

# BLADE & LOCK PICK

GAME ENGINE FOR  
SOLO, ONE-ON-ONE &  
GROUP GAMING



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## BLADE & LOCKPICK

### INTRODUCTIONS

*Blade & Lock-pick* is a collection of mechanics that together form a simple role playing system, intended especially for solo gamers and “one player, one game master” situations.

It can also be played as a conventional group game.

### THE COMPONENTS

The rules consist of three distinct components, each of which can be used individually or all together.

The Challenge section explains how to use the resolution mechanics.

The Character section details how to build characters specifically for this system.

Finally, we include a Solo section, offering an Oracle and other mechanics of interest to solo gamers.

The components are intended to be modular, allowing you to use one, two or all three modules in your gaming.

### GENERAL NOTES

We have assumed that players are familiar with the concept of role playing games already. Likewise, we assume that this is not your first solo oriented game.

Many games have served as inspiration, but it seems almost all solo gaming material owes a debt to the *Mythic Game Master Emulator* and this product is no different.

The mechanics for game resolution are inspired by *Tunnels & Trolls* and GW's *Lord of the Rings* miniatures game, as well as my old work on the *Fast and Dirty* miniatures rules.

Most of these rules were written while listening to *Cytotoxin*, *Crystallion* and the *Dragon Age Origins* sound track. If you like all three of these, you're probably a weirdo. I approve.

All feedback and suggestions can be forwarded to the author at [nordicweaselgames@icloud.com](mailto:nordicweaselgames@icloud.com)

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*Love and Peace*  
*Ivan Sorensen*

# THE CHALLENGE SYSTEM



## CHALLENGES

### Purpose

A quick system for resolving situations in role-playing games.

### Intended users

- \*Groups desiring a very simple game system.
- \*Groups desiring a more group-oriented resolution system.
- \*Solo or “one player one GM” gaming situations.
- \*Games where each player controls multiple characters.
- \*Groups that favor quick resolution over blow-by-blow details.

### Presentation

First, we present the Fundamental rules. (Page 5)  
Then we delve into explanations and details. (Page 7)  
Third, we offer a wealth of variations, suggestions and mechanics to tailor the system (Page 12).  
A sub-system for handling magic is available. (Page 21)

At the end, we present the Fundamentals again, but with all the options written into the system.  
This serves as a solid, one page reference guide (Page 22)

Where possible, rules terms are presented in **bold** to help distinguish from regular use of terms such as “group” or “challenge”.

## THE SYSTEM

### Fundamentals

When the outcome of a situation is in doubt, it is considered to be a **Challenge** and is resolved using the system provided here.

When a **Challenge** takes place, simply work through the following steps one at a time. The process looks intimidating on paper, but works very quickly in practice.

All dice are D6.

#### Step 1 - Type of Challenge

Any **Challenge** will have two opposing forces. One of these will be a **Group** of characters (a **Group** can one or more individual characters).

The other may be a **Group** of characters or it may be an **Obstacle**.

**Obstacles** are passive difficulties to be overcome.

**Obstacles** must be established as **Simple** or **Complex**.

*Examples:*

*If the players are trying to get past a security guard, it's a Group.*

*If we're trying to pick the lock, it's an Obstacle.*

#### Step 2 A - Determine dice pools

Each **Group** in the **Challenge** receives a pool of dice.

The basic dice pool is 1D for each character able to contribute to the contest.

#### Step 2 B - Determine Difficulty

An **Obstacle** will have a **Difficulty** set from 3 to 7.

#### Step 3 - Roll dice

Roll the dice for each **Group**.

Pick out the single highest roll. Set the remaining dice aside.

#### Step 4 - Compare results

Compare the highest score for each **Group**. **Obstacles** use their **Difficulty**.

If the results are equal, the contest is a Draw. Otherwise, the lower side Loses.

#### Step 5 - Apply results

A Losing **Group** must remove one of its characters from the **Challenge**.

A Losing **Obstacle** is **Resolved** if it is **Simple**.

A Losing **Obstacle** lowers its **Difficulty** by 2 if it is **Complex**.

If **Difficulty** is reduced to 0, the **Obstacle** is **Resolved**.

On a Draw, both sides Lose.

#### Step 6 - Establish victory

If an **Obstacle** is **Resolved**, the **Group Challenging** it has won.

If a **Group** has all its characters removed, it has lost and the opposition wins.

If Victory is not established, begin again at Step 2.

### **Game Example**

*An adventuring party of 4 characters need to get inside a crumbling castle and decide to hack their way through the walls.*

*The GM sets this as a Complex Obstacle with a Difficulty of 5.*

*The players roll 4 dice, getting 2, 3, 5, 5.*

*As the two sides are evenly matched, it's a Draw and both lose.*

*The Difficulty drops to 3 as the party makes head-way but one of the characters must be removed, probably exhausted or suffering a minor injury.*

*Next round, they roll 3 dice, scoring 1, 4, 5.*

*The difficulty is now only 3, so they win, reducing the difficulty to 1.*

*At this point, there's no chance of failure, since even if they rolled all 1's, they'd still have 2 characters left and the difficulty would reach 0.*

*The party makes their way through the wall and are ready to continue the adventure.*

### **Game Example**

*Our 4 characters run into 3 goblins that try to rob them. Arrows fly and swords are drawn.*

*The players roll 4 dice, scoring a 1, 3, 3, 6.*

*The goblins roll 3 dice, scoring 3, 5, 5.*

*As the highest player die beats the goblins score, one of the goblins is struck by an arrow and falls.*

*For the second round, the players roll 1, 2, 5, 5 while the goblins score 2, 3.*

*The fighter smites one of the creates with a mighty blow, leaving one standing.*

*The final roll is 1, 2, 3, 6 while the goblin scores a 6.*

*As a draw requires both sides to remove a character, we narrate that the last goblin flees but one of our heroes stumbles. Turns out one of the initial volley of arrows struck them and they had just managed to retain their footing for a few minutes.*

## THE DETAILS

This chapter provides suggestions on how to handle the various elements of the system. Consider it as a set of guide-lines except where suggested otherwise.

### Run away!

Typically, either **Group** can end a **Challenge** after any round has been finished.

This generally means the **Group** opts to concede the **Challenge** but prefers to avoid a worse outcome by sticking it out to the death.

If the **Group** initiated the **Challenge**, it fails to attain its goals.

### What else can I do?

It's customary to check for desired actions between each round.

A character may have an item that could turn the tide of a battle or a coward may wish to flee the scene, leaving their comrades to slug it out.

A pair of characters may wish to go after the opposing commander, while an evil wizard may summon additional reinforcements.

In a group game, ask each player for any desired actions and then adjudicate them as you would in any other role playing game.

Often, such actions may produce **Advantage** or **Deception** (see the following chapter) or cause two larger groups to split into smaller **Groups** for the next round of a **Challenge**.

### Talk it up!

The system is intended to be narrative, meaning each roll, round and character removal should be accompanied by narration.

In a conventional game, the GM typically does this, though there's no inherent reason you can't let the players do it for themselves.

If you are playing solo, you can obviously narrate things any way you like.

Since we're playing a role-playing game, narration is what elevates the proceedings from a mechanical system to a story. (Of course, you may prefer a mechanical system, if so, skip this step as you see fit!).

