Pixies and Predators

I am going to assume that anyone reading this already knows at least the basics of a role-playing, know about dice and has some idea about how a game proceeds.

This game is very much inspired by Dungeons and Dragons Fourth Edition. I am in no way affiliated with Wizards of the Coast, the publishers of Dungeons and Dragons Fourth Edition, and I am going to do my best not to infringe their copyright, though I will be using many of their ideas (ideas cannot be copyrighted). Dungeons and Dragons Fourth Edition is an excellent game, but it is not quite what I want it to be. This game is to some degree a slimmed-down version...

This is an RPG game system; a set of rules. It is not a setting; these are the mechanics for playing the game, the crunch rather than the fluff. It is designed for a low fantasy setting, but could readily be adapted to any setting at all.

Gameplay

Perhaps I am doing this in reverse order, but let us start by looking at how to play the game, and then worry about creating characters later. The basic mechanic comes into play when a character is in conflict with someone or something. When that happens, the player rolls a d20, adds the appropriate skill and possibly a modifier, and compares that to the defence of the opponent.

- To sneak, roll and add your Stealth, comparing that to the opponent's Passive Perception.

- To lie, roll and add your Bluff, comparing to the opponent's Passive Insight.

- To escape a grab by brute force, roll and add your Athletics, comparing to the opponent's Fortitude; or roll and add your Acrobatics, comparing to the opponent's Reflex to escape by wriggling out.

Sometimes you are up against a situation, rather than a creature.

- To find something, roll and add your Perception, comparing to the difficulty rating of the search

- To climb, roll and add your Athletics, comparing to the difficulty rating of the climb

Outside of combat, in a situation where all the characters are trying to do the same thing (such as search a room) the character with the highest skill can make the attempt first. Also, a player can "Take Ten"; that is, if he can succeed on a roll of ten, then he does so automatically (if he chooses

to roll and fails, then the character fails).

Attacking uses the same basic mechanic. To hit something with a sword or arrow, roll and add your weapon bonus, comparing to the opponent's Reflex. If you hit, you roll the damage applicable for that weapon, deduct the opponents armour. The opponent then loses that number of hits.

Note that defences, passive perception/insight and difficulty ratings have a base value of 10. If a character has a perception of +3, then her passive perception is 13. Someone trying to sneak past her needs to roll over 13 (his d20 roll plus sneak skill). Rolling 13 is a fail!

Combat

So, we have a basic idea of how to attack, we now need to look at the nuts and bolts of combat.

Order of Play

At the beginning of the encounter, everyone - PCs and monsters - rolls a d20 and adds their initiative (monsters of the same type roll as a group; optionally a GM may assume all monsters roll ten for convenience). This determines the order of play (if two players have the same, they can either decide between themselves, or go alphabetically; players go before monsters with the same initiative).

If one side is surprised, then they all miss their first turn. The other side get a "surprise round", when only they can act.

On your turn, you may decide you would like to wait. You can choose to delay until after someone else; thereafter your turn will be at this new position in the sequence. If you are towards the end of the initiative list, you may delay so that you miss that round altogether, and take your turn towards the top of the list (perhaps a better way to view it is going around a circle, rather than a list with a top and a bottom). If you delay, then any effects that were already running and were due to stop during your turn will stop at the point when you started to delay. You cannot prolong effects by delaying.

Actions in a Turn

The design aim here is to keep combat dynamic by allowing a character to move or do other actions without losing the chance to attack.

When it is your turn you can do two actions:

- A standard action (which you can use as an extra minor action)

- A minor action

You can use your actions in either order, but they must be one after the other (you cannot move a

bit, attack, then finish your move). Thus, you can: do a standard action, followed by a minor action; do a minor action followed by a standard action; or do a minor action followed by a second minor action.

Most attacks are standard actions, and what you can do depends on your character. Any character can also bull rush or charge a foe as a standard action or perform a second wind to heal himself (once per encounter).

