# 8. Sequences

For some events in the game, such as fights and coordinated moves, precise timing and order of actions will be very important. This chapter presents a few game mechanisms which help resolve these events. An event played out this way is called a “sequence”.

Sequences are mostly turn-based, with limited emulation of real-time execution. Time is divided into cycles (which are then divided into rounds) and usually each character participating in the sequence will get to act once or a few times over the course of a cycle.

A square or hex grid along with some miniatures to represent characters may be helpful for playing out a sequence (especially a fight), but it's not mandatory.

Sequence Basics:

The following sections will go over the most important concepts for playing out a sequence.

Initiative:

Whenever there’s a question of who gets to act first, we look at the actors’ current Initiative values and the one with the higher one gets precedence.

Initiative is determined at the start of each cycle by rolling a single d12 and adding their Reaction modifier to the result, along with any other modifiers the character may have.

Cycles:

The cycle is the most basic construct for measuring time within a sequence. It represents time span which realistically lasts about five to ten seconds, but in order to make keeping track of timings easier, it's usually regarded as lasting exactly six seconds (and then one minute is exactly ten cycles).

At the very start of each cycle, all involved characters roll for initiative.

Over the course of a single cycle, one or more rounds will occur, during which sequence participants will get to play out their turns and actions. All events that occur during a single cycle can be said to happen simultaneously or one after another - which ever makes more sense in the context of the narrative.

When a cycle ends, a new one begins, and this repeats until the sequence is over.

Rounds:

During one round, all sequence participants who have any action dice remaining get to act in turns, in descending initiative order (characters without action dice are limited to free actions). Actions and action dice are described in the following text.

Once a round is over, if at least one participant has any action dice remaining and wishes to use them, a new round begins. Otherwise, the current cycle ends.

Turns:

During their turn, a character may perform a single standard action, and any number (within reason) of free actions. The standard action can be skipped if he wishes to preserve action dice.

If it’s the character’s first turn in the current cycle, there are two mandatory steps that he must take before performing any actions:

1. Roll for fatigue.
2. Reset the action pool.

Both are described in the following sections.

Action Dice:

Action dice (AD) are a kind of “currency” that sequence participants spend in order to perform actions (move, attack, defend, cast spells, use items etc.). We refer to the character’s remaining unused action dice as their “action pool”.

At the start of their first turn within the current cycle, each participant’s action pool is reset. What this means is that they first discard their remaining action dice (if any), and then roll a number of six-sided dice equal to their Action Pool Size stat (for most characters, this will just be 1 + their Agility modifier).

Most actions that may be performed during a sequence require the acting character to discard one of their action dice. However, the number on the discarded action die is very important – these numbers represent the shifting tides of opportunity and circumstance during a hectic situation, as well as the character’s state of mind in such a situation. Action dice boasting high numbers represent moments of control, advantage and clear focus on the character’s part. However, sometimes the character is outmaneuvered, distracted, overwhelmed by the weight of the situation , or simply needs a second or two to catch their breath. Low-numbered action dice stand for these moments.

The way this translates to game mechanics is simple: any skill test performed during an action is modified based on the value of the action die that was discarded in order to perform that action.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **AD Value** | **Skill test effect** |
| 4-6 | No effect |
| 2-3 | -1 Circumstance Modifier |
| 1 | -2 Circumstance Modifier |

Actions that don’t rely on skill tests (such as movement) may suffer in other ways when performed with low-valued action dice (those effects will be described in relevant sections).

The obvious implication of these rules is that players will need to be careful and tactical when allocating their action dice, especially in combat. Spending your best action die on offence and leaving a ‘1’ for defence could mean losing your head if your foe survives to retaliate.

Actions:

Actions are, simply put, various activities that characters and creatures may perform in a sequence. We have a few different kinds of actions, based on when they can occur and how taxing they are:

* **Standard actions:** These are the main actions that drive the situation forward. Attacking, moving, activating items and casting spells are the most notable examples. Characters may only perform standard actions on their own turns. Standard actions always cost one AD.
* **Reactive actions:** These are the actions that characters perform during the others’ turns in response to others’ actions. In this category we have attacks of opportunity and various defensive options, among others. Reactive actions also cost 1 AD to perform.
* **Free actions:** Minor activities that don’t require much time and effort, such as speaking or dropping the items you’re currently holding are free actions. They don’t cost any AD to perform (but also don’t usually involve any skill tests) and, unless otherwise noted, may be performed during anyone’s turn.

Rolling For Fatigue:

Each sequence participant must, at the start of their first turn during the current cycle, roll an Athletics skill test (from now on, this will be called the “Fatigue Test”).

The DC is based on his encumbrance and armour worn, and the number of strenuous actions he performed since the last time he rolled for fatigue (or the start of the sequence). If he performed no strenuous actions during this time span, then the fatigue test must be skipped.

In general, each expenditure of an action die is considered a strenuous action, however, exceptions can (and should) be made. If you can’t picture an action as being particularly taxing (for example, standing and reading an inscription on the wall, or drinking a potion), it’s probably worthy of an exception.

The base DC for the fatigue test is 0, no surprise there. Add 1 for each strenuous action performed. Then, adjust for encumbrance and worn armour. Finally, the GM may choose to reduce the DC if he feels like the current state of affairs offers some room for breathing (on the other hand, if that’s the case, maybe you should end the sequence and resolve the situation in another way).

The effects of the fatigue test are the following: if the number of successes meets or exceeds the DC – nothing. Otherwise, the testing character suffers a point of fatigue for each success he is missing to meet the DC.

The Initial Cycle:

At the start of the very first cycle in a sequence, each participant who is aware of what is going on receives action dice equal to half (rounded down) of what he would normally receive at the start of his first turn. Alternatively, participants who are caught off guard or surprised receive no action dice until their first turn, and also suffer a -6 penalty to their first initiative roll.

Action Options:

The following sections are dedicated to describing the most common examples of standard, reactive and free actions. Keep in mind that the rules cannot hope to cover all possible situations that you’ll encounter during play, and that these lists are not exhaustive. Later chapters will add to these lists or revisit existing entries, but sometimes it will be up to the GM to come up with appropriate rulings on the spot.

Standard Actions:

* Move
* Move & Action
* Attack
* Cast spell
* Use item
* Mount / Dismount
* Delay
* Ready
* Joint Action

Reactive Actions:

* [C] Defend
* Execute readied action
* [C] Attack of opportunity

Free Actions:

* Assess situation
* Speak
* Signal
* Drop item