Consider the difference between *"Rath the Dwarf is removed from the fight"* and

*"As Rath charges the raiders, a blow to his helmet sends him staggering backwards. After a few stumbled steps, he collapses in a heap".*

### Who rolls the dice?

If you have a single player, this is easy of course:

Tally up the dice and roll them.

In a group game, it's often more satisfying if each player rolls their own dice, though that can make the game move a little slower.

If a particular character is in charge of a given action, you may consider letting that player roll the dice pool.

Other groups may prefer just taking turns to roll the pool.

Establish whatever norms work for you.



### Who can contribute?

The first question any **Challenge** will present is: “How many characters can be involved?”.

In many cases, the answer is “the entire group”.

If the party is crossing a mountain chain and have to roll to progress safely, then everyone will be contributing.

In a battle against the orc raiders, everyone is at risk and will roll dice.

But what about picking a lock?

Persuading a guard?

Researching in a language only one character speaks?

It is fine if a test relies on only a single character, though be advised this dramatically increases the chance of the **Challenge** failing.

In most cases, it’s easy to justify a second characters involvement:

Browbeating a guard is a lot easier if your warrior friend is looking menacing behind you, while the thief could “acquire” a few books to help out the scholar do their research.

Likewise, a crafter could have fashioned some high-quality lock-picks for the thief to use.

In general, lean on the side of permitting at least two characters to be involved, if at all possible.

It is fine to establish a maximum number of involved characters.

Expecting 8 people to all huddle around a book is probably unrealistic, but it might well be feasible for a large work-party doing manual work.

### When is an Obstacle Simple or Complex?

A **Simple Obstacle** is one that can be resolved in a single dice roll.

This typically assumes a high chance of success.

Thematically, it is often a binary task:

Either the heroes make it or they fail.

The outcome may rely on a snap decision or it may come down to the party lacking a required resource or knowledge.

Examples might include avoiding a trap, picking a lock or talking your way past a sentry.

**Complex Obstacles** are by definition extended rolls that require multiple tests.

This works well for tasks that take a significant amount of time, represent a high degree of attrition or which are time sensitive.

Examples might include traveling through inhospitable territory, fighting an opposing squad or researching an ancient document before the evil wizard finishes their ritual.

### How are Difficulties assigned?

As a rule of thumb, **Difficulties** of 3 or 4 should be assigned to **Obstacles** that are of modest or average difficulty.

Such **Obstacles** will take two rounds to overcome if they are **Complex** and a party with 3 or more dice can generally expect to succeed.

This is a good “standard” **Difficulty** level for many in-game situations.

**Difficulties** of 5 or 6 have a significantly increased chance of failure.

If they are **Complex**, they will require a minimum of three rounds to overcome.

7 is the highest **Difficulty** possible.

This will require a **Group** with significant manpower to throw at the problem as well as specific skill sets.

Use this level only sparingly and for tasks you don’t expect the party to succeed with.

### What does it mean when a character is removed?

A removed character cannot contribute to the **Challenge** any longer, whether by dice or other mechanics.

Depending on the nature of the **Challenge**, this might mean they are no longer capable of assisting, though it might also mean that they have reached the limits of their abilities or endurance.

In a battle, a character may be wounded or knocked out, while when picking a lock, a character may realize the complexity of the device is beyond their talents.

In group-endurance oriented **Challenges**, you will find characters getting exhausted and struggling on as long as a few remaining motivators remain.

### Who decides who to remove?

Any method you feel like.

The players may agree on it (or vote), you might pick someone based on the narrative so far or you might roll at random.

We generally assume that groups of bad guys will remove the least valuable members of the group first (ruthlessly sacrificing the minions to save the boss).

### What does it mean to win?

Winning over an **Obstacle** means the party overcame the problem and got what they wanted.

In most cases, an **Obstacle** will not need to be overcome again later, once it has been **Resolved**.

For example, if they managed to climb the castle-wall, they can climb back out again without rolling dice.

When defeating an opposing **Group**, that **Group** loses the ability to oppose or hinder the party.

They must rest, recover and regroup before it can be regained.

It is up to the GM to determine how “final” any such defeat is.

Defeating a bunch of cannon-fodder minions might result in most of them being dead, with survivors fleeing in panic never to return.

A squad of tough, veteran soldiers on the other hand may have taken a few losses, but have retreated in good order.

They won’t present any hindrance currently, but could show up again in the future.

### What does it mean to lose?

When a **Challenge** is lost, it means the players must face the results of failure.

If a **Challenge** was instigated by the players, it typically means they do not get what they were hoping to get.  
Failing to make it through the lock means you have to go around for example.

Be resistant to the idea of simply trying again: The party needs to find a new method, approach or tactic.

It helps to look at the larger picture of the scene:

If the goal is to get inside the mansion and bluffing the guard didn't work, you could try climbing the wall, picking the lock on a back-door or simply knocking the guard out and storming the building through the front door.

What you cannot do however is the same action, with a slightly different wording. If "bluffing" the guard didn't work, "fast talking" or "charming" won't work either.

Losing a **Challenge** forced on the party can be more dire.

A party that loses a combat encounter may be captured or they may be fleeing in a panic.

If you failed to bluff the guard when they came for you, you're probably in chains.

It is strongly encouraged to establish what the outcomes are going to be before rolling. That way you avoid ill feelings when the players expected one thing and another happened.

Where possible, aim for Loss conditions that present an interesting story possibility:  
Having the guards execute the party in the street ends the game.  
Having the party arrested instead is pretty typical adventure stuff.

### The end of the line

If a **Challenge** has the potential to end the game or end the primary objective of the party, then two new rules kick in:

The loss condition **MUST** be clearly stated up front.

The players **MUST** be given the chance to avoid the confrontation.

If you are GM'ing the game, you don't have to explicitly tell them what alternatives they have, let them figure that out and be open to their suggestions.

Likewise, you're not required to give them alternatives that they will like:  
If it's the show down with the epic villain and they opt to run away and let him rule the world, they won't like what happens next but it's still a choice they can exercise.

Be careful about using such scenes too frequently:  
We suggest no more than once per adventure, typically at a climax or finale.

Of course, if the players insist on throwing themselves into such encounters, let them live dangerously.  
Some players prefer high stakes and if so, there's no reason not to indulge them.

### Large Groups

Due to the nature of the dice mechanics, once a **Group** has 5 or more members, the benefit of throwing more bodies at the problem tends to simply be endurance.

More importantly, the dice mechanics can get a bit predictable between big **Groups**, as most rolls will end in a draw.

The simplest way to handle this is to simply break up the **Groups** into smaller ones: Instead of resolving a battle between 8 heroes and 11 goblins, you might create 3 Groups of heroes and 3 Groups of goblins.

Then each **Group** can resolve their own **Challenge**.

This works well when characters are engaged in different activities, are separated or would face different opposition.

If characters from one **Group** come to the aid of another, simply add them to the **Group** from the next round onwards.

### Keeping your head down

If the situation warrants it, a character can usually keep their head down and avoid taking part in a **Challenge**.

This may be for a single round or for several.

Some **Challenges** may not allow this as an option, though we suggest allowing at least one character in the **Group** to stay in the back.

If a character is heads down, they cannot contribute any character benefits but cannot become removed either.

