

# Game Master Book

---

- State stakes clearly. Before the roll: attribute, **TN**, failure consequence, and whether help is possible.
  - Fiction → mechanics → result. Always start from the fiction, then call for a roll.
  - Keep scenes snappy. One test = one meaningful effect.
  - Failure moves the situation forward. Complications change the fiction rather than resetting it.
  - Consistency. Same circumstances → same **TN** and effects.
- 

1. Player states intent and approach.
2. Pick attribute: S (force), D (speed/precision), M (special effect).
3. Set **TN**: 4 easy, 6 standard, 8 hard, 12 heroic.
4. Announce failure stakes and whether someone can help (bump die by one size).
5. Player rolls and compares to **TN**.
6. Apply outcome and update the situation.

Table shorthand: “Attr/**TN**/Roll/Effect”.

---

- 4 (easy): favorable conditions, no active opposition.
- 6 (standard): default in adventures without advantage.
- 8 (hard): time pressure, bad position, cover, complex tools.
- 12 (heroic): above-average challenge; often needs preparation or a big die.

Situational adjustment: shift **TN** by one step (max two for extremes).

- Worse: dark, slick, cover, alarm → **TN** +1.
- Better: time, tools, high ground, surprise → **TN** -1.

Quick odds intuition (rough):

- **d6** vs TN6 ≈ 17%; **d8** vs 6 ≈ 38%; **d10** vs 6 ≈ 50%; **d12** vs 6 ≈ 58%.
- **d10** vs TN8 ≈ 30%; **d12** vs 8 ≈ 42%; **d20** vs 12 ≈ 45%. Use as guidance only; don't math at the table.

When not to roll:

- If the outcome is obvious and there's no stake.
  - If rolling won't change anything — move on.
- 

- 1 on the die: failure + complication. Examples: noise, time loss, bad lead, minor harm (-1 Heart), spent resource, worse position.
- Failure (result < **TN**): no effect plus potential retaliation in combat, or threat progress outside combat.
- Critical (max on die): success + extra benefit (faster/quieter/no cost/bigger effect).

Complication checklist:

1. Hit a resource (time, position, hearts, mana, gear).
2. Change the map (new obstacle, blocked route, improved enemy cover).
3. Raise pressure (clock, alarm, reinforcements).

- Movement: up to 5 squares; diagonals allowed.
- Cover: partial → ranged **TN** +1; full → no line.
- Difficult terrain (optional): entering a cell costs 2 of 5 movement.
- Shove/push: S vs **TN** 6 (adjust by fiction). Success: move target 1–2 squares; critical: +1 square.
- Ranges: treat up to 10 squares as no penalty; further → **TN** +1. Prioritize speed over minutiae.

- Order: players → opponents → repeat.
- Attacks: melee = S, ranged = D; foe TNs: minion 6, elite 8, boss 12.
- Hits: minion off the board; elite/boss +1 Wound (boss has 3). Criticals usually = 2 Wounds.
- Miss: if foe could strike back → attacker loses 1 Heart (retaliation). From full cover/far away → usually no retaliation.

Scaling pressure:

- Several minions in close → **TN** +1 or add a complication on a miss.
- Evolve terrain each round: obstacles, chokepoints, opportunities for advantage.

Do it in 5 steps:

1. Goal: why the scene exists (cross/secure/disable/steal/escort/defend).
2. Obstacles: 2–3 different types (guards, lock, alarm, hazardous area).
3. Threat: minions/elites/boss, hazards, traps.
4. Clock (optional): 3–5 steps; failures tick it; at max, the bad outcome triggers.
5. Reward/Consequence: what success grants; how failure changes things.

Encounter sizing for 3–5 PCs (guidelines):

- Easy: 3–5 minions or a lone elite.
- Standard: 6–8 minions or 1 elite + 2–4 minions.
- Hard: boss + 2–4 minions or 2 elites + 3–5 minions.
- Heroic: boss + 4–6 minions and/or an elite. Adjust for terrain and cover — they matter a lot.

Format (setting-neutral):

Name — **TN**, Wounds, Role, Special

- Minion: **TN** 6, no Wounds; simple tactics.
- Elite: **TN** 8, 2 Wounds; has a clear edge (mobility, cover, control).
- Boss: **TN** 12, 3 Wounds; 1–2 unique moves (push, summon, barrier, etc.).

Reaction/morale (lightweight):

- When the first minion falls or an elite is wounded, roll **d6**:
  - 1–2: withdraw/hunker; 3–4: hold; 5–6: press.
- Modify ±1 for advantage/fear/boss nearby.

Assign **TN** and Mana cost per tier:

- Trick: **TN** 4, 0–1 (small, quick effect).
- Standard: **TN** 6, 1 (single target, short blink, barrier).
- Strong: **TN** 8, 2 (area, control, heal +2 Hearts).
- Great power: **TN** 12, 3 (scene-changer).

Helpers:

- Multiple targets: either +1 Mana or **TN** +1 step.
- Sustained effect: pay 1 Mana per round or it occupies the caster's Action.
- Countering/evading: allow a relevant PC test (D or M) vs the same **TN** to reduce/avoid the effect if fictionally justified.

- Stealth/assassination: set an Alarm clock (3–5). Failures tick it; at max, patrol arrives/locks engage.
- Chase: track distance in “chase steps” (e.g., 3). Each round both sides roll; pursuer success shrinks, runner success grows. At 0 → caught; at 5 → escape.
- Environmental obstacles: state the cost clearly (fall = –1 Heart and worse position). **TN** depends on fiction.

- Advancement: after an adventure each PC picks one — bump a die size, +1 Heart (max 7) or +1 Mana (max 5).
- Material rewards: grant permissions (new actions) or one-shot boons (“once per scene lower a **TN** by 1”). Avoid permanent numeric modifiers.
- Economy (optional): coarse tiers (cheap/standard/expensive). Resolve with a resource test instead of counting currency.

- Agree on boundaries and lines/veils up front.
- Provide a simple “pause/rewind” signal for uncomfortable content.
- Resolve disagreements in fiction, not at the table.

1. Hook: one-sentence problem.
2. 3 locations with tactical features (cover, height, narrow passages).
3. 3 obstacles: lock, patrol, environmental threat.
4. Stakes: time, noise, attention.
5. Complication list (5) and a clock.
6. Opponents: one-line entries (minions/elites/boss) + simple tactics.

Complications — **d6** (universal):

1. Time loss / enemy advantage.
2. Position revealed / alarm rises.
3. Minor harm: –1 Heart or resource.
4. Bad position: pushed/stuck.
5. Gear lost/jammed.
6. A new threat enters the scene.

Critical benefits — **d6**:

1. Faster.
2. Quieter.
3. No cost (no Mana/retaliation).
4. Bigger effect (area/range).
5. Better ally position.
6. Extra clue/information.

- Goal: cross a secured passage.
- GM preps: lock (**TN** 6), patrol (clock 3), narrow corridor (cover).

1. Player A: “I pick the lock” (D, **TN** 6). Failure ticks clock. Roll 5 → fail, clock 1/3.
2. Player B helps (bump die). A tries again with new tools/better position, rolls **d12** = 9 → success.

3. Patrol nears (clock 2/3). Player C covers the exit (S,  6). Critical grants a strong position for the team. Fast resolution, transparent stakes.

---

That's all you need to run. The rest (setting, monster lists, treasures) is modular and should fit your chosen genre.