# Chapter 1: Core concepts

The first things to learn before digging into this book are some basic concepts common to all role playing games.

## What is a Roleplaying Game?

A roleplaying game (RPG) is a game where the players assume the roles of characters in a story. One player narrates the story and takes the control of the world and the support characters, while the other players take the control of the protagonists.

As the story advances, the narrator, known as the Game Master, will create different situations and challenges that the protagonists will have to solve by wit or force. The result of solving such situations will grant the characters some development points that can be used to improve their skills and abilities.

As the game progresses, the situations the protagonists must face will become more complex and difficult until they face their final and most dreadful enemy. A story usually ends at that point but, of course, the narrator may just continue the adventure and take the characters into new settings and new challenges.

## What is a Roleplaying Game System?

A Roleplaying Game System (RPGS) is an attempt to quantize, reduce and simplify the world we live in so that the actions of the characters can be judged as successful (or failed) given a set of constraints and probabilities.

This simplification begins on the game characters. A game character is the entity the players use to get into the imaginary worlds created by the story narrator. In order to make rules fair and accountable, characters are reduced to a series of numbers that represent their physical and mental characteristics.

For example, an Olympic body builder is stronger than a 5-year-old kid. The roleplaying system assigns a numerical value to the strength of each one so we have an idea of how much weight each one can lift.

Those numeric values allow comparing different characters and how they affect the world around them. Some characters will be stronger, other will be more intelligent and others will be more agile. The players use those numeric attributes to tailor their characters to their preferred game style.

The second thing an RPGS attempts to quantize is the character experience, knowledge and skills. Some characters may devote themselves to weapons and military skills while other may be smiths, scholars or engineers (or more). The system allows defining which skills the characters have learned and how experienced they are in their respective areas of knowledge. For example, in karate, it is not the same to be a white belt, a black belt or a tenth dan black belt. Martial artists will know about karate but the knowledge level and experience on the art is different.

The third thing a RPGS does is to provide a series of rules to simulate time and the success of actions. This simulation can be used during combats allowing the characters to attack and damage their opponent, shoot, move or flee.

Finally, the system allows in the creation of a coherent world by setting some guidelines on physics, materials, economy, weather, politics and even magic.

## Requirements

In order to play an RPG you will need this rulebook, dice, players, pencils, paper and some free time.

### Rule book

It is recommended the group has at least two copies of this book readily available for consult, one for the Game Master and other for the players.

In this book there are two levels of rules designed to suit most gaming styles.

Normal rules are easy to follow and will make for faster games. It is recommended you learn to play with the normal rules first then pick up the advanced rules.

Advanced rules can be found all over the book marked with the text ***(Advanced)***. Those rules can be very detailed and are recommended to experienced players only.

If at any time a specific rule contradicts other general rule, then the most specific rule always takes precedence. This is particularly true for spells as they can bend the laws of physic.

But the most important rule in the whole book is this:

***The Game Master always has the last word.***

It doesn’t matter if the rulebook says anything. The Game Master is the narrator so he has the attributes of god for all purposes within the adventure. If he decides the world is made of cheese then hope your character is not lactose intolerant because that’s it.

### Dice

Roleplaying games use specialized dice that can be found in your local game store or multiple online stores. It is recommended you get at least two sets of dice.

Common dice sets include one of each: four, six, eight, ten, twelve and twenty-sided dice. Some research in the internet may help you find more exotic dice. Depending on the number of sides, each dice is referred using a “d” prefix so a four sided dice is noted as a d4 and a six sided dice is a d6.

If multiple dice are required then it is noted by a number prefix. For example to roll three 6-sided dice the notation 3d6 is used.

In addition, some modifiers may be added (or subtracted) from the final roll. For example, 3d6+2 means you need to roll 3d6 then add 2.

When asked to roll some uncommon dice some replacements can be used:

For a d2, roll a d6 and consider results of 1-2-3 as 1 and results of 4,5,6 as 2.

For a d3, roll a d6 and consider 1-2 as 1, 3-4 as 2 and 5-6 as 3.

A d5 can be rolled using a d10 and pairing faces in the same way as a d3 (1,2 is 1, 3,4 is 2, and so on).

For a d7 pick one:

1. Roll a d6 and d8 and add the results. Halve and round down if necessary.
2. Roll 2d4 – 1.
3. Roll a d6. Recommended, unfair but faster.

And for a d9:

1. Roll a d8 and d10 and add the results. Halve and round down if necessary.
2. Roll 2d5 – 1.
3. Roll a d8. Recommended, unfair but faster.

### The Game Master

The Game Master (GM) is the story narrator. He controls all the aspects of the game. He imagines the location where the adventure will take place, defines the plot and creates and acts out the supporting role characters including the bad guys. Finally, he decides the effects of the player actions on the game world. Think about the GM as a computer program able to decide any outcome given the actions of the players. He is the big omnipotent guy that sees and knows everything.