Note that this cannot be used to delay a loss, unless the players come up with an extremely good explanation.

If you're the last man standing, expect that you will have to contest the **Challenge**.

## MECHANICS

This chapter offers various mechanics to detail (and complicate) your game as much as you want.

### Abilities

**Abilities** refer to the innate qualities of a given character. Whether a character is particularly strong, fast or clever, it's an **Ability**.

Each **Ability** should be listed with one or two keywords on your character record sheet.

**Abilities** are by nature open-ended: You can come up with most anything that fits the character as a descriptor, though if you are uncertain, you can use the ability scores/statistics/characteristics of almost any existing role-playing game as inspiration.

Don't hesitate to be creative though: Being "Patient" is an **Ability** as much as being "Strong".

When a **Group** engages in a **Challenge**, if any member of the **Group** has an **Ability** that would be an asset in the type of **Challenge**, they receive the following benefit:

When the dice for the **Group** have been rolled, they may pick up any die that scored a 1 and roll it again.

The new roll stands, even if it's another 1 (Everyone can have a bad day).

This benefit applies to all dice, as long as one **Group** member has a relevant **Ability**.

Multiple characters with relevant **Abilities** do not grant an additional benefit, however such a **Group** may retain the benefit even if one of the characters are removed, making them more robust.

*Examples:*

*A "Clever" character would grant a benefit to solving a problem while a "Strong" character would grant a benefit to knocking down a door.*

It is often better to apply **Abilities** somewhat narrowly, rather than trying to make tortured explanations for why being "Lucky" will assist every possible **Challenge**.

### Advantage

A **Group** that can claim a situational **Advantage** in a **Challenge** may add 1 additional D6 to the pool.

This may stem from organization, surprise, planning, equipment or any other factor you can think of.

It is possible for both sides to claim **Advantage**. For example, a surprise attack against an enemy in a fortified position.

An **Obstacle** can have **Advantage** in some cases.

In this case, roll a single D6 and use the higher of the D6 roll or the **Difficulty**.

The GM may judge an **Advantage** to be **Momentary** (affects one roll) or **Persistent** (lasts until removed).

A **Persistent Advantage** can be removed instead of removing a character.

*Example:*

*We manage to sneak up on the bandits, gaining us Advantage in the ensuing fight.*



*The GM might rule that the Advantage is Momentary and lasts only for one roll, particularly if the enemy was expecting trouble in any event.*

*If the bandits are caught completely unaware, the Advantage might Persist until we opt to remove it when losing a round. This might represent the bandits regrouping to face us.*

### Assistance

The simplest way of handling assistance from a remote character is through letting them contribute to the **Challenge**.

This can be used in cases where a character has received extensive instruction on how to tackle a particular problem, the action depends on the success of another character elsewhere or the character is in constant communication with a coordinating ally.

Such an **Assistant** can provide a bonus die and be removed from the **Challenge** (the benefit of their advice runs out) but **CANNOT** provide any other mechanical advantages, including **Abilities**, **Skills** or any additional dice beyond one.

### Bystanders

You may have a situation where a character is present to help, but doesn't realistically have a chance of contributing. An example might include a non-combatant in a battle or an apprentice to a researcher.

Such characters are **Bystanders**.

They are assumed to always roll a 0 on their die but can be removed in the event of a Loss.

It's convenient to place a D10, with the 0 facing up, to track them.

Mechanically, they essentially act as an ablative shield.

Be wary of players trying to set up a situation herding along 20 villagers and claiming them all as **Bystanders**.

Typically, don't permit more than one or two **Bystanders** to count.

The rest will get in each others way, stand around looking stupid or simply run away.

### Cannon fodder

In some genres of gaming, it is custom to have "mooks": Disposable enemies that the heroes can chop to bits in droves.

We call this **Cannon Fodder**.

Simply treat 3-5 **Cannon Fodder** characters as one character for game purposes. This "character" is known as a **Blob**.

For example, a **Blob** of 4 goblins might roll a single die in a battle and if they are selected for removal, they are all removed.

Typically, killing one or two members of a **Cannon Fodder Blob** causes the rest to run away, but feel free to let player describe mangling and eviscerating the lot, if you prefer.

## Consequences

Typically, a removed character may have no ill effects.

If the character is removed from a research **Challenge**, they may just have come to the end of their talents and have sat around doing little of value.

Meanwhile, being removed while scaling mountains or battling a dragon might be a lot more risky.

If you wish to add risk, use one of the tables below for any character that was removed. It's usually easier to roll after a **Challenge** is completely resolved.

There are four outcomes possible:

### *Trivial Consequence*

-----  
The character is inconvenienced but otherwise unaffected.

They may have roughed up or their ego may be smarting a bit.

### *Minor Consequence*

-----  
Minor injuries or a bit hesitant.

This should factor into roleplaying and may provide an Advantage to the opposition in a similar Challenge.

### *Major Consequence*

-----  
A character is seriously wounded, ostracized or severely shaken in their confidence.

This will often cause the character to be unable to contribute to the same type of Challenge again.

### *Fatal Consequence*

-----  
The character is grievously wounded, slain, exiled or falls into a deep depression.

Typically, this removes the character from the campaign.

Typically, **Major Consequences** will take until the next adventure to recover from, while **Minor Consequences** require a week or so to get over.

Adjust as appropriate.

Roll	Easy	Moderate	Hard	Punishing
1	Trivial	Trivial	Trivial	Trivial
2	Trivial	Trivial	Trivial	Minor
3	Trivial	Trivial	Trivial	Major
4	Trivial	Trivial	Minor	Major
5	Trivial	Minor	Major	Fatal
6	Minor	Major	Fatal	Fatal

## Deception

Trickery can usually be handled as an **Advantage**, however, if you prefer a more distinct mechanic, allow a **Group** employing some sort of deception or trick may pick up one of the opposing dice and roll it again.

The new score applies, even if it turns out to be better than it was before:

Sometimes a clever plan can indeed backfire.

**Deception** doesn't affect **Obstacles** (since they don't employ dice).

If the party engages in some particularly witty trickery that ought to still benefit them, treat it as an **Advantage** instead.

It's completely possible for two groups to **Deceive** each other.

### Double-dice system

If you want to have fewer rounds in a **Challenge** or are concerned about large groups being “grindy” to defeat, you can use the two highest dice for each side.

Compare the highest die to the highest die and the second highest die to the second highest die.

With this approach, you will see at least two characters removed each turn, which can whittle down larger groups rather quickly.

For a player-friendly twist, roll for the enemies first, pick out the two highest dice they get, then let the players assign their two highest dice as they see fit.

This method won’t tend to work well if you are breaking the **Challenge** up into several smaller groups.

### Endurance

It can feel unsatisfactory for an epic monster battle to be over in a single round. If so, assign **Endurance** to the character.

An **Enduring** character removes a single die when it is selected for removal.

Thus, a 4 die troll would require four defeats to lose a **Challenge**. You can adjust the rate of loss, to adjust the toughness of an individual creature (or length of encounter).

*Example:*

*A troll with Monster 4 and Endurance (-1) has 4 dice and loses 1 each time it’s selected for removal.*

*A troll with Monster 4 and Endurance (-2) has 4 dice but loses 2 each time it’s selected for removal.*

You could apply **Endurance** to player characters in general, if you are playing a very high-powered, fantastical or super-hero inspired game.