As a minor action you can run or shift. When you run you move a number of squares up to your speed, but if there was an enemy adjacent to you when you started to move, she gets an opportunity attack. Alternatively, you can shift, which is just one square, but you will not provoke opportunity attacks. You can move through a square occupied by an ally, but not an enemy, and you must end your move in an unoccupied square.

Speaking is a free action, as is accepting something from another character. You can have as many free actions as you like (within reason).

There are many exceptions to the above, depending on the character or monster. For example, or a particularly powerful monster may appear twice in the initiative order. In general, monsters cannot do second wind – but some may be able to do it twice.

When it is not your turn, you may still get to act. If a monster tries to run away, you may get an opportunity attack yourself. And again, there are powers unique to a character that can allow you to act on someone else's turn, such as a fighter's mark; he gets a free attack if his marked enemy attacks someone else.

Once per encounter you can use an action point to get an extra standard action during your turn. Alternatively, you can use your action point to give a +4 bonus to a roll (and you can choose to do this even after rolling the dice). Generally, monsters do not get action points.

Types of Attacks

Melee: A melee attack is direct contact between the character and the foe (unarmed), or contact by a weapon, with the character holding the weapon as it contacts his foe. A standard melee attack can only be made to a foe in an adjacent square.

Melee n: A melee attack, the target must be within n squares. A polearm might have reach 2, for example.

Range n: Targets a foe up to n squares away. If an enemy is adjacent to you, it can take an opportunity attack. Ranged spells tend to use this mechanic.

Range n/m: As above, but at greater range (over n squares, less than or equal to m squares) there is a -2 penalty. Ranged weapons usually use this mechanics.

Close Burst n: This affects every square within n of the player (but not the player, if an attack spell!).

Blast n: This affects an n by n square (parallelogram if using hexes) that must touch the player's square at least on one corner. Breath attacks and some spells use this mechanic.

Burst n range m: Targets a square up to m squares away, affects each square within n of that square. If an enemy is adjacent to you, he can have an opportunity attack. Spells like fireball use this mechanic.

All attacks require a line of effect. For a Ranged Burst, you need a line of effect from the character to the origin square, and then from the origin square to the enemy. Melee and range attacks require a line of sight, or you suffer a -5 penalty. A ranged attack suffers a -2 penalty if there is cover between you and the target (another opponent counts as cover; an ally does not). Note that some bursts and blasts target enemies only, some do not.

Opportunity attacks are usually restricted to melee or melee n type attacks (it can be useful for a wizard to have a melee weapon just for this).

Attacks will be against Reflex (for most weapons and blasts), Fortitude (say for poisons) or Will (some magical attacks); check the specific power. Note that reflex will be targeted much more than Fortitude and Will.

Armour

Armour serves to reduce damage. Type n armour will reduce the damage taken by n points for each dice rolled (for example, type 2 armour will take 4 points off from a weapon doing 2d6+2 damage). An attack that hits will always do at least one point of damage. Be aware that some attacks ignore armour, especially spells.

> *Barak the Bold is wearing armour type 3, and is fighting a Dark Elf. The Dark Elf attacks twice, and hits both times. It is doing 2d6+2 damage. For the first attack, the Dark Elf rolls 2 and 6, which works out as 10 damage. However, Barak's armour protects reduces that by 6 (twice its type, as the Dark Elf was rolling two dice), so he only suffers 4 hits.*
>
> *For the other attack, the Dark Elf rolls 1 and 2, giving a total of 5. This is less than the armour reduction, so Barak just takes the minimal damage of 1 hit.*
>
> *Next round, the Dark Elf performs a mind blast; it ignores armour and Barak feels the full effect.*

If an attack does not use dice for damage (most attacks by minions), the damage is reduced as though it used a single die.

> *Barak the Bold is now fighting a Dark Elf minion. Its attack hits, and it is doing 5 points of damage (no dice roll). The armour protects as though it was 1 die roll, reducing the damage by 3.*

Armour typically ranges from 0 (no armour at all) to 4 (full plate in a fantasy setting). Better armour might be found in exceptional cases.

A character needs to be trained to use armour properly, to learn how to move while wearing it and to build up the muscles to fight in it. Anyone not trained suffers a penalty to their Reflex defence. If the armour is type n, and the character is trained to use type m, then the penalty is n-m (for example, a character wearing type 4 armour, but only trained in type 1 armour will suffer a -3 penalty).

Note that some weapons are going to be better against armour than others. A sword doing d12+2 damage will be more effective against an armoured foe than a sword doing 2d6+4, though the latter will be better against an unarmoured foe.

Shields

Shields deflect blows, so give a bonus to the Reflex defence. As with armour, you must be trained to use a shield properly; you only receive a bonus up to the highest of the shield's defence and your skill (for example, a character with shield skill of 2, using a type 3 shield, only gets a +2 bonus to his Reflex).

Hits, Dying and Healing

This game is about "cinematic action", i.e., it is more like an action film, than real life. The heroes narrowly survive the battle, but after dusting themselves off, they are ready for the next one. Things are going badly for the tough guy, but after spending a moment to clear his head, he is ready to kick butt. With this in mind (and keeping it simple), all hits are regained at the end of an encounter.

When a character's hits drop to half or below, he is "bloodied". This should be announced, as certain effects may then be applicable (both positive and negative). This applies to monsters too.

When his hits drop to zero or less, a character is unconscious and dying. A death saving roll must be made each round for a dying character. A result of 1-9 is a fail; three fails and the character is dead. A result of 20 means the character is stabilised. Hits return to zero (and on-going damage stops), and no further death saving rolls need be made. The character is still unconscious however. Another player can attempt to "stabilise the dying" using his healing or medical skill (depending on the genre of the game). A success has the same effect as rolling a 20. A character also dies when

his hits fall below negative half hits.

Healing during combat can be accomplished in three ways. Each character can, once per encounter, perform a Second Wind (if conscious). This is a standard action (but could be done with an Action Point), and will allow the character to regain a third of his hits. It also boosts his defences by +2 until the start of his next turn.

Characters can also be healed by potions and by magic. These vary, so check the details.

Grievous Injuries

A character who has fallen unconscious is considered to have taken a serious injury. This also happens when a character receives a critical hit from an "Elite" or "Solo" opponent. Roll d6 on the table below

Roll	Where	Effect
1	Head	Magical attacks and mental skills at -2
2	Left Leg	Slowed, movement is reduced 2 points
3	Right Leg	Slowed, movement is reduced 2 points
4	Left Arm	Martial attacks and physical skills at -2
5	Right Arm	Martial attacks and physical skills at -2
6	Torso	Maximum hits reduced by 20%

Grievous Injuries are the one thing that carries over from an encounter. The effect of a Grievous Injury reduces by half after three days, or just one day of bed-rest. Alternatively, the character can find a healer to perform a curative ritual.

Other Combat Notes

Combat Advantage: If a character has Combat Advantage against another character, he gets a +2 bonus to attack. There are various ways to get combat advantage, but the most significant are when you have an ally on the opposite side of your opponent (flanking) or when your foe is suffering a condition such as dazed or stunned.

Charge: A charge is a standard action in which the character moves and attacks, with a +1 bonus to the attack. The character must move at least 2 squares (and is restricted to his speed as usual). He must take a direct route to the foe, and must end his turn at the nearest possible square adjacent to

the foe.

As a charge is a standard action, it can be combined with a move as his minor action to allow a character to move a good 10 squares in his turn. A character can take no further action on his turn after a charge (if he has not used his minor action, it is lost).

Bull Rush: A bull rush is an attempt to shove an opponent as a standard action. The character rolls and adds his Lifting skill, and compares that to the enemy's Fortitude. If successful, the enemy is pushed back 1 square. A character must be adjacent to an enemy to attempt a bull rush.

Types of Monsters

All monsters fall into five types, depending on how hard they will be to defeat.

Minions: Minions can be taken out in a single hit (if this was Star Trek, they would be wearing red shirts), though they can still have some interesting powers. At low level a minion will be doing typically 5 points of damage.

