

Core Rules

- A squared grid (paper, battle mat, or VTT) and tokens/miniatures.
 - Pencil and a character sheet.
 - Dice: **d6**, **d8**, **d10**, **d12**, **d20**.
 - Practically, one of each per table is enough — you roll a single die at a time.
 - If you only have **d6**, use the **d6**-only variant at the end.
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These appear throughout the rules — here they are in plain language:

- GM (Game Master): describes the situation, controls the world and opposition, sets Target Numbers (**TN**) and consequences.
 - Player: declares what the character does and rolls the die.
 - Square: one cell on the grid; used to measure distance and movement.
 - Move: moving a character a number of squares.
 - Action: one meaningful thing in your turn (attack, ability, trigger a mechanism, cast, etc.).
 - Turn: your opportunity to Move and take one Action.
 - Test: a die roll that resolves uncertainty.
 - **TN** (Target Number): the number you must meet or beat to succeed.
 - Attributes: Strength (S), Dexterity (D), Magic (M). Each has a die size.
 - Attribute die: the die size tied to an attribute (e.g., D **d10**).
 - Success: result \geq **TN**.
 - Critical success: the maximum value on the die (e.g., 12 on **d12**). Grants an extra benefit in addition to success.
 - Complication: an extra problem on failure — noise, time loss, dropped gear, worse position, spent resource.
 - Cover: an obstacle between attacker and target; usually increases **TN** for ranged attacks.
 - Retaliation: consequence of missing in combat — you lose 1 Heart if the foe could effectively strike back.
 - Heart: a hit point in the simplest sense.
 - Mana: resource used for Magic (could represent tech/psionics in other genres).
 - Wound (Boss/Elite): a hit that reduces a tougher foe. Bosses fall after several Wounds.
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Character creation is intentionally brief: pick a role, assign three attribute dice, note resources.

2.1 Roles (pick one)

- Warrior — specializes in Strength (melee, force).
- Rogue — specializes in Dexterity (shots, stealth, precision, evasion).
- Mage — specializes in Magic (special effects, control, power).

Role names are technical. In another setting they can mean soldier/agent/specialist.

2.2 Attributes and dice

You have three attributes:

- Strength (S) — force, endurance.

- Dexterity (D) — speed, finesse, stealth.
- Magic (M) — special effects: spells, psionics, tech, superhuman ability (setting-dependent).

Each attribute has a die size. At start:

- Warrior: S **d10**, D **d6**, M **d6**
- Rogue: S **d6**, D **d10**, M **d6**
- Mage: S **d6**, D **d6**, M **d10**

2.3 Resources

- Hearts: 5.
- Mana: 3.

2.4 Talents (optional but recommended)

Talents are two short keywords that describe what your character is notably good at (still setting-neutral):

- e.g., Negotiator, Mechanic, Scout, Analyst, Athlete, Medic, Hacker.

How Talents work: if a Talent genuinely helps on a test, the GM may lower the **TN** by one step.

- Talents don't grant automatic success.
- Usually at most one Talent applies to a single test.

2.5 Gear

Write down:

- a weapon or combat tool,
- protection (optional),
- three useful items for the adventure.

Gear in the core rules acts as permission (it enables actions) rather than numeric bonuses.

2.6 Sample character

- Role: Rogue
- Attributes: S **d6**, D **d10**, M **d6**
- Hearts: 5, Mana: 3
- Talents: Scout, Negotiator
- Gear: ranged tool, lockpicks, rope, light source

If you understand this section, you understand the system.

3.1 When to roll

Roll only when both are true:

1. the outcome is uncertain, and
2. failure changes something or has a cost.

If a task is trivial and pressure-free, the GM can just say "it works".

3.2 How to perform a test (step by step)

1. The player states **what they are doing** and **what effect they want**.
2. The GM chooses a characteristic: S, Z, or M.

3. The GM sets the **TN** (Difficulty) and any situational modifiers.
4. The player rolls **one characteristic die**.
5. Compare the result to the **TN** and determine the outcomes.

3.3 Difficulty scale (**TN**)

Use four bands:

- **TN** 4 (Easy): likely if competent or conditions favor you.
- **TN** 6 (Standard): default difficulty.
- **TN** 8 (Hard): needs advantage, prep, or specialization.
- **TN** 12 (Heroic): significant challenge; often requires **d12**/**d20**, great setup, or both.

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Target Number (TN**)**: 4 (Easy), 6 (Normal), 8 (Hard).