Do note that **Endurance** only matters for characters with multiple dice to begin with. If you wish to grant some survivability to a 1 die character, use **Resistance** instead.

### Epic battles

When you have particularly large **Groups** facing each other, you will be faced with the dice totals often being a draw at the end of each round.

This leads to a slow repetitive attrition as each **Group** takes a removal then dices again.

As discussed earlier, this is often handled better by splitting the **Groups** into several smaller affairs, then having them face off individually.

Another option is to declare the **Challenge** to be **Epic**.

An **Epic Challenge** is determined as normal, but add up the two highest dice (instead of picking the single highest). **Skills** are still only eligible to provide a +1 bonus.

The losing side must suffer two removals, while on a draw, each side suffers 1 removal as before.

The GM must determine at what stage the battle is no longer **Epic** and transitions to the normal system.

You may wish to institute a **Very Epic** stage above even that.

In a **Very Epic Challenge**, do not add up more than two dice, but each side suffers two removals on a draw and three removals on a loss.

If your **Groups** are shaping up to be unwieldy even at that scale, it's a good sign they need to be broken down into smaller **Groups** instead.

### Equipment considerations

Most **Challenges** assume that the characters have any equipment they need.

If the **Group** as a whole is under-equipped for the task at hand, raise the **Difficulty** of an **Obstacle** or grant **Advantage** dice to the opposition.

If a single character lacks required equipment (such as being unarmed in a gun battle) they can't contribute to the **Challenge** though they could be **Removed** as a loss.

If the limitations of equipment is a hindrance but does not prevent a character from contributing, the best solution is typically to prevent them from adding any **Skill** benefits (including **Expertise** or **Mastery**).

Superior equipment can be treated as a **Talent** if it is far above the expectations of the **Challenge**.

This is the typical way to handle enchanted items, though it can also apply to the type of item.

A fully plate-armored knight fighting a group wearing leather armor might well count "Plate" as a **Talent**.

### Henchmen

If a character has a henchman, follower or servant, they can rely on them in **Challenges** as appropriate.

If the particular capabilities of the **Henchman** aren't significant (a butler when trying to fight a werewolf), simply count them as a **Bystander**.

A **Henchman** with relevant training or experience grants an additional die that always rolls a 3.

Simply take an extra die and put it on the table with a 3 showing.

A character cannot benefit from more than one **Henchman** and the Group as a whole shouldn't include more than two.

### Minions

Any proper villain needs minions to do their bidding.

**Minions** are handled the same way as **Henchmen**:

Each **Minion** adds a die that always rolls a 3. Simply place a die with 3 side showing.

Unlike **Henchmen**, a given villain may have multiple **Minions** and will of course gleefully sacrifice them for the cause.

### Monsters and epic characters

The core system assumes relatively human-level characters, but many game settings require monsters that can fight an entire party on its own, while other worlds have epic heroes that can single-handedly defeat a small horde.

Such an entity is simply given a **Monster** or **Epic** rating which is expressed numerically.

In a **Challenge**, roll as many dice as the **Monster/Epic** rating.

For example, a troll with **Monster 3** has 3 dice to roll.

This makes it easy to adapt creatures from games that use "Levels" as a way to gauge power: A "level 4" monster could simply be given 4 dice.

We strongly suggest reviewing the **Endurance** rule if using **Monsters**.



## Resistance

A monster, alien or creature that is particularly resilient to a given attack form (or all attacks) receive a number of **Resistance** dice.

This mechanic may also be fitting for robots, troopers in powered armor suits or those with magical defenses.

Each **Resistance** die is a virtual die that always rolls a 0.

When rolling your dice, place a D10 with the 0 showing for every point of **Resistance**.

**Resistance** then cannot win **Challenges** but these dice can be removed individually instead of removing a character.

*Example:*

*A Troll might have Resistance 1 because it regenerates wounds.*

*This means the first time it loses a round, it could give up the virtual die obtained from Resistance.*

**Resistances** should always be narrated and are specific:

A zealot who is willing to die for the cause may be **Resistant** to persuasion attempts while our regenerating troll is **Resistant** to physical injury (except from fire or acid).

## Skills

**Skills** refer to the learned and practiced qualities of a character.

Many role-playing games use skills in some form, so this should be a familiar concept.

As with **Abilities**, they function as keywords such as "Fighting", "Riding", "Lock Picking" and so forth.

When a **Group** engages in a **Challenge**, if any member of the **Group** has a **Skill** that would be an asset, you may add +1 to the final die score.

Note that as with **Abilities**, only a single +1 is permitted.

Multiple **Skilled** characters simply makes the **Group** more robust against character removal.

For a given game, you may prefer a very wide **Skill** system (here your combat skill may be Fighting) or a more narrow and specific one (where your combat skills may be Sword or Spear).

The author finds that character-oriented skills tend to work great.

A soldier may have a Soldier Skill, usable for any common activities related to that profession.

### Experts

A character with an unusually high level of expertise is termed an **Expert**.

In addition to qualifying the **Group** for the +1 **Skill** bonus listed above, it also permits an additional die to be rolled, as long as the character is contributing to the **Group**.

### Mastery

Complete **Mastery** of a skill allows the benefits of being an **Expert**, but permits an additional die to be added on top.

This means the character contributes a total of 3 dice.

Multiple characters CAN contribute **Expert** and **Mastery** dice to the pool.

*Example:*

*A Group has 5 characters, two of which are Experts at Basket Weaving. When the Group enters into the galactic basket weaving tournament, they would roll 7 dice (5 characters, plus a die for each Expert) and add +1 to the final score.*

When a character is removed from a **Challenge**, all their dice are lost.

### Stunts

The default system does not typically allow you to target specific enemies, though this can be a vital tactic in a real-life encounter.

If a **Group** rolls more than a single 6 and wins, it may pick the removal target.

For particularly large **Groups** (or **Epic** conflicts) you may prefer to require three 6's to trigger this ability). This is also worth considering if you'd like the **Stunt** option to be less commonplace.

It can be recommend to offer this rule to the players but not their enemies.

*Example:*

*We are facing an orc warlord (Epic 3) and 4 of his minions.*

*We manage to roll a pair of 6's, allowing us to select the target for removal and opt to go after the warlord, seriously reducing the enemy dice pool.*

*We narrate this as the groups fighter stepping up to challenge the warlord to a one-on-one duel and smiting him in single combat.*

### Talents

Characters may have all manner of innate knacks, species traits, supernatural capabilities and magical/technological widgets to aid them.

We broadly call these **Talents**.

Every suitable **Talent** a character has will add 1 die to the **Group** total.

A character could contribute multiple **Talent** dice and multiple characters may all contribute **Talent** dice.

Note that we suggest interpreting **Talents** somewhat narrowly.

If the same **Talent** keeps being invoked for wildly different types of **Challenge**, it's a good sign you are being too generous.

However, if you desire a more heroic-feeling game, you could issue every major character a **Heroic Talent** that DOES apply to every action they take.

This can work particularly well for an action-movie scenario with relatively few characters.

If a **Talented** character is removed from a **Challenge**, their dice are lost.

## Vulnerability

A character or monster may be **Vulnerable** to a particular threat, approach or weapon. This is a common combat ability but an alcoholic might be **Vulnerable** to an offer of booze, while a locked door is **Vulnerable** to an enchanted lock pick.

