

QUIRKS!

A Storytelling System

System Guide



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
What is QUIRKS!?	3
Who is This Game For?	4
Getting Started In Session Zero	5
Part 1: The New Player Basics	5
Introductions & Ice Breakers	5
Deciding your Roles	6
Talking about Safety	6
Managing Expectations	6
Sample Group Rules	7
Part 2: Building the World	8
Genre	8
Setting	8
Group Dynamic	8
Part 3: Creating a Character Sheet	10
Character Concept	10
Character Description	10
Attributes	11
Skills	11
Quirks	14
MEAT and BONES: Fleshing out a Character	18
Trackable Armament and Gear System	19
Utility TAGs	19
Weapons	20
Armor	21
Inventory	21
Example Inventories	22
Danger	23
Hazard Time	23
Risk	23
Wounds	24
Recovery	24
Death	24
Making Moves	25
Roll Results	25
Mastering Moves	25
General Moves	25
Combat Moves	29
Custom Moves	31

Contingency	31
Character Growth	32
Experience Points	32
Character Challenge	32
Improvement Path	33
Max Level Characters	33
Wrapping Up	34
Player Tips	35
The Weavers Role	37
Making the Monster	37
Building Backdrops	37
Telling Tales	37
Leading by Example	38
Tools of the Trade	38
A Personal Note	38
Weaving a Pattern	39
The Hook	39
The Danger	39
The Lead Up	42
The Inciting Incident	43
The Play	44
The Midnight Moment	45
The Possible Places	46
The Clues	47
Final Pass	47
Running the Game	48
Starting a Session	48
Setting a Scene	48
Interacting with NPCs	49
Currency	50
Reputation	51
Making Danger Fun	52
How to Run Hazard Time	52
Making Use of Your Monsters	53
Antagonist Taxonomy	54
Threat Levels	54
Threat Types	55
The Arena of Combat	59
Weather	59
Environmental Hazards	59

Introduction

What is QUIRKS!?

QUIRKS! (Q!) is an asymmetrical Role Playing Game. With a focus on Collaborative Storytelling. It is Setting Spanning and designed for Theater of the Mind Style Play.

So what does that mean?

Role Playing Game: This game sees one player take on the role of “The Weaver”, a game master who has 4 core tasks:

1. Create the Quandaries. They will be the one player who knows all the game's secrets, and whose role it is to create the challenges that the rest of the players will face. They will create hazards and puzzles to overcome, and narrative mysteries to solve.
2. Maintain the World. They are responsible for keeping the contents setting and theme appropriate. They create non-player characters for the other players to interact with and environments for them to explore. They also integrate player backstories into the world.
3. Keep the Story Moving. They are responsible for adapting player ideas into story elements on the fly in order to keep the narrative from stalling and prevent the game from stagnating in player indecision.
4. Arbitrate the Gameplay. Whenever something that is not covered directly by the rules comes up, they are tasked with hearing the opinions of everyone involved, weighing that against what makes the most sense according to agreed upon rules of the world, and then making a decision as to what happens so the gameplay may continue.

The remaining people will play as “Threads”. They create unique characters and their backstories, take on a role pretending to be them in a fictional game world, and work with the other players to tell a story together and overcome challenges created by the Weaver. You have 4 core tasks as a Thread.

1. Be Interesting. You should create unique and interesting characters who have individual mannerisms, and you should strive to actively participate in any scene your character is in.
2. Be Inquisitive. The worlds of Q! are full of things to explore. You should try to make use of moves to help you investigate and understand the world, and you should strive to ask questions and solve mysteries.

3. Be Believable. You should take actions and make decisions as if your character were a real person in the game world. Your characters should have senses of self preservation and you should try to avoid using knowledge that you as a player have but the character does not.
4. Be Cooperative. This is a group activity, you should ensure every player is included in scenes and that each person gets a chance to shine and contribute to the story in every scene their character is in.

Collaborative Storytelling: In Q! players work together to create and participate in a shared narrative within a fictional setting. Each game session produces a unique and engaging story. The Weaver creates the overarching mystery each session for the Threads to follow, but as the name implies, the Weaver also includes each of the Threads ideas and stories into the narrative of the game.

Setting Spanning: You can make Q! fit into any setting you and the rest of your friends want to play a game in. From Sword and Sorcery, to Sci-Fi, to Detective Noir; if you can imagine it, you can make it work.

Theater of the Mind Style Play: There are no battle grids or miniatures in this game. The settings, characters, and actions are imagined in the mind of each player. Distances are measured in narrative terms. The only thing you need to play are friends, paper, pens, and 2 six sided dice.

Who is This Game For?

People who like to play pretend, but seek the structure of a light rule system to give the pretend meaning. People who like to solve mysteries and puzzles. And people who like to tell stories.

Q! is best enjoyed with 4-6 players, and can be suitable for any age.

Q! is a game about imagination, and it rewards creative thinking, curiosity, and cooperation. Because there are no pre-made character classes or playbooks to pick, you have to be ready to think outside the box and be self guided in your play.

This book is the System Guide. The first half has all the information you need to play a game of Q!. If you are interested in being a Weaver you may want to check out the Weaver's Companion in the second half, where you'll find tips for creating compelling quandaries, encouraging collaborative storytelling, and adapting other content into Q!.

Getting Started In Session Zero

Session Zero refers to the meeting that happens before a new campaign or game group starts. There are a couple of important parts to a successful session zero.

Part 1: The New Player Basics

Introductions & Ice Breakers

If you have all been friends for a while this may not be important, but many people nowadays play games online with strangers, or in game groups that have flexible memberships. If any of the players in the game group are new friends, it's a great idea to go around, introduce each other, confirm desired pronouns, and if appropriate, play 1 or 2 ice breaker games. I have some personal favorites:

Two Truths and a Lie

Each player shares three statements about themselves – two truths, and one lie. Then, everyone tries to guess which is the lie by taking turns asking each other questions. Try to find out as many details about the statements as possible.

Fossilized

Each player imagines they were traveling with their three favorite things, when they are flash fossilized. Pretending to be a group of archeologists from the future, each player takes turns asking the others about the fossils they found until you are able to identify everyone's three favorite things.

Paper Telephone

Start by handing out a stack of small papers and pens, and have each player write a sentence on the first piece of paper. Players then pass their stack to the next person who must read the sentence, place it at the bottom of the stack, and then create a visual representation of that sentence on the next piece of paper in the stack. Play proceeds around the circle, with players needing to transform back and forth between words and images until it gets back to the person who wrote the original sentence.

Pitch Meeting

Each player creates a pitch for a movie and tries to sell it to the group. After everyone has pitched their movie, the players debate which one the “studio” should produce. The player who convinces the most people wins.

Deciding your Roles

If you haven't already, decide which of you is going to be the Weaver for the campaign.

Talking about Safety

Tabletop games should be a place where everyone is able to feel comfortable participating. Some people have difficulty interacting with certain subject matter, and discussing how to handle those subjects ahead of time can make approaching those narratives much more comfortable.

- Have an honest discussion of potential traumatic triggers the group members may have.
- Acknowledge that there is no possible way to identify or discuss every conceivable trigger or trauma. Some trauma may be repressed, some triggers may not be known.
- Maintain a supportive environment, no one is here to be a therapist or to provide solutions to problems, we are just here to listen and validate what we have heard.
- Remember there is no social pressure to disclose particulars of individual trauma.
- Make sure everyone knows that, when in play, if a player encounters triggering material, they can, if they choose, talk about that to the other players. When they do this, the other players will stop and listen.
- As part of talking about it, players should be given the opportunity to express their needs for the scene, and the group should play towards accommodating those needs.

Managing Expectations

Making sure everyone's expectations are aligned is a critical step in keeping everyone happy.

- Decide the schedule for the game and agree on the time and attention commitments required.
- Decide how to handle their character when a player is not able to make it.
- Decide how many sessions the campaign should aim to take.
- Make sure everyone agrees on the rules of the game.

Sample Group Rules

Here is an example rule set that I use at my tables, you can use it as a template to make up rules suitable to your particular group.

I WILL BE POLITE WHEN DEALING WITH OTHERS

"Polite"

Having behaviour that is considerate of other people

"Considerate"

Careful not to cause inconvenience or hurt to others

I WILL PLAY THE GAME IN A MANNER THAT IS FAIR

"Fair"

Without cheating or trying to achieve unjust advantage.

I WILL ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE GAMES

"Actively"

In a deliberate and positive way

"Participate"

Take part in an action or endeavour

I WILL NOT OVERSHADOW OTHER PLAYERS

"Overshadow"

Appear much more prominent or important

I WILL NOT DISSENT WITH THE WEAVERS FINAL DECISION

"Dissent"

Express opinions that are at variance with those officially expressed

I WILL NOT DISRUPT THE GAME

"Disrupt"

Interrupt by causing a disturbance or problem

I WILL NOT IMPOSE SEXUAL CONTENT ON OTHERS

"Sexual Content"

Subject material that is intended for sexual arousal.

Part 2: Building the World

In QUIRKS! a campaign can be built as a group activity. Players each pitch ideas and the group votes for the ones they like the best. As a team you will decide the genre, setting, and group dynamic for the campaign.

Genre

The first thing to decide is the genre of story you and your friends are going to tell. Genre is the general category of a story. Eldritch Horror, Noir Thriller, Superhero Action, Comedy, etc. Each player suggests the genre they want to play, if there are duplicates mark them down as well. Then you each vote for the one you are most interested in playing. You can't vote for your own idea, and the Weaver breaks any ties.

Setting

Once you know what the genre of the campaign is going to be, the next thing to pick is the setting. A futuristic starship in deep space, a 1920's industrial city with eldritch leaders, a fantasy world of adventure and monsters, ect. The setting decides the location, general tone and standard narrative tropes for the campaign. Each player suggests the setting they want to play, if there are duplicates mark them down as well. Then you each vote for the one you are most interested in playing. You can't vote for your own idea, and the Weaver breaks any ties.

Once you have picked a setting, take some time to talk about it. Each player can start suggesting world building ideas. Talk about what the scale of the campaign will be; a single building, a whole country; multiple worlds? Discuss how the society of this world works. Decide the rules of magic or advanced technology. Make sure each player is afforded the chance to make suggestions.

Group Dynamic

What role do the player characters fill? Adventurers in a monster hunter guild, students at a magical school, detectives in a cyberpunk city, ect. Each player suggests the group dynamic they want to play, if there are duplicates mark them down as well. Then you each vote for the one you are most interested in playing. You can't vote for your own idea, and the Weaver breaks any ties.

Once you pick a group dynamic, decide if you get any group moves as a result of it. You may all be able to cast magic, or fly, or breathe underwater. Whatever the campaign calls for. These Quirks bypass Rule 1 of making a Quirk. Decide what group assets you have, maybe a secret base, covert coms, or a method of transportation.

NPCs

Create a nemesis or nemeses for your group, powerful antagonistic NPCs who act to thwart your plans. Decide why they harbor so much resentment for your group.

Create an ally or allies. Useful NPCs who act to assist you. Decide what kind of assistance they can provide and what they expect in return.

Goal

Decide a campaign goal. What is the ultimate win state for this story and what are the stakes going to be?

Now that we know what our campaign is going to be. It's usually a good idea for everyone to take a short break. The Thread players can start thinking about the character they want to play, and the Weaver player can start thinking about the campaign story.

Part 3: Creating a Character Sheet

Character Concept

A simple descriptive paragraph of the character you want to play. This will be the guiding principle to your character concept and any actions you take or abilities you create should be in line with your character concept.

An example of a good character concept:

The traumatized son of murdered wealthy socialites becomes obsessed with fighting crime. After decades of honing his body into a weapon, he now leads a double life. Running his fortune 500 company by day, and fighting crime using advanced tech as a masked vigilante at night.

An example of a bad character concept:

A rich superhero with cool gadgets.

Character Description

Find or create a character reference image, or write down a description of them. Create a vivid idea of what interacting with the character is like. Consider, what do they sound like? What are their mannerisms? Try and imagine how you would act if you were the character.

Attributes

Physique is a character's strength, fitness, and constitution.

It governs your feats of strength and stamina.

Reflex is a character's reaction time, coordination, and fine motor skill.

It governs your feats of dexterity and reflex.

Wit is a character's mental acuity, wisdom, knowledge.

It governs your feats of intellect and problem solving.

Heart is a character's charm, deception, and self-certainty.

It governs your feats of manipulation and willpower.

Spirit is a character's connection to the strange, wondrous, and unexplained.

It governs your dealings with anything analogous to magic.

There are 2 ways to assign attributes. You can pick whichever matches your character concept better.

Tiered:

1. Pick a Primary Attribute, give yourself +2 in it
2. Pick a Secondary Attribute, give yourself +1 in it
3. Pick a Weakest Attribute, give yourself -1 in it
4. Give yourself a 0 in the other two Attributes

Distributed:

1. Give yourself +1 in three attributes
2. Give yourself 0 in one attribute
3. Give yourself -1 in one attribute

Skills

Skills are your character's specialized knowledge. Anything your character can have studied in detail or practiced to mastery could be a skill.

Every skill comes with a perk of some kind that provides a passive benefit or unlocks an ability that would require expertise to use.

When creating a skill, decide which of your attributes is most closely associated with the skill, that's the modifier that will be used to roll moves made using it. If you try to make a move that requires a skill you don't have, the weaver can decide if it is even possible, if so, it is made with a -2 penalty.

You start the game having already mastered 2 skills. As your character levels up, they will gain new skills.

Example Skills

This list contains a number of suggestions for common skills and examples of possible benefits. It is not comprehensive, and you may choose to interpret a skill differently.

Wit

Archaeology: You can identify ancient cultures and the general purpose of ruins you find
Cartography: You can keep a perfect mental map
Chemistry: You understand the interactions between substances you can identify
Cryptography: You can craft and break cryptograms
Electronics: You understand the electrical components of machines
Engineering: You understand the mechanical forces behind machines
Geology: You can identify the makeup of rocks and soil and spot geologic hazards
Hacking: With the right tools you can gain access to secure electronic systems
Herbalism: You can identify plants and their properties upon study
History: You know the general history of the places you visit
Law: You can find loopholes in legal systems if given time to study them
Mathematics: You are capable of doing advanced equations in your head
Medicine: You are familiar with anatomy and can perform surgery
Physics: You can calculate the motion of objects through space and time
Scavenging: You are able to salvage usable materials and resources from objects
Survival: You can locate available sources of food and water, as well as craft shelter and fire
Tactics: You can work out your opponent's strategies if given a chance to study them

Heart

Animal Handling: You are familiar with animal behavior and can train animals to do basic tasks
Anthropology: You can blend into a new culture with minimal exposure
Begging: You can identify the best technique to use when trying to beg someone for something
Disguise: With the right equipment you can quickly and easily hide your usual appearance
Forgery: With the right equipment you can craft convincing copies of documents
Gambling: You can see through most people's poker faces
Impersonation: You can mimic someone's mannerisms if given the chance to study them
Intimidation: You project menace and can cause others to fear injury or harm
Leadership: You can identify the message people need to hear to be motivated
Manipulation: You can identify the message people need to hear to believe a lie
Negotiation: You can identify agreements that are mutually beneficial when making deals
Performance[Skill]: You can attract the attention of people around you with a specific performing arts skill

Socialization: You are gifted in making small talk and can ingratiate yourself into social interactions

Reflex

Archery: You are skilled in the use of Bows and Arrows

Armor Drills: Remove the penalty from wearing heavy armor

Blind Fighting: When blinded you do not take the blind condition penalty to the Melee move

Contortionist: You take +1 ongoing to Escape moves

Crafting[Skill]: You are able to produce masterwork quality items in a specific discipline

Driving: You can make advanced maneuvers while operating a vehicle

Juggling: You can use any item as if it had the Thrown TAG

Locksmithing: With the right tools you can pick mechanical locks

Scouting: You ignore harsh terrain penalties while traveling

Sleight of Hand: You can palm small objects without people noticing

Physique

Acrobatics: You take 1 less wound from falling and being thrown

Brawling: You are used to fighting with improvised weapons

Climbing: You may always choose to take a mixed success when climbing

Dual Wield: You can swing with 2 light weapons in a round

Endurance: Your stamina only fails after the most extreme exertion

Martial Artist: You're skilled in unarmed attacks, and your fists deal 2 Wounds

Sprinting: You can outrun all but the supernaturally fast

Swimming: You are able to free dive and swim very quickly

Weapon Mastery[Weapon Type]: Expertise in a specific melee weapon type

Wrestling: You can disengage as a rushed action if you fail a grapple role

Spirit

Alchemy: With the right tools, You can craft potions with various effects

Arcane Lore: You understand the meaning and uses of most arcane symbols

Blood Magic: You understand the methods and applications of blood magic

Elementalism: You understand the methods and applications of elemental magic

Enchanting: With the right tools, You can impart magical benefits onto items

Fortune Telling: With the right tools, you can divine glimpses of possible futures

Hypnotism: With the right situation, You can plant subconscious suggestions in people

Monster Lore: You can identify a monster once you've had a good look at it

Occultism: You understand the methods and applications of spirit magic

Spell Craft: With enough time to study, you can discern the nature and weaknesses of a spell

Quirks

Quirks are what make a character unique. They are custom moves and abilities you create. You are encouraged to be creative and to use them as a tool to make the character you want to play.

A Quirk could be one of the following:

- A custom move that gives you a special ability
- A passive bonus to another move
- A change to one of the game mechanics

Rules to Making a Quirk

1. They have to be unique, you cannot create a quirk that is functionally identical to one from another character in play.
2. They have to fit with your Character Concept
3. They have to fit with the setting and scope of the campaign
4. A Quirk can only provide one benefit
5. A Quirk can only ever give a maximum bonus of +1 to a roll
6. Powerful Quirks should have a balancing downside or cooldown
7. Some Quirks may require relevant skills to make use of
8. The Weaver has the final say on Quirks

Types of Quirk

Tactical Quirks are all about getting the upper hand in dangerous situations. They rely on Physique and Reflex. They can allow you to do things like;

- Give bonuses in combat situations.
- Cause or mitigate damage.
- Gain tactical advantages.
- Manipulate the battle environment.

Clever Quirks are all about outwitting your opponents and solving puzzles. They rely on Wit. They allow you to do things like;

- Make exceptional deductions.
- Find overlooked clues.
- Research and recall information.
- Achieve feats of great intellect.

Emotive Quirks are all about reading and manipulating people. They rely on Heart. They allow you to do things like;

- Tell if people are lying.
- Create convincing disguises.
- Distract and entertain.
- Socially engineer your success.

Utility Quirks are all about creating situational advantages for yourself and the other players. They can rely on any of the attributes. They can allow you to do things like;

- Give additional bonuses when you help.
- Have an important item for the situation.
- Allow a player to re-roll.
- Change NPC actions.

Strange Quirks are supernatural effects. These are unique to the character concept the player has created. They can allow you to do things like;

- Cast Magic Spells.
- Be a vampire.
- Talk to Animals.
- Perform feats no mortal normally could.

Changing Quirks

As your character improves you will eventually gain the ability to modify your Quirks. You could choose to;

- Make them more powerful or impactful.
- Give them greater range or flexibility.
- Reduce the negative effects from them.
- Use them with greater frequency.

Determine your Starting Quirks

- All Characters start with 1 Quirk of their choice
- Characters with Physique or Reflex as their primary attribute start with 2 additional Tactical Quirks
- Characters with Wit as their primary attribute start with 2 additional Clever Quirks
- Characters with Heart as their primary attribute start with 2 additional Emotive Quirks
- Characters with Spirit as their primary attribute start with 2 additional Strange Quirks
- Characters with distributed attributes start with 2 Quirks of their choice

Once you have created your starting quirks, check with the Weaver that they fit with the game's setting and scope. You may need to add caveats, conditions or requirements to your Quirks.

Example Quirks

The Incredible Detective

- **Crime Scene Reconstruction - Clever Quirk**
 - Whenever you roll to Investigate the scene of a mystery, you can ask “What happened here?” as a free bonus question.
- **Investigators Eye - Clever Quirk**
 - When you first encounter an opponent, Roll +Wits
 - On a Failure: your opponent knows your weakness
 - On a Minor Success You know your opponent weakness
 - On a Major Success You know your opponents weakness and you planned ahead, take +1 forward against them.
- **Utility Belt - Utility Quirk**
 - You have an incredible utility belt with all sorts of changing gadgets, open the pocket and roll +Spirit
 - On a Failure, your belt disappears, it will show up again eventually.
 - On a Minor Success, you have a tiny useful item on you
 - On a Major Success, you have a small useful item on you

The Protective Paladin

- **His Light Protects Me - Tactical Quirk**
 - As long as you are acting to protect someone, you take half as many wounds from an attack
- **His Will Demands Attention - Strange Quirk**
 - When you make a challenge to your opponent, roll +Spirit
 - On a Failure, your opponent ignores you and attacks another vulnerable character.
 - On a Minor Success, your opponent ignores everyone else to attack you.
 - On a Major Success, the effect lasts until the end of the scene.
- **His Touch Mends Flesh - Strange Quirk**
 - You lay your hands on a target and roll +Spirit
 - On a Failure, you make the injury worse, the target takes an additional wound.
 - On a Minor Success, your target heals 1 wound or neutralizes a toxin.
 - On a Major Success, your target heals 2 wounds, neutralizes all toxins, or cures a disease.

The Social Engineer

- **Tiny Muscles Tell Truths - Emotive Quirk**
 - By reading the subtle unconscious muscle movements a person makes, you can try to tell if a person is lying. Roll +Heart
 - On a Failure, you can not tell if a character is lying or not.
 - On a Minor Success, you can tell if a character is being directly untruthful.
 - On a Major Success, you can tell if a character is being subtly untruthful.
- **Cold Reading - Clever Quirk**
 - By appraising your target, you can attempt to profile them. Roll +Wits
 - On a Failure, you make incorrect assumptions.
 - On a Minor Success, you may ask the Weaver 1 yes/no question about the target
 - On a Major Success, you may ask the Weaver 1 open question or 2 yes/no questions about the target
- **I Belong Here - Emotive Quirk**
 - As long as you have the right disguise, people overlook you while you are acting like you belong.

The Infiltration Specialist

- **Quick Reflexes - Tactical Quirk**
 - Once per scene, if you fail a Reflex roll, you may re-roll it.
- **Like a Mouse - Utility Quirk**
 - You may always choose to take a Minor Success on the Hide move.
- **Cat's Grace - Tactical Quirk**
 - You take a +1 ongoing to Escape and Manipulate moves.

MEAT and BONES: Fleshing out a Character

One of the elements to playing a good RPG character is to know who that character is beyond just the moves and mechanics. The MEAT and BONES system is designed to help you ask questions and imagine your character in a more well developed way.

TIP: Leave the “E”s to the End

M otivations What are the things your character cares about? What makes them do what they do? What is the reason they get up in the morning? Who do they care about? E nmeshment What ties your character with the rest of the group? Why do they care about the other player characters? How do they know each other? What do they know about each other? A ssets What valuable items does your character have? What useful connections have they made? T error What are your character's fears? Why do they fear these things?	B ackground What kind of upbringing did they have? Who is their family? What did they do in their old life? O rigin What was the defining event that made your character stop being an NPC and become something more? N eeds What goals do they have for themselves? What do they expect from others? What do they expect to receive for their efforts? E ntanglement How is your character connected to the main story? What keeps them invested in following the narrative? S ecrets What do they keep from themselves? What do they keep from others?
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Trackable Armament and Gear System

The Trackable Armament and Gear System (TAGs), converts every piece of equipment in the game into a collection of descriptive words that determine its properties.

There are 3 basic TAGs every item will have. Size and Weight determine what slot it takes in your inventory, and how much power it has as a weapon. Material determines how durable it is.

Size	Weight	Material
Tiny Can fit in a clothing pocket (<i>wallet</i>)	Trivial Barely weighs anything (<i>key ring</i>)	Fragile Made of breakable materials (<i>kids craft</i>)
Small Too big to fit in a pocket, small enough to fit on a belt strap (<i>potion bottle</i>)	Light Can easily be lifted with one hand (<i>maglight</i>)	Average Made of average quality materials (<i>mass produced knife</i>)
Medium Too big to fit on a belt strap, small enough to fit in a holster or scabbard (<i>sword</i>)	Heavy Takes both hands to lift effectively (<i>battleax</i>)	Ornamental Made with valuable materials (<i>golden statue</i>)
Large Too big to be carried anywhere except strapped to your back (<i>backpack</i>)	Substantial Takes a concerted effort to lift (<i>television</i>)	Sturdy Made of better than average materials (<i>bulletproof glass</i>)
Huge Too big to be carried on your person, small enough to fit in a moving truck (<i>table</i>)	Massive Takes more than one person to lift (<i>couch</i>)	Enchanted Made of magical or fantastical materials (<i>Fel Iron</i>)
Oversized Too big to fit in a moving truck (<i>Cruise missile</i>)	Overweight Too heavy to lift without equipment (<i>pile of rubble</i>)	Futuristic Made with sci-fi materials and advanced components (<i>Power Armor</i>)

Utility TAGs

Utility TAGs should be used to describe the functionality of the item. For example a flashlight could have the TAGs “Illuminating” and “Battery-Powered”. A laptop might have the TAGs “Wireless” “Networking” and “Battery-Powered”. And a set of thieves’ tools would have the TAG “Lockpicking” and “Concealable”. Decide all the functions or features your item has, and give it a TAG representing each one.

Weapons

Weapons deal base wounds determined by their size and weight TAGs

- **Small Light** weapons deal a base wound of 1
- **Medium Light** weapons deal a base wound of 2
- **Large Heavy** weapons deal a base wound of 3

Ranged weapons need to have the following TAGs

- **Projectile [Ammo]**: Indicates what type of projectile it fires
- **Reload [#]**: Number of shots before needing to reload
 - Remember you need to carry extra ammunition if you want to be able to reload
- **Range [Distance]**: How far the weapon can reach
 - Distance is measured in narrative terms
 - Within your current action
 - **Touch**: Directly in contact with you
 - **Engaged**: Within arms range of you
 - **Close**: Within a few steps of you
 - Within your next action
 - **Mid**: Reachable within a few seconds
 - More than one action away
 - **Long**: Reachable within a minute
 - **Far**: Out of Reach

Weapons can have many other TAGs, here are some ideas, you can work with the Weaver to make up your own.

Fast: Can be used twice in a round; Deals half as many wounds (daggers)

Slow: Requires a round to build up, deals twice as many wounds (charged blaster)

Thrown: Balanced for throwing (tomahawk)

Pulling: Able to pull a target off balance (halberd)

Enfeebling [Condition]: Causes a condition on successful hits (poisoned arrow)

Compact: When stored, the item has a reduced size TAG (folding knife)

Energy [Type]: Deals damage in the form of energy (laser)

Armor

Armor protects you from danger.

- It adds to your Max Risk Count
- If you do get hit, it prevents you from taking Wounds
- Light and Heavy Armor can be stacked with each other

Armor provides base protection determined by its weight TAGs

- **Light**
 - Adds 1 to your Max Risk Count
 - Prevents 1 Wound
 - Takes up a Medium Item Slot
- **Heavy**
 - Adds 2 to your Max Risk Count
 - Prevents 2 Wounds
 - Takes up the Large Item Slot
 - -1 Ongoing to Reflex

Armor needs to have the following TAG:

- **Durability [#]**: The Number of wounds it can block before breaking.

Armor can have many other TAGs, here are some ideas, you are free to make up your own.

- **Powered [Fuel]**: Requires some sort of fuel to function, does not offer benefits without it.
- **Shielding [Energy Type]**: Prevents effects from the specific energy type.
- **Flexible**: Allows greater movement, removes reflex penalty from the armor.
- **Stealthy**: Gives you a +1 to Hide moves.
- **Adaptive**: Changes form to suit its users' needs.
- **Summoned**: Comes from a pocket dimension and appears on the wearer as an action.
- **Hazmat**: Protects the wearer from biological contaminants.

Inventory

A Character's outfit offer the following inventory spaces:

- 4 Tiny Items carried in pockets
- 2 Small Items carried on belts or in pouches
- 2 Medium Items carried in holsters or on straps
- 1 Large Item carried on their back

Carrying more than this causes the character to be overburdened, and imposes an ongoing -1 penalty to Physique and Reflex moves

A large bag is able to store a second inventory worth of items, taking something out of a container is an action during Hazard Time.

Example Inventories

Heroic Warrior

Plate Armor Large, Heavy, Sturdy, Durability 4	Iron longsword Medium, Light, Sturdy Iron Buckler Medium, Light, Sturdy, Armour, Durability 2	Minor Healing Potion Small, Light, Fragile, Healing 2 Vial of Sanctified Oil Small, Light, Fragile, Holy, Flammable
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Symbol of Faith Tiny, Trivial, Ornamental, Holy	Gold Coins Tiny, Light, Ornamental	Scriptures Tiny, Light, Average, Holy	Travel Ration Tiny, Light, Average, Edible
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Sci-fi Spaceman

Space Suit Large, Heavy, Futuristic, Powered[Internal Reactor], Pressurized, Hazmat, Durability 2	Plasma Blaster Medium, Light, Futuristic, Slow, Projectile[Plasma], Reload[5], Range[Mid] Synaptic Disruptor Medium, Light, Futuristic, Fast, Stunning, Projectile[Electric], Reload[10], Range[Mid]	Scanner Small, Light, Futuristic, Powered[Battery], Identifying Transporter Beacon Small, Light, Futuristic, Powered[Battery], Teleporting
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Plasma Charge Tiny, Light, Futuristic, Explosive, Ammo	Disruptor Battery Tiny, Light, Futuristic, Ammo	Com Badge Tiny, Trivial, Futuristic, Wireless	Device Battery Tiny, Light, Futuristic, Electric
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Urban Monster Hunter

Backpack Large, Heavy, Average, Container - Monster Journals - Medical Kit - Infiltration Tools	2x Handguns Medium, Light, Average, Projectile[9mm], Reload[10], Range[Mid]	Flask of Holy Water Small, Light, Average, Holy JuJu Bag Small, Light, Enchanted, Spell Focus
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Handgun Clip Tiny, Light, Average	Handgun Clip Tiny, Light, Average	Handful of Salt Tiny, Trivial, Average	Lucky Charm Tiny, Trivial, Ornamental
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Danger

Hazard Time

When a scene becomes dangerous, it is separated into rounds of intent that comprise a few seconds of time.

It begins as soon as any character in the scene decides to act on a hostile intent or is put in mortal peril. The Weaver will pause the game and give a summary of the observable information the characters are aware of. See [How to Run Hazard Time](#) for how to play Hazard Time as the Weaver.

A Hazard Time round plays out as follows:

1. Each player will describe their characters intended action for the round
2. The Weaver will decide the intended action of any NPCs
3. When relevant, the action resolution plays out in descending order of Reflexes attribute score.
4. Once every character in the scene has acted out their intended action and made any relevant rolls, a new round begins.

Once all the threats have been neutralized or evaded, Hazard Time ends.

Risk

Player Characters are much luckier than the average person, but that luck isn't infinite. Risk works as a temporary shield in dangerous situations. It represents your character's ability to just barely block an attack, or dodge a hazard. Unless a Quirk says otherwise, Player Characters have a maximum Risk Count of 6 and Risk Count resets at the end of a scene. A character who is restrained cannot defend themselves, attacks against them deal Wounds directly.

Every dangerous thing a character avoids risks a certain number of Wounds.

- Minor dangers; like mundane fights, mortal minions, and minor environmental damage are usually 1 Wound.
- Medium dangers; like small caliber guns, trained weapon users, super human minions, and major environmental damage are usually 2 Wounds.
- Large dangers; like explosions, high caliber guns, boss monsters, and extreme environmental damage are usually 3 Wounds.
- Dangers above this are storytelling elements. They have the description "Unavoidable" and deal wounds directly

Once a Player Character has reached their maximum Risk Count, all further danger deals Wounds directly.

Wounds

Wounds represent the amount of damage a Character's physical form has taken. Player Characters have a default Wound Count of 6.

- At 2 Wounds, the character has taken minor damage, they are at a -1 ongoing penalty until they recover.
- At 4 Wounds, the character has taken major damage, they are at a -2 ongoing penalty until they recover.
- At 6 Wounds, the character has taken lethal damage, their physical form fails at the end of the round.

Recovery

Player Characters usually heal from injuries faster than the average person. Unless your campaign setting says otherwise, healing follows “action hero rules”. A long uninterrupted rest can remove all normal Wounds from a character. However if a character has no access to food and water, they do not recover wounds when resting.

Outside of this, there are other ways of removing Wounds.

- Magical Spells and Items using a Spirit roll
- First Aid Treatment using a Wits roll
- Advanced Technology using a Wits roll

Healing items will have the **Healing [#]** TAG, with # being the number of Wounds it can remove before being expended. Healing most often requires a Wits or Spirit based roll.

Death

Unless a Quirk says otherwise, a character that takes 6 (or more) Wounds dies at the end of that round.

Character death is usually the end of that character's story and requires a new character to be created. However, depending on the setting, death may not be the end of play for this character, for example:

- They may return as a spirit entity
- They may be able to be returned to life in their old form
- They may be reincarnated in a new form with their existing memory

Talk to the Weaver about what your options are to continue playing once your character dies.

Making Moves

Whenever the outcome of an action your character wants to take is uncertain, you have to make a move;

1. Determine the outcome you want to achieve, the Weaver will tell you which move to make.
2. Narrate your character attempting their action.
3. Roll 2 six sided dice and add your associated attribute modifier.
4. Announce the result to the group.

The Weaver will narrate the outcome based on the result of your roll. If you roll a 13+, the move goes as perfectly as it could possibly go.

Roll Results

- 6 or less: Failure
- 7 - 9: Minor Success
- 10-12: Major Success
- 13+: Exceptional Success

Mastering Moves

As you gain experience you will gain the opportunity to select a move that your character has mastered. Mastering a move provides a +1 bonus whenever you roll to make it.

General Moves

These moves cover the vast majority of the contested actions your characters will take as they explore the world around them. If a contested action is not covered under one of these moves the weaver may pick the Attribute that best matches it and ask for a roll based on that.

Escape - Reflex

You have arrived in mortal peril, adrenaline flows and you reach into primal instinct in order to survive. Using perception and quick action, you try to escape from a dangerous situation.

- On a Failure, you draw unwanted attention or your situation otherwise worsens.
- On a Minor Success, you may do one of the following:
 - Slip free of a restraint
 - Evade an environmental Hazard
 - Dodge a single attack you can see coming
- On a Major Success, you gain a counter-attack or a +1 forward

Manipulate - Reflex

A lock that needs picking, a delicate device that needs disarming, an item that needs palming. When your fine motor skills are tested, use your dexterity to successfully manipulate objects in the world.

- On a Failure, your coordination slips and you damage the object or otherwise make the situation worse.
- On a Minor Success, you successfully accomplish your task, but there is a catch of some kind
- On a Major Success, you successfully accomplish your task without complication

Overpower - Physique

A locked door that needs to be broken down, a friend that needs to be pulled up from a ledge, or a fallen beam that needs to be removed from the path. Eventually a feat of strength will be the best way to overpower a challenge.

- On a Failure, you are unable to overcome the challenge, you may become injured or otherwise find the situation worsens
- On a Minor Success, you may do one of the following;
 - Break free of a grapple
 - Move a heavy object
 - Break through a barrier or obstacle
- On a Major Success, you carry +1 forward

Traverse - Physique

Sometimes you'll need to climb over a wall, jump across a gap, or sprint after someone. As you travel through the world, you'll need your Physique to make it to where you need to be.

- On a Failure, you are unable to traverse the challenge, you might fall, or get stuck, or otherwise find your path barred.
- On a Minor Success, you make it safely across the challenge, but your actions create a hazard
- On a Major Success, you make it across the challenge without issue

Convince - Heart

Sometimes it takes a rousing speech, sometimes a subtle lie, and sometimes a veiled threat. No matter how you go about it, eventually you need to get people to do what you want. Using your Heart, you try to convince an NPC to do what you tell them. The NPC must be amenable to hearing you out, your request must have a logical reason, and it must be a task the NPC would and could reasonably complete.

- On a Failure, you upset the person, they refuse to help you and may become hostile depending on the severity of the offense.
- On a Minor Success, they are willing to do what you ask, as long as you are willing to make it worth their effort in some way.
- On a Major Success, they are willing to do what you ask, for the reason you gave them.

Withstand - Heart

Every character has a breaking point, when their willpower is strained by temptation and hope is weakened by what they have seen and done. Using your Heart, you can fight to withstand these challenges.

- On a Failure, you succumb to temptation or hopelessness, the situation worsens for you.
- On a Minor Success, you are able to resist, your character maintains their composure.
- On a Major Success, you may also pick one of the following effects:
 - **Resolute:** You can automatically take a minor success on any further Withstand moves against this foe or challenge.
 - **Inspirational:** You provide +1 forward to other characters who make a Withstand move against this challenge.
 - **Heroic:** You take +1 forward to your next action.

Investigate - Wit

You have clues to find, puzzles to solve, and mysteries to unravel. You search your surroundings and then use your detective skills to put together an understanding of the relevant events.

- On a Failure, you make a mistaken assumption that may negatively impact the situation.
- On a Minor Success, you may ask the Weaver one of the following questions;
 - Who is or has been here?
 - What are the ways in/out of this environment?
 - What trails can I follow?
 - What can I determine about events here?
 - What is out of place?
 - How does something work?
- On a Major Success, you may ask 2 questions.

Assess - Wit

The world can be a confusing place, and the best defense is a good understanding of the facts . Enter your mind palace and take stock of your current situation in order to work out what is important for you to know.

- On a Failure, you find yourself overwhelmed and unable to come up with a plan, your confusion may expose you to danger
- On a Minor Success, you may ask the Weaver one of the following questions;
 - Have I missed any threats?
 - What clues are relevant to my current story?
 - What is the most likely next action of a person or group?
 - Why would someone have done something?
 - What would be the likely outcome if I take a specific action?
 - How can I best protect myself/others?
- On a Major Success, you may ask 2 questions.

Help - Any

Sometimes a task seems too big to undertake alone, or requires skills your friends don't have. If you are able to explain how one of your Attributes could help, and if another Player asks you to, you may roll to help out.

- On a Failure, you hinder the effort more than you help, the character you help takes -1 forward on the task.
- On a Minor Success, the character you help takes +1 forward on the task.
- On a Major Success, the character you help cannot fail the task, but the outcome will still have consequences

Protect - Any

If an ally is about to face imminent danger you may choose to act to protect them. You must be able to explain how you would intend to intercept the danger. The Weaver will decide which attribute to roll based on your plan.

- On a Failure, you place yourself in harms way, but just become another casualty, you share whatever danger your ally faced as well
- On a Minor Success, you prevent the danger from affecting your ally, you take it instead
- On a Major Success, you deflect the danger, neither you nor your ally take damage

Hide - Any

Whenever you need to take action to conceal yourself, you may decide how you want to use your environment and equipment to do so. You must be able to explain how you would prevent yourself from being observed. The Weaver will decide which attribute to roll based on your plan.

- On a Failure, You are unable to hide, your attempt draws attention.
- On a Minor Success, you conceal yourself, but your foe may spot you if your hiding place is scrutinized
- On a Major Success, You are completely hidden, as long as you don't move, you will not be spotted

Combat Moves

These moves cover most of the basic actions you will take during hazard time.

Melee - Physique

Be it with bare fists or broadsword, you intend to get close and hit your foe in melee combat. Using your Physique you make an attack with your equipped weapon.

Attacks with unskilled weapons receive a -1 penalty.

- On a Failure, your foe anticipates your attack and it has no effect on them, they attack you.
- On a Minor Success, you and your foe both attack each other.
- On a Major Success, you may choose an additional effect;
 - **Advantage:** You gain +1 forward or may grant +1 forward to the next character to act against the foe.
 - **Critical:** You double the wounds you deal.
 - **Defensive:** You take half as many wounds as you would have, rounded up.
 - **Control:** You prevent your foe from moving away from you.

Grapple - Physique

Maybe you need to have a conversation with a hostile foe, or need to stop a hysterical innocent from hurting themselves. Whatever the reason, if you need to wrestle with someone, want to pin them down, or disarm them, use your Physique to get the upper hand in the struggle.

- On a Failure, they overpower you and you become restrained.
- On a Minor Success, you successfully snare or disarm your opponent.
- On a Major Success, you pin them down, they are restrained as long as you can hold the move.

Take Aim - Reflex

If you want to make sure that you hit a target with a ranged attack, you may choose to spend an action carefully lining up your shot. As long as your target does not move behind cover, and your concentration and footing are not disturbed, you may automatically take a major success on Ranged moves against that target

Ranged - Reflex

From sticks and stones, to grenades and guns, at some point you are going to need to attack your foe from a distance. When you use a Ranged weapon, roll +Reflex to determine the outcome.

Attacks with unskilled weapons receive a -1 penalty.

Attacks against targets that are at the engaged or touch range, receive a -1 penalty.

- On a Failure, you miss your target, you may hit someone or something else
- On a Minor Success, you hit your target
- On a Major Success, you may choose an additional effect;
 - **Advantage:** You gain +1 forward or may grant +1 forward to the next Player Character to act against the foe.
 - **Critical:** You double the wounds you deal.
 - **Defensive:** You take half as many wounds as you would have, rounded up.

Reload - Reflex

Magazine, bolt, plasma pack, whatever it is, if the weapon has the reload TAG an action must be used to reload it. If a full action is used, the reload is always successful. If you want to perform the reload as a fast action you may roll +Reflex to do so.

- On a Failure, the weapon jams, an action must be used to unjam it before it can be reloaded and fired.
- On a Minor Success, you reload fast enough to take another action this turn.
- On a Major Success, you load one in the chamber, you can fire the weapon one extra time before reloading again.

First Aid - Heart

Tending to a wound on the battlefield requires nerves of steel. Use your Heart to push through duress and use a medical item on someone's wound in combat.

- On a Failure, you fumble, wasting the equipment and the round.
- On a Minor Success, you are able to tend to the wound, but draw the attention of the foe.
- On a Major Success, you pull the target into cover and tend to the wound.

Strategize - Wit

Not everyone's strength lies in a heavy weapon or the barrel of a gun, sometimes the thing that makes all the difference in a fight is a good plan. Using your wits, you may attempt to strategize under pressure.

- On a Failure, your plan backfires, the foe receives a benefit instead
- On a Minor Success, you receive one of the following benefits;
 - **Advantage:** You may grant +1 forward to the next action of any character.
 - **Critical:** You double the wounds a foe takes from the next attack.
 - **Defensive:** You halve the wounds an ally takes from the next attack.
 - **Control:** You may change one person's position in the action resolution order.
- On a Major Success, every other player also takes +1 forward this round.

Custom Moves

What if the action you want to take doesn't fit one of these moves? What if you want to create a unique move for a Quirk? No problem. Custom moves are easy to make.

1. Make sure that what you want to accomplish is not possible with one of the existing moves.
2. Determine the attribute that best matches the action you want to take, this will be the modifier you use for the roll.
3. Decide the best case scenario outcome for the move. This will be the Major Success result
4. Decide the worst case scenario outcome for the move. This will be the Failure result.
5. Pick an outcome in between, that balances the good and the bad. This will be the Minor Success result.
6. Decide if the move has any requirements, like expendable materials or tools.
7. Give the move a cool name.