The GM always has the last word for any event; sometimes his decisions might seem unfair for the players but the GM is the final judge of any situation and players must trust his decisions.

That said, the GM should take care on being fair and not abuse his power. The GM must keep his ears open and listen to the players as they are the best source of amazing ideas to improve the adventure.

In other words, the GM job is to keep the players entertained. The GM may have all the power but, in the end, everybody has gathered together and made time to have fun. So it the GM job to provide fun not frustration! If the GM is unfair the players may leave in search for a wiser and fairer GM in distant and exotic lands.

### The World

A world provides a place for the adventurers to explore. It provides towns looking for heroes, kingdoms looking for saviours and continents looking for conquerors. The limit is the GM imagination and is his job to provide a consistent environment where the adventures will take place.

### Characters (PCs and SCs)

A character is an entity in the world. It is defined by a collection of values representing its unique personality and philosophy; and measures his different skills and experience.

There are two types of characters in the game; player characters (PCs) controlled by the players and support characters (SC) controlled by the GM.

Each player should control one PC but may control more depending on the GM discretion.

The GM decides the SC actions. SCs are independent entities and might be affected by the PCs actions. They may become the PC friends, followers or maybe their worst enemies.

Chapter 2 has more information on character creation.

### The Adventure

So you have a world and a group of characters armed to the teeth full with spells ready to rip the fabric of the universe. The next step is for the GM to provide an adventure for those characters. You know, farm boy meets princess girl, princess girl is kidnapped by the evil dragon, daddy king cries for princess girl safe return, farm boy travels to save the girl and makes lots of friends that help the boy defeat the evil dragon, farm boy takes princess girl to his palace then runs away before daddy king learns what farm boy and princess girl were doing during the trip back home. Legends will be sung about farm boy. Usual stuff.

The adventure may be an epic requiring many game sessions to destroy the ring, or may be just one night stands where the PCs help the farmers of a town whose near bridge is now taken by a troll who demands too high fees to cross it (classical).

While the GM can create a detailed adventure, it is possible (very highly possible, almost a fact really) the players will decide to explore and do unplanned things that were not in the GM script. The GM should be flexible and adapt the adventure to the player desires. Don’t forbid them of entering a cave or a palace to steal something just because you hadn’t planned it. Many times the best adventures are those not planned at all!

## Game Mechanics

During the game, diverse events will arise and the characters will have to deal with those situations by force, wit or skill. The players must pick the most appropriate skill for the situation from the skills the character has acquired during his adventuring life.

In every skill contest there are two parts, the attacker who wants to perform an action and the defender who tries to prevent the attacker from succeeding. The value used to execute the action is called the Skill Rank (SR) while the value used for defence is called the Difficulty Rank (DR). A higher SR means the character is more experienced in that skill. A higher DR means the task at hand is more complicated.

The basic mechanic for challenge resolution is:

1. The GM assigns a DR for the situation.
2. The attacker picks the skill he wants to use to solve the situation.
3. Roll the appropriate dice depending on the skill.
4. If the dice result matches or exceeds the DR the attacker succeeds.

Chapter 4 has more detailed rules on skill resolution.

## Elements

The core of the Warscale system are the six magical elements. The six elements are the base building block for every entity, creature, object and magical force in the universe.

### Death

Death is void and emptiness. Death requests, absorbs, demands and drains. Death bends the nature to its will. Nothing escapes death. Death is related to willpower and charisma.

### Earth

Earth is immutable and permanent. Earth is the foundation of everything. Earth is about resistance to change, stubbornness, resilience, stability and order.

### Fire

Fire is wild and uncontrolled. It can warm a house hearth or explode and burn everything if left unchecked.

Fire is related to energy, strength, love, passion, rage and destruction.

### Life

Life is fullness. It gives and provides. Life is what keeps a creature going on while others fall to the ground, wither and die. Life is related to health, stamina and power.

### Air

Air is movement and change. It is always flowing. It is related to precision, travelling, trickery, illusion.

### Water

Water is about logic and planning. It is about learning and keeping a cool factual mind. Water is related to intelligence, mind reading, clairvoyance and foretelling.

### Opposed elements

Elements by themselves are not good or bad but without an opposing element they would be destructive.

Without death, life would grow uncontrolled and become chaotic. But without life all would be a dark void.

Without water, fire would grow and consume everything. But without fire everything would be cold, mechanic and boring.

Without earth, air would always flow unopposed. But without air there would not be change at all… ever.

### Secondary elements

When two elements combine they can form secondary elements. For example:

- Electricity = Air + Fire. Electricity is energy coming from the sky.

- Ice = Death + Water. Ice is water whose heat has been removed.

- Time = Water + Air. Time is precise, exact and always moves forward.

This is a very important concept for magic as it allows wizards a wider range of spells. Chapter 7 provides more information on elements and sub-elements.