A **Vulnerable** character cannot remove **Resistance** dice and must remove an additional die per defeat if they are **Enduring**.

*Example:*

*A sword of Troll slaying would prevent trolls from discarding Resistance dice when I defeat them.*

*If the trolls had Endurance (-2) they would be treated as Endurance (-3).*

In most situations, if a **Group** has access to a **Vulnerability**, it is applied even if only a single character benefits from it. For example if a party of 4 adventurers have a sword of Troll Slaying. Even if rolling all 4 dice, the effects of the sword can still be applied.

This can get a little messy if the opposing **Group** is only partly **Vulnerable**.

If a **Group** of orcs and trolls opts to take a removal on an orc, then the benefits of the troll slaying sword won't apply.

## MAGIC AND MIRACLE

### The Basics

Many settings involve mystical and magical abilities such as psionics, spell-casting, super powers or more.

These can be handled in a few different ways presented below.

### Treat them as a Talent

Smaller magical acts can be handled as Talents, granting a bonus die to relevant situations.

A petty wizard with a Talent for “Trickery” might be able to utilize small illusions, tricks of voice and subtle social manipulations for example.

This has the advantage of being very simple to use mechanically and uses an existing rules option.

### Treat them as a Skill

An alternative is to consider each brand of magic as a Skill set, with all the rules that apply to such.

A magic user may be Skilled, Expert or Master of a given type of magic the same way you may be Skilled, Expert or Master of any other craft or trade.

For this to work, magic types typically have to be fairly well defined.

Many game worlds have schools or philosophies of magic that serve this purpose:

For example an Expert in spirit magic would add +1 and a bonus die, if the group is trying to get information from a ghost.

### Grant Magic Dice

If you prefer magic to be more distinctive, give magic wielders Magic Dice.

At the beginning of the gaming session, roll 3-6 dice (depending on level of magical skill), and track the results.

Whenever the Group enters in a Challenge, after making all of their dice rolls, the magic user may add any of their Magic Dice to the rolled scores as additional dice.

Magic Dice are committed after the dice for both sides are rolled and any re-rolls have taken place.

If the Group takes a loss, two un-used Magic Dice can be sacrificed instead of taking a Removal.

In both cases, the use of magic must of course be narrated appropriately.

### It's all about the story

Magic use (and any traits resembling it) should always be clearly defined for each character, unless you wish for a game that is VERY open-ended.

If a character learned their magic from the spirits of the forest, they won't be able to apply those traits to hacking into a computer system, but they could probably turn into a wolf and sniff out a trail.

Be consistent even with something as ephemeral as spell slinging.

## SUMMARY OF OPTIONS

In this chapter, we present the system again, but with the various options included. Note that this may give the impression you are intended to use every option. This is not the case.

We have simply included them here, for the sake of thoroughness.

### Step 1 - Type of Challenge

**Group**  
**Simple Obstacle**  
**Complex Obstacle**

#### Step 2 A - Determine dice pools

1D6 per **Character** or **Blob**.  
 1D6 per **Assistant** (does not qualify for other bonuses)  
 1D6 per **Monster** or **Epic** rating.  
 +1D6 per **Expert** or **Talent**.  
 +2D6 per **Master**.  
 +1D6 for **Advantage**.  
 Each **Minion** or **Henchman** adds a (3)  
 Each **Bystander** adds a (0)  
 Each **Resistance** adds a (0)

#### Step 2 B - Determine Difficulty

**Obstacle Difficulty** from 3-7

### Step 3 - Roll dice

Roll all dice.  
 Re-roll 1's with suitable **Ability**.  
 Opponent may force re-roll of 1 die with **Deception**.

### Step 4 - Compare results

Pick highest die.  
**Epic** battle, pick two highest dice and add together.  
 Add +1 with suitable **Skill**.  
**Obstacle** counts the **Difficulty**.

### Step 5 - Apply results

Lower score loses.  
 On a Draw, both sides lose.  
  
 On a Loss:  
**Simple Obstacle** is **Resolved**.  
**Complex Obstacle** reduces **Difficulty** by 2.  
**Group** must: Remove a character / **Advantage** / **Resistance** / Lose a die from **Enduring** character.

If winner scores two or more 6's (optional 3) they may pick target for removal.

**Epic** battle loser must take two removals.  
**Epic** battle draw each take one removal.

### Step 6 - Establish victory

If an **Obstacle** is **Resolved**, the **Group Challenging** it has won.  
 If a **Group** has all its characters removed, it has lost and the opposition wins.

If Victory is not established, begin again at Step 2 unless either **Group Concedes**.



# THE CHARACTER CREATION SYSTEM

## CHARACTER CREATION

### Purpose

A simple character creation system intended for use with the Blades and Lock-Picks resolution system.

The aim is to allow a player to quickly create multiple characters on the fly.

### Intended users

\*Players wishing for characters defined by keywords rather than numeric values.

\*Solo or “one player one GM” gaming situations where multiple extensive character sheets are impractical.

\*Story oriented players.

### Presentation

First, we will present the building blocks of a character, along with examples. (Page 24)

We also summarize the rules function of each building block.

You will receive three methods for creating a character. (Page 26)

Finally we offer a character progression system. (Page 28)

Where possible, rules terms are presented in **bold** to help distinguish from regular usage of the same word.

## THE FUNDAMENTALS

### Building blocks of a character

Characters consist of a number of “building blocks” that provide a complete picture of who the individual is.

There’s no inherent reason every character must possess every type of building block, though for primary or main characters it is customary.

### Abilities

The key characteristics of a character are the **Abilities**.

These are broad attributes such *Strong*, *Agile*, *Charming* and *Cunning*.

An **Ability** covers a fundamental keystone of the character, often something that becomes readily apparent to anyone interacting with them.

**Abilities** are best described in a single word and should be concise and clear, so it is clear what type of situation it will apply to.

In the *Blades&Lockpicks* system, a relevant **Ability** permits the group to re-roll all **1**’s on their dice.

### Skills

A **Skill** covers an area of expertise, training or practice.

Decide if you wish to use wide Skills (e.g. Fighting. Outdoors. Athletics) or more specific Moderate Skills (e.g. Fencing. Tracking. Running).

A popular choice is occupation skills such as Woodsman, Knight and Fire Fighter.

In the *Blades&Lockpicks* system, a relevant **Skill** permits the **Group** to add a **+1** to their final score.

A character that qualifies as an **Expert** may also add an additional die to the dice pool.

A character that qualifies as a **Master** may add two additional dice to the poo.

### Talents

**Talents** cover all aspects of the character that cannot be quantified above.

Some **Talents** may be an unusual knack for a given activity. A character that has unusually keen senses may have the **Talent Sharp Senses** for example.

In more fantastical games, characters often have unusual abilities even beyond this.

An elf ranger may have a **Talent** for moving quietly in the woods while an Orc may have a **Talent** related to berserk rage.

In the *Blades&Lockpicks* system, each relevant **Talent** permits one die to be added to the **Group** dice pool.

### Flair

There’s more to role playing than the mechanical side.

Any details that are relevant to your character but which aren’t reflected in a game mechanic is considered **Flair**.

