# 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 flow.

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

Sequence Phases:

A Sequence is played out in 2 phases:

1. **Setup Phase:** This phase happens only once when the Sequence is started. The only mandatory step in it is to construct the Initiative Stack (explained in the continuation) to track the turn order of all the Sequence participants. If you want to use a grid with scenery and miniatures to play out the sequence, also set them up during this phase.
2. **Action Phase:** This phase is played out over a series of Rounds. During every round, each participant will get one or several Turns during which they can play out their Actions, such as moving, manipulating objects, attacking, defending, casting spells, using items and so on.

<I don’t know what to put in this column. Maybe a nice picture of people dying?>

A Note on Tracking Time:

A single round is meant to last for roughly 10 seconds (give or take a few) in the game world. To make tracking time in Sequences easier, we always take it that one Round lasts for exactly 10 seconds, and then 6 Rounds take exactly one minute.

All events that occur during a single Round can be said to happen simultaneously or one after another - which ever makes more sense in the context of the narrative.

A note on lasting effects:

* lasts for 1 round (10 seconds): ends at the end of current round
* lasts for 2 rounds (20 seconds): ends at the end of the following round
* lasts for 3 rounds (30 seconds): ends at the end of the round after the following
* etc.

The Initiative Stack:

To answer the age-old question of “who gets to go first”, we use a stack of cards.

What kind of cards isn’t really important, as long as they have identical back sides and it’s easily distinguishable to whom each card belongs. For example, you may want to use one or two decks of regular playing cards and have each character represented by a specific number.

Constructing the Initiative Stack:

At the start of every Sequence, the GM needs to construct the Initiative Stack. To do that, for each Sequence participant, take a number of their cards equal to the Action Pool Size stat of that participant, plus their Reaction modifier (unless it’s negative).

In other words, each participant will have a card in the stack per Action Die in their pool, so that there’s always enough cards for them to use all of their actions. If they also have a good Reaction modifier, there’ll be extra cards for them in the stack so that they can get to their actions faster.

Upon collecting all of the required cards, the GM shuffles them and places them face-down onto the table – that’s the Initiative Stack. Also reserve some space for its discard pile.

### Group Initiative for NPCs:

To keep initiative management easier, the GM may group multiple similar NPCs together, and when their card is drawn from the stack, they all get a turn one after another.

Using the Initiative Stack:

The Initiative Stack is used during the Action Phase to govern the turn order of Sequence participants.

To begin a Round (the Action Phase begins with the first Round), reveal the top card of the stack and move it face-up onto the discard pile of the Initiative Stack. Then, the owner of that card gets to play out their Turn. After that, reveal and discard the next card of the stack, then its owner gets a Turn, and so on.

If a card is ever drawn belonging to a character who is no longer participating in the Sequence (for example, because of having being killed) or has no Action Dice left, simply discard that card and draw the next one.

Repeat the above process until there are no more cards in the stack – that marks the end of the current Round. At that point, either:

1. End the Sequence if appropriate, or
2. Start a new Round by flipping the discard pile of the Initiative Stack (**without shuffling it!**).

**Note:** A the end of every Round there’s a special step “Rolling For Fatigue”. See page XX.

Adding and Removing Cards:

Occasionally a Sequence participant needs to add more of their cards to the Initiative Stack, as a result of having their Reaction modifier or Action Pool Size increased. Sometimes the opposite will happen, and some of their cards will need to be removed. In those cases, follow these two simple rules:

* **When adding cards**, always add them to the bottom of the stack.
* **When removing cards**, remove the bottom-most ones from the stack. If there are none in the stack, remove the top-most ones from the discard pile.

Unless otherwise noted, adding and removing cards is done by the GM.

Perturbations:

<Perturbations are when something disrupts the flow of the sequence – shuffle both the discard and the initiative stack>

Action Dice:

Action Dice (abbrev. AD) are 6-sided dice that act as a “currency” that sequence participants spend in order to perform Actions. We refer to the character’s remaining unused AD as their “Action Pool”.

Gaining Action Dice:

When a rule instructs that a character gains or receives an Action Die, his player rolls one d6 and adds it to the character’s Action Pool.

Resetting the Action Pool:

At the start of their first Turn within the current Round, each participant’s Action Pool is reset. What this means is that they first discard all the dice (if any) in their Action Pool, and then receive a number of AD equal to their Action Pool Size stat (for most characters, this will just be 1 + their Agility modifier).

Losing Action Dice:

When a rule instructs that a character loses an Action Die, remove the lowest-numbered die from his Action Pool.