Roll Result:

- **1**: Failure + Complication.
- < **TN**: Failure.
- \geq **TN**: Success.
- **Max (10/20)**: Success + Benefit.

3.4 Outcomes

- Result \geq **TN** → Success.
- Result < **TN** → Failure.
- Rolling a 1 → Failure + Complication (even if **TN** is low).
- Max on the die → Critical success (success plus an extra benefit appropriate to the fiction).

3.5 Adjusting difficulty without math

Instead of adding/subtracting numbers, shift **TN** by one step.

- Worse conditions → **TN** +1 step (e.g., cover, darkness, slick surface, time pressure, noise, distractions).
- Better conditions → **TN** -1 step (e.g., prep, proper tools, superior position, surprise, full focus).

For extremes, you may shift by two steps.

Bounds:

- If **TN** would fall below 4, treat it as “almost certain” (often no roll).
- If **TN** would exceed 12, treat it as “nearly impossible” (requires a new plan/approach).

3.6 Help from an ally

An ally can spend their Action (or time outside combat) to assist.

Effect: bump the roller’s die up one size for that single test:

- **d6** → **d8** → **d10** → **d12** → **d20**

Order rules:

- Usually only one helper per test (avoid “help towers”).
- The help must make sense in fiction: covering fire, handing tools, distracting, steadyng, giving instructions.

3.7 Re-rolling

Don't repeat the same test over and over without a change.

- Change approach (different attribute/tools/route), or
- accept a complication (time, alarm), or
- withdraw.

3.8 Examples (non-combat)

Example A — quiet crossing:

- Player: "I want to cross an open area unseen."
- GM: Dexterity. It's dusk with some cover → **TN** 6.
- Roll **d10**=5 → failure. GM: "You're not spotted yet, but someone heard a sound and starts checking (complication: time pressure)."

Example B — tools and force:

- Player: "I want to get the mechanism working fast."
- GM: Strength if it's brute force, Magic if it's a special interface; here it's Strength. **TN** 6.
- Ally helps (bump to **d12**). Roll **d12**=12 → critical: it works instantly and silently.

How we measure on the board.

4.1 Squares

- 1 square = base unit of distance.
- Diagonals are allowed and count as 1.

4.2 Movement

- Default movement: up to 5 squares on your turn.
- You may move before or after your Action (or split movement).

4.3 Line and cover (simple)

- Full cover: target is completely blocked → cannot be hit by ranged attacks.
- Partial cover: target is visible but protected → ranged **TN** +1 step.

Apply cover to perception/stealth tests as fits the fiction.

Combat is a normal scene with turns.

5.1 When combat starts

When at least one side tries to harm the other and timing matters.

If it would be trivial/obvious, resolve with a single test.

5.2 Turn order (simple)

- All players act (any order), then
- all foes act, repeat.

This keeps pace fast. For more tactical play, add initiative (see GM book).

5.3 What you can do on your turn

On your turn, you have:

- **Movement** (up to 5 squares),
- **1 Action.**

An action can be:

- an attack,
- a skill check (e.g., pulling a lever, running through a hazard),
- using equipment,
- assisting an ally,
- using Magic.

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5.4 Attacking

1. Pick a target (in reach and line).
2. Pick attack type:
 - Melee → Strength test,
 - Ranged → Dexterity test.
3. Set the target's **TN**.
4. Roll.

Foes' **TN** (core):

- Minion: 6
- Elite: 8
- Boss: 12

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5.5 On a hit

- Minion: removed from the fight.
- Elite: takes 1 Wound; standard Elite has 2 Wounds.
- Boss: takes 1 Wound; Boss has 3 Wounds.
- Critical success: vs Elite/Boss either +1 Wound (total 2) or another sensible boon (push, disarm, seize position) — choose one.

You can simplify by using only Minions and Bosses.

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5.6 Misses and retaliation

If result < **TN** and the foe could realistically hit back, the attacker loses 1 Heart.

“Could hit back” guidelines:

- In melee (adjacent) — usually yes.
- At range in the open with a responsive foe — often yes.
- Behind full cover or beyond practical reach — usually no.

Rolling a 1 in combat: failure + complication (e.g., lose 1 Heart and get knocked prone, drop gear, or get pushed from cover).

5.7 Ranges (defaults)

- Melee: adjacent.
- Ranged: any visible target.
 - If you want a limit: treat up to 10 squares as no penalty; beyond that **TN** +1 step.

5.8 Multiple foes in close

If many minions are adjacent to one hero, either:

- raise **TN** by 1 step (pressure), or
- have failure include an extra complication (lose position).

Keep it fast: one resolution → one outcome.

5.9 Combat examples

Example A — simple melee exchange:

- Warrior (S **d10**) adjacent to a minion (**TN** 6).
- Roll **d10**=4 → miss; retaliation triggers → Warrior loses 1 Heart.

Example B — boss and critical:

- Rogue (D **d10**) shoots a Boss (**TN** 12). GM: “Hard without setup.”
- Ally helps (die to **d12**) and Rogue gains position (**TN** 12 → 8).
- Roll **d12**=12 → critical: Boss takes 2 Wounds.

“Magic” is the umbrella for special effects; in other genres it can be psionics or tech.

6.1 Mana

- Start with 3 Mana.
- Spend Mana when attempting effects beyond normal capability.

6.2 How to adjudicate

1. Describe the effect.
2. GM sets **TN** and Mana cost.
3. Spend Mana.
4. Roll Magic (M) vs **TN**.

Failure: effect fizzles; Mana is spent; add a small consequence.

6.3 Effect tiers (**TN** and cost)

- Trick — **TN** 4, cost 0–1: light, sound, smoke, brief distraction.
- Standard — **TN** 6, cost 1: bolt, barrier, 5-square blink, short buff.

- Strong — **TN** 8, cost 2: area, control, heal +2 Hearts, immobilize.
- Great power — **TN** 12, cost 3: large scene-changing effect.

6.4 Critical magic

On a max roll with Magic:

- increase scale (area/duration/potency), or
- reduce cost (GM may refund 1 Mana), or
- add another benefit (quiet, precise, safe for allies).

6.5 Magic examples

Example A — defensive run:

- Player: “I set a quick barrier to sprint 5 squares safely.”
- GM: Standard **TN** 6, cost 1. Roll M **d10** =9 → success.

Example B — failure and fallout:

- Player: “I try to pin an elite” (**TN** 8, cost 2).
- Roll 3 → failure: effect fizzles, spend 2 Mana, plus a complication (exposed).

7.1 Hearts (life)

- By default, you have **5 Hearts**.
- Losing a Heart means real damage or exhaustion — depending on the world.

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7.2 0 Hearts

If you fall to 0 Hearts:

- you are **down** and cannot take actions,
- an ally can spend an Action to get you back on your feet with **1 Heart**.

7.3 Rest

After a scene of combat/conflict, if you have a moment of safe rest (and basic conditions), you return to full:

- Hearts,
- Mana.

This keeps the system fast and does not require lengthy healing.

After an adventure (or major milestone) choose one:

- bump S/D/M die size (**d6** → **d8** → **d10** → **d12** → **d20**),
- or +1 Heart (max 7),
- or +1 Mana (max 5).

Note: a bigger die means more effectiveness without adding more dice to the table.

If you prefer a single **d6**:

9.1 Thresholds instead of die sizes

Each attribute has a **d6** target:

- Master: 3+
- Trained: 4+
- Novice: 5+
- Untrained: 6

9.2 Situational difficulty

Shift the threshold one step for harder/easier situations (min 2+, max 6).

9.3 Help

Help lowers the threshold by 1 for that roll.

9.4 Combat mapping

- Minion: Standard (no change).
- Elite: Hard (+1 to threshold).
- Boss: Heroic (+2) and 3 Wounds.

9.5 Advancement

Raise one attribute's level (e.g., Novice → Trained) or +1 Heart/Mana.

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1. What exactly is the player trying to achieve?
 2. Which attribute applies: S/D/M?
 3. What's the **TN** (4/6/8/12), and does the situation shift it by a step?
 4. Any help (bump die)?
 5. Roll → success/failure.
 6. On failure: which complication (or retaliation in combat)?
 7. On critical: which extra benefit?

1. Introduction

7.2 Additional tools are not required, but they can sometimes facilitate management.

11.1 Protection (armor) as a simple resource

- A character with protection has 1 Armor token per scene.
- When they would lose 1 Heart (retaliation/hit), they may spend Armor instead.

11.2 Time pressure as a clock

- If a scene is time-sensitive, set a “clock” (e.g., 3-step). Each failure advances it by 1. When it fills, the bad outcome triggers (alarm, target escapes, passage collapses).

End of the Basic Rules Book.