**Flair** can be unusual habits, a style of dress, a noteworthy appearance and a favorite drink.

Even if **Flair** isn’t reflected in the game rules, in a creative game, it’s not inconceivable that your fate could end up depending on it some day.

## Flaws

What makes a character stand out is often not their areas of mastery, but where they fall utterly short.

A **Flaw** might be physical, such as missing an arm or it might be psychological, such as being unable to hold your alcohol.

In some settings, **Flaws** may even take the shape of a code of conduct such as the warrior code of a knight or samurai.

Such a character would not view their **Flaw** as a hindrance at all, quite to the contrary, but to the game rules, we term all these **Flaws**.

A **Flaw** should be stated in a word or three.

In the *Blades&Lock-picks* system, if a **Flaw** applies to a given situation, the character can contribute no other mechanical advantages to a **Challenge**:  
Their **Abilities**, **Skills** and **Talents** are all cancelled.

## Connections

Nobody exists in a vacuum and good gaming tends to come from a well-connected character.

A **Connection** is a link between your character and the world they exist in.

This can be heavily setting-dependent, but examples of **Connections** include people above or below you in a hierarchy, mentors and enemies, favors owed, organizations you belong to and organizations you wish to bring down.

**Connections** tend not to factor into the **Challenge** mechanics but can be vital to creating an interesting story.

Having an interesting **Connection** may suggest a future scene, a course of action or even an entire story line.

## CHARACTER CREATION

### Power levels

Campaigns, and indeed characters, can exist in a variety of power levels. We primarily govern that through the number of things that go on the character sheet.

It should be noted that due to the group oriented system, highly proficient characters tend to become widely flexible, rather than ever-increasing paragons of a single skill or in-game expression.

We use four fundamental power levels:

**Mundane.**  
**Veteran**  
**Elite**  
**Champion**

The table below offers how many choices you get from each of the three main building blocks

	Abilities	Skills	Talents
<b>Mundane</b>	1	2	0
<b>Veteran</b>	1	3	1
<b>Elite</b>	2	4	1
<b>Champion</b>	2	5	2

If the game will use very wide Skills, reduce the Skill total by 1.  
For a more high-powered, exotic or fantastical game, raise the number of Talents by 1.

Characters that are Veteran and Elite may trade their Talent for upgrading a Skill to Expert.  
Champions may trade both Talents for upgrading a Skill to Master.

### Flair

Each character should have 4 pieces of Flair assigned, whether mannerisms, appearances, habits or trinkets.

### Flaws

Assign a single Flaw to each character (2 if playing a more comedic game).

### Connections

Each character should have 2-3 Connections to people, places or organizations.

### Going above and beyond

Review the Challenge rule options for Epic, Resistant and Enduring characters if they would be applicable to your character concept.

A caped super hero will likely need to be Epic, while a werewolf should have some Resistances (and Vulnerabilities).



### The notepad method

A way of guiding character creation is to simply write out a paragraph or two detailing the characters strongest characteristics, occupation or prior training, physical appearance and a few facts you would notice upon interacting with them

Think of this as a character bio for an online encyclopedia.

When you are done, simply underline the keywords and then assign them as Skills, Abilities or Talents as needed. Anything that seems like it adds character can be a Flair.

This method is ideal if you are a bit of a writer. It can also be great for people who aren't sure how to go about assigning mechanical traits to their character concept.

Flair can be assigned at the conclusion or you may assign a piece at each stage beyond the first.

### The character path

This is a more structured approach to character building, without inhibiting your ability to create what you wish.

Simply proceed through each stage and finish the sentences with as much or little detail as you like.

In many cases, especially if you are creating an entire adventuring party, there's no need to answer in long paragraphs. A line or two is usually all you need to move on.

Phase	Mundane	Veteran	Elite	Champion
<i>"I grew up in..."</i>	Select 1 Connection	Select 1 Connection	Select 1 Connection	Select 1 Connection
<i>"When I got older, I decided to..."</i>	Select 1 Ability	Select 1 Ability	Select 1 Ability Select 1 Skill	Select 1 Ability Select 1 Skill
<i>"However, events beyond my control resulted in me..."</i>	Select 1 Skill	Select 1 Skill Select 1 Talent	Select 1 Skill Select 1 Talent	Select 1 Skill Select 1 Talent
<i>"Everything was going great until..."</i>	Select 1 Flaw	Select 1 Skill Select 1 Flaw	Select 1 Ability Select 1 Skill Select 1 Flaw	Select 1 Ability Select 1 Skill Select 1 Talent Select 1 Flaw
<i>"And now I am ..."</i>	Select 1 Skill Select 1 Connection	Select 1 Skill Select 1 Connection	Select 1 Skill Select 1 Connection	Select 2 Skills Select 1 Connection

## CHARACTER PROGRESSION

As characters adventure, we expect them to grow, change and develop.

We offer several systems for doing so. Pick the one that fits your campaign the best.

### Narrative experience

In a Narrative system, simply make changes to the character sheet when it seems appropriate:

If a character saved the day, found themselves in a position to learn something, met a mentor or had a revelation review their character sheet.

New Skills or Abilities can be added as a result of experiences had (and survived) while Talents typically require something significant to have happened in the story.

Sometimes, a character may lose a feature or replace it with something else. A character might turn their back on their own lifestyle and embrace something new. If so, simply cross off the old Skill and add a new one that fits better.

This can also work when you realize that you made a choice that feels wrong. Sometimes when you start playing, the image you have of your character will end up being dramatically different from what you had in mind when you wrote it.

If so, adjust as you need, though be wary of changing traits that have come up in game-play.

A more realistic campaign may demand training times and extensive practice to manifest a given trait, while a more fantastical one can justify sweeping changes with relatively little set-up.

### Single player games

If a single player is handling a party of characters, a good rule of thumb is that each play session you can add one trait and change one trait anywhere in the group. This could be the same or two different characters as desired.

### Group games

With a group of players, permit each player to add a trait or change one after each session.

We recommend the use of the Prep Time rule below in group games.

### Prep time option

Any new trait to be acquired is explained and written down, however it does not actually take effect until after the FOLLOWING gaming session.

This is an abstraction to reflect the time needed to practice, train, familiarize yourself or go through the lesson plan.

### Experience interval

We assume relatively long gaming sessions where players get to “level up” each time. However, if you prefer a slower-paced game, have shorter gaming sessions or want to limit the number of things on the character sheet, you might instead award experience every 2, 3 or even 4 sessions.

### Milestone based experience

Under this system, characters grow when they experience a significant Milestone in their existence (or in the campaign).

This system is excellent for smaller groups of characters or for games where you want to get a bit deeper into the role-playing. It will also tend to shape the nature of your campaigns a little, which is completely intentional.

If you typically run a very particular style of game, you will want to create some Milestones of your own.

A super hero game would have very different Milestones from a gritty war drama, for example.

Milestones can exist for a particular character and for the group as a whole.

Some examples include:

*\*Defeat, overcome or persuade a lifelong rival*

*\*Experience a harsh lesson in life*

*\*Lose a lifelong friend*

*\*Discover something about the universe*

*\*Save your home from threat*

*\*Change the world (a tiny bit)*

*\*Achieve a lifelong ambition*

*\*Realize you were wrong all along*

*\*Do something that shouldn't be possible*

*\*Defend the innocent.*

*\*Punish the guilty.*

With practice, you can often estimate Milestones on the fly, rather than have an exact list.