Mooks: Mooks are a bit better than minions, but not a lot. They do have a set number of hit points, but can typically be taken out in two hits.

Standards: Normal monsters; at low level they will be doing d6+2 to d8+4 damage; any character should survive a couple of hits from these monsters.

Elites: Elites have better armour and better attacks, and considerably more hits. They get a +2 to saving throws and do significant damage. They effectively count as two standard monsters. Characters that are not defenders are going to be in trouble after a couple of hits from these guys, so it is important that the defender identify these (and solos) and marks them quickly to protect the less resilient members of the group.

Solos: Counts as five standard monsters. They have even better armour and attacks, and even more hits. They get a +5 to saving throws and may well get to have more than one turn per round or get to attack you whenever you land an attack of them. Oh, and despite the name, they will not generally be found on their own.

Conditions

For simplicity, conditions last either until the end of the attacker's next turn, or until the character makes a saving throw. A saving throw can be attempted at the end of the character's turn. If you have more than one effect, then you need to save for each one.

If another character makes a successful heal attempt (standard action, must be adjacent, difficulty

of 15), you get an extra saving throw.

All saving throws are the same (unless you buy features to improve them) - just roll 10 or over.

A character can only be affected by a specific condition once at any time. For example, a character that is dazed, and is stuck by an attack that caused him to be dazed and knocked prone, is only dazed once (i.e., only needs to save against the effect once). If he fails to save, the daze lasts until the end of the turn of the enemy making the second attack.

A character cannot be both stunned and dazed. Stunning a dazed character automatically removes the daze condition, as stun is worse. Dazing a stunned character has the same effect as stunning the character, i.e., prolonging the stun to the end of your next turn.

Marked: You are at -2 to all attacks that do not include the foe marking you.

Slowed: Your movement is reduced to 2.

Prone: You grant combat advantage to melee attacks, but get a +2 to defence against ranged attacks. You are at -2 to all attacks. Unlike most of the other conditions, this has no duration; you are prone until you stand. You can stand as your minor action or crawl up to two squares.

Note that if you have a power that knocks a foe prone, it might be worth delaying your turn until after he has acted so your allies can get an attack before he stands!

Weakened: You do half damage (no effect on on-going damage).

Restrained: You are held and cannot move to another square, but can still fight, etc. You can teleport to another square (if you have that ability), and are then no longer restrained. Like prone, this does not have a duration as such; it lasts until you get free. You can attempt to get free using your Athletics (against the foe's Fortitude) or your Acrobatics (against the foe's Reflex).

Immobilised: You cannot move to another square, but can still fight, etc. You can teleport to another square (if you have that ability), or get slid, pushed, etc., but are still immobilised when you get there.

Dazed: You grant combat advantage and cannot flank, and can only take one action during your turn (either a standard or a minor). You can spend an action point to get an extra action as normal.

Blinded: You grant combat advantage and cannot flank. You are at -5 to melee and range attacks, and -10 to perception. It is assumed that even a blinded character knows approximately where his friends and foes are.

Stunned: You grant combat advantage, cannot flank and can take no actions. A player cannot be

both stunned and dazed; stunning automatically removes the daze condition. You can spend an action point to get an extra action as normal.

Dominated: You grant combat advantage, cannot flank and can take no actions. The dominating foe determines your actions, limited to one per round, and no limited-use powers.

Helpless: You grant combat advantage, cannot flank and can take no actions. This is usually because you are unconscious.

Penalty to ...: Character has a specified penalty to all or specific defences or attacks. A character can have multiple penalties applying to various attacks or defences, but for each attack or defence only the worst applies.

Taking damage: The character takes the specified damage at the start of his turn, until he makes his saving throw. Taking damage effects do not stack; you can ignore all but the worst one.

