

Gumslingers

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Resolution System

The system uses a 2-die roll-over mechanic based on Abilities. Each character has 6 abilities (see below).

Characters also have Sand Points (named after the “having sand” expression), which allows them to push themselves beyond their normal limits.

Main roll

The base roll is simple:

- Roll two dice of the indicated size
- Compare them with the DC:
 - If both succeed, it's a full success: you get what you want and nothing bad happens
 - If both fail, it's a full failure: get ready for consequences (most commonly in combat, the enemy gets to do something)
 - If one succeeds, it's a mixed success: you get what you want, but you suffer some consequence (meaning that both the success and failure effects take place)
- If the two dice have *the same value* , then it's a *strong* result: whichever effect occurs, it's going to be amplified

Risk roll

Sometimes a PC might want to not care about contingencies and go straight for the metaphorical kill, even at their own risk. This is the *risk roll*. Roll 1 die (subject to advantage), and treat it as if it were a pair of dice for the purposes of the main roll's degrees of success: any result is automatically a *strong* result, and there's no mixed success.

Ability dice

Ability scores are tracked by increasing die size. The starting point for all abilities is d6.

Assigning Abilities

Based on character creation choices, base ability scores can change. For example, an excellent marksman might start with a d8 or d10 in Aim instead of the usual d6. Conversely, a simple farmhand might start with a d4 in Gift of the Gab.

d4 ← d6 → d8 → d10 → d12

Sand Points and Pushes

Each character has a pool of Sand Points. These can be used to *push oneself*, making for the character behave, **for a moment** (a single roll, a single action), as if they were better at the skill. This means, most notably, increasing the die size by one step following the usual progression:

d4 → d6 → d8 → d10 → d12

Beyond d12, each Sand Point becomes a +1. Starting from a d12 (even if pushed), 4 points can be spent to roll a d20 with no modifiers. Beyond those 4 points, you add a +1 modifier to the d20 for each additional Sand Point spent.

You can double the effect of a push (with GM consent) by introducing a complication. Instead of a complication, the World can tally a due.

The World (personified in the GM) can keep a tally of the PC's dues. A sort of symbol of the unfair luck they might have had, or of the favours fate handed them. Fate, however, doesn't do gifts, and luck turns around.

Dues

Dues—accumulated within Bargains with Fate—are tokens the GM gets to spend to insert world or NPC moves while outside of the timing defined by the normal resolution system. For example, the GM might spend a token to:

- add a complication to a scene
- have an NPC interrupt a player turn / sequence of player turns

"Run, cowboy, try your best. I'll be on the other side. This check has your signature on it, and I fully intend to cash it."

Generally, Difficulty Classes are:

Difficulty	DC	When to Use
Easy	3+	Simple tasks
Simple	5+	Routine challenges for competent folk
Moderate	7+	Significant obstacles
Hard	9+	Expert-level tasks
Legendary	11+	Heroic feats

Favorable circumstances may grant **advantages** or **disadvantages**.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantage: Add a die of identical size to the one being rolled—after any pushes. Take the two highest results. *An advantage can be converted to +1 up to d8, +2 up to d12, and +4 for d20*

Disadvantage: Add a die of identical size to the one being rolled—after any pushes. Take the two lowest results.

As with the main touchstone of this system—Gumshoe—characters are presumed to be *competent*. No rolls are needed for activities that any denizen of the Old West would be able to do. Additionally, as ability levels increase, this minimum baseline for success also rises.

Failures and Reactions

When you (partially or fully) fail a roll, the GM presents consequences that you can react to in turn. The choice of which ability to use in your reaction depends on the situation. It's common for reaction rolls to be *risk* rolls (though not required).

Example

Bob has a d8 in Aim and tries to hit NPC Alice. Alice is a bandit wanted in 20 towns, so she has a legendary DC of 11. Knowing this, Bob spends two Sand Points to push his roll to a d12. Unfortunately, he rolls a 6 and a 10, thus taking a full failure. Alice now gets to shoot back at him. Bob rolls Awareness to try to find cover to mitigate the damage. He acts quickly, having no real alternatives, calling for a *risk roll*. He rolls his d6 against a simple DC of 5 because they're in a saloon full of barrels: it's a 6, so he manages to dive, taking no damage. He emerges unscathed from the situation, but is now cornered by Alice. How will he proceed?

Bob could instead choose to react with Grit. He heroically takes the bullet in the shoulder, *risk* rolling his d10 in Grit against a legendary DC of 11. He uses a Sand Point and manages to succeed by rolling an 11. Eventually he'll have to stop (he does have lead in his shoulder), but for now he doesn't give ground.

It's reasonable for the GM to impose disadvantage on reaction rolls using the same ability that just failed (barring special circumstances).

In a reaction, you can perform quick actions that grant advantage if they present a complication.

Example 2

Alice is fleeing from the police when she sees a man recognize her from across the street. She approaches him to convince him not to call *the law*, but her Gift of the Gab isn't working (she rolled a 3 and a 2). The man now runs toward the sheriff. Alice reacts using her Gift of the Gab again, but the GM rules that she's rolling with disadvantage. Alice could cancel her disadvantage by drawing her gun and pointing it at the man to frighten him. Naturally, she's in town and there's people around. It might just not be worth it.

After the first exchange occurs, the player might be tempted to keep the chain of events going: as their reaction triggers a reaction from the NPC, and so forth.

Other players *can* and probably should intervene (unless it's fun for them to watch as their friend keeps digging their own grave with more and more complications. In that case, have fun!).