Contingency

Once per session, each player may award another player a Contingency Point when that player has done something funny, creative, clever, or otherwise entertaining.

A player may spend this point to retcon the outcome of any roll to a 12 by describing their character's backup plan in the event the move failed. You may only hold one contingency point at a time and they expire at the end of a session.

A player can not receive a second contingency point in a session unless they have already given one away.

Character Growth

As you play the game, your character gains power through the Experience Point and Improvement Path system.

Experience Points

There are 4 ways to gain experience points:

- Whenever you fail a roll.
- When you complete a Quandary.
- At the end of every session.
- When you accomplish your character challenge.

Once you have 5 experience points, take the next improvement from the path, and reset your experience count. This can occur mid-session, but not during Hazard Time.

Character Challenge

At the start of the session, set a challenge for your character. This should be a short term goal that can be accomplished within a session. These can be simple and require little preparation or investment, but must be possible to fail, such as “Succeed in an infiltration without getting caught” or “Haggle a great deal on a new weapon in the market”.

If you fail at a challenge you can try it again next session, but can’t get a second chance at trying this time.

Improvement Path

1. +1 to an Attribute, max +2
2. Gain a new Quirk
3. Receive a personal story boon (Item, Resource, or Influence)
4. Gain a Skill
5. +1 to an Attribute, max +2
6. Gain a new Quirk
7. Receive a personal story boon (Item, Resource, or Influence)
8. Gain a Skill
9. +1 to an Attribute, max +2
10. Mark one of your moves as Mastered
11. Refine one of your Quirks or gain a new one
12. +1 to an Attribute, max +3
13. Gain a Skill
14. Mark one of your moves as Mastered
15. Receive a personal story boon (Item, Resource, or Influence)
16. Refine one of your Quirks or gain a new one
17. Mark one of your moves as Mastered
18. +1 to an Attribute, max +3
19. Gain a Skill
20. Mark one of your moves as Mastered
21. Receive a personal story boon (Item, Resource, or Influence)
22. Refine one of your Quirks or gain a new one

Max Level Characters

Once you have reached the end of the improvement path, your character stops gaining experience points and has reached the end of its power arc. You have 2 choices:

- You may continue to play the character until the end of the campaign, but they will not develop any further mechanically.
- You can make a new character and retire the old character:
 - to be an NPC ally for the team.
 - to become a legendary figure.
 - to become an antagonist.
 - to peaceful anonymity.

Wrapping Up

As you reach the last 15 minutes or so of your game time, you should wrap up the session. Finish whatever scene you were in, and then do an end of session discussion.

Add your end of session experience point. Determine if each character accomplished the experience point goals they set for each other, if so, add the experience point. If a quandary completed this session, add an experience point.

Go around the table and do “Wonderful and Wishful”. Each player, including the Weaver, will discuss a moment in the session that they thought was wonderful, and a moment in the session they wished could have gone differently.

Remember to thank each other for sharing our precious time together.

Player Tips

Develop a Character Voice

Having a “voice” for your character helps distinguish when you are talking as a player, and when you are talking as a character. You don’t need a thick accent or distracting mannerism, just making a small adjustment to your normal speaking voice can be enough.

Take Notes

Your ability to engage with the game will be vastly improved with note-taking. Keeping track of; NPC names and personality traits, details about locations or events, and information about your quandary, enriches your ability to enjoy the game. You don’t have to write whole paragraphs, even just bullet points will make a huge difference.

Ask Questions

The more you ask about the world around your character, the better your chance of success will be. Try to figure out how things work, question the motives and motivations of NPCs, and be mindful of the ripple effects of your actions. Remember to use all your characters senses. Use the Investigate and Assess moves whenever you can. Don’t be afraid to ask clarifying questions if you are confused or need more detail.

Communicate & Cooperate

Don’t expect to play in a vacuum. This is a social, collaborative game, which makes it important for the players to find opportunities to cooperate wherever possible. When faced with a challenge, you don’t only have your own tools, you have those of your whole group. Discuss the challenge before acting, preferably in character whenever possible. Decide as a group what you are all going to do.

Shine the Spotlight

This is a positive-sum game. The more fun each player is having, the more fun everyone at the table is having. You should look for chances to shine the spotlight on every player at the table. It can be tempting to solve every challenge your party faces yourself, we all like to be the hero. However, instead, consider if your character can point out opportunities for other characters to show off their skills, share their backstory, or achieve an objective. Not only does this keep everyone involved, but opens up roleplay opportunities.

Embrace The Unexpected

A part of learning to thrive at roleplaying games is to practice the skill of radical acceptance. To learn to embrace unexpected or unfavorable outcomes to your actions.

Remember that part of the excitement is not knowing exactly what is going to happen. You may make a perfect plan, only to feel like the dice deny you at every turn, and it's ok to get frustrated, chance is sometimes cruel. But if everything always went exactly as we wanted it to, it wouldn't be a game. The failures are opportunities to laugh as a group, to learn new strategies, and to gain experience points.

Bite the Hook

It's important to remember that Weaver is not out to defeat or trick the other players. So when a new story hook pops up in the campaign, you should trust that it is a real adventure, not a trap. That the Weaver has put real time and effort into preparing it, and has done their best to make sure the story it leads fits the players' interests. And then you should bite the hook.

That isn't to say that you should refrain from developing creative solutions to the hooks. Or not talk to the Weaver outside of the game with critical feedback if there's something you're not enjoying. But in almost all cases, Weavers work hard to create fun experiences for everyone, and simply ignoring the story hooks they provide only hurts the game.

Invest in the World

After investing all that time, effort, and passion into building a character, it's not uncommon for players to only really focus on their character sheet, mostly ignoring the world the campaign takes place in. Many RPG campaigns face a disconnect between the world of the game and the played experience of the players around the table. Especially if your experience comes from a top down system that has less player agency.

The Weaver may create the bulk of the game world after session zero. But Threads can create things too. Work with the Weaver to create locations, NPCs, or historical events that your character might be tied to. Collaborate to build real, meaningful relationships so that they may appear as hooks in the campaign.

By grounding your character with connections in the world, you can enrich your own gameplay experience, making the game a place for your character to act in, rather than a mere stage dressing for them to stand in front of.

The Weavers Role

Like many other tabletop RPGs, Q! is an asymmetrical game, and playing as the Weaver sets you apart as the “Game Master” for the upcoming campaign. It is a role that has more responsibility and takes more time and effort to play. But it also comes with a great deal of reward. You will get to explore all sorts of characters to play as, and will be hero, antagonist, and friend to the other players characters. You will get to explore your ideas and you’ll get to surprise and delight your friends with exciting twists and turns. In this companion section you will find all the tips and tricks I can provide to help you play as the Weaver.

Making the Monster

In Q! a Quandary represents an individual specific threat that you’ll create to challenge the other players. It might be an antagonist or group of antagonists with an insidious goal that needs to be thwarted. It might be an environmental phenomena or a strange occurrence that messes with the rules of reality. It might be a specific dangerous location they must escape, like a dungeon or far away realm. As the Weaver, one of your roles is creating and fleshing out these challenges. Each Quandary might be a single session, or may take a few sessions to complete.

Linking together each Quandary to the next is the framework of the group dynamic you've picked. Eventually your Quandaries should lead you to the final climax of the campaign.

Building Backdrops

In order to play the game, you'll need the game world. As a Weaver, It's your responsibility to add detail, maintain continuity, and create interesting spaces and characters for the other players to interact with. The places you create are like the sets of a movie, they are important tools in your storytelling. You want them to be believable and be prepared for players to ask questions about their surroundings. You'll need to be mindful to keep things setting and theme appropriate and to integrate player backstories and ideas into the world.

Telling Tales

One of the most important skills you'll be developing is learning to keep the story moving. You'll be adapting player ideas into story elements on the fly. You'll have to be ready to do a lot of improvisational thinking because the other players are going to decide to do things you never accounted for. You'll need to try and keep everyone focused on the goal of the session, while being prepared to change the goal if they decide to go off pattern.

Leading by Example

As the Weaver, one of the hardest tasks you'll have to get used to is being the de facto leader. Whenever something that is not covered directly by the rules comes up, and it will often in a rules light system like Q!, you will be tasked with hearing the opinions of everyone involved, weighing that against what makes the most sense according to the agreed upon rules of the world, and then making a decision as to what happens so the gameplay may continue. The other players are going to look to you for tips and ideas for their quirks and character concepts. And you will inevitably have to arbitrate disputes between players. Remember the goal is to be fair, firm, and forward thinking.

Tools of the Trade

The first thing every Weaver needs to get started is a Pattern Book. This is going to be your master notebook. You can have a digital one using the app of your choice, or you can opt for a physical binder, it's a personal decision and they both have their pros and cons. The important thing is that it lets you keep all the important details you come up with in one place.

Once you have your Pattern Book, the second thing you are going to want to get is a small pocket sized notepad and writing implement, or a note taking program for your cell phone. This is gonna be your Forget-Me-Not, and you should keep it on you so that you can record the creative ideas you have throughout the day. These ideas will make up the majority of the inspiration for your hooks when you are making patterns.

If you are playing in person, you may need some sort of screen to hide your notes and dice rolls.

The last thing you'll need is your favorite pair of six-sided dice. Of course, each player can bring their own dice, collecting new ones can be a lot of fun.

A Personal Note

Playing as the Weaver is a huge amount of fun. It is a very rewarding experience. But it is also really easy to burn out, always being the one in charge of telling the story. I personally recommend that player groups try to take turns being the Weaver. When a campaign comes to an end, it's good practice to take a break and be a Thread in the next campaign. Spreading out the responsibility for being the Weaver also helps build the roleplaying skills of the whole group.

Weaving a Pattern

Every Quandary starts with the Pattern, a structural framework for creating an interactive story. The Pattern has the following parts:

- **The Idea:** A summary of the threat at play
- **The Danger:** Who are the antagonists? What are they capable of?
- **The Lead Up:** What happened prior to the start of the story?
- **The Hook:** What happened that sets off the players' awareness of the Quandary?
- **The Play:** What does the danger do at each stage of its plan?
- **The Midnight Moment:** What are the stakes if the threat is allowed to play out without being stopped?
- **The Clues:** What will lead the players to the important aspects of the story?
- **The Possible Places:** What locations are relevant to the story? What can be found there?

Let's examine each of these components in more detail. We'll build an example Pattern as we go.

The Idea

The Idea is really simple: try to summarize your story in a few sentences.

A group of werewolf tavern owners have been kidnapping and killing people. They are using blood magic to experiment with making their curse contagious in food and drink. They have almost perfected the formula and plan to poison the town water supply to create a whole community of werewolves.