> *Talor the Hopeless has been hit by a pyro-demon. The attack has dazed him, and he is taking 5 hits per round fire damage. It is now Talor's turn. First he takes the ongoing damage (reducing his hits by 5), then he attacks the pyro-demon (his single action this round as he is dazed). At the end of his round he attempts a saving through for being dazed (rolling 6) and for the on-going damage (rolls 2).*
>
> *The pyro-demon attacks again, and hits. This time it has the effect that Talor is stunned, and taking 3 hits per round. The stun overrides the previous daze effect, while the 3 hits per round is smaller than the 5 hits per round he is already taking, so has no effect.*
>
> *His friend, Barizin, leaps to his aid. He makes a successful attempt to heal Talor, so Talor gets a free saving roll (as part of Barizin's turn). He chooses to use it for the stun effect, and rolls 10 - just enough.*
>
> *Now it is Talor's turn again. He is not stunned, but is still taking the on-going damage, so first he takes 5 off his hits. Then he attacks the pyro-demon, and shifts away from it. At the end of his turn he attempts to save for the on-going effect.*

Terrain

Different types of terrain can have tactical consequences.

Difficult Terrain: A character can only move at half speed in difficult terrain. As numbers are always rounded down, the only way to shift in difficult terrain is to use your standard action to shift as well (so you can shift two squares - once in your move action, once in your standard action - halved to one square movement in difficult terrain).

Hazardous Terrain: Rather less common, hazardous terrain is a catch-all term that might include terrain that does damage, that teleports you, that requires a roll to negotiate or whatever.

Roles

Characters work best when they assume certain roles in combat.

Defender: The defender, or tank, is there to draw attacks from his allies. He has good armour, and a lot of hits, and he can take the punishment. His job is to engage the more dangerous foes and use his "Mark" to stop them attacking the weaker members of the group.

Striker: The striker deals out damage, though he cannot take it himself. His job is to bring foes down as quickly as possible, and the different types to strikers have different mechanics for dishing out extra damage.

Controller: A spell caster (in its generic sense), the controller supports the defender and striker in various ways. Area effect spells can quickly dispatch minions, battlefield effects disrupt the enemy tactics. Controllers might also boost their allies (a +3 bonus to the striker, to make sure he hits to deal out that damage; a healing spell on the defender to keep him standing) and suppress their enemies.

These are not hard and fast rules; it would be perfectly reasonable to have a spell caster who concentrates on a high damage output; a striker rather than a controller.

Character Creation

So now we know the rules, you will want to be playing as soon as possible!

Players can pick 2 career package points at each level. This means that at level zero, all characters are identical, so characters should start at level 3 to 5, so they have had a chance to specialise.

Characters cannot have more points in a career package than their level. That means, at level 4, a character cannot have more than 4 points in a career package. However, players are advised to have the maximum in a least one career package (so you might 4 points in two, or 4 n one and 2 in two, etc.).

Some packages work well together, while some are useless without another package.

Skills

Some career packages give bonuses to skills. In addition, players can spend one point per level to increase a skill.

Hobby

You can also select some specific background skill or knowledge area (such as juggling, singing, sculpture, wine appreciation, cookery, local politics, ancient history of one nation, traditions and customs of another nation). This cannot be a skill that can be used in combat, and should be pretty specific. Think of this as a way to make a more rounded character, rather than something that will be useful!

Old rules!

Character creation is done through some custom software, but is very easy to do. The first step is to start the software running.

Now you should see the character screen. It is divided into three parts. On the left, a scrolling array of boxes. Each box is a feature, and you build a character by buying features. Click on any box and a description of the feature will appear in the top right of the display. The character sheet is on the bottom right. Right now you are pretty rubbish at everything, but that will change...

You need to buy some features to make your character. You can only buy features that are currently in yellow, so click on one (it should now have an orange border), and then click add. The feature will turn green, to show that you now have it, and any other features that follow on from it will turn yellow - they are now available to buy.

Most features depend on other features, so to be a fighter, you first pick "Way of the Warrior", which gives access to other features (in effect this is your character class), then say "Mark I" for your basic marking, "Axe I" for basic axe fighting, etc. Other warrior features allow you to slide an opponent or make multiple attacks. Some are only be available at higher level.

