Play** games (see **How to Play**) player characters will be given **2 Attributes Points** and **12 Skill Points** they may assign to their character during character creation.

5.2. ATTRIBUTES

By default, in **Fast Play** games, player characters will be given **2 Attribute Points** they may assign to their character during character creation. Generally, in **Campaign Play** (see **How to Play**) players will start with fewer points and gain more during the course of their adventure.

Attributes represent the physical abilities of your character. There are three:

- **Strength (STR)**
- **Reflex (RFL)**
- **Intelligence (INT)**

On the Character Sheet they look like this:

When assigning a point to an attribute or skill, simply mark a box with your pencil as shown above.

The tapered “negative” box present represents the capacity for a character to have negatives in attributes. Players may not choose to have a negative in an attribute – it is only there in case a disabling characteristic or injury demands a negative be applied to an attribute.

These three attributes cover all of the actions your player might attempt. Upon first glance it can seem like many physical abilities or qualities a person can possess are missed (most other role-play systems have a lot more), such as stamina, constitution, speed, knowledge, charisma etc. but in Cogent, these things are incorporated into the three Attributes above. Things like constitution and stamina are covered in strength, speed in reflex, and knowledge and charisma in intelligence. There’s no need to over-complicate it!

Each of these attributes applies to certain skill checks and to all combat rolls. From a combat perspective, one point in Intelligence and one point in Reflex have the same dice bonus as two points in strength. This is because a fast or clever opponent may very well be just as challenging as a strong one.

In addition to granting bonus dice to appropriate rolls, each attribute also gives a specific advantage unrelated to dice checks. These are:

- **Strength:** For each point in **STR**, you may reduce an **Injury Level** by -1 once per Combat Encounter.
- **Reflex:** Your **Initiative** is equal to the number of points in **RFL**.
- **Intelligence:** For each point in **INT**, you receive **+3 Skill Points** during character creation

An average person in any setting will have the equivalent of **0 points** in each. **1 point** in any of these attributes equates to the character being professional or naturally gifted in that area. **2 points** in any one attribute would equate to being elite or ‘world-class’ in that aspect.

Example:

	0 Points	1 Point	2 Points
Strength	Average	Soldier, Athlete	Olympic Athlete
Reflex	Average	Acrobat, Thief	Bruce Lee
Intelligence	Average	Professor, Politician	Sherlock Holmes

Some settings (depending on the narrator) may allow for over 2 points in one attribute. These are mostly justifiable through means of superhuman powers, genetic anomaly, magical enchantment or advanced technology.

6. CORE SKILLS

Where attributes showcase the raw physical and mental capabilities of a character, skills represent their learned or unlearned abilities.

In **Fast Play** games, player characters will be given **12 skill points** they may assign to their character during character creation. Players may gain additional points to spend in this phase by either accepting a Disabling Characteristic (See: “Disabling Characteristics”) or by assigning attribute points to Intelligence (+3 skill points per point in Intelligence.) In **Campaign Play**, players will also be able to gain skill points as the story progresses. Each point represents an additional die the character receives when making dice checks using the applicable skill.

Just like with Attributes, when assigning a point simply mark the box with your pencil as shown above. The tapered box on the far left is there to “cross out” if you take a negative in a skill. These skills can have a max of four points spent on each of them, and a player may also take a single ‘negative’ point from one of these skills, and apply the removed point elsewhere. (Note: This may only be done once, you cannot choose multiple negative skills at character creation)

Although this tapered “negative” box is also present in the Attributes section, players may not choose to have a negative in an attribute – it is only there in case a disabling characteristic demands a negative be applied to an attribute.

Every **skill** has an attribute (or attributes) it is based on. For example, the skill “**Persuasion**” is based on the Attribute “**Intelligence**” When rolling a skill check you need to create the pool of dice that you will be rolling for the check. First, add the 3 dice that make up your base roll. Then, count the number of shaded boxes in the skill you are being asked to make a check for, as well as the number of shaded boxes in that skill’s core attribute. This forms your dice pool for any skill check and will be explained in depth in Chapter 2: **How to Play**.