The Danger

We're gonna make a list of the antagonists and threats here. A danger sheet should identify:

- What are the monsters or threats, what do they look/act like?
- What are their cover stories, what makes attacking them outright hard to do?
- What is the public knowledge of this creature? What are the actual facts?
- What are their abilities, combat tactics, and health pools?
 - Remember to adjust these to suit the party size and combat capability.
You want challenges to be fun and reward planning, not be frustrating or unfair.

Werewolves:

Fact: Lycanthropy is a “blessing” from a long forgotten celtic era goddess of the hunt. People who contract it have a psychedelic experience under the next full moon where they will transform into a werewolf, hunt prey, and eventually have a conversation with this goddess. During which their hearts desires will be laid bare and they will be bestowed a blessing that fits them. After that first transformation, they can change forms at will. They do still transform regardless of their will under the full moon, but they remain in control of themselves and retain their human faculties.

Public Myth: Lycanthropy is a curse from the gods, turning people into psychotic uncontrollable killing machines out for blood. This stems from the fact that many first moon werewolves have gone on killing sprees, especially in places where a forest isn’t accessible to hunt in. Many unfortunate werewolves have woken up covered in blood only to find themselves the target of a hunt by the city guard.

Abilities:

- **Superhuman Strength** - Even in human form, they are much stronger than any average human.
 - Grapple Moves against them fail unless your roll modifier is at least +4
 - They can break down doors and other barricades very quickly
- **Superhuman Senses** - They have a heightened sense of smell and dark vision.
- **Regeneration** - Unless a wound was caused by a silver weapon, they heal from it at the end of the round. Decapitating or completely destroying the body will still kill the werewolf.
- **Natural Weapons** - In wolf form they have a [3 Wound] bite they can use on a grappled target and a [2 Wound] claw swipe attack they can use as a retaliation in melee.
 - These attacks have a 1 in 6 chance of infecting the victim with lycanthropy if they survive the encounter.
 - If a character takes wounds from them, roll a die behind the screen. On a 1, the character contracts lycanthropy.
- **Dark Mothers Blessing** - Each werewolf gains an innate magical gift on their first transformation.

Combat Tactics:

- Pack Fighters - In the event any one of them are caught in a fight alone, they will do everything they can to fall back to the rest of their group.
- Rational - They will act in their best interest and try to escape if they become too injured or think the odds are too stacked against them
- Melee Fighters - They will try to grapple and bite their opponents, and use their claws to swipe at anyone that gets close or tries to attack them

Health Pool: 7 or 8 Wounds

Threat Level: Villain

Threat Type: Chimera

The Stubbs Family:

Believed by all to be the well loved proprietors of the Yellow Bush Tavern, the Stubbs are in fact a family of werewolves who have been hiding in plain sight for decades. The tavern is a bustling social hub, and many of the local guards are loyal patrons, due to the discount they receive on drinks.

Elenore Stubbs	Micky Stubbs	Arlene Stubbs
45 years old long, braided, golden hair Brown eyes. Soft pale skin. 154cm (5'0") tall Thick build Chef & Owner Dresses in a light tan simple linen dress with a leather apron full of kitchen utensils. A matronly sweet woman, is very kind and a good listener. Blessing of Shadow: Can shadow step and cast darkness.	51 years old long, black mohawk green eyes rough black skin 184cm (6'0") tall Muscular build. Snake bite piercing on his lip Bartender & Security Dresses in a pair of black slacks and tight white button up linen shirt. Strong stoic man of few words. Grunts and uses non verbal communication. Yells when angry. Blessing of Wind: Has supernatural speed.	20 years old Short, straight, golden hair Brown eyes. rough brown skin. 172cm (5'7") tall round build. Serving Girl Dresses in tan slacks with a simple blue linen blouse and a black leather duster. Brash and headstrong, certain of herself to the point of cockiness. Blessing of Blood: Can cast spells in the domain of blood magic.

- Elenore will cast darkness on the target and use guerilla tactics to stab them from the dark with her knives.
- Micky will dodge or catch projectiles and can take an extra action in a round. He will try to close the distance and point blank double barrel antagonists with his gun.
- Arlene will use blood bending to make one of the characters move against their will. And if forced to, will use the vial of acid she keeps in her pocket.

The Feral Child:

Found in the woods by the Stubbs family. This ~10 year old girl is completely feral, has no communication skills, and can't control her werewolf transformation. She is kept sedated and locked in a cage in a hidden room in the tavern's basement. Her arms are covered in marks from the needles used to draw her blood.

If she regains consciousness, she will transform and try to escape, attacking anyone in her way. Anyone attacked by her has a 100% chance of catching lycanthropy.

She is weakened by her imprisonment and blood loss, as such, she only has a health pool of 4.

The Lead Up

Most stories actually start long before the player characters arrive on the scene. Planning out the important actions that lead up to the start of the session can help you be able to answer player questions on the fly and help you flesh out your idea about what the antagonists are up to. We've established the general goal of the antagonist in the hook, here we ask ourselves how the antagonist got to where they are now. Try to ask yourself the following questions:

- What motivates your antagonist?
- What allows them to be a threat?
- Why have they only now put their plan into motion?
- Why are they in the position they are now?

The Stubbs family have been living in town for their whole lives. Eleanor's father built the tavern over 70 years ago. Elenore met Mickey at a harvest festival, they fell in love and married 25 years ago. Shortly after they were married, Eleanor turned Mickey into a werewolf after he asked her to. Eleanor inherited the tavern when her father died 20 years ago. Arlene was born later that year.

The Stubbs have lived comfortably hidden among the townspeople. Once per month they "go hunting" and the tavern is closed up early. They hunt game as werewolves under the full moon, and then use that meat for the tavern's meals. No one in town has ever questioned this behavior, as it seems perfectly normal.

Elenore and Mickey are simple people who don't have much ambition beyond living comfortable lives as well respected, wealthy business people. They have cultivated a lot of respect from the local community by offering affordable drinks and meals for decades. Arlene is more headstrong and curious about the world around her, she embraced advanced learning early in life. She is particularly interested in the study of magic because of her blessing.

Elenore and Mickey are happy living in hiding, but Arlene doesn't like the fact she has to hide that she is a werewolf, she secretly wishes everyone in town were werewolves. But because lycanthropy has a low chance of being spread and a victim is more likely to die from the attack than turn, it is nothing more than a fantasy.

Everything changed when they found another werewolf, a young girl, in the woods one night a few months ago. Realizing that the child had clearly been abandoned by someone when her nature was revealed, they brought her home. However it soon became clear she was completely feral, and a danger to herself and others. They locked her up in a cage in their hidden room in the tavern's basement.

Arlene's blessing allowed her to sense that there was something different about the girl's blood. After doing some testing, she learned that the girl's blessing makes her lycanthropy much more transmissible. Learning this, Arlene hatched a plan. She could use this girl's blood, and her blood magic to make a potion to turn people into werewolves without having to attack them.

She convinced the rest of the family that if they turned the whole town into werewolves they would finally be able to live free. The elder Stubbs are a little reluctant but they agree to go along with the plan. Arlen started doing experiments and realized she would need a lot more blood.

They have abducted people every few nights for the last couple weeks. They focused on people who would likely not be missed, and drained their blood for Arlene's experiments, then dumped the bodies outside town. They made it look like the work of vampires just in case the bodies are found.

Arlene has almost finished her formula, she just needs to make a few tweaks to it so that it stops turning people into monsters. A few more tests and it will be ready to deploy.

The Hook

This is the plot point we are going to use to introduce the rest of the players to our story idea. We want to bait the hook, and give them some sort of incentive to bite. Ideally you want to give them just enough to make them curious, without being obvious about what the danger is, remember, figuring that out is part of the fun of the game.

It could be all sorts of things, a discovered body, a frantic and potentially unreliable witness, a vague request for aid from an eccentric scientist. It should be tailored to the group dynamic, and whenever possible tied to one or more of the player character's MEAT and BONES elements.

The group of private monster hunters received a plea for help from Heather Ward, who says that her partner, Max, was found dead yesterday morning in the woods outside the town. Max was exsanguinated by puncture wounds on his neck and still in possession of his valuables. He was found just off the road, obfuscated in a patch of bushes and trees.

The town guard determined that it was likely a monster attack and because Max and Heather are Bliss-Leaf users, they say he probably wandered out of town in a drug induced stupor and got himself killed. They don't want to devote any resources to the case.

Heather doesn't believe that, she thinks her partner's body was dumped after being killed, because there is no reason he would have been out there, bliss-leaf or not. She offers to pay the group to find out what happened to Max, and if it was a monster, to exterminate it.

The Play

This is where you plan out the behind the scenes actions of your antagonists and establish their plans. You'll be using this to set the timeline to the midnight moment. It is a blueprint for the worst possible circumstances the player's could face and how things will go if the antagonist is not stopped. Consider how long it will take for your antagonists to accomplish tasks and what things they will need in order to accomplish them.

Day 1:

Arlene has captured a drunk the night before. She drains him and mixes his blood with a little of the feral child's. Then does some alchemical and magical processes to it, turning it into a potion. She doses one of the tavern patrons' drinks later that night with the potion. A few hours later, back at home, he transforms into a deformed wolf-like monster and goes on a rampage, killing his family and breaking out into the street. He is put down by the town guard if the players don't do it themselves. Meanwhile Elenore uses her blessing to watch this unfold from the rooftops and take notes for Arlene. Mickey uses his blessing and the cover of darkness to dispose of the wino's body in the river fast enough to not be spotted. The body washes away.

Day 2:

Arlene has captured a prostitute and drains her blood. She makes a new potion. This time she laces a sailor from the visiting merchant ship. Back on his ship shortly thereafter, he transforms into a more werewolf-like monster than the man from last night, and kills most of the crew in their bunks before eventually falling into the water and drowning due to not being able to swim in this mutated form. Again Elenore takes notes and Mickey disposes of the prostitute's body, this time throwing it into the waste pit outside town.

Day 3:

Arlene has captured a junkie and drains his blood. She makes a new potion. She laces a traveling merchant's drink. This time the man transforms within a few minutes. He is a fully formed werewolf, but he has a seizure and dies. Unbeknown to Arlene, he had a rare allergy to one of the compounds in the potion. Everyone in the tavern freaks out at this event and word soon spreads. Within a few minutes the town guard arrives on the scene. The investigation occupies the Stubbs for the majority of the evening and the tavern is closed early. It is eventually assumed that he must have been a werewolf all along and died of some naturally occurring medical emergency, since no other cause seems apparent. His body is taken away for autopsy.

Day 4:

Early in the morning, before sunrise, Mickey disposes of the junkie's body in the river.

Arlene works to figure out what happened with the potion, but can't find anything wrong with it, and eventually decides to test it again, but since there is too much heat on the tavern now she decides to test it somewhere else. She mixes the

potion into a whiskey flask and goes to the park where she “accidentally” drops it beside a man begging for money. Once the man sees she has walked away he takes a sniff and realizing it’s full of whiskey, drinks it. Moments later he transforms into a werewolf, setting off a mass panic in the park as he goes on a killing rampage. The town guard eventually corners and kills the werewolf. A full investigation is started. His body is also taken away for autopsy. The junkie's body is found tangled in the anchor line of a river barge and reported.