Damage

There are 5 damage levels:

Condition	Mechanical Effect	Description
Unharmed	No penalties	You're in fighting shape, ready for whatever comes next.
Wounded	All abilities reduced by 1 die size	You're hurt but functional. That bullet graze or knife cut is slowing you down, but you can still act.
Badly Wounded	All abilities reduced by 2 die sizes. Some abilities may become unusable (GM discretion).	You're in serious trouble. Blood loss, broken bones, or severe trauma make even basic actions difficult.
Dying	All abilities reduced by 3 die sizes. You fall unconscious and cannot act unless spending Sand Points to briefly regain consciousness for one action by <i>pushing</i> .	You're at death's door. Your vision fades, strength leaves you, and staying conscious requires tremendous effort.
Dead	Character dies, but may make one final action with any ability at -4 die size before expiring (eg dump all Sand Points into one final shot).	Your time has come. In your last moments, you might manage one desperate act of will before the darkness takes you.

When taking damage, based on the result of your response, you can move from one level to another. Strong results, like strong failures in getting out of the way of a bullet, might also move the PC by two levels. (eg unharmed → badly wounded)

Note to GMs: this system gets *very* lethal *very quickly*. Pay careful attention to telegraph potentially game-ending encounters.

Abilities

The six abilities are:

Ability	Description
Aim	Shooting, throwing, and hitting targets. Combat accuracy and weapon handling.
Ride	Horsemanship, animal handling, and mounted activities. Managing beasts of burden.
Survival	Wilderness skills, following trails and physical signs, camping, and navigating harsh environments.
Grit	Mental toughness, pain tolerance, and perseverance. "Gritting your teeth" through hardship.
Awareness	Observation, perception, and noticing details. Reading people and situations, detecting ambushes.
Gift of the Gab	Social skills, persuasion, deception, and verbal communication. Talking your way through problems.

When abilities get stronger, so does the kind of thing the character can do become more and more impressive. This is handled via the DCs system. For example, *calling shots* might raise the DC by 1. Shooting from a large distance might do the same. Combining the two might raise it by 2. This is sort of pre-tracked within the difficulty table above.

A d4 is a novice, or a person with a serious lack of talent, a d6 represents roughly amateurish-average skill. A d8 represents the level of a professional. A d10 is a virtuoso, and the d12 is the all-time-best in the field. When pushing with Sand Points, characters can attempt feats normally associated with higher ability levels.

Example

A d6 Aim character might reliably hit targets at close range, while a d10 character could make precise shots at distance or under pressure. A d12 character operates at legendary levels of precision.

Character Creation

You have 8 Sand Points at your disposal. They can be kept entirely (meaning you'll have 8 Sand Points available after each rest), or they can be invested in permanent improvements. Points can only be invested during character creation, or through strong narrative justification (since Sand Points become a rechargeable resource once you start playing).

Investing Sand Points

The cost to permanently increase an ability is:

Die Step	Cost	Descriptors
d6 → d4	-1 point*	Not great
d6 → d8	1 point	Pretty great
d8 → d10	2 points	Incredible
d10 → d12	3 points	Peak human ability

*You can lower an ability to d4 to gain one Sand Point.

Remaining Points

The remaining points form the character's **Sand Point limit**. There are various ways to recharge Sand Points, but they can never exceed the limit (unless explicitly stated by an effect).

Recovering Sand Points

Sand Points fully recharge after long rests (e.g., a full night). They can also be partially recovered (1-2 points) by eating, drinking, or smoking. To recharge by eating, you must dedicate time to it. For each point recharged by smoking or drinking, make a simple ability roll. If it fails, that ability is reduced by one die size until the next rest, full meal, or for the next 24 hours (whichever comes first).

Archetypes

These are essentially presets that are nothing more than combinations of what's written above.

- **Marksman** : Deadeye, a cigarette and a well-kept weapon
- **Ranger** : Horses, plains
- **Smuggler** : "Officer, I swear I don't know how that got in my bag"
- **Survivor** : After navigating a difficult life, chooses to rely more on experience than on people or fate.

The sheets for these can be found at the end of the document.

Character Name: _____

Archetype: _____

Sand Points: /

ABILITIES

Aim:

Ride:

Survival:

Grit:

Awareness:

Gift of the Gab:

CONDITIONS

☐ Unharmed

☐ Wounded

☐ Badly Wounded

☐ Dying

☐ Dead

NOTES

EQUIPMENT

Weapons:

Other Equipment:

Character Name: _____

Archetype: Marksman

Sand Points: 6 / 6

ABILITIES

Aim:

Ride:

Survival:

Grit:

Awareness:

Gift of the Gab:

CONDITIONS

☒ Unharmed

☐ Wounded

☐ Badly Wounded

☐ Dying

☐ Dead

NOTES

EQUIPMENT

Weapons:

Other Equipment:

Character Name: _____

Archetype: Ranger

Sand Points: 5 / 5

ABILITIES

Aim:

Ride:

Survival:

Grit:

Awareness:

Gift of the Gab:

CONDITIONS

☒ Unharmed

☐ Wounded

☐ Badly Wounded

☐ Dying

☐ Dead

NOTES

EQUIPMENT

Weapons:

Other Equipment:

Character Name: _____

Archetype: Smuggler

Sand Points: 4 / 4

ABILITIES

Aim:

Ride:

Survival:

Grit:

Awareness:

Gift of the Gab:

CONDITIONS

☒ Unharmed

☐ Wounded

☐ Badly Wounded

☐ Dying

☐ Dead

NOTES

EQUIPMENT

Weapons:

Other Equipment:

Character Name: _____

Archetype: Survivor

Sand Points: 2 / 2

ABILITIES

Aim:

Ride:

Survival:

Grit:

Awareness:

Gift of the Gab:

CONDITIONS

☒ Unharmed

☐ Wounded

☐ Badly Wounded

☐ Dying

☐ Dead

NOTES

EQUIPMENT

Weapons:

Other Equipment: