Objectives of system:

* Streamlined play for players - Minimize the amount of flipping through source books to find rules during play
* Streamlined play for storytellers - Minimize the amount of record keeping/dice rolling the storyteller does so they can focus on a rich and descriptive story
* Easy to learn, fun to explore - The system should be low barrier to entry for new players and storytellers, but provide enough options to keep veteran pen & paper enthusiasts happy
* **Encourage player ingenuity - players should not be punished for trying to make the game more exciting as opposed to what happens in traditional called shot/raise systems**
  + This is absolutely key to combatting the typical ennui that sets in after a few sessions of an encounter based campaign.
* **Respect character skill - a chess grandmaster should not lose to a novice**
* **Respect player skill - both combat and non-combat confrontations should be fun and dynamic, with player decisions being at least as important as dice rolling**
* **Respect danger - fighting ten people should never be trivial, jumping off of a tall cliff without a plan should never be safe**
* **Discourage brutality - A person with a hundred confirmed kills is a monster, an RPG character with the same history is still a novice at it, systematic reinforcement of death being a big deal will ultimately protect both your characters and their antagonists, creating a more self-sustaining storyline**
* Customizable feel - provide a few simple levers to adjust the feel of play on the cinematic/gritty and fast/slow progression axes within a given setting
* Customizable setting - system is robustly adaptable to a wide variety of settings, allowing for thematic/storytelling expansion rather than rules expansion

Combat, or the lack thereof.

* Too much emphasis on combat skills (in isolation) leads to combat heavy gameplay.
  + Combat heavy gameplay can be slow and unrewarding, eventually becoming onerous and disinteresting if it involves
* Combat should be fun, but dangerous.
  + Characters should be able to define their roles, but be somewhat bound to them. Wizards who are suddenly exposed to a rush by a barbarian should be lucky as hell if they survive **OR** prepared somehow (with magic, a trap, etc). A full on defense character (Wall) should see it as a threat, but one that is manageable with skills. A spellsword should be somewhere in between.
    - Ideally these are enforced via good decision making rather than raw stat power.
* I still think standard/move/minor is a great setup
  + 9/2/13 - I agree with the idea, but definitely not with 4e’s implementation of it. Keeping them rigid does give some scaffolding for players to more easily plan their turns, but it also reduces player choice and encourages a certain level of gaming the system to maximize turn efficiency. I like the idea of subphases for each combat turn to make it feel like things are flowing a little more in real time. My original thought was to have a 3 die system with the same dice, but I like the idea of maybe something like d8/d6/d4 to replicate the standard/move/minor idea. I think whatever we decide for dice should be standard for the whole system though. Streamlined play is an important objective.
* Less “equal” encounters (more in skills down below) where all characters are on somewhat equal footing. The spear<sword<axe<spear balanced gameplay where class types have an obvious strength and weakness can still be exploited for emphasis on defining a character (which I think increases attachment/involvement) but doesn’t need to be nullified to the point of being generic by equalizing any of the associated traits (low bonuses leads to more even balance, not necessarily good).
* Emphasis on unpreparedness (in terms of balance, bad choices being very very bad… (combat should be brutal unless you are prepared!)
* Balance between brutal and fantastic is hard to manage… if getting shanked in the gut is likely deadly then it doesn’t leave much room for what to expect when fighting a mage who can electrocute you.
  + Preparedness on the defensive end should be able to balance this, but if you’re not prepared expect to be a skeleton… Working out the mechanism for balance will be tricky.
    - 9/2/13 - The alternate problem (and you touched on this below) with preparedness being important is that a prepared party is frequently a terrifyingly over-armed, social misfit party, but when combat is too deadly characters will over protect themselves. It’s hard to systematically enforce a low level of ongoing armament, but leaving it to the setting puts a lot of the job of enforcement on the story teller, which I think in the end detracts from focus on the story. I’m thinking the way to deal with this from a system perspective (and ultimately help players drive story) is to reduce player attachment on their characters. I’m going to add this as a system objective.
      * I like this idea in principle… it’s good to think of good ways to achieve this to a degree that don’t result in players not caring about the character at all as a result. On the other end of the spectrum the game might turn into an RPG where players expect their characters to die. I had an idea of how to do this using “quick” characters (as in quickly made, not them being fast) while thinking about attribute system and alternate ways to reduce number crunching. It’s in the other document I uploaded, but not complete.
    - I’ll deal with it more in depth when we create the sections on how to actually accomplish the objectives, but the gist of my solution is to have two parties. One is the primary story party. The other is a secondary party whose characters are tied into/aligned with a *different player’s* primary character. This both reduces player attachment to a particular character or that character’s goals and also has the bonus impact of making the game more resilient to flakey players.
      * I get to be green! (Or red…) This would need to be filled out for more discussion, but it seems to me that it could lead towards a higher level of arbitrary management in terms of when to switch, how switching works, temporal matching, that might result in a nightmare of administration on the GMs part and grumbling from players. I can think of a few ways this could be rewarding, though the end goal might be met by simpler/less burdensome means. I guess it depends on how it would be implemented.
  + “Larger skills” or more damaging skills require greater success but still have an effect when used with a matching/low bonus roll. This should emphasize an interplay of offensive/defensive behavior.
    - For example a way this could be done… Mage casts fireball and rolls (random numbers for now, not balanced) a native 15 that targets an area hitting two characters. One is a balanced warrior who is not exhausted and has excess “defense points” to dump to mitigate the attack (say by dodging partially, slamming his shield down in front of him, etc) while the other is a similar character type who has exhausted his common “stamina” pool that could have been used for defense. If the mage had rolled higher, he could hurt both; if the 2nd warrior had played less risky he might have survived. Instead, he is now effectively bbq.
* Perhaps a mechanism for “charging” could be interesting… do little one turn to deliver a rather devastating attack or powerful support action the next.
* Possible 3rd resource pool… stamina, as we’ve briefly discussed. You could dump actions to fill stamina, e.g. I drop my minor for 3 bonus stamina which I then use defensively to save my ass.