Day 5:

Arlene captures a drunk man who was peeing in the alley. She drains him and makes another potion. She is fairly certain she has it right this time and just needs to test it. She laces a box of pastries and gives them to a group of young people playing ball in the public court. They all turn into werewolves minutes later. This time they are all confused and terrified by the experience, not sent into a mindless rage. They try to run home to their parents, but are intercepted by the town guard, who think they are the werewolves they have been put on high alert for. They start a hunt and chase the teenage werewolves down. Who, unable to talk properly with their wolf mouths, are killed. Arlene uses the chaos as a distraction to get into the town's water supply unopposed.

The Midnight Moment

So the players got lost following a red herring, or didn't take the threat seriously, or were defeated and had to retreat. Just like in the real world, sometimes evil wins. And the Midnight Moment is what happens if the antagonist succeeds in the story. Decide where the point of no return is, and what the consequences for the world will be now that the antagonist has won. Remember that just because the antagonist got what they wanted doesn't mean they will be happy.

Arlene pours her potion into the town's water supply. It contaminates all the drinking water. People all over town soon start turning into werewolves, chaos and rioting occur. About a quarter of the population are killed over the next couple days. But eventually everyone left in the town are werewolves and things calm down. They become known as the werewolf town, and life returns to a new normal. Eventually Arlene comes out as the one who caused the whole thing, thinking she would be revered. Instead she is put on trial for the deaths of the great riot. She takes all the blame, saying her parents had no idea what she was doing. She is burned at the stake and her parents leave town, never to be seen again.

The Possible Places

We should make a list of the important places we have come up with and make up a description of who and what is there. You may want to find some pictures to help portray these places to the other players.

The Yellow Bush Tavern:

Located near the docks

2 floors with a large central fireplace and balcony seating on the second floor.

There is a bar and swinging doors to the kitchen.

There is a washroom and 3 private booths available.

The kitchen has a back door to the alley and a door leading to the basement stairs.

The basement has a pantry, wine and beer casks and bottles, and a small office.

There is a secret door behind the wine casks that takes superhuman strength or more than one person to move.

The secret room behind the door has an alchemy lab and the caged feral werewolf.

The Initial Crime Scene:

A dense section of bushes and trees, just off the road outside town.

Max's body was found here.

The Residential District:

Rows of similar looking 2 story townhouses.

Lots of citizens live here.

The first transformation occurred here.

The Merchant Ship:

A large ocean going sailing vessel. Docked in the harbor.

Loaded with cargo from around the region

About 2 dozen sailors on board, they are on shore leave for a few days

Site of the second transformation.

The Park:

Located in the center of town.

Large green space with winding walking paths through cultivated forest.

Busy public activity space.

Attracts a community of homeless people

The Water Treatment Plant:

A large industrial complex where the town's water is brought in from the river, processed, and distributed through a pipe system to the citizens homes and businesses.

Not open to the public.

Normally too well guarded to infiltrate.

The Clues

Now that you have your antagonist's plan fleshed out, and we know where the important places are, we are onto the last step of the pattern. Make a list of the possible clues that could lead the player characters towards the antagonist, and help them figure out what is happening.

Mickeys Footprints:

- Any time Mickey has dumped one of the bodies he has left behind footprints.
- They are too deep to be one person's weight and the way they are spaced out says he was moving way faster than a person should be able to.

The Crime Scenes:

- If you investigate the crime scenes it is clear the bodies were moved after death.
- Trails lead back to the Docks and the area around the tavern.

The Drained Bodies:

- If you examine the bodies you can determine that the puncture wounds on their necks were made with medical instruments, not with fangs.
- They were hung upside down, based on the marks around their ankles.

The Monsters:

- The potion victims all had dinner at the Tavern.
- One man dies in the tavern after a reaction.

The Transformed Kids:

- If the kids can be saved, they can identify Arlene.

Shady Dealings:

- If you watch the tavern at night you will see the draining victims walk into the back door, they are being blood bent by Arlene
- If you watch the tavern in the pre-dawn morning you will see a blur leaving, it's Mickey carrying the dead bodies.

Final Pass

The last thing you want to do is take a final pass over your pattern. Make sure it makes sense and that there are no holes in your plot. Double check that it is possible for the other players to figure out the antagonist's plan with the clues you have given them. Try to make sure there is still a chance for them to solve the mystery even if they completely fail the investigation, albeit at a terrible cost.

Running the Game

Starting a Session

So you're all scheduled, everyone has a character ready and you're ready to start playing. You all show up for the first session and... now what?

First thing you should do is plan for 10-15 minutes of socialization at the top of the game. Giving people the opportunity to chat helps them get all the "out of character" energy out at the top of the game, lets them catch up on real life, and gets everyone comfortable and loosened up for social interaction. It also helps by providing a buffer of time in case one or more of the players is running late.

Now that it's time to get started, the next thing to do is to ask everyone to summarize the events of the last session. Even though you kept your own notes, it's better to have the other players do the recap for two reasons. First it helps get everyone engaged, and second it lets you know if there are any important details they forgot to mention, you can bring them up at the end of the recap. If this is your very first game you can replace this recap with a summarization of the setting and group dynamic and move to the next step.

Have each player set their character challenge for the session.

If the characters have had off screen time in between the last session and this one you may want to resolve downtime actions. Ask each player what their character has been up to in the time. If they are doing activities that require a roll to be made, they can do so now. Downtime can be used for things like furthering personal stories, going shopping for equipment or resources, or performing labor and crafting tasks.

Setting a Scene

The characters aren't sitting in a white void, so it's up to you to describe the environments they visit throughout the game. Describing an RPG location is a bit of a balancing act. You want to make sure that the players have enough information to react, but you don't want to overwhelm them with excessive detail. The goal is to be able to answer these 4 questions whenever you are describing a location.

- Mood: What is the general atmosphere that you want the description to convey?
- Essentials: What is the required information you need to convey?
- Highlights: What parts of the scene do you want the players to interact with?
- Clarity: Is your description easy to understand?

When you are describing a location, you can use the “4S” system to help make places feel more realized and facilitate imagining them. Whenever you can, try to have at least one thing from each of these categories in your descriptions.

- Sights: What can they see?
- Sounds: What can they hear?
- Smells: What can they smell?
- Sensations: What can they feel?

An important thing to consider when you are describing a location is what details are obvious, and what details are hidden. You can require the players to make an investigation roll whenever you want there to be the possibility they miss something. But if you want to make sure they find a hidden clue or detail, draw attention directly to it during the description and then allow them to find it without a roll.

Interacting with NPCs

There are 2 general ends of a spectrum when it comes to handling player interaction with your NPCs. Neither of them is the “right way” to play or inherently better than the other. They both have pros and cons, and you’ll need to find the method that works for you and your friends. Most players eventually settle somewhere in between the two, with major plot interactions being done in interactive dialogue and the rest of the encounters being through conveying intent.

Interactive Dialogue	Convey Intent
Each NPC has a distinct character voice and behavior, and the players have to directly roleplay their interactions with them using in-character dialogue. This method is arguably the harder of the two. It requires acting skills, quick improv, and the dedication to remain in character. But it also rewards you with the deepest level of immersion in the game world.	You describe the NPCs and their character voices, and provide a summary of their intent when they communicate, rather than use line by line dialogue. Players also respond in kind. This is the easier of the two. It lets the character do the talking instead of the player having to improv lines. But it adds a layer of separation, and is less immersive overall.

Currency

There are a number of ways you can choose to handle currency in your game. Each of them comes with pros and cons and requires different levels of management. You'll have to decide which one works for you:

Cash Analogues: You may choose to have one or more denominations of currency. This could be gold coins, or space credits, or whatever makes sense in your setting. You'll have to decide:

- What form does the currency take, is it physical/digital/both?
- If you have to carry it on you, what are its TAGs?
- What is the buying power of each unit of the currency

Boons: The boon system simplifies compensation into a conceptual framework based on what you can accomplish with the currency. It doesn't require keeping track of an account balance or calculating item costs. It is assumed that your boons take the form of whatever is valuable in the world's setting. They can be broken up into smaller boons, or combined together into larger ones.

- *Trivial*: Enough to get someone to do you a trivial favor; which would cost them nothing.
- *Small*: Enough to get someone to do you a small favor, which would minorly inconvenience them.
- *Medium*: Enough to get someone to do you a moderate favor, which would greatly inconvenience them or take a few days worth of time. The usual cost for a piece of market bought gear.
- *Large*: Enough to get someone to do you a large favor, which may be unethical, illegal or costly for them. The usual cost for a piece of specialty crafted or augmented gear.
- *Grand*: Enough for the average person to be set for life. Most people would do just about anything for this level of compensation. Can buy powerful tech, magic, or luxury items.
- *Mythic*: Enough to affect the outcome of huge groups of people. Spending this kind of boon is an act of world wide renown. Used primarily for story purposes.

Resource Levels: You may choose to remove currency tracking altogether and opt to assign characters a resource level. This represents the abstract level of wealth the character has from passive income or downtime labor.

- *Wretched*: None of your needs for survival are met. You are destitute and have nothing but the items in your inventory. You must beg for or steal everything you need. You sleep rough in public or wilderness areas.
- *Squalid*: Only your base needs for survival are met. You own nothing but the items in your inventory. You can afford the meager scraps needed to not starve, and sleep in a boarding house, hostel, or other group home of some kind.
- *Poor*: All of your basic needs are met. You can afford to rent a poor quality living space and likely share the space with others. You live paycheck to paycheck and have no room in your budget to afford anything else.
- *Modest*: All of your basic needs are met. You can afford to own a small living space or rent a modest living space. You have a small savings and can afford to occasionally make discretionary purchases.
- *Comfortable*: All of your basic needs are met. You can afford to own a modest private living space. You have a decent savings and can afford to make discretionary purchases as required. You can occasionally afford luxury goods.
- *Wealthy*: All of your basic needs are met. You can afford to own a lavish private living space. You have a large savings and can afford to buy luxury goods as desired. You can occasionally make extravagant purchases.
- *Plutocratic*: You are one of the wealthiest people in the area. Money is no object to you and you can afford whatever it is you need.

Reputation

Certain settings will require that you keep track of the reputation the characters build with one or more groups. There are 2 ways to track this.

- Points: If your setting has a strong element of politics and negotiation, where favors and reputation are important to the story. you will likely want to use the point system. Assign each faction you are tracking a value of 1-10 with 1 being abject hate, 5 being neutral, and 10 being veneration. As the players take actions for or against these factions, you can add or subtract points.
- Abstract: If your setting doesn't require detailed reputation tracking you can assign each faction one of the following reputation levels and only have to change it if the characters make major story decisions.
 - Hated: Will attack on sight, will not cooperate at all.
 - Indifferent: Will only interact with you if there is something in it for them.
 - Friendly: On good terms with you, can provide limited assistance.
 - Allies: You are good friends and they will help you the best they can.

