

A Long Time Ago...

A tiny little Star Wars-ish game by Bill Garrett <garrett@peppermile.com>

Create a Character

Pick a name (e.g. "Han"), an occupation (e.g. "Smuggler"), and some notes on appearance, habits, and backstory (e.g. "scruffy-looking, pilots the Millennium Falcon, on the run from a crime boss").

Pick six or so beats: skills, careers, signature equipment, etc. The Force, lightsabers, escapes, the Millennium Falcon, etc. are beats. Assign numbers between +2 and -2 to each beat. No specific beat can be at zero. The total of your beats must sum to zero.

If you have a beat that talks about the Force, you are Force-sensitive, aligned either to the Light or Dark depending on whether it's positive or negative.

You get to start with whatever equipment your character would logically have (blaster, spaceship, lightsaber, Wookiee companion). If you need gear later, tell the GM and decide together if it requires an action to get.

Balance

The Force is a continual struggle between Light and Dark. Each of your actions has a starting and ending Balance from this list:

- White - redemption, justice, goodness, and mercy.
- Light - reinforcements, positive feelings, hope.
- Gray - neutral, uncertain, chaotic.
- Dark - danger, loss, menace, pain, harm.
- Black - tragedy, great loss, death.

Emotional Moments

When you hazard an emotional stake, reveal a secret, confront a hard truth, make a cynical quip, engage in comic relief shenanigans, or even perform a heroic sacrifice, don't roll the action. These are the true moments of Star Wars. Instead, you get to shift the Balance of the next action (yours or someone else's) up or down one shade.

How to Play

Narrate your action to the GM. The GM determines starting Balance. You roll 2d6. Add or subtract any beats that apply.

- 9 or higher: one Balance stage lighter than you started (e.g. Gray to Light)
- 6-8: Balance is unchanged
- 5 or less: one Balance stage darker than you started (e.g. Gray to Dark)

Narrate an outcome consistent with the Balance that you ended up with. Note that none of these outcomes are necessarily better for you personally: they only favor somebody. If you don't have a solid idea, or the GM overrules you, GM's narration takes precedence.

The GM can arbitrarily pick who ends up better off as a result of the action, or use this guideline: if the Balance changed thanks to the roll, ask if the PC follows along with the adjustment. If they do, the advantage is theirs. If not, the advantage goes to the enemy.

Villains

If a villain would logically do something, the GM just says what they do. If this would impact a PC, the player gets to roll an action to see how it goes down for them.

If a bad guy is personally scary enough just by being in the scene, lower action Balances by one shade when interacting with them. Comic relief villains lighten the shade by one.

End of Session

At the end of every session, players can review and (if desired) rewrite or re-value their beats. Beats should continue to sum to zero. Individual beats should not exceed +2 or -2.

Characters who make a dedicated effort of aligning themselves to the Light Side can have beats that sum to +1 or +2, at the GM's option. Characters pursuing the Dark Side can sum to -1 or -2.

Conflicts

Small unit tactics, large open warfare, and anything in between. It's you vs. an opposing force.

- Fight another force in a stand-up conflict
- Outflank or outmaneuver a stronger force
- Dogfight an enemy in space
- Place somebody else in peril or escape from it yourself
- Retreat while under fire

Starting Balance is typically Dark. Outcomes:

- White - an enemy changes sides, a lost friend is found, peace (but not necessarily victory)
- Light - moment of hope, escape routes are taken, lives are saved or spared.
- Gray - the situation changes but the battle rages on, or a costly victory.
- Dark - the other side (or yours) loses people or suffers injury.
- Black - a lasting injury, treachery, great loss, named people die.

Lightsaber Duels

A contest between Force users, with the weapons of the Jedi and the use of the Force. Often mixed with a set of Moral and Emotional Moments.

- Cross sabers with your opponent
- Use telekinetic tricks or attacks to distract, disorient, or harm
- Move to a new area or change the environment
- Inflict or avoid a lasting injury
- Escape to fight another day

Starting Balance is your Force alignment modified by your intent. Outcomes:

- White - redemptive victory or bloodless capture.
- Light - a successful defense, an appeal to your opponent's better nature.
- Gray - Duel of the Fates.
- Dark - opponent (or you) at a disadvantage, emotionally compromised, or hurt.
- Black - opponent (or you) seriously injured or killed, a moral or physical tragedy.

Races and Pursuits

Any chase scene, whether a rooftop chase, pod racing, or TIE Fighter escape. You want to get to somewhere or away from somewhere, and somebody is interfering.

- Disable or destroy another chaser
- Make a risky move to advance your position
- Elude pursuit or avoid detection

Starting Balance depends on your intentions. Avoiding capture is Light, blowing up the other guy is Dark, just racing is Gray. Outcomes:

- White - chase ends without drama for somebody, or some chaser gets a big advantage.
- Light - somebody escaped, avoided detection, or learned something interesting.
- Gray - mixed success, the chase goes on.
- Dark - off course, lost, damaged vehicles, lost something valuable in the chase.
- Black - serious crash, wrecked vehicles, physical injury.

Infiltration and Search

You want to get a thing, enter a place, or know a thing. Others would prefer that you don't.

- Locate a lost or stolen MacGuffin
 - Find a prisoner or someone in hiding
 - Get into a secure area through an unguarded route
 - Bluff the guards or hack the system
 - Search your feelings with the Force
- Starting Balance is Gray or Dark depending on risk or time pressure. Outcomes:

- White - truth comes readily, you achieve your goal easily.
- Light - you avoided detection or got away, you found your target and all's well.
- Gray - you made it in or through but lost something in the process (your concealment, an important item, whatever).
- Dark - guards died, you're compromised, your target is hurt or can't move, awful truth or harmful lie.
- Black - a trap is sprung, entire party captured, somebody dies, objective permanently lost or false, deceit or terrible truth.