

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.

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.

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 roll (steps)

1. Player states what they do and the intended effect.
2. GM picks the attribute: S or D or M.
3. GM sets the TN and any situational adjustments.
4. Player rolls a single attribute die.
5. Compare to TN and apply results.

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.*
- *≥ 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, steadying, 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

- Move up to 5 squares,
- take 1 Action.

An Action can be: attack, attribute test (dash through danger, pull lever), use gear, help an ally, use 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).

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.

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?

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.