If, at any moment, a character has more dice in his Action Pool than is allowed by his Action Pool Size stat, any excess AD are lost (remove the lowest-numbered ones first).

Using Action Dice:

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 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, and 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 AD that was discarded in order to perform that Action:

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

Actions that don’t rely on Skill Tests (such as movement) may be impaired 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 & Action Types:

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.
* **Swift actions:** Actions which require a small but not negligible time or effort. To ‘buy’ a Swift action, the player must bump down one AD from his Action Pool. The bought Swift action can be used before the end of the turn – this also means that the player may, at the very start of his turn, bump down one of his Action Dice, use that same die to perform a Standard Action, and only then use his Swift Action. Swift Actions are limited to 1 per turn.
* **Free actions:** Minor activities that don’t require much time and effort. Speaking (in reasonably short sentences) or dropping the items you’re currently holding are examples of Free Actions. They don’t cost any AD to perform. You may always perform Free Actions during your own Turn, and the GM may also let you do it during others’ turns.

Turns:

As previously noted, a character may, During their turn, perform a single Standard Action, a Single Swift Action, and any number (within reason) of Free Actions.

**Important:** If it’s the character’s first Turn in the current Round, he must first reset his Action Pool before doing anything else. The players may wish to use tokens to track this: Once a Round starts, everyone receives a “first Turn” token, and whenever someone starts their turn with that token, they immediately reset their Action Pool and return the token.

Rolling For Fatigue:

At the end of every round, each sequence participant must 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 in this round. 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 to be 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. Add 1 for each strenuous action performed (note: This can be modified if you’re wearing medium or heavier armour).

The effects of the fatigue test are the following:

* No effect if the number of successes meets or exceeds the DC;
* Otherwise, the testing character suffers a point of fatigue for each success he is missing to meet the DC. <Max 3>

The Initial Round:

At the start of the very first Round 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.

If there are any participants who are caught off guard or surprised, then also follow these steps to set up the sequence:

* The surprised participants receive no action dice until their first turn;
* When creating the initial Initiative Stack, take one card of each aware participant from the stack, shuffle them and put them on top of the stack. That way, all aware participants will get to play their turns before any surprised participants.

Late Joiners:

When a new participant (or a new group of participants) joins a Sequence, do the following:

* **If the new participants are Surprised,** they receive no Action Dice and all of their cards are added to the top of the discard pile of the Initiative Stack.
* **Otherwise,** they receive half (rounded down) of the Action Dice they would usually receive at the start of their turn, and that many of their cards are added to the bottom of the Initiative Stack. Also, add a number of their cards equal to half (rounded down) of their Reaction modifier to the bottom of the Initiative Stack. All other cards that they should have in the Initiative Stack are added to the top of its discard pile.

New participants in a Sequence always cause a Perturbation when they join (resolve it after adding their cards to the stack).

Available Actions:

The following sections are dedicated to describing the most common examples of different kinds of 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] Delay:

This action, despite being a Standard Action, does not use up an Action Die. After using it, put one of your cards at the bottom of the Initiative Stack.

If all the participants of a sequence use “Delay” consecutively, the Round ends. If they keep doing this, the GM should end the Sequence and resolve the scene in another way.

[STANDARD] Hesitate:

Do nothing. The Action Die is wasted.

[STANDARD] Joint Action:

When you use this action, do not discard the Action Die you just used. Instead, increase it by 1 (up to a maximum of 6) and give it to an adjacent ally. They can now immediately use it to perform one Standard Action. A single character can be targeted by Joint Action only once per Round.

**Note:** Look at Chapter X: Combat to see how combat rules interact with Joint Action.

[STANDARD] Mount/Dismount:

Mount or dismount from a steed, vehicle or other kind of mount.

*Not talking about storage media here.*

[STANDARD] Move:

AD 4-6 => full movement  
AD 2-3 => 75% movement  
AD 1 => 50% movement

[STANDARD] Ready Action:

use the spent AD to determine CM of readied action

[STANDARD] Use Item:

drink a potion, throw a grenade, activate a magic scroll, administer a stimpack

also for picking up an item

[STANDARD] Use Special Ability:

Some characters will have special abilities which are activated as a Standard Action. Specific rules for such abilities will be put in relevant places.

Reactive Actions:

* [C] Defend
* [C] Attack of opportunity

Free Actions:

* Assess situation
* Execute readied action
* Speak
* Signal
* Drop item

Special Actions:

Shift

See Equipment chapter for info on accessing equipped items

Free Movement:

Each character participating in a Sequence can, once per Round, take a “Move” action as a Swift Action.

This ability is gained when entering the Sequence, (unless Surprised) and is refreshed when the character is resetting their Action Pool.