There are also training powers to give boosts to specific skills, background powers, and so on. Want to multi-class? Fine, just pick "Way of the Rogue", and you can access the martial striker features.

Abilities can be available by more than one route. Go the warrior route, and you can get armour 5 in two picks, while the rogue route takes 5 picks, and the wizard route only goes to armour 2.

Wizards can get powers to do ranged attacks, ranged bursts or blasts, but also need to get the elements to power them. To do a fire burst, you need the fire power and the burst power. Get higher bursts to increase range, damage and area of effect. Get higher fire powers to do on-going damage.

Get frost to do cold-based bursts. Each element has its own special effect (frost slows, illusion blinds, etc.).

What about different races? There are no bonuses for being an elf, it is up to the player to build a character that works as an elf, who is good at those areas an elf is good at (or not, it is up to you). There are background options for some races, but they are not restricted to the race.

Level Advancement and Experience Points

Calculating experience points is fairly straightforward. Award one to the party after each encounter. The party can go up a level when they get to around 8 experience points, at the GM's discretion (that is, at a suitable point in the narrative), at which point the experience points revert to 0.

All characters should be the same level. If a character dies, or a new player joins the game, the new character should be of the same level as the rest of the party, and will go up a level at the same time.

Options In Combat

Options for melee

Any character can make a melee attack, if they have a weapon. Melee experts get some extra options, and if they specialise those options are even better with a specific weapon. These options are not available to characters that are not melee experts, and only one option can be used each turn.

Power Strike +2 damage (+4 with weapon specialisation)

Sure Strike +2 to attack roll (+4 with weapon specialisation)

Mark Until the start of the character's next turn, her foe suffers a -2 penalty to any attack that does not iclude her (with weapon specialisation, the character gets an Opportunity Attack if her foe makes such an attack, or if her foe voluntarily moves)

Parry +2 to reflex until the start of the character's next turn (+4 with weapon specialisation)

Dual Strike Character must be wielding two weapons. Character makes two attack rolls against one enemy with a -2 penalty on each attack, or against two different enemies with a -3 penalty (no penalty

with weapon specialisation). Note that only certain weapons can be used for dual wielding.

Quickdraw Character can draw a weapon and attack in the same turn, but suffers a -2 penalty to the attack roll (no penalty with weapon specialisation).

Charge Character can move up to his speed in his standard action (but must move at least 2 squares), and make an attack. +1 to damage (+3 with weapon specialisation) .

Shield Bash Character must have a shield. Character rolls an attack as if he was using his weapon. If successful, he attack does half bash, but the target can be pushed one square (do full damage with weapon specialisation).

Options for missile

Any character can make a missile attack, if they have a weapon. A missile attack is a ranged attack against a specific target (firearm, arrow or firebolt, not grenade or fireball). Any character can use these options.

Only one of these options can be used at a time:

Shoot from Full Cover +6 to reflex, but -3 to attack roll (requires very good cover; an arrow slit or equivalent)

Shoot from Superior Cover +4 to reflex, but -2 to attack roll (requires good cover)

Shoot from Half Cover +2 to reflex, but -1 to attack roll (requires some cover)

Only one of these options can be used at a time:

Aimed Shot +2 to attack roll, but character cannot move this round

Snipe +5 to attack roll, but character cannot move this round, and cannot have moved or acted in the previous round

Covering Fire Character attacks a foe at -4, then selects an ally. If the foe attacks his ally before the start of the character's next turn, the character can take an opportunity attack against the ally (without the -4 penalty). It should usually be assumed that the foe is aware of this risk before attacking the ally.

Suppressing Fire Character must be using an automatic weapon. Character attacks a foe at -4. The foe, and any who start their turn in an adjacent square, suffer a -2 penalty to all attacks until the start of the character's next turn.

Careful Reload If the weapon has to be reloaded, a character can choose this option to reload the weapon without penalty, but cannot move this round.

Quick Load Character can reload and shoot as part of his standard action, but attacks with a -3 penalty.