Making Danger Fun

How to Run Hazard Time

As soon as the intention of violence or the potential for injury occurs, you should declare Hazard Time. As soon as you do, everything in the game freezes and we slow down to round by round gameplay. Each round is approximately 5 seconds of time. A player can only take one limited action and one bonus action during a round. Players can also communicate a short message as a free action each round.

General Limited actions:

- Making any 1 move
- Covering a distance of more than a few steps
- Interacting with an object
- Switching equipped weapons

General Bonus actions:

- Taking a few steps
- Dropping a held object
- Recovering from being knocked down
- Using cover

Start by giving a summary of where every character in the scene is located, the layout of the space they are in, and any obstacles or potential threats they are aware of. If they are aware of it, tell them what the antagonist or threat seems to be about to do.

Decide where in the round the antagonist will take its turn. If the antagonist got the drop on the party, you may want them to get an action right away at the top of the first round, or if the antagonist is particularly large or slow you may choose to have it act at the end of the round. It's up to you to look at the situation and nature of the creature they are facing to decide when in the round the antagonist acts.

Ask what each character intends to do. There is no turn order in Hazard Time, a character can act as soon as they know what they want to do, provided they have not already taken an action in the round. Characters can also act together at the same time. If the issue of conflicting resolutions occurs, the player with the higher reflex score acts first, if their reflex scores are tied, the higher roll acts first. You decide if an antagonist resolves their actions faster than a player, base this decision on the nature of the creature and the action being taken.

Once you have resolved all the player rolls and made sure every NPC has taken an action, start again at the top of a new round. Play continues like this until the player characters are no longer in danger.

The Arena of Combat

Weather

Weather can have an adverse effect on the area in a scene. Storms make investigating and using ranged weapons more difficult. Bad weather is evaluated on a 5 point scale:

Calm Skies	Poor Weather	Storm	Raging Storm	Deadly Storm
No Effect	-1 ongoing to Investigate rolls	-1 Ongoing to Investigate rolls -1 Ongoing to ranged attacks	-2 Ongoing to Investigate rolls -2 Ongoing to ranged attacks	-2 Ongoing to Investigate rolls -2 Ongoing to ranged attacks 1 Wound per round spent exposed to the elements

Environmental Hazards

There are lots of different environmental hazards you can include in your encounters and you should encourage players to look for and use them, as well as making use of them yourself. Some of the things you can consider as ideas:

- High ground advantage could give +1 to defenders
- Heavy furniture can be knocked onto people, restraining them
- Long falls can kill
- Sharp objects can be used as impaling tools
- High voltage devices can electrocute
- Sources of extreme heat or cold like a grill or liquid nitrogen
- Explosions can cause furniture and structures to become shrapnel
- Structures can be collapsed
- Broken glass can cause a lot of damage
- Fire spreads quickly in a building and can cut off escape

Making Use of Your Monsters

So you may have noticed that the example danger sheet from the pattern guide earlier doesn't list any attributes for the werewolves. That's because in Q!, NPCs don't make rolls. They always get a mixed success on moves they make, and can not get major successes.

If they receive penalties, like a -1 forward, that amount of damage is removed from any attack they do instead. If they receive buffs, like a +1 forward, that amount of damage is added to any attack they do instead.

Just like the player characters are defined by their quirks, your antagonists are defined by their unique abilities and equipment. Make sure to give them interesting ones.

Whenever you can, try to have a picture of your antagonist. Being able to visualize the creature can make the threat feel much more real.

Things to avoid when making an antagonist:

- **Huge health pools:** Damage sponges are a boring way of making a monster hard to kill. Try to avoid going over 10 wounds and opt for things like armor, regeneration, immunity to damage types, allies to back them up, or tactical strategy if you want to make your antagonists hard to kill.
- **Mind Control:** It isn't very fun to have character agency taken away from you, especially for long periods of time. Opt for clones or shadow versions of characters if you want to have the players pitted against each other, secretly ask a player to play the evil version of their character. If a monster is going to have mind control abilities in a fight, try to limit it to a single action at a time or make it possible to resist or prevent.
- **Instant Kill Moves:** It's not fun to have no chance to avoid something or to learn from a mistake. If you really need to, opt for having the antagonist attack some NPC if you need to show off a potential extreme threat.
- **Deus ex Machina:** Don't suddenly add powers or change antagonist mechanics mid-fight in order to counter an unexpected player tactic, reward their creativity with a victory, and have the NPCs react to the situation realistically instead. Then prepare for the party to use that strategy again in the future, being ready to counter it with context next time.

An important thing to consider when building encounters, is how intelligent and self aware are your foes? You want to avoid giving your intelligent antagonists “Game AI” behavior. They shouldn’t charge directly at melee characters, stand in the open and shoot, or engage in fights that pose overwhelming odds against them. They should act with self preservation and try to flee if they are likely to die. You should keep tactics like flanking, reinforcement, and guerilla attacks in mind. Try to avoid making encounters that rely simply on winning mathematical battles with dice, instead, try to make them more about improvising creative solutions to fights.

Threat Levels

Your antagonists are going to fall into one of the following threat levels:

- **Obstacles:** These are your minor combat threats. They are used to add action to a scene. They are only really a threat if encountered in large numbers. They will have a health pool of 3-4 and deal 1-2 wound attacks
- **Minions:** These are your standard threats, and will likely make up the majority of your combat encounters. They are used to make an area dangerous, or to protect something critical to the antagonist’s plan. They will have a health pool of 5-6 and usually deal 2-3 wound attacks.
- **Villains:** These are your main antagonists, and the category that the quandaries main threat usually falls under. They are the driving force behind the action and should present a real and dangerous challenge in combat. They will usually have a health pool of 6-10 and deal 3 wound attacks. They will also always have unique abilities.
- **Overlords:** These are your Big Bads, NPCs who’s abilities outstrip the player characters by a significant enough margin to make them overpowering. These sort of antagonists should be used to establish world building and setting, but you should avoid having them engage in direct confrontation with the players unless they have an equalizer.

Threat Types

There are a lot of ways to categorize your antagonists. This is the method I use. These categories are entirely administrative and don't have gameplay mechanics. You may choose a different system, and many antagonists may fall into more than one category.

Chimeras

Human antagonists who have been tainted or altered by something. Sometimes, the mundane host can be freed to defeat the monster, for example an exorcism curing a possession. But sometimes they have to be destroyed, such as a decaying zombie past the point of being saved.

Slashers

Antagonists with a psychopathic and unrelenting desire to torture and murder others. They may have signature weapons or a calling card. They are almost always exceptionally strong and resilient individuals and often can return from injuries that would have killed other people.

Cultists

Antagonists who zealously worship an entity or concept of some kind. They commit atrocities in the name of their belief and can encompass large groups of people, all hidden in plain sight. They will have enigmatic and secretive rituals and may be compelled, or acting of their own free will.

Spellcrafters

Antagonists who have the ability to use magic. They may or may not be able to control their powers. Their abilities will vary based on the magic system you are using. They can be simple hedge witches, capable of basic folk spells. Or all powerful archmages, able to bend reality to their will.

Scientists

Antagonists who have used the power of science to disastrous effect. This includes both the intentionally evil and the misguided. They will have created a unique and novel device or creature that is causing havoc, that they may or may not be in direct control of.

Aliens

Antagonists from other planets. They may be hyper-advanced technologically like the grays or deadly killing machines like the xenomorphs. They are biologically different from life on our world and we may not be able to communicate with them. They may be here by mistake and need help, or be here intentionally for nefarious means.

Giants

Abnormally large creatures. They are mundane or mythical antagonists whose primary threat is overwhelming size and strength. They may be the result of science or magic. They may be simple creatures that rely on the same reflexive behavior as their smaller kin, like bugs or animals. Or they may be intelligent creatures, able to strategize, like apes or trolls.

Affected

Non-human antagonists that have been influenced by some substance, illness, or outside influence. They will be more violent and dangerous than they would be otherwise. They may be infectious, venomous, or otherwise altered to be more dangerous. This can also include plants that have become ambulatory and predatory.

Cryptids

Strange creatures, things almost no one has ever seen, things we would call monsters. They may be sentient or beasts, They may be hiding in plain sight, or native to very remote locations. Cryptids are rare, unstudied, and mysterious. They usually have exceptional or supernatural abilities that make them hard to find and document. They can be malicious, or misunderstood, but they are always dangerous in some way.

Swarms

Even the smallest creatures can become dangerous in large numbers. Swarms are all consuming antagonists, able to fit through tight spaces, and only vulnerable to area of effect attacks, making them potentially very hard to deal with. They may be naturally occurring or assembled and controlled by some entity.

Constructs

Artificially created antagonists. This includes things like robots, golems, or homunculi. They may or may not be humanoid, and may be under the control of their maker, or may have free will. They may rebel against the task they were made for, or unquestioningly follow it. Those made of materials like metal or stone are often very durable and difficult to destroy with force.

Artifacts

Items that have been imbued with unnatural properties by something. They often have negative cognitive and/or physical effects on people. They may be a single item or a group of items. They may otherwise be a mundane item, or may possess some sort of innate goal, consciousness, or the ability to move on their own.

Haunts

Places that have become antagonists themselves. Able to lure people within, manipulate them with paranormal effects, and change the architecture or structure within. They may be possessed by another antagonist, or may be a result of science, nature, or magic. They may consume biomass, energy, or souls, and can have a number of different reasons to do so.

Elementals

Antagonists composed of, and able to control, one of the fundamental natural forces of reality. This may be the classic western quartet, the asian wuxing, or a modern understanding of the periodic table. You can mix and match them to find the system that works for the setting. They may act out for their own inscrutable reasons or may be controlled by another party. They usually can't be destroyed, but rather must be appeased or banished in some way.

Fae

Entities that embody chaos. Fae creatures are beings from folk and fairy tales, who come from a world connected to ours, but which follows different laws of reality. Fae trick and manipulate people to their own selfish ends, usually at the price of a terrible fate for the human in question. They often delight in games and mischief, and can possess the power to influence reality, usually through methods that have eccentric requirements.

Outsiders

Cosmic horrors and beings from beyond our comprehension. This includes Voidspawn, Old Ones, and other eldritch entities, whose very existence is antithetical to beings from our reality. Being exposed to these entities is often disastrous for the individual and results in madness. These sorts of entities must usually be contained rather than being able to be destroyed.

Animistics

These antagonists are personifications of abstract concepts such as war, death, or time. These entities are often limited in their capacity to understand things outside of their purview and seldom have cognitive patterns similar to humans, making them often difficult to understand and relate to. Their goals are enigmatic and will be directly related to their purview.

Remnants

These antagonists are the components of a person which are left behind after death. They may be silent wrathful disembodied rage, such as a poltergeist. Or they may be the near human ghost of a person. They are usually immune to any sort of physical attack and often need to have their unfinished business from life resolved to free or banish them.

Theistics

Abyssal and celestial antagonists, pulled from the various religious beliefs and mythologies of our world. They may be scripturally accurate, or a modern reimagining of creatures loosely inspired by scripture.