# 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 rounds, and each character participating in the sequence will usually get to act once or a few times over the course of a single round.

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.

Action Dice:

Action Dice (abbrev. AD) are a “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 round, 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.

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| --- | --- |
| **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 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.

### Gaining Extra Action Dice:

Any time a player is to gain an extra Action Die while in a sequence, he immediately takes one d6, rolls it, and adds it to his action pool. He also then adds one of his cards to the bottom of the Initiative Stack (which is described below).

The Initiative Stack:

To answer the age-old question of “who gets to play first”, we use a stack of cards (yes, cards, contrary to all other mechanics based on rolling dice, but you shouldn’t be surprised at this point).

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.

Either way, the basic idea is simple – once we have this stack of cards (called the Initiative Stack), we draw the top card of the stack, and its owner gets to play their turn. Then we draw the next card, its owner then plays, and so on…

If a card is ever drawn belonging to a character who is no longer participating in the Sequence (for example, he could have died in the meantime) or has no Action Dice left, simply discard that card and draw the next one.

### Constructing the Initiative Stack:

To construct the Initiative Stack, for each Sequence participant, take a number of their cards equal to the maximum size of their action pool, 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.

Either way, the GM takes all the collected cards and shuffles them face down – that’s the Initiative Stack. Note that both the character’s Reaction modifier and the size of his action pool are fairly static values, so the stack will usually be the same (or very similar) from one round to the next, you’ll just need to re-shuffle the cards.

### 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.

Rounds:

The round is the most basic construct for measuring time within a sequence. It represents time span which realistically lasts about five to ten seconds. Usually we take it that 10 rounds lasts for 1 minute, to keep track of time easier.

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.

The structure of a round is the following:

1. Create the Initiative Stack;
2. While there are cards in the stack, play out characters’ turns;
3. Finish the round by having all participants roll for Fatigue (see page XXX);
4. Go back to step 1 or finish the Sequence.

Turns:

During their turn, a character may perform a single standard action, and any number (within reason) of free actions.

If it’s the character’s first turn in the current round, he must first reset his action pool before doing anything else.

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. 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 (but also don’t usually involve any skill tests) and, unless otherwise noted, may be performed during anyone’s turn.

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. Then, adjust for encumbrance and worn armour (see page XXX).

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.

The Initial Round:

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.

If there are any participants who are caught off guard or surprised receive, 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.

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
* Hesitate

Reactive Actions:

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

Free Actions:

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