Genre: Fantasy

The fantasy genre could be characterised by a low technology level (typically pre-fire arms) and the existence of magic.

Magic

Use of magic is in essence like any other power, but there are some complications that are worth noting.

There are broadly three types of magical attacks; bolts, blasts and bursts. A bolt targets specific foes, blasts affect an area adjacent to the caster, and bursts affect an area around a specific square. To be able to perform one of these a character needs the appropriate power.

The character also has to attune to an element to power the spell. To be able to attune to a specific element, the character must have learnt it (that is, he must buy the feature during character creation or when going up a level). Attuning is a minor action, and the character remains attuned to that element until the end of the combat, or until he attunes to another element. Elemental effects also require that the character is attuned first.

> *Jaszaa the Improbable, who has learnt the elements of Fire and Storm, is about to go into combat. In the first round as a minor action he attunes to fire, and for his standard action he conjures up a Pillar of Fire, hoping to obstruct his enemies.*
>
> *In his second round, as a minor action he sustains the Pillar of Fire. Instead of moving, he attunes to Storm, then for his standard action he casts Stormburst at a bunch of foes held behind the pillar.*
>
> *In his third round, as a minor action he again sustains the Pillar of Fire. Then he moves the Pillar of Fire a few squares (which he can do instead of moving himself). He casts Stormbolt at the remaining enemy for his standard action.*

Note that radiant and necrotic are kind of divine elements, the former for good gods, the latter for evil gods.

Greater magical effects can be achieved through the use of rituals. You need the requisite skills to perform a ritual, and generally some material components (though these are usually not consumed by the ritual). Rituals can take some hours to perform.

Genre: Occult-Horror-Pulp

The Pulp genre has its roots in early twentieth century literature, and so frequently is based in that setting.

Appendix A: Differences to DnD 4e Game Play

Having played DnD 4e somewhat, I have some ideas about what I want to be different. I really like the gameplay in DnD 4e, so that is relatively unchanged. This section lists the changes to the rules that apply during play (as opposed to character creation). It is a reference to the changes, together with the thinking behind the change.

If it is not mentioned here, then follow the DnD 4e rules.

Armour

It seems to me that someone in armour will get hit more often than someone in their underwear, though the guy in his underwear will take much more damage if he is hit. My system reflects that. It also means the fighter can keep going longer before running out of hits - which again seems more reasonable. Furthermore, this allows more variation in weapons as a d12 weapon becomes significantly different to a 2d6.

Healing Surges

While the idea is sound, it adds extra complexity that I do not think is required. Running out of healing surges means the players go to bed instead of going to the next encounter. Is that heroic? Is it fun?

Action points

One per encounter is so much easier than worrying about milestones.

Grievous Wounds

Grievous wounds are the only things that carry over from one encounter to the next; there is some on-going penalty for getting a bad hit, there is some reason to see a healer. So why is this preferable to running out of healing surges? The idea here is that a character will struggle on with the injury. Going into an encounter with no healing surges is liable to get your character dead; far better to sleep where you are. Going into an encounter injured will make you less effective, but therefore all the more heroic when you succeed against the odds, and the alternative is to trek back to town.

Surprise Round

Characters that can act in a surprise round get the full set of actions (minor and standard), not just a standard action. It sucks if you are a fighter (or a cleric with range 5 attacks) 8 squares away from the nearest enemy, unable to reach them for the surprise round.

Daily Powers

None.

In fact there is no limit to how often a character can do most things. Wizards can cast spells all day long. This does mean that their spells are less powerful, but the aim is that they are still effective. Instead of a wizard who can dramatically control the battle once per day, and the rest of the time is just stood at the back doing small amounts of damage, you instead play a wizard who can somewhat control the battle several times an encounter.

Furthermore, powers that only work once an encounter work automatically (at least, that part that makes them special). It really sucks when your cleric has carefully arranged for himself, the striker and the defender to surround the elite brute, he then attacks with an encounter power that means everyone does 1d6 extra damage, then he misses. A bad dice roll and the plan collapses.