Writing them down in advance can work wonders to guide the game however.

### Points based experience

This system uses Experience Points (XP) to purchase modifications to your character.

XP are awarded for each gaming session you play.

Short gaming session	30 XP
Long gaming session	50 XP
Overcame a significant threat	10 XP
Progressed a major plot point	15 XP
Resolved a major plot point	30 XP

It is up to the group or GM to determine what constitutes a Short or a Long session.

In a group game, if a player is particularly creative or really pushes the game to new heights, they can be awarded from 5-20 bonus XP.

If the group would have been doomed, lost or defeated without the efforts of a single, particular character, that character may receive 25 bonus XP for fore-sight in character design.

XP can be spent to purchase upgrades and changes:

Change Ability	50 XP
New Ability	100 XP
Change Skill	75 XP
New Skill	150 XP
Improve Skill to Expert	150 XP
Improve Expert to Master	150 XP
Change Talent	100 XP
New Talent	200 XP
Gain highly unusual trait	300 XP
Gain Magic Dice	100 XP
(+ 25 XP for each Magic Die already known)	

If a desired trait is very wide-ranging, open-ended or magical in nature, increase the cost by 50%.

More realistic campaigns will expect that new Abilities and Skills are matched to events in the game.

If so, charge a 25 XP premium cost for any Ability, Skill or Talent that is not justified by the on-going story.

# SOLO GAMING TOOLS

## SOLO GAME MECHANICS

### Purpose

Mechanics and tables to conduct a solo or collaborative role playing game.

### Intended users

\*Solo gamers.

\*Players wishing to run a game without a conventional Game Master.

\*GM's wanting to experiment with a more spontaneous game experience.

### Presentation

The first tool presented is a set of tables for setting up a brand new game.  
If you already have a setting or story idea in mind, this can be skipped. (Page 32)

The second tool is an "Oracle": The corner stone of solo gaming. (Page 34)

Third, we provide some random event tables. (Page 35)

Finally we offer tools to help structure the on-going story as it unfolds. (Page 37)

Where possible, rules terms are marked in **bold** to avoid confusion.

### Players notes

Throughout we assume that you are familiar with the basic concepts of how to play a solo role playing game.

## THE GAME BUILDER

### Basics

This section can be used if you wish to set up a new campaign completely from scratch.

It will help you set up a genre of game play, along with key words to get you started.

If you are stuck and inspiration just seems to be evading you, give it a spin.  
If you already know exactly what you want to play, go ahead and skip this chapter.

It is very likely that a given player or group may have no interest in particular genres or themes or wish for a different distribution of probabilities.

For this reason, we've added a blank column so you can print out the rules and pencil in your own dice roll tables instead.

### Genre

The Genre of a game tends to define a lot of other aspects, such as the type of characters to expect.

D100 roll	Your rolls here	Genre
1-25		Fantasy
26-50		Science Fiction
51-65		Historical
66-75		Contemporary
76-90		Urban fantasy
91-100		Horror

**Fantasy Genres** may roll again:

<b>1-45</b>	Low Fantasy
<b>46-90</b>	High Fantasy
<b>91-100</b>	Historical or Folklore Fantasy

Low Fantasy tends to take place in a world that's recognizable without the magical aspects while High Fantasy tend to have fantastical elements as a core foundation. Game of Thrones vs Lord of the Rings is a good example.

**Science Fiction Genres** may roll again:

<b>1-20</b>	"Hard" sci-fi
<b>21-50</b>	Space Opera
<b>51-80</b>	Space Fantasy
<b>81-100</b>	Cyberpunk

Space Opera is typically defined by "cool" over "practical". Firefly or Trigun are examples of Space Opera.  
Space Fantasy is things like Star Wars or the Destiny video games.

**Historical Genres** may roll again:

<b>1-10</b>	Pre-Medieval
<b>11-40</b>	Medieval
<b>41-60</b>	Black Powder
<b>61-80</b>	Industrial Age
<b>81-100</b>	20th Century

The Black Powder period covers the era of musketry and swashbuckling from roughly the 1500's to the Napoleonic Wars.  
The Industrial Age covers the mid 1800's through to the outbreak of the first world war.

You can roll on this sub-table to define a Historical Fantasy.

Add a 25% chance of the Historical Genre being "Pulpy". (Indiana Jones or The Mummy)

**Urban Fantasy** may roll again:

- 1-50** Secret societies
- 51-75** Super Hero
- 76-100** Magical world

A Magical World is one where the supernatural is widely understood and known (many Young Adult novels, arguably Harry Potter), while a Secret Societies world is one where the supernatural is secret and concealed (Such as the Blade or Underworld movies)

Horror Genres may roll again to find the base Genre (such as Horror Sci-fi or Urban Horror).

Theme
-------

The theme can be thought of the type of scenario you will be playing. Some themes may be best suited to particular genres but we have opted to make each table function independently.

D100 roll	Your rolls here	Theme
1-10		Exploration
11-20		Mystery
21-30		Treasure hunt
31-39		Special mission
40-48		War
49-58		Survival
59-66		Heist
67-74		Revenge
75-80		Character drama
81-91		Epic quest
92-100		Intrigue

Mood
------

The mood table can establish an intended tone.

Some moods can seem difficult fits, but give it a bit of thought.

As an example the film Saving Private Ryan would be a Gritty War story, while Black Adder Goes Forth would be a Comedic War story.

D100 roll	Your rolls here	Mood
1-13		High adventure
14-26		Gritty
27-37		Comedic
38-51		Dark
52-65		Light-hearted
66-78		Serious
79-90		Fantastical
91-100		Dramatic



## THE ORACLE

These rules assume you are familiar with the idea of an Oracle in solo-roleplaying but we will provide a small introduction:

When establishing facts in the game world, you frame a Yes/No question to the Oracle and roll the dice to obtain an answer.

In most cases, it is best to use 3-4 questions to establish the scene, then set up any likely outcomes once you have a good idea.

You can always drop back into the Oracle later in the scene, if you need new information.

*For example if our characters are approaching the bridge to an occupied village, a good question might be "Is the bridge guarded?".*

*If the answer is "Yes" we may want to make a follow up question such as "Are the guards heavily armed?".*

Almost any piece of information you need about the game world can be established on the fly using the Oracle and any player can frame a question.

Oracles work best if you do not try to "game" the system ("Do I randomly find the epic sword of monster slaying in my backyard?") or ask repeated variations of the same questions.

Note that the table is weighted slightly towards Yes answers.

Roll	Answer is	Roll	Answer is
1-5	Definite No	46-60	Likely Yes
6-25	No	61-70	Yes But
26-35	No But	71-95	Yes
36-45	Likely No	96-100	Definite Yes

**All examples use "Yes" for simplicity.**

**Yes** The answer is a Yes.

**Yes But** The answer is a Yes but with a condition, modifying factor or limitation.

**Likely Yes** If Yes is the most likely or plausible answer, the answer is Yes.

**Definite Yes** A strong Yes.

*Example question "is the bridge guarded?"*

*Yes - There are guards on the bridge.*

*Yes But - There are guards but they are not very attentive.*

*Likely Yes - Given the location, it seems likely the bridge should be guarded, so it is guarded.*

*Definite Yes - It's heavily guarded with sentries and check points.*

## THE WORLD ISN'T STANDING STILL

The characters exist in a living, breathing world that has an agenda of its own. In a conventional role playing game, this is injected by the GM, however in a solo game, it can tend to feel like nothing happens unless you are there to witness it. The tables in this chapter can help create the illusion of activity. Intended for a multitude of settings, worlds and realities, they must of course be quite generic and open-ended.