Characters, avatar *vs* vehicle

* Character mechanics (skills/class) should have an impact in RP elements like decision making, but hopefully without a completely separate skillset.
* Previous actions (in the story) should have an effect on other story outcomes. This is typically done *via* story keeping (Guard you meet was Bob’s brother…and you killed Bob…) but could be incorporated into a faction based notoriety system to encourage lasting impact rather than fleeting decision making (*a la* Beyer, “Let’s just fucking murder this guy and get on with the whatever!”) that can detract from the setting/impact of decisions.
  + Discouraging brutality is a good thing for good aligned players; if a party is negligibly good, or outright evil, a reputation of being brutal should be accordingly punitive in terms of lasting impact but not at the expense of allowing brutality to occur.
* Care must be taken to establish that characters are not “above the setting”, this is partly GM ability and partly rule set based. Part of this is choosing whether every person walking around in the world is used to seeing a party of people with weapons walking casually down the street getting in fights or whether it is rather exceptional to be able to conjure a ball of fire with your hand.
* Should character traits be easily identifiable without investigation? Is it obvious when someone is a mage?

Skills

* Can be either minor or major. Being a character who is extremely observant and fast can grant you a +1 to initiative or a +10 depending on the system. The former feels like it has very minor impact and more randomized gameplay during combat (initiative need not be purely combat related). The higher the bonus to a skill from character development the more it feels like you have actually learned something useful (specialized in something); if I have a high chance of going first or close to first in something initiative related it will further define my role to the party.
  + A quick character can have many uses (just rolling with the initiative thing). A “fast” and observant defender can be an ideal bodyguard as they can position themselves appropriately early in a dangerous situation. A “fast” rogue can quickly take out a strong defender or mage or NPC, etc. Either way, combining skillsets should define your usefulness and role to the party.
* Ideally, any mix of skills can be useful if a player can find a way to make them useful.
* Cross-use skills can simplify, sometimes overly. Dungeoneering shouldn’t be a blanket roll for whatever the fuck you want, but having a million different skills where only two are remotely useful (with your assigned bonus) feels disempowering at best.
* Flat leveling system with skills rewarded on an independent basis puts less focus on the quick exp boost mentality from killing everything in sight.