Further Notes

It is anticipated that monsters will vary quite significantly in their damage output. Most will

Appendix B: Character Creation Rationale

While game play is pretty much the same, character creation is drastically altered. This appendix offers my reasoning.

No Races

At least, none built into the character creation process. You want to play an elf, and you think an elf should be good at X, Y and Z, well create a character that is good at X, Y and Z, and call him an elf. It is easy, balanced, flexible and not racist. DnD makes no distinction between men and women, despite men being stronger on average, so why the distinction between elves and men?

No stats

You do not use stats during gameplay, so why bother? The only exception I could think of was strength, so there is a new skill "Lifting" to handle that.

Slow Progression

DnD has everyone getting at least 10 better in their skills and attributes over 20 level. This means that at level 21 the scrawny wizard is stronger than the warrior was at level 1, while the too-stupid-to-count barbarian now has a higher intelligence than the wizard did at level 1.

And it is all meaningless, because everything is 10 better at everything. So what is the point?

A consequence of this rapid increase is that monsters are pinned to a specific level. Put the party up against monster 4 levels higher, and they are going to be in serious trouble, as the monsters are all +2 to hit, and +2 to defences. A slow progression means you have a much broader range of levels for the monsters.

Or you would if I published Monster Manuals like WotC do...

Appendix C: Other Thoughts

We have strikers who do lots of damage by hitting a bunch of times, strikers who do a lot of damage by carrying giant weapons and never missing, strikers who charge and just have really high damaging powers, and strikers who get a ton of damage from their striker feature, and strikers who do normal amounts of damage, which then gets applied over a wide area, and strikers who enter different at-will stances which boost basic attacks.

I like the idea of combo building classes. Or Classes that charge-up. A Soulknife, for example, a Psionic Striker that uses Augmentable at-wills. But the Soulknife doesn't start the encounter with power points, he gains them from attack combos, having foes drop next to him, like the Hexblade's Pact boon.

On a roll of 1 the character has fumbled. Roll d6 on the table below:

d6	Attack spell	Other spell	Bow	Firearm	Melee
1	Bad miss!	Fails	Bad miss!	Bad miss!	Miss
2	Embarrassing miss!	Fails	Embarrassing miss!	Embarrassing miss!	Miss
3	Unable to properly control the magical forces, your mind flips at the wonder of it all. Spend next round reconsidering your career (stunned).	Fails	Drop arrow	Weapon jams this round	Bad miss!
4	Spell backfires, you take d8 hits.	Sneeze at just the wrong time, spell fizzles uselessly.	Let go of bow instead of arrow, spend next round picking it up	Perhaps juggling was not a great idea. Drop weapon, spend next round picking it up	Embarrassing miss!
5	Tripped over an invisible hedgehog. Oh. That is unfortunate. You have hit a friend instead.	Confusing strikes at just the wrong moment, leaving you stunned for this round and the next.	Oh dear. String breaks. Weapon is useless until it is restrung (after combat has ended).	Oh dear. Weapon jams. Weapon is useless until it is fixed (after combat has ended).	Complicated attack is just to tricky. Sword is stuck in the ground, spend next round picking it up.
6	Sudden doubt fills you with uncertainty. How do you cat that spell? You realise you have no idea. Spell must be relearnt from a tutor before you can use it again.	Spell backfires, you take d8 hits.	Who jogged you? Oh. That is unfortunate. You have hit a friend for d8 damage.	Who jogged you? Oh. That is unfortunate. You have hit a friend for d8 damage.	Oops! If there is a friend within range, you got him, d8 hits. Otherwise, weapon flies out of your hands over the head of your enemy. What do you fight with now?

Tactics and Combat

The objective with the system is to keep combat simple to run, but to offer meaningful choices to the players. To this end, each character should have a selection of powers to choice from, their utility depending on the situation. By giving characters a move action as well as a standard action, they can move during their turn without sacrificing an attack, so the battlefield should be dynamic, and the tactics changing round by round.