For Example, your character has **1 point** in **Strength** and **3 points** in **Athletics** When they perform an athletics check they will begin with their base of **3D6** add **1D6** for their **STR** Attribute, and **3D6** for their Athletics skill. The result is **7D6** to roll with:

Skills checks may be attempted even if your character has no points spent on that specific skill. To do this, simply form your dice pool as normal, adding your base 3 dice to the number of shaded boxes in the relevant skill (+0 in the case of unskilled) and then adding a die for your skills core attribute.

Skills are divided into two categories:

- **Core Skills:** Strength/Reflex/Intelligence-based skills.
- **Vocational Skills:** Skills which define a character’s chosen path in life, be it a class, a career or a calling. These skills are crafted between the player and narrator and include combat proficiencies.

6.1. CORE SKILLS IN DETAIL

Core skills in Cogent Roleplay are meant to represent the scope of activities that everyday people are capable of attempting with some chance of success. It includes motions of the body and feats of strength, speed and thought that are near-universally used by all creatures. While sometimes more specific interpretations of these skills are relevant (For example, using ride/pilot to drive a car), the same skill could also be used for a beaver attempting to balance on a log as it floated downstream.

It is in this way that Core Skills primarily differ from Vocational Skills, as Vocational Skills cover tasks related to very specific or learned jobs.

Combat will be introduced fully in Chapter 4, but it is worth noting that Core Skills cannot be added to combat rolls. The only way Core Skills can aid combat rolls is through assists (see **Assists**, CH3, PT2.) Your combat skills will be covered in **Vocations**, CH3, PT4.

6.1.1. Strength-Based Skills

Endurance

Endurance is the physical trait that represents your body's ability to process toxins and resist disease. Resisting food poisoning, hot and cold weather and pushing on past exhaustion are all domains of endurance. Endurance also makes wearing and fighting in heavy armour easier, which will be covered further in (**Armour**, Chapter 4, Part 3.)

Examples:

- Approaching a raging inferno and pushing through the heat.
- Travelling on a long journey with little to no sleep.
- Holding your composure in a drinking competition.

Athletics

Athletics covers physical activity largely related to raw speed and strength. Long jump, high jump, sprinting and weightlifting are all covered by Athletics.

Examples:

- Attempting to outrun something.
- Shouldering a door open.
- Carrying heavy weights.

Grip

Grip encompasses hand strength and your ability to hold on to things. Climbing, holding, squeezing, and crushing are all covered by Grip. Grip can also be used by animals and monsters in several ways, an alligator death roll or a T-Rex crushing a fence with its jaw would all fall under Grip.

Examples:

- Dangling from a rope.
- Climbing the wall of a castle.
- Crushing something in your hand.

Swim

Swim covers all situations where characters are attempting to move in liquids. It is also applicable to science fiction settings in Zero gravity environments. Swimming may be more difficult if a character is wearing heavy clothing or resisting conflicts at the same time, at the narrator's discretion. While the skill is quite linear in function, the cost of failure in these situations is more often than not fatal. Uniquely amongst the skills, failing a swim check differs depending on whether you have assigned skill points to it. If you have, narrative failure applies as normal, with your character making no headway, treading water or otherwise. However, if you have not been assigned any points to swim, your character slips underwater and begins drowning.

Examples:

- Swimming across a river.
- Diving underwater to search for something.
- Floating from one solar panel to another while repairing a space station.

Throw

Throw covers the physical task of launching objects from yourself, and successfully receiving them. The ancient arts of shotput and discus are the domain of the Throw skill.

Examples:

- Throwing a dwarf from a cliffside to a stone bridge.
- Catching a sack of stolen goods dropped from above.
- Throwing a grappling hook over a high ledge.

6.1.2. Reflex-Based Skills

Perception

Perception is the art of detecting things through sight, sound, and or scent, it can even cover "gut feelings" or intuition. It is used as the defence against deception, persuasion, and stealth; it will be common for the Narrator to require players to make environmental "Perception Checks" to gauge how much the characters notice regarding current happenings or places, whether obvious or subtle. While intellect can be vital in perception, it is the speed at which one notices things that can turn the tide in one's favour. It is important to note many types of skills may commonly be used to assist with perception, especially vocational ones.

Examples:

- Checking an area for traps.
- Finding the right contact at a nightclub (Assist with Infiltration).
- Locate a vendor for a particular item in town (Assist with General Knowledge).