Event rolls can be fit in whenever it seems needed, such as during a period of down time or after a short adventure has been completed.

If an event seems to dramatic for your campaign, it can always be something heard about from far-away lands/planets.

Roll	Character events	Roll	Background event
1-5	Receive a message	1-5	Change of leadership
6-10	Meet an old friend	6-10	Threat of conflict
11-15	Meet an old rival	11-15	Disease epidemic
16-20	Catch a minor disease	16-20	New philosophy or religion
21-25	Make a local friend	21-25	Political disorder
26-30	Make a local rival	26-30	Natural disaster
31-35	Make a bit of money	31-35	Scandal among the rich and famous
36-40	Witness an injustice	36-40	Social disorder
41-45	Witness a crime	41-45	Peace and quiet
46-50	Hear a rumor	46-50	Discovery
51-55	Offered a job	51-55	Unusual person becomes famous
56-60	Asked for help	56-60	Fad of music or fashion
61-65	Victim of crime	61-65	Festival or celebration
66-70	Friend in trouble	66-70	Outspoken activist
71-75	Mysterious event	71-75	Tensions boiling over
76-80	Premonition	76-80	Mass hysteria
81-85	Learn something interesting	81-85	Heated political debate
86-90	See something strange	86-90	Crime spree
91-95	Gain a strange item	91-95	Abundance of resource
96-100	A moment of introspection	96-100	Shortage of resource

These events can be as dramatic or minor as you see fit and should be interpreted with your campaign style in mind.

The two tables below offers results for enemy forces, if you wish to get surprised at what your arch rivals might be up to, as well as results for large organizations your party may be involved with.

Roll	Enemy actions	Roll	Organization events
<b>1-10</b>	Inactive	<b>1-29</b>	No event
<b>11-19</b>	Direct attack on characters	<b>30-31</b>	Splinter group
<b>20-28</b>	Indirect attack on characters	<b>32-36</b>	Gain allies or support
<b>29-37</b>	Enemy gathers allies	<b>37-41</b>	Lose allies or support
<b>38-46</b>	Enemy fortifies or gathers support	<b>42-46</b>	Gain popularity
<b>47-55</b>	Allies of characters attacked directly	<b>47-51</b>	Lose popularity
<b>56-64</b>	Allies of characters attacked indirectly	<b>52-55</b>	Leadership struggle
<b>65-73</b>	Sabotage or espionage	<b>56-60</b>	Conflict with another organization
<b>74-82</b>	Subversion of allies	<b>61-66</b>	Players make a new Connection within the organization
<b>83-91</b>	Attempt to deprive characters of support or resources	<b>67-72</b>	Players make a new Connection with a rival of the organization
<b>92-100</b>	Show of strength	<b>73-75</b>	Change of leadership
		<b>76-77</b>	New rival organization
		<b>78-81</b>	Corruption or disorganization
		<b>82-84</b>	Organization is infiltrated
		<b>85-92</b>	Organization needs something done
		<b>93-96</b>	Internal reforms
		<b>97-100</b>	Improvement in loyalty

## SCENE BY SCENE

Games usually progress in a series of scenes.

As each scene is completed, take a moment to write down any Story Threads that have been created.

This may be people you've heard of, possible plot hooks, potential risks, areas of interest and so forth.

In the verbiage of video games, think of these as "side quests".

If a given Story Thread was resolved in the scene you just played, cross it off the list.

Establish what the next scene is going to be: Typically this depends on what you want the characters to do, though in some scenarios, a course of action may be dictated by the story. Use of the random event tables can also trigger a scene that you may not have expected.

When you've established what you intend to do and where it is going to take place, roll below to determine if things go as you expected.

Roll	Next scene is	Roll	Next scene is
1-4	Complicated	13-16	Opportunity
5-8	Unlucky	17-20	Interrupted
9-12	Lucky	21-100	Exactly as planned

### **Complicated**

The scene is made more confusing or chaotic, usually by the presence of someone or something unexpected.

### **Unlucky**

The scene will be more difficult than expected.

### **Lucky**

The scene will be easier than expected.

### **Opportunity**

The scene will have an unexpected chance to advance the plot.

### **Interrupted**

Events, forces or happenstance interferes and causes a different scene.

### **Exactly as planned**

Play the scene as you intended to.

#### *Example:*

*After fighting our way past the guards, our next scene is going to be infiltrating the occupied village and finding our contact.*

*Complicated - Allied artillery are planning to shell the village within the hour.*

*Unlucky - The town is particularly well defended.*

*Lucky - The villagers are extremely angry with the occupiers and will help us.*

*Opportunity - An enemy intelligence officer is visiting the town right now.*

*Interrupted - An enemy patrol spots us as we're nearing the town and we must escape.*

## DESIGNER NOTES

So why does this entire thing exist?

Largely out of three impulses:

First, I have really enjoyed a lot of the work and creativity of the solo gaming communities online, especially the *Lone Wolf Roleplaying* Google + community.

I wanted to contribute something meaningful myself, with the modest hope that it'd end up improving the gaming experience of someone out there.

Second, I often become frustrated with running conventional RPG systems solo.

It's strange, I can GM a 5 player *Rolemaster* battle no problem, but the second I am in charge of the characters, shuffling character-sheets becomes an annoyance for me.

I wanted something that would let me play with a full party of characters, while keeping everything potentially on one piece of paper (or a couple of index cards).

Thirdly, having read and experimented with, but never played "proper" *Tunnels & Trolls*, I was intrigued by how it handled combat as a group activity: Each character on both sides contributes to an overall "pool" and then you compare to the bad guys to see who got beat up.

This got me thinking: What if you could extend that to everything in the game?

This meant finding a dice mechanic and I didn't have to look too long.

I didn't want to add the dice together, the way *T&T* had done, because it can create situations where one side is overmatched and stands no chance.

This isn't automatically a bad thing, but in a solo oriented game, I felt it would be boring.

The solution came from a few sources simultaneously: The Games Workshop *Lord of the Rings* miniatures game as well as my old design work on the *Fast and Dirty* war game rules:

Roll the dice, pick the highest and then compare.

This both creates a nice averaging effect where large groups will typically perform as expected, but also puts two groups within the same theoretical frame work (a 1 to 7 range in our case). Perfect!

With a pretty universal mechanic in place, it was just a case of filling it all the fringe cases: What if the bad guys has cannon fodder minions? What if you fight a troll? What if you are a ninja master? All that stuff.

I included a few random tables I've been using for my own solo games. Knowing that solo gamers tend to find a tool set they like and stick to it, I wanted to make sure each component of the game rules was as modular as possible.

As such, there's nothing stopping you from using the resolution mechanics along with another oracle such as *Mythic*. Or for that matter using my oracle with a conventional game system.

After all, if you're playing solo, who is going to tell you no?

*Best wishes and happy gaming*  
*Ivan Sorensen*