Acrobatics

Acrobatics covers movements requiring agility and finesse as well as balance. Parkour, backflips and walking tightropes are all the domain of Acrobatics. Acrobatics is also the skill used for dodging things and avoiding traps or pitfalls.

Examples:

- Performing a gymnastics routine.
- Diving out of the way of a speeding car.
- Weaving through security lasers.

Ride/Pilot

Any time a creature wishes to take passage on something the Ride/Pilot skill can be used. Riding a horse, driving a car/cart or surfing a wave would all be considered Ride/Pilot checks. When the ride skill is chosen the player must choose what type of animal or craft it applies to. The check should only need to be made if an active effort is required to maintain control. A person riding a train would not need to make a Ride/Pilot check, but the driver would. Clinging to a giant as it walks would be a grip check unless you were in control and directing its movement.

Examples:

- Piloting a spaceship.
- Steering a raft.
- Driving a horse and cart.

Sleight of Hand

Activities that require highly dexterous control of the hands are covered by Sleight of Hand. While more obvious tasks such as picking pockets come to mind, the skill also covers things such as weaving a small basket or threading a needle.

Examples:

- Taking something small and fiddly apart successfully.
- Picking a lock.
- Performing a magic card trick.

Stealth

Sneaking, hiding from others and moving with no noise forms the basis of the Stealth skill. Stealth can be used for setting up ambushes and laying traps. Stealth is often countered by Perception, and the two forces of hide and seek clash constantly.

Examples:

- Hiding in the bushes awaiting a caravan to rob.
- Moving silently on a rooftop and staying low out of sight.
- Approaching a predator from downwind to avoid it catching your scent.

6.1.3. Intelligence-Based Skills

General Knowledge

General Knowledge is the art of listening to rumours, recalling information and applying it where it is needed most. It aids in many tasks while being very specifically only usable on non-specialized tasks. A general knowledge check could never allow you to know how to disarm a bomb, but it might be able to tell you that to disarm a bomb you need to cut a specific wire. Which wire? You have no idea, perhaps if you had a Vocational Skill related to explosives you might know more.

Examples:

- Getting a general grasp of who holds power in a region.
- Knowing what trade goods are usually imported to or exported from an area.
- Broadly understanding how to approach a situation, and what skills you might need on your team to be successful.

Deception

Deception is used to mislead others. This can be done in a variety of ways, from complicated disguises to outright lying. Deception also covers forgery and wilfully sending the wrong impressions through body language. An important thing to note regarding deception is that the knowledge of the person you are trying to deceive/persuade should affect the CL of the roll. Even with this caveat, some things are simply impossible to lie about. You could not convince someone you were their wife or husband for example. Instead, succeeding even against impossible odds often leads to the listener believing that YOU believe what you are saying, which can lead to some very unexpected outcomes!

Examples:

- Lying about why you are somewhere you aren't supposed to be.
- Disguising yourself as someone else.
- Faking an emotion - ie. fake crying.

Infiltration

If stealth is the art of going unseen, Infiltration is the art of going unnoticed. Hiding in plain sight or making the right social connections to ease into a niche social circle are equally valid uses of Infiltration. Infiltration also covers the ability to know and track patrol routes and weak points in defences.

Examples:

- Slipping your egg into another bird's nest to have it rear your young, unnoticed.
- Weaving your way through a social web until you reach the contacts you seek.
- Avoiding mapped guard patrols to slip through a gap in their defences.

Persuasion

Persuasion is the art of convincing people of your point of view. Persuasion can be used in innumerable ways, but bartering, charming people and making sound arguments are the primary focus of the skill.

Examples:

- Bargaining for a cheaper price on an item.
- Convincing the town guard to give you information to help solve a murder.
- Inspiring a boost in morale in a defeated force.

Survival

Survival is the skill associated with staying alive in all environments. It covers scavenging for food, basic first aid as well as finding safe places to rest and lighting fires. In the city, survival keeps you from going too close to dangerous gang territory, it lets you know who to avoid, and where to avoid. In the wilderness, it tells you which berries will make you sick, which meat is spoiled and more.

Examples:

- Preparing an animal to be cooked.
- Splinting an injured limb.
- Collecting